



Competing Imperialisms in Northeast Asia, 1894-1953:
New Perspectives – CIRN3
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Keynote Speech:
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5 pm Saint Petersburg / 11 pm Tokyo / 3 pm London

Registration by noon London time on Tuesday 7th
September at : competingimperialisms@gmail.com

**Compradors of opinion: Influencers and adventurers
on the road to systemic change in Northeast Asia**

This talk is focused on the travels and exploits of a small, uncategorised group of operators in the transnational political media of Northeast Asia. Through a combination of professional flexibility and sheer good fortune, these people negotiated established networks and leveraged their access to power to their own advantage. Working the interstices of a series of overlapping imperialisms, these people became, effectively, compradors of opinion in the long contest for the prize of a just imperialism in Northeast Asia.

The aim here is to show how looking more closely into individual histories in our historically under-explored arena can turn over fertile ground for hitherto unnoticed actors. By this process of exploration, we can see how untested but plausible and nimble opinion formers became at times opinion leaders during the feverish prelude to systemic change in Northeast Asia.

In the fog and desperation of Japanese incursions in a weakened and divided China, with the Soviet Union sometimes a daring, sometimes a retreating player and a nervous West desperate for tips on where to place its bets, these influencers and chancers skipped between the raindrops in the public sphere, evolving as small but significant drivers in the cluster of factors leading to systemic change in Northeast Asia.

Time permitting, the speaker will also explore the afterlives of our compradors in the wake of the Chinese post-war and the early Cold War in Asia.