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Rethinking Ideology in Asia at end of the Liberal International Order

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The end of the Cold War did not mark the end of history or the human struggle over ideology. While ideology remains a powerful force in global politics, there has been a significant decline in the academic study of ideology in International Relations. This was largely because liberal internationalism was so hegemonic that it became the unacknowledged ideology, something that becomes increasingly apparent as the liberal international order unravels. Unlike during the Cold War, ideology today is less easily contained within the grand philosophical and political frameworks of established ‘-isms’. How then does ideology operate in contemporary international politics? How can we conceptualise it within the discipline of International Relations? This panel addresses these questions by exploring the role of ideology in the international politics of Asia. The papers show how the legacies of past ideological struggle underpin competing visions of modernity that propel contemporary Asian politics across multiple scales, from techno-globalism in China, to illiberal peacebuilding and rebel developmentalism in Southeast Asia, and ideological bricolage in Central Asia. The panel’s discussion also serves to reflect on centre-periphery dynamics within Asia, and their implications for the study of international politics in Asia.

Track Classification: International Studies of the Mediterranean, Middle East & Asia Working Group