

1)

Title of Paper for the Osaka Workshop “Globalization from East Asian Perspectives”:  
***The German and Japanese Empires: Great Power Competition and the World Wars***

2) Summary:

This paper proposes to provide both a connected and comparative history of the Japanese and German empires between c.1870-1945. Despite a number of significant transfers (of people, ideas, ideologies and practices) between them, there exists as of today not a single comparative work in English or German that would trace the partly shared experiences of the two powers in the context of high imperialism from the 1880s onwards, nor their violent military encounters, and later their alignments and mutual radicalisation, during the First and Second World War respectively. We also lack a more comprehensive knowledge of the history of Japan’s takeover of a number of German colonies, not only of Kiautschou, but also in the Pacific. The proposed paper explores the constant shifts between conflict and collaboration that transpired between the changing political systems in Germany and Japan during the chosen period, which saw significant political and imperial ruptures in both countries. By reconstructing the links between Japan and the other late-coming imperial power of Germany, we can explore a number of crucial topics with regard to globalization from an East Asian perspective, not least the role of inter-imperial learning and selective imitation, political alignments and ideological radicalisation, and finally the building of new international (wartime) orders in East Asia. Particular consideration will be given to the contested issue of ‘legitimacy’ in both empires. Germany’s colonial empire building (first overseas in Africa, China and Micronesia, and later during the Nazi period in Eastern Europe) was never seen or experienced as a form of ‘liberation’ by the subjected peoples. By contrast, Japan could – at least initially – claim a legitimate purpose for her expansion by driving out different European empires from their possessions in the Pacific and by claiming to liberate Asia from western encroachment and thus establishing a new world order. Yet, the trajectory of Japan’s rule in her colonies, including shallow promises of assimilation and co-prosperity, and the war atrocities committed during the Pacific War in the late 1930s and early 1940s, contributed to the destruction of the empire’s legitimacy, with ultimately significant consequences for anti-colonial and national aspirations throughout Asia.

Dr. Moritz von Brescius

3)

Scholar's details:

Dr. Moritz von Brescius

Lecturer in Modern European History

University of Konstanz

Chair of Modern European History (held by Prof. Dr. Jürgen Osterhammel)

Tel.: +497531/88-4764

Email: [Moritz.von-brescius@uni-konstanz.de](mailto:Moritz.von-brescius@uni-konstanz.de)

Address:

Universität Konstanz

Neuere und Neueste Geschichte

Fach 6

Universitätsstr. 10

D-78457 Konstanz

Germany

4)

A short CV is attached as a pdf.