

## Call for Papers

Cluster of Excellence “Contestations of the Liberal Script” (SCRIPTS)

### Regional Conference on Asian Scripts, 21–23 February 2022, online

The Cluster of Excellence “Contestations of the Liberal Script” (SCRIPTS) seeks to explore and understand causes, types and consequences of contestations of what we call “the liberal way of organizing societies” from different disciplinary perspectives, focusing on the local, regional, and global level. For further information about the Cluster and its research agenda, please visit our website ([www.scripts-berlin.eu](http://www.scripts-berlin.eu)).

This conference will address the broad theme of “Asian scripts” (liberal or not) and the extent to which Asian states organize themselves and form alliances with each other based on these scripts’ political and economic features. The conference is set in the context of the changing balance of power and the changing narratives about emerging power configurations. We aim to explore the extent to which the rise of alternative models presents a challenge to the liberal script and how other actors in the region are responding to a “Western” liberal script and the challenges. While the notion of the “Asian way” has served to counter American and thus liberal hegemony for some time, it is now “liberal visions” of society that serve as a counter-hegemonic script to increasing Chinese dominance.

SCRIPTS will venture onto the terrain of traditional world-views and historical experiences of Asian countries and how these shape strategies, reactions, and counter-reactions in modern-day politics and international relations. The differences within Asia are often underplayed in western theorizing and empirical research. For instance, we see crude representations of “Asian values” that still paint Asia’s diverse cultural and religious traditions as a monolith. We want to map out these nuances and invite researchers to investigate the impact of changing ground realities on what they make of similarities and differences among and within national jurisdictions. We expect to cover practices in a broad range of issue areas: security, human rights, trade, digitalization, geo-economics, climate change mitigation, and how these practices are shaped by – and in turn shape – values.

We plan to develop lines of inquiry, including how the distinction between democracies and autocracies plays out in the region. For instance, do foreign policies and partnerships depend on the political system, and how? Similarly, one can ask to which extent political decision-making is open for epistemic authorities and expertise. This question cuts across the difference between democracies and autocracies. There are democracies – at least in the Western hemisphere – that increasingly challenge the role of expertise. They justify their actions with the will of the silent majority and the “gut feelings” of the leader. Do such populist democracies play a role in Asia as well? Technocratic autocracy seems to be important in Asia, with Singapore and China as the two best-known cases. In a sense, these autocracies accept input from experts and some degree of functional differentiation to improve their performance. Do these internal or ideational features influence Asia’s partnerships, as well as in their political coalitions and regionalization processes?

We particularly invite panel and paper proposals on the following topics:

- **Asian thinking about political orders:** To which extent has the Liberal Script (LS) influenced (emulation, adaptation, rejection) specific views of political orders?
- **Asian Scripts:** Which aspects of the LS collide with major strands of Asian scripts? How have these scripts developed over time, e.g. from treating LS as a role model to hegemonic scapegoat and then as a potential ally against Chinese hegemony?
- **Practices in a broad range of issue areas:** What is the role of liberal and Asian Scripts, e.g. security, human rights, trade, digitalization, geo-economics, climate change mitigation, and how are these practices shaped by – and in turn shape – values?
- **Competition and Commonalities between Scripts in Asia:** Where and under which circumstances do we find co-existence, cooperation, and competition among Asian scripts, e.g. in specific institutions and issue areas?

The conference will take place **virtually** on **21–23 February 2022**, and is hosted by the Cluster of Excellence SCRIPTS under the lead of Prof. Dr Amrita Narlikar & Prof. Dr Michael Zürn. A second event is envisioned to take place later in 2022, hopefully in person.

Please submit your **panel** and **paper proposals** to Dr Isabel Winnwa ([irc@scripts-berlin.eu](mailto:irc@scripts-berlin.eu)) until **10 December 2021**. You can also e-mail any questions you might have to the same address.

Prof. Dr Amrita Narlikar & Prof. Dr Michael Zürn for SCRIPTS