

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ Tokyo)

DIJ Study Group



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The political economy of U.S. military bases and its impact on Japan's local economy

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This talk provides an overview of the economic and political impacts of the presence of U.S. military bases in Japan. International relations research has traditionally examined U.S. bases qualitatively, usually treating them as an outcome of U.S. global security strategy. In contrast, military economics offers a body of work on the economic effects of base closures and realignments in the United States and Europe. However, studies examining the impact of U.S. bases on Japan remain scarce.

My research addresses this gap by presenting the historical and strategic background of U.S. basing in Japan, alongside empirical evidence and case studies that illustrate the effects of these bases on surrounding communities. The project employs a mixed-methods design and explores the relationship between U.S. bases and Japanese municipalities using the original dataset “The United States Bases in Japan”, which draws on a wide range of primary and secondary sources.

This study contributes to military economics and international relations—especially scholarship on the U.S.–Japan security alliance—by demonstrating how economic impacts vary depending on base type and concentration. The policy implications suggest that Japan's base-hosting strategies should be adapted to the characteristics of individual bases and local conditions, incorporating municipal perspectives into alliance management and regional development planning. These insights are particularly relevant amid shifting Indo-Pacific security dynamics and ongoing debates about the sustainability of overseas military bases.

Chatchada Kumlungpat is a Thai visiting scholar at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), specializing in international security, political economy, and comparative politics, with a country focus on Japan and Thailand, and a regional focus on the Indo-Pacific. She completed her bachelor's and master's degrees in the Faculty of Political Science at Thammasat University, Thailand. Chatchada's research interests span U.S. military bases and local economic activities in Japan, the politics of bureaucracy, Thai politics, and the political economy of Chinese investment in Thailand.

About:

The DIJ Study Group is a forum for scholars from all disciplines conducting research on contemporary or modern Japan. The event is open to all. This session is organized by David M. Malitz.

This is a public event. Please be aware that audio-visual recordings may be made, stored, and published during and after the event.

Hybrid Event:

On-site participation: please register via email to malitz@dijtokyo.org until January 14, 2026.

Online participation: please register via our webpage.

Venue:

Online and DIJ Tokyo: <https://www.dijtokyo.org/access/>