illiberalism Studies Program

Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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Journal of Illiberalism Studies

The latest issue of the JIS is out now! This special issue brings together research on narratives, actors, and institutions shaping illiberal politics across global contexts. You will not want to miss it!

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Publications

Human, All Too Human: A Review of Samuel Moyn's Gerontocracy in America

Matthew McManus reviews Samuel Moyn's *Gerontocracy in America*, praising its core claims and prescriptions and lingering on its existential themes.

The Meloni Model Does Not Exist

Giovanni Orsina investigates the nature of Giorgia Meloni's political project and evaluates her time in power.

Trump and the Messiah: The Iconography of an American Heresy

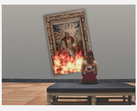
A photo investigation by *Le Grand Continent* looking at the use of religious symbolism by Trump and his administration.

Trumpian Foreign Policy and a Moment of Geopolitical Flux

Colin Flint on the Trump Administration's foreign policy approach and its overarching rejection of the liberal internationalism of the post-Cold War order.

Trump, Iran, and the Eschatological Reversal

Joël E. Schnapp analyzes Trump's eschatological rhetoric and how it is now being used against him by many of his former allies and supporters.



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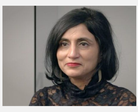

Shikha Dalmia on Libertarianism and the Possibility of an American Liberal Political Coalition

Shikha Dalmia on libertarianism and building a broad liberal coalition fit for the present.

RESOURCE HUB

Tom Ginsburg and Aziz Huq argue that the emphasis on family, faith, and nation by the U.S. Supreme Court under the leadership of Chief Justice John Roberts is in no way unique to the United States. Rather, this turn by the court is embedded in a global shift in public law. Ginsburg and Huq analyze the international dimension of the Roberts Court's turn and offer an analytic framework for understanding the observed causes and effects of this global shift toward illiberal basic law by showing that this movement has no single, dominant causal pathway.

While many have focused on so-called Christian nationalism as a preeminent threat to democracy, Raymond Roberts addresses the burden that mainstream Christianity has placed on democratic culture by failing to nurture members in a thick democratic and republican faith. Examining the positive role that religion must play in a liberal democratic society and showcasing how mainstream Protestants can revitalize the cultural and moral resources on which democracy depends, Roberts addresses Protestantism's disarray and America's democratic crisis by articulating the practical implications of nine principles of a public theology. Refreshing their meaning promises to strengthen ideas that are frequently considered more secular, such as liberalism, federalism, constitutionalism, human rights, the separation of powers, and the rule of law.

Charles Daniel III provides an evangelical explanation for U.S. Latinos' support for Donald Trump in the 2024 election. Daniel III addresses the rise in Latino evangelical Protestantism and contextualizes these religious arguments within neoliberal conceptualizations of citizenship, noting Latinos' sympathy towards the latter. He argues that these values reject Democrats' support for illegal immigration and governmental oversight in public school education, resonating with Trump's promises of protecting "faith and familia." He further observes that Trump's us-versus-them perspective allows Latino voters to perceive illegal immigration as the enemy rather than something that resonates with their own identity.

Paul May focuses on the progression of far-right ideas within French society, analyzing how the "great replacement thesis" (GRT) was represented in the national press between 2010 and 2020. Rather than merely tracking the electoral advances of the far-right National Rally party, the article uncovers a strong polarization in public debate over the GRT and examines the circulation of theory beyond the circle of far-right newspapers.

Based on political ecology theories, Raphael Deberdt coins the term "startup extractivism" to characterize the operations of small companies developing new cobalt and nickel processing plants in the United States. These firms have three characteristics. They are (1) young enterprises with small teams (2) whose growth is fueled by venture capital instead of production that (3) follow an entrepreneurial, informal mindset centered around their founder. By analyzing secondary research and interviews from six of these companies—and in light of the U.S. government's push for "onshoring" and "reshoring" of critical minerals—Deberdt argues that they present themselves as vital to the United States' goal of economic, industrial, and military decoupling from China.

João Ferreira Dias provides a theoretical analysis of Péter Magyar's electoral breakthrough in Hungary, in which his party defeated the government of Viktor Orbán. Dias argues that Magyar's victory does not represent a liberal shift but is rather a reconfiguration of Hungarian nationalism. Focusing on migration and the concept of *Mitteleuropa*, Dias shows how Magyar preserves a moderate nationalist stance while repositioning Hungary within a more plural, regionally grounded Europe. Instead of abandoning sovereignty or identity, Magyar's project seeks to detach them from illiberal statecraft and reintegrate them into a European framework.

Stephen Deets reflects on the victories and failures of the Hungarian opposition during Orbán's period in power. He argues that the behavior of Hungary's opposition parties and voters reflects two overlapping dynamics: (1) after winning elections, competition between opposition parties increased, and (2) after the loss of the 2022 election, opposition voters sought more promising opposition parties while opposition parties sought to use the 2024 Budapest elections to test new strategies and messages, as well as their own popularity. These dynamics produced multifaceted disunity, wherein competition between existing parties reached a fever pitch, the Orbán government tried to co-opt certain opposition energies, and a powerful new party emerged on the scene.

Adnan Huskić examines the entrenchment of "stabilitocratic" governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, arguing that contestation over the country's political direction has pushed it towards illiberal convergence. Huskić frames Bosnia as an example of tension around the EU's normative authority, as domestic elites hollow out democratic structures and justify it based on alignment with European norms. At the same time, resistance to EU conditionality increases as illiberal states offer Bosnia alternatives. Huskić concludes that the EU's accession framework, even in a "formally 'Europeanised' setting," is vulnerable to authoritarianism.

Fabrice Flipo uses a perspectivist methodology to survey the core issues in ecologism. He confronts the latter with modernity's three key political ideologies (liberalism, conservatism, and socialism), developing ecologism as a distinct political ideology. Flipo distinguishes his approach from postmodernism by providing definitions of key terms, such as nature, and concludes that socialism forms the only political alliance with ecologism. Liberalism is too dependent on a lifestyle that clashes with ecologism and fascism's features inherently contradict ecologism, rendering the possibility of "ecofascism" as an extreme conservative ecologism unfeasible.

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