

Bases of Power: Military Effectiveness, Alliance Politics, and Protests against U.S. Military Bases in Asia

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Presenter

Yuko Kawato is a PhD student in political science at the University of Washington. She is currently completing her dissertation tentatively titled: “Bases of Power: Military Effectiveness, Alliance Politics, and Protests against U.S. Military Bases in Asia”. Kawato presented a draft of a chapter from her forthcoming dissertation.

Theme

How can we explain changes in military base policies? Kawato’s work tries to identify the conditions under which domestic protest against U.S. military bases influence the states acceptance of U.S. military bases on their soil. By looking at instances of protest in Japan, the Philippines and South Korea, she argues that contrary to Realist expectations, protests can indeed influence domestic policymakers and as such, policymakers might act contrary to what we perceive as national interest.

Audience

The audience consisted of approximately 30 people. Audience members came from multiple academic units across campus including Department of Sociology, Political Science, the Jackson School and the Evans School. Faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students were all represented.

Questions

The audience asked few direct questions, rather there were comments on how Kawato could improve her theoretical framework. Some comments related to specific causal mechanisms discussed by Kawato, and how there she needs to better distinguish different mechanisms from each other. Some audience members also pointed to the fact that the U.S. was generally missing from the analysis and that the role of the U.S. should be taken into consideration in her analysis. Finally, there were some calls for better operationalization of key concepts.

Implications for National Security

The U.S. needs to carefully consider all aspects of their international military bases. Domestic actors take note of “bad” behavior by soldiers or other negative effects from having U.S. military bases on their soil, and can under some circumstances manage to influence local decision makers to refuse the United States access to their land. This can significantly undermine U.S. military effectiveness if they are forced move their bases to less optimal areas.