

Authoritarian futures? International politics and future-oriented foreign policymaking in authoritarian regimes

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Contemporary authoritarian regimes are becoming more sophisticated than their twentieth-century counterparts. Countries like Kazakhstan, Rwanda, and Saudi Arabia are building spectacular capital cities often full of steel, glass, and glitzy modernity, whilst others – like Qatar, Singapore, and United Arab Emirates – are charting ambitious long-term visions for the future of their citizens and country. At their heart, these visions challenge the dominant geopolitical narratives of democratic prosperity in the West and authoritarian impoverishment in the East (or South). Instead, they present exciting futures of technological advancement, green innovation, and prosperity unmatched by anything seen and experienced in the West. They position their regimes as future-oriented leaders with sharp foresight and pro-active attitudes, unburdened by the constraints of democratic politics. Put simply, in all their innovation-oriented galore, they make authoritarianism seem the way to the future. How do we address this rising phenomenon of authoritarian future-making? And what impact does it have on international politics? This panel seeks to explore the topic of authoritarian future making and its impact on international politics from multiple disciplinary lenses, including international relations, political science, geopolitics, and area studies.

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