

FORSCHUNGSKOLLOQUIUM: VORTRAGSREIHE ZU AKTUELLEN THEMEN DER JAPANFORSCHUNG

26 June 2025

18:15–19:45, Oettingenstr. 67 / seminar room 151 / onsite only

“Foreigners Are Committing Very Heinous Crimes”: Framing of Deviance and Order in Japan’s Immigration Policy

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In recent decades, following the terrorist attacks in the USA on September 11, 2001, a securitization of immigration policy has been identified in many Western industrialized countries. In the case of Japan, however, issues of public and national security have played a central role in immigration policy since the early 1950s and have helped to shape it. Japanese immigration policy is primarily discussed in the research literature in the context of ethnic homogeneity and the associated national identity discourses, but this paper argues that the security frame has had the



strongest curbing influence on public opinion and in policy processes. The perception of immigration as a risk to public and national security prevented policy makers from opening Japan up to labor immigration of low-skilled foreign workers despite decades of intensive public and political debates and far-reaching reform proposals. By tracing the continuities and changes in framing in immigration policy in Japan from the early post-war years to the present, we show the anchoring of certain policy actors and especially the Ministry of Justice in a security perspective. The decline in importance of the security frame in the 2010s was a key prerequisite that opened up the window of opportunity for the comprehensive immigration reform in 2018/2019.



Biography – David Chiavacci is Professor in Social Science of Japan at the University of Zurich. His specialization is political and economic sociology of contemporary Japan in a comparative perspective. The focus of his current research is on social movements, social inequality and Japan's new immigration and immigration policy. Recent publications include “Japan’s Melting Core: Social Frames and Political Crisis Narratives of Rising Inequalities” in *Crisis Narratives, Institutional Change and Transformation of the Japanese State* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021, pp. 25-50), “Social Inequality in Japan” in *Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022, pp. 451-470), “China’s and Japan’s Winding Path to the Refugee Convention: State Identity Transformations and the Evolving International Refugee Regime” in *Modern Asian Studies* (2023, 57/4: 1415-1447), “Tokyo Olympics 2020: Between Dream and Contention” in *Contemporary Japan* (2023, 35/1: 3-15), and “Dam Break in Japan’s Immigration Policy: The 2018 Reform in Long-term Perspective” in *Social Science Journal Japan* (2025, 28/1: 1-41).

This event is co-hosted by CRC 1369.

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