

Call for Papers:

Amsterdam | 12-13 January 2023 |

Conference Antiliberal Internationalism (20th c): Beyond Left and Right?

University of Groningen & University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Theme: Since the turn of the millennium, all over the globe new forms of international collaboration have surfaced that explicitly position themselves against the liberal international order established after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Examples of this new antiliberal internationalism are the Congress of European ‘conservative nationalists’ held in Rome (February 2020), the Visegrád Group meetings which offer a platform for self-proclaimed ‘illiberal’ government leaders from Central Europe, the nebulous network of far-right ‘traditionalist’ anti-liberal intellectuals including the likes of Alexandr Dugin and Steve Bannon, the leftist anti-neoliberal and anti-austerity Greek-Spanish collaboration between Syriza and Podemos and its grassroots constituencies, cross-border far-right protest movements such as Pegida, the Russian-Chinese strategic alliance, or the ‘Buddhist international’ in South-Eastern Asia. In scholarship, these and other contemporary examples of antiliberalism across national boundaries are frequently explained as consequences of the recent cultural backlash, tendencies of authoritarianism and the populist zeitgeist against the backdrop of globalising societies. However, in hindsight, antiliberal internationalism is not necessarily a timely or new phenomenon – nor can current manifestations of it be understood or explained detached from historical precursors.

Research questions: At this conference, specialists from different disciplines, periods, and regions aim to uncover the longer twentieth-century trajectories and genealogies of antiliberal internationalism: sentiments, outlooks, strategies, and ideologies. To what extent do contemporary antiliberal internationalisms build on older patterns, traditions, ideas or recurring antiliberal tropes? How might historical trajectories and genealogies of antiliberalism in internationalism be qualified and conceptualized? How has antiliberal critique shaped and informed internationalism? Can we observe (non)ideological variations of antiliberalism in internationalism across time and space? And to what extent do these manifestations of antiliberalism interrelate, overlap, or coincide? Do antiliberal repertoires and critiques travel

within the sphere of the international? What historical and contingent circumstances help explain the particular nature of antiliberal tropes in internationalism over time?

Antiliberal internationalist criticism can be aimed against multiple perceived traits of the liberal world order: the liberal state and democracy, market liberalism and capitalism, liberal consumerism and individualism, liberal cosmopolitanism and universalism, liberal belief in technology, reason and progress, and liberal modernity at large. Antiliberal internationalism can, for instance, take the form of a ‘nationalist internationalism’, but, such as in the case of the Vatican, can also manifest itself as an antiliberal internationalism critical of the predominance of the nation state. Antiliberalism can be viewed as a phenomenon of political and intellectual elites, but also more popular, colloquial expressions of antiliberal sentiments will be studied, which may be found in border-crossing protest movements for instance.

The point of departure of the conference is that ‘liberalism’ and ‘anti-liberalism’ are not fixed entities. ‘(Anti)Liberalism’ was and is as much defined by its enemies as by its advocates. International actors can position themselves as both liberal and antiliberal in different contexts. Moreover, antiliberal internationalists often do not reject liberalism in its entirety; while they repudiate certain aspects (ranging from liberal support for open markets or global elites and institutions), other aspects (such as modern technology) are embraced. Historical actors borrowed concepts from varying ideological traditions, prompting the question of whether the ideological left-right dichotomy is helpful in understanding antiliberal internationalism in the first place, and if not, whether more yielding analytical categories are available to historians. The conference will result in a publication that aims to explore the manifestations and articulations of antiliberalism as a lens to study twentieth-century internationalism, and thus contribute in new ways to the historical and political study of the international.

We invite **speakers** to reflect on the following (non-exclusive) **list of topics**:

- Intellectual traditions at the intersection of antiliberalism and internationalism
- The role of religion (Islam, Hinduism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodoxy, Buddhism)
- Antiliberalism and conservative ideologies
- Antiliberalism and scientific internationalism
- Antiliberalism and the radical left
- Antiliberalism and (de)colonization

- Nationalist internationalism
- Antiliberalism and ecology
- Antiliberal communities and networks
- Technocracy and antiliberalism
- Authoritarian corporatism
- The association of ‘liberalism’ with ‘the West’

We invite those who are interested to write a proposal, including a title, a 400-word abstract and a short CV including current institutional affiliation and relevant publications to Matthijs Lok (m.m.lok@uva.nl) **before 1 December 2021.**