

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ Tokyo)

DIJ Study Group



July 22, 2026, 6.30 pm (JST)

The Indo-Pacific Knowledge in Indian Anticolonialism: Geopolitical Imaginaries from Pan-Asianism to Pacific Affairs, 1920s–40s

Arnab Dutta, University of Groningen

This lecture explores the emergence of the Indo-Pacific as a geopolitical concept within Indian anticolonial thought from the interwar period through the early 1940s, rather than treating the Indo-Pacific as a Cold War or post-Cold War invention. While the contemporary usages of the Indo-Pacific in South, South-East and East Asia are well-researched, its entangled and granular historical genealogy in Indian anticolonial political formulations have remained less explored beyond the obvious references to early twentieth-century Pan-Asianism and Indian entanglements in the Indian Ocean World. Moving beyond Pan-Asianism and Indian Ocean-centred frameworks, the project situates Indian engagements with the Indo-Pacific within a wider, transnational history of spatial imagination and political geography. Its core analytical focus lies on the interactions among several institutions: the Greater India Society (Calcutta), the Indian Council of World Affairs (New Delhi), the Kokusai Bunka Shinkōkai (Tokyo), and the Institute of Pacific Relations (Honolulu). By following exchanges among the stakeholders and early International Relations scholars emerging from such epistemic networks centred around the domain of *Pacific Affairs*, this lecture reconstructs an integrated history of the Indo-Pacific as a site of geopolitical knowledge production in the first half of the twentieth century.

Arnab Dutta is an early-career lecturer of European Politics and Society at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. He has been, until recently, a PhD candidate in Global Intellectual History at the same institution; and a lecturer at Utrecht University. His doctoral dissertation project explored the political, cultural, and intellectual entanglements between Interwar Germany and British India. Currently, he is developing a postdoctoral research project on the intellectual history of the Indo-Pacific concept in the first half of the twentieth century. With a Global Indo-Pacific Mobility Fellowship, in July 2026, Dutta is completing a short-term research stay at the DIJ Tokyo.

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 Torsten Weber.

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

On-site only event:

For on-site participation please register via email to weber@dijtokyo.org until July 20, 2026.

Venue:

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