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The Centre for Korean Research is pleased to present:

“The Origin of the Developmental State in South Korea: A Reexamination of the Park Chung-hee Myth”



**By Jong-Sung You,
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Friday, April 4th

3:30-5:00 pm

**Seminar Room #604, Asian Centre
1871 West Mall**

Abstract: Studies of South Korea’s economic development have focused on the role of a developmental state and credited Park Chung-hee for establishing such a state. Scholars have contrasted poor economic performance under Syngman Rhee (1948-1960) with robust economic growth under Park (1961-1979), and argued that Park’s establishment of a meritocratic and competent bureaucracy was instrumental in promoting export-led industrialization. I question this conventional wisdom. My findings suggest that the contrast between predatory Rhee regime and developmental Park regime has been unduly exaggerated. I find evidence that meritocracy in bureaucratic recruitment and promotion developed gradually over several decades, including Rhee’s and Park’s periods. Then, what explains the establishment of a developmental state in Korea? I emphasize the critical role of land reform in laying foundations for the development of meritocratic and autonomous bureaucracy and in promoting rapid expansion of education.

Bio: Jong-sung You is Assistant Professor and Co-Director of the Korea-Pacific Program at the Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies, University of California, San Diego. He has Ph.D. in Public Policy from Harvard University. Before pursuing an academic career, he fought for democracy and social justice in South Korea, spending two and half years in prison under Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-hwan regimes because of his involvement in democratization movement. His book, *Democracy, Inequality, and Corruption: Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines Compared*, will be published by Cambridge University Press.