



Two Steps Forward, One Step Back? Political Change (and Non-Change) and the Future of Japanese Business

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After five years of sweeping changes during the Koizumi administration (2001-06), Japan has slipped into a period of political stagnation.

The ruling LDP is in disarray and facing the prospect of defeat in the next general election, partisan conflict is slowing the pace of policy innovation, and past reforms have been partially unraveled in response to demands from both the public at large and vested interests.

This lecture explores the past decade of political change and backtracking in Japan and their implications for innovation and entrepreneurship in the business community, paying particular attention to the ongoing process of postal privatization and other instances of “structural reform.”



Patricia MacLachlan is Associate Professor of Government and Asian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She received her Ph.D in political science and Japan studies in 1996 from Columbia University and spent one year as a research associate in the Program on U.S.-Japan Relations at Harvard University. Her research interests include consumer politics and culture in advanced industrial democracies, with a focus on Japan.

Professor MacLachlan is the author of *Consumer Politics in Postwar Japan: The Institutional Boundaries of Citizen Advocacy* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2002), and a co-editor and contributing author to *The Ambivalent Consumer: Questioning Consumption in East Asia and the West* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006). She has also written several articles and book chapters on consumer-related issues in Japan and the West, Japanese civil society, and on Japanese postal reform. She is now completing a book on the history and politics of the Japanese postal system.

Friday, May 1, 2009, 3:00pm–4:30pm
Okimoto Conference Room
Encina Hall, Third Floor, Central