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Introduction

JAPAN'S HISTORIC pursuit of full membership of the "West" may finally be close to fruition today, ironically at a time when that status retains only diminished meaning and appeal.

From the late nineteenth century to date, the political and economic development of Japan has taken place in the context of the American liberal hegemonic projection across the Pacific, and a study of the American perspectives on Japan's unique success, abject downfall, spectacular reemergence, and relative decline enables us to examine the changing nature of the West itself as well. This book, in that sense, is as much about the changes in the Japanese political power structure as it is about the (Anglo-)American projection of imperialism, racism, capitalism, liberalism, and democracy in East Asia.

Japan's quest for a Western recognition of equal standing in modernization and democratization reveals the shifting Western identity, which has been, at times, white supremacist, and at other times, liberal capitalist (anti-communist), but usually some combination of the two. The concept of "liberal hegemony" is used in this book to capture this chimera of a combined identity that joins a realist-hegemonic Hobbesian assumption (the state of nature as a state of war) and conclusion (unaccountable absolute power) to a liberal-institutionalist Lockean storyline (the protection of private property above all else, justifying colonialism, slavery, patriarchy, and environmental exploitation).¹

It is a central point of this book, however, that Japan was not just passively constrained or forced to react to the Western-dominated international setting it has found itself in. The presence of a hegemonic power in its external environment commonly gives birth to a counter-hegemonic (not necessarily *anti*-hegemonic) domestic hegemonic project that is usually either ethnic-nationalist or (later) communist, and Japan was a particularly "successful" case of the former.² This book shows that Japan played a key role in the shaping of the "race development" paradigm that has emerged in the United States since the 1910s.³ Japan's rise as a unique, non-white colonizer presented a challenge

to the material hegemony of the rival Western empires as well as to their white supremacist worldview, triggering a shift from a *deterministic* variety of racism to a *developmentalist* type, which in turn, accelerated the transition of Anglo-American hegemony from liberal imperialism to liberal internationalism.⁴ As it probes these issues, this book straddles the subfields of comparative politics, international relations, political theory, and the disciplinary history of American political science and Asian studies.

Furthermore, drawing on the literatures and methodologies of intellectual history and political sociology, this book highlights the centrality of the American political scientists and their elite universities in the US exertion of its hegemonic sway over Japan and East Asia as the wielders of both state power and academic authority, armed with funding from the foundations of the capital.⁵ The Anglo-Saxonist, white supremacist roots of American political science since its inception in the late nineteenth century have been inextricably linked to the racist rule-making of the international community and of migration to the Anglosphere (the “Yellow Peril”), much to the chagrin of the Japanese who imagined themselves to be honorarily white.

Even after World War II and the decolonization that supposedly erased the imperialist legacy of “the color line,”⁶ the anti-communist, Schumpeterian (elite-pluralist) theory of democracy⁷ that became embedded through the “modernization theory” paradigm in area studies and comparative politics during the Cold War⁸ was vigorously mobilized by the US scholar-state agents in the military and ideological campaigns in East Asia, including Japan (the “Red Scare”). At the heart of the fundamental elitist bias in American political science is its obsession with the elitist theory of democracy built on racist and sexist foundations⁹ that has often been accepted as “realistic,” and even when problematized, commonly regarded as exogenous to its liberalism.¹⁰

As recently as during the Joe Biden administration, the liberal political and academic elites of the United States have proclaimed its elite-pluralist understanding of democracy to be a model for the world to follow, its hegemonic projection a natural force for good, and jointly promoted its policies of “democracy assistance” for those who were considered possibly redeemable, on the one hand, and “integrated deterrence” with allies and partners against those who were othered as hopelessly evil and menacing, on the other.

This book argues, however, that, in truth, the Anglo-American model of liberal democracy has been at best liberal, pluralistic, and competitive, but not very democratic most of the time. It has largely chosen to ignore its white supremacist/West-centric roots, which have never been fully confronted even by the expert theorists of democracy, and this may account for the recent Trumpian atavism. It was as if the American liberals (including most political scientists) were caught by surprise by Trump’s call to “Make America Great

Again” because they had always thought that America was, is, and will ever be great. As polarized as the present-day United States may appear, there persists a wide consensus that it has a manifest destiny to be great and that the rest of the world should prop up its god-ordained greatness—the disagreement has only been over the preferred means to ensure its greatness, either through soft power or hard coercion. Liberal America may have a Lockean self-image, but much of the rest of the world, including Japan, has long known and experienced it as a Hobbesian hegemon at its core.

The Assumed Supremacy of the Liberal Democratic West and Its Propagandists

“The obstacles to non-Western countries joining the West vary considerably. They are least for Latin American and East European countries. They are greater for the Orthodox countries of the former Soviet Union. They are still greater for Muslim, Confucian, Hindu and Buddhist societies. Japan has established a unique position for itself as an associate member of the West: it is in the West in some respects but clearly not of the West in important dimensions.”¹¹ Samuel P. Huntington made these striking observations in the 1993 *Foreign Affairs* version of his “Clash of Civilizations?” polemic in relation to what he called the “civilization identity.”

Some thirty years later, this passage as well as the overall thrust of Huntington’s assumptions and arguments seem Trumpian rather than simply naive, and in that uncomfortable way, eerily prophetic.¹² The West, including its standard bearer, the United States, is infinitely less certain and secure of its physical borders and the purity and primacy of its “civilization identity” today than it was in its moment of triumph as the Cold War came to an end. Moreover, the anxiety that the West is under siege by the “Rest” (the non-West) has only intensified since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Hamas attack on Israel in October 2023, and as the prospect for a so-called “Taiwan contingency” (Chinese military conquest of the island) was played up by association (“Ukraine today, Taiwan tomorrow”). It appears that the contested boundary that divides the West and the Rest is currently being redrawn worldwide.

Japan continues to occupy its ambiguous position as an “associate member of the West,” but, in today’s context, maybe a considerably more welcomed one. Back when Huntington and many other Western opinion leaders placed Japan on probation, it was suspected of possible anti-Western machinations to undermine the economic primacy of the United States. Japan, now unmistakably in decline, is no longer the threat that it was then perceived to be, and the target of such an accusation has fully shifted to China.¹³ Japan is also

presently joined by South Korea and Taiwan as “almost-Western” societies of the “Far East.”¹⁴

Huntington’s statements are interesting, however, not only in relation to the way the politics of the West versus the Rest has actually played out, but also as revealing of the mainstream academic theorization patterns in political science, where, put bluntly, universalistic, general theories are generated in the West from Western perspectives (or, to be more precise, predominantly in the US from US perspectives), while area studies specialists and non-Western local experts find exceptions, add qualifications, or make corrections to them as they apply them to the non-Western cases. The two—West-centric public policy practice and political science theory—are inextricably intertwined, particularly in the United States. Huntington was as mainstream and as influential as a political scientist/public intellectual/government advisor gets, and rather than being an exception, he is a prominent example of the extreme proximity between political power and academic authority in American political science.¹⁵

While Huntington considered the legitimate membership of the West highly exclusive (and indeed inaccessible for most of the Rest), he also thought that the West, and again the US in particular, was generally a force for good. In his equally impactful *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (1991), Huntington listed the democratization promotion policies of the European Community and the United States among the five independent variables that caused the third wave democratizations in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁶ The others were the deepening legitimacy problems of authoritarian regimes, the unprecedented global economic growth, the changes in the doctrines and activities of the Catholic Church, and the enhanced means of communication that enabled what he called the demonstration effects. Following Joseph Schumpeter and Robert Dahl, Huntington adopted the “procedural definition” of democracy that centered around the competitive election of leaders by the people they govern, so the critical point in democratization was when a “free, open, and fair election” took place to replace an authoritarian government.¹⁷

Huntington acknowledged that foreign actors may delay or stop democratizing forces, but he emphasized that the Vatican, the European Community, and crucially, the US significantly helped third wave democratizations. Considering the long history of the United States (and its Western allies) in propping up dictators and preventing democracy, this is a bit much.¹⁸ Huntington himself, according to Ido Oren, as recently as in 1987, warned against the naive idea that “the first African government of South Africa . . . could scarcely be any worse” than the apartheid regime, in his presidential address at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association.¹⁹ Oren

further noted that the background of Huntington's lack of enthusiasm was his trip to South Africa to meet the apartheid government officials and political scientists in 1981 as the regime was contemplating limited constitutional change to extend political rights to mixed-race and Asian population but none to the Black majority.²⁰ Indeed, in the keynote address at the Biennial Conference of the Political Science Association of South Africa that he delivered, Huntington observed that "the creation of a non-racial state through the universalization of political rights, privileges, and opportunities without regard to color" may appeal to the Americans, but that the "congruence of that principle with South African traditions and its relevance to South African needs . . . appears questionable."²¹ Huntington did not mention his role in assisting the prolonging of the apartheid regime in *The Third Wave* and merely played down the impact of the US and European Community's economic sanctions in accelerating the end of apartheid.²²

The Disempowerment of the Democratic Populace in the "Rest"

The problem with such a roseate account of the West as a benign promoter of democracy is not only that it is one-sided and disingenuous but also that it largely erases the political agency and even the existence of the local, grass-roots democratic populace from the story of their own democratization. Other than a reference to the growth of the urban middle class and the highly educated public, which were, in turn, a socioeconomic outcome of economic development, Huntington barely hid his contempt for those who emphasized the role played by "a deeply felt and widespread 'yearning for freedom' by people oppressed by authoritarian rulers." This was for him a given that only distinguished between the countries that democratized and those that did not but failed to explain the timing of the successful democratic transitions. "East Europeans had been yearning for freedom for decades; they only got it, however, in 1989. Why then and not earlier?" he asked.²³ It was Huntington, though, who committed the error of construing the intervening variables for the independent variables and who thereby politically disempowered the very people who became the sovereign masters of their own country after years of "yearning."

In 1980 in South Korea, the Gwangju Uprising was brutally suppressed by the military dictators with the approval of the US government—the Jimmy Carter administration, no less. In 1987, when the June Democratic Struggle finally bore fruit, military crackdown was no longer an option not only for President Chun Doo-hwan but also for the Ronald Reagan administration. It does not occur to Huntington that the "yearning for freedom"

of the South Korean citizens may finally have forced a change in US policy, not vice versa.

A related point is that, to the extent to which Huntington acknowledged the role played by the local actors in the third-wave democracies themselves, he characteristically focused exclusively on the political leaders. Abruptly shifting the language from the “causes” of democratization that he supposedly discussed to mere “conditions” that are favorable to it, Huntington claimed that “A democratic regime is installed not by trends but by people. Democracies are created not by causes but causers. Political leaders and publics have to act.” Although he attached the word “publics” it is clear from the rest of his book that he only meant the “political leaders” because that was all he talked about: “In the third wave, the conditions for creating democracy had to exist, but only political leaders willing to take the risk of democracy made it happen.”²⁴ For an account of the democratization of the Rest, his is not simply a West-centric but also an elite-centric explanation that is noticeably wary of popular agency.

What is troubling, however, is that these tendencies seem to be largely shared by more contemporary and more liberal American political scientists of influence as well. In their influential *Competitive Authoritarianism*, Steven Levitsky, the staunch Trump critic,²⁵ and his coauthor Lucan Way squarely placed their arguments within the recent democratization literature that emphasized the “international dimension” in determining the types of regime change in the post–Cold War world, which included the democracy-authoritarianism hybrid of competitive authoritarianism.²⁶ Having noted five distinct mechanisms of international influence in the existing literature as *diffusion*, *direct democracy promotion*, *multilateral conditionality*, *democracy assistance*, and *transnational advocacy networks*, all of which are essentially to do with Western influence (with the partial exception of diffusion, which may be from a neighboring and/or recently successful democracy, presumably starting off under some Western influence), they organized these categories into the two factors of direct “Western leverage” and more diffused “linkage to the West.”

Levitsky and Way found that if the Western linkage was high, then almost invariably, the regime change led to democracy, and echoing Huntington, they pointed out that these were mostly East European and Latin American cases. In other parts of the world, where the linkage to the West was moderate or weak, in the post-Soviet countries, Africa, and Asia, the regime changes were less conducive to democracy. A third, and sole domestic, factor—the organizational power of the incumbent (state and governing party)—was also considered as an obstacle to democratic transition, but overall, their findings showed that strong Western leverage had more chance of resulting in

fortuitous democracies, though a high organizational power of the authoritarian governments might also allow the autocrats to resist external democratic pressure.

The scope of their study, while extensive, was limited to the post–Cold War era, and they ended the conclusion in a rather pessimistic tone. As the post–Cold War era, in their view, came to an end by the late 2000s, the “Greater availability of assistance from China and other states may expand the autocratic government’s room to maneuver vis-à-vis Western powers, and in the face of new geopolitical rivalries, Western powers may prioritize strategic issues (e.g., security cooperation and geopolitical alliances) over democracy, much as it did during the Cold War.”²⁷ Constrained by the specific post–Cold War time frame of their research, Levitsky and Way noted that their cases were characterized by weak civil societies and opposition parties, and hence particularly dependent on strong and persistent international pressure to democratize, but also that this might change in the longer term.²⁸ Nevertheless, it is still hard to avoid the unfortunate impression that the thrust of their argument at the end of the day was a rather simple assertion that the future of democracy in the Rest largely depended on the degree to which they westernized and that democracy was at peril now that the West did not dominate the world as much as it did during the post–Cold War era.

As central as the concept was, Levitsky and Way did not give a definition of “the West” upfront in the main text of the book. It was also referred to as “the liberal West,” and it seems to be essentially defined in Cold War terms—as “liberal capitalist democracies” as opposed to the (former) communist bloc or what used to be called the Third World—but we learn in a footnote that “the West” refers to the US and the EU: “Our treatment of ‘the West’ is highly aggregated. . . . However, EU and U.S. policies toward competitive authoritarian regimes were sufficiently coherent after 1989 to merit theorizing about the West as a unitary actor.”²⁹ As may be obvious, Japan was thus not considered part of the West in this study since it was defined as one of the four “black knights,” which were “counter-hegemonic powers whose economic, military, and/or diplomatic support helps blunt the impact of U.S. or EU democratizing pressure” alongside China, Russia, and (somewhat oddly, but presumably for its anti–Anglo-Saxon insecurity) France.³⁰ In relation to the linkage factor, however, the influence of the West was measured by looking at “the United States, the EU (and pre-2004 EU members), and Western-dominated multilateral institutions.”³¹

Furthermore, to the extent to which those in the non-West had a say in the future of their regimes, it was the autocratic incumbents’ organizational power that mattered and not so much the people. In fact, Levitsky and Way invoked the story of the three little pigs (authoritarians) whose houses got

“huffed and puffed” by the wolf (prodemocracy movements) to explain their point that whether the houses (organizational power of the authoritarian state and party) were built of straw, sticks, or bricks made a key difference. In other words, what was dismissed as the ineffective but also potentially dangerous “yearning for freedom” by Huntington was here referred to as “democratic ‘huffing and puffing’”³² and similarly held as a constant and was thus rendered immaterial in their structuralist account. They surely did not mean to disrespect the prodemocracy opposition, but it seems clear that their (possibly unconscious) West-centric and elite-centric perspective is a reflection of the centrality of their position within the broader American political science literature where they situate their work, the fellow American political scientists who read and cite their work, and the elite public officials who seek their expert opinions.

An obvious question that emerges from these discussions is whether democracy is fundamentally “Western,” if the rest of the world is so dependent on the West for successful democratic transition, while even Japan, a country that was democratized by the United States some eighty years ago still doesn’t quite qualify as a full member of the West. Of course, Levitsky and Way are in no way arguing that therefore the Western domination of the world should be propped up, restored, or extended, at least not through force, though an obvious corollary to their conclusion would be that the elimination or the weakening of the new rivals of the liberal West would once again enable it to conduct more effective democratic assistance as in the post–Cold War era.

They are also the first to admit that the exercise of the Western leverage had been too often linked to “electoralism,” a reductionist understanding of democracy that placed an excessive emphasis on the holding of multiparty elections without due regards to such key issues as civil liberties and a level playing field.³³ Their book was primarily about *Competitive Authoritarianism*, not full and happy transitions to democracy, after all. Nevertheless, democratic backsliding and the rise of radical populists in the post–Cold War world have much more to do with the Western acceptance and spreading of such a reductionist notion of democracy than the rise of China does, and in that sense, it is of the West’s own making.

It bears noting that Levitsky and Way, too, remained “committed to a procedural-minimum conception of democracy” that kept its focus on “competitive elections” rather than popular participation.³⁴ Thus, they are also more concerned about the *liberal* part of *liberal* democracy, even though their own key analytical contribution was supposed to be that a regime can still be authoritarian (and therefore undemocratic) even if it became *competitive* to a degree. To them, it is primarily an issue of an incumbent’s abuse and distortion of the level playing field rather than declining and insufficient popular

commitment to and participation in democracy. To that extent, Levitsky and Way's account remained grounded in the American tradition of "electoralist" and reductionist conceptualization of democracy.³⁵ Indeed, in January 2026, Levitsky and Way with Daniel Ziblatt acknowledged that "in Trump's second term, the United States has descended into competitive authoritarianism" (one might think, so much for "Western leverage" and the "linkage to the West"), but that "the most important arena for contestation in competitive authoritarian regimes is elections."³⁶

Thus, the return of Donald Trump as the president of the United States in 2025—this time by winning the popular vote, despite everything that he said and did during his first term and after he lost the 2020 election—cannot but raise some fundamental questions, not only about the general health of democracy in America, but also about the American concept of democracy that its political scientists shaped and promoted all over the world. Is the current crisis of American (and more broadly, Western) democracy rooted in its tradition, or is it just a temporary aberration? How should we understand the relationship between the West and democracy? This book will ask these questions in what follows, but also specifically in relation to Japan and the "Far East." Japan's ambiguous status as an almost-Western but not-really-Western and formally democratic but not-fully-democratic "Other" from the US perspective may be particularly useful in shedding light on these questions.

Japan's Stunted Democracy

The interplay of conflicting forces in the US occupation and in Japan set the basic parameters within which postwar Japanese politics unfolded. These were a set of international, constitutional, and institutional frameworks and conditions that may be captured by the contradiction of a "puppet democracy." As a *liberal* hegemon, the United States preferred the new Japan to embody a liberal, anti-communist variety of democracy, ideally based on a pluralist competition of the ruling elites, but as a *hegemon*, it could live with the emergence of a unified hegemonic party of these conservative elites, if that was what it took to block the leftist parties that stirred up the untamed Japanese masses with a call for anti-imperialist democratic action from coming to power. By mastering the American language of liberal, *anti-communist* conception of democracy, the conservative elites were able to reconsolidate their hegemonic position within Japanese domestic politics against the leftist, *anti-imperialist* proponents of egalitarian and participatory democracy, branding them as subversive, un-Japanese communists and communist sympathizers. In that sense, there were two competing and largely incompatible concepts of democracy in postwar Japan.

America, as an ethical and disinterested former colony turned liberal democracy in its own self-image (in spite of the persistence of segregationist, Jim Crow, Asian exclusionist, and sexist realities), was fundamentally different from a European-style (or Japanese-style, for that matter) territorial imperial power that belonged to the nineteenth century. America's hegemonic military, economic reach, and even temporary occupation (even the colonization of the Philippines) were merely to liberate and democratize others under America's benevolent, civilizing (i.e., race-developing) tutelage—and to save them from the un-American (and not infrequently identified as specifically “Asiatic”) peril that was the “new imperialism” of international communism. Thus, American hegemonic projection in Asia was fully compatible, in fact coterminous, with the latter's liberation and democratization—inadvertently mirroring a claim that was previously made by the Japanese imperialists to justify their expansionist policy; those same Japanese imperialists were now ironically being turned into the Pu Yi and Manchukuo of the United States.³⁷

The “reverse course” that began with the onset of the Cold War and that accelerated with the “loss” of China, resulted in the eventual formation of a transpacific elite agreement that centered around the joint espousal of an *anti-communist* (and in that sense, liberal) concept of democracy as elite pluralism, while sidelining retrograde, imperialist illiberalism to its right, and confronting an *anti-imperialist* and anti-US concept of democracy to its left. Ironically, by far the single most important political resource this camp of leftist, anti-imperialist democrats had (and still have, to the extent to which it—and they—survive) was the Constitution of Japan that the New Deal idealists, leftists, and pro-China anti-imperialists in the occupation bequeathed in the short window of opportunity that MacArthur's imperial style and ambitions accidentally opened amid the confusion of the immediate postwar period.

It bears emphasizing that such proponents of anti-imperialist democracy (critical of both Japan's own imperial past and the ongoing American imperialist policy, which also exonerated and recycled Japanese imperialists as their puppets in the postwar era) included the communists, but the most significant force consisted of the socialists (Japan Socialist Party or JSP), who had their own differences with the communists. The bifurcating dynamics of the Cold War meant, however, that the leftist opposition was commonly labeled as communist or pro-communist (*yōkyō*, literally “accepting of the communists”) by the anti-communists, who coalesced to form the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in November 1955 and became Japan's perpetual governing party. Similarly to the American liberals, some of the Japanese liberals over time assumed a more stringently anti-communist, conservative position, though the liberal appellation continued to be reserved for the progressives

who were at least somewhat sympathetic to the left, if not necessarily to the communists.

The fact that the leftist parties have never jettisoned their pacifism that stemmed from war repentance and instead gave up the chance to win power has often been criticized as irresponsible and hypocritical by the transpacific political and academic elites, but this book argues that, by doing so, the leftist parties have actually saved Japanese democracy and peace from the diktats of the American hegemon. Without the stubborn opposition from the leftists, the Japanese conservatives would have caved in much earlier and more fully to the US demands for remilitarization to contribute to its forever wars, and in that way, it was the leftist perpetual opposition that salvaged Japanese democracy from complete foreign control and gave some tangible democratic substance to the postwar “puppet *democracy*.”

The bipolar tension of the Cold War international system was, thus, integral to the domestic political system of postwar Japan as its fundamental fault line, as has been pointed out by such scholars as John Dower and Bruce Cumings.³⁸ Moreover, whereas the end of the Cold War that began with the fall of the Berlin Wall led to the reunification of Germany and the eastward expansion of the EU and NATO (which are now once again contested), the communist regimes in East Asia—the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) in particular—continued on to date, as did the American hegemonic projection in the region. Consequently, the intermeshing of the international and domestic political systems that meant that “postwar controversies over military and international policy almost invariably became entangled with internal struggles concerning power, participation, national priorities, and competing visions of fairness, well-being, and social justice” during the Cold War equally outlived the Cold War era.³⁹

The exact forms and foci of the American liberal hegemonic projection changed over time. A key argument of this book is that, despite the common understanding that postwar Japan became a democracy thanks to the benevolent reforms and lasting patronage of the United States, the American hegemonic projection in the East Asian region interfered directly with Japanese domestic politics at times even after its independence, set the outer boundaries for the permissible policies and government framework on the Japanese democratic process, and in general, provided political conditions and resources that were favorable for the establishment and maintenance of the LDP’s hegemonic position in the Japanese party system. In that sense, except for the immediate postwar occupation reforms, including most crucially the enactment of the Constitution of Japan, the United States stunted, rather than encouraged, democracy in Japan.

To the extent to which the United States promoted democracy, it was limited to elite pluralism of an anti-communist and US-subservient variety that was, at best, more liberal than democratic. Thus, insofar as the main opposition to the LDP refused to accept American hegemony over Japan and in East Asia, ironically by making the most of the “MacArthur” Constitution that the US Cold Warriors quickly came to regret, the United States preferred to support the LDP as Japan’s hegemonic party, just as it propped up authoritarian rulers in the former colonies of the Japanese Empire, South Korea and Taiwan (and elsewhere in the world during the Cold War).

Seen from this perspective, Japan’s “failure” to develop into a US-style “liberal democracy” with regular changes of government between parties that all accept the continuous deepening of the lopsided US-Japan alliance as a given, is testimony to the persistence of the leftist, anti-imperialist (or anti-hegemonic) democratic forces in Japan, and thus, a sign of the survival of postwar Japanese democracy. Stunted, surely, since alternation of power to anti-hegemonic, pacifist alternatives to the LDP has always been stymied, but Japan has long resisted (at least until relatively recently) being turned into a complete puppet of the United States, thanks to the stubborn, leftist democrats in Japan, who have been variously berated and ridiculed as unrealistic, hypocritical, and mired in the past by the transpacific ruling elites.

This is heresy, of course, and that relates to another central point of this book, which is the extraordinary degree to which the American academic elites, particularly the political scientists (and the economists), have been entangled with state power and the capital. The assumption that Anglo-American liberal hegemony is generally just and benign, be it in its imperialist or internationalist incarnation, or in its competition with communist internationalism, is only credible and accepted because the hegemony is not merely political, economic, and military, but also academic and cultural.

Japan’s postwar success in trade and finance under the military and economic tutelage of the United States gave rise to “Japan bashing,” which shook the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) hegemony to its foundation. This, however, was exploited by the emergent New Right coalition⁴⁰ to further marginalize the left and create a “conservative two-party system.” The era of neoliberal globalization brought about Japan’s decline and China’s rise. As the US recentered its hegemonic projection away from a more optimistic Lockean liberal internationalist mode to a Hobbesian unilateralist mode, Prime Ministers Junichirō Kozumi, Shinzō Abe, and most recently Sanae Takaichi utilized the emergent US-China bipolarity as an opportunity to rebuild a pro-US/anti-China conservative hegemony at home and to accelerate Japan’s economic and security integration to the US hegemon. Today, with its leftist, pacifist democratic traditions all but (though not yet fully) destroyed, Japan is praised as a

full-fledged, reliable member of the West but exposed more than ever to the unrestrained whims of its puppet master, when the US reverts to its most illiberal, undemocratic, white supremacist, and misogynist self. Thus, the overall impact of the American liberal hegemon has been to repeatedly stunt democracy in Japan.

The remainder of the book is organized in two parts. Part I comprises three chapters and deals with the interplay between the Anglo-American liberal hegemony and Japan's own imperialist modernization agenda roughly from the late nineteenth century to World War II. Part II consists of four chapters that cover the postwar period to date and examine the way in which democracy in Japan collided with the American hegemonic projection.

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