



Tuesday, 14 October 2025, 18.30–20.00 (JST) and online

Writing a Global History of the Second World War by Taking Japan Seriously

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Although the Second World War was truly global, historians of the war have been remarkably Eurocentric and America-centric. They fail to appreciate that one of the key belligerents was a non-Western society and that the Asia-Pacific theater constituted—in many senses—one half of the war. This talk argues that by integrating scholarship on Japan into the history of the Second World War, we may ask better comparative and transnational questions about war and society. Wartime Japan should no longer be seen as an exceptional, bizarre case, but as a part of the global history of 20th-century warfare. This lecture reveals the important role of Japan in the transnational circulation of ideas that resulted both in a “global war on civilians” and in efforts to construct “home fronts” that mobilized civilians. Topics include the Russo-Japanese War, Japanese investigations of European home-front mobilization in the First World War, Japanese bombing of Chinese cities (1937-41), and the U.S. aerial onslaught against Japanese civilians in 1945.

Sheldon Garon is the Nissan Professor of History and East Asian Studies at Princeton University. A specialist in modern Japanese history, he also writes transnational/global history. Awarded a European Research Council Advanced Grant, he currently directs a five-year collaborative project, “The Global War on Civilians, 1905-1945,” hosted by the Centre d’histoire de Sciences Po in Paris. His publications include *Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life* (Princeton, 1987), *Beyond Our Means: Why America Spends While the World Saves* (Princeton, 2012), and “On the Transnational Destruction of Cities: What Japan and the United States Learned from the Bombing of Britain and Germany in the Second World War,” *Past & Present* (2020).

Sebastian Conrad is Professor of History at the Freie Universität Berlin and a leading scholar in Global History. He has widely published on issues of colonialism and post-colonialism, transnationalism, intellectual history, and historiography. His publications include *What Is Global History?* (Princeton, 2016), *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, 2010), *The Quest for the Lost Nation: Writing History in Germany and Japan in the American Century* (University of California Press, 2010).

The event will be held in English, admission is free. The presentation by Professor Garon will be followed by comments by Professor Conrad, a Q&A session, and a small reception. To participate onsite, please register via email to forum@diitokyo.org. To participate online, please register via our website. This is a public event. Please be aware that audio-visual recordings may be made, stored, and published during and after the event. This event is part of the Max Weber Foundation’s ‘The Ends of War’ event series.