

The Department of East Asian Studies/Chinese Studies is pleased to invite to the lecture of:



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postdoc fellow

Université libre de Bruxelles



**Right-wing populist discourse on Chinese social media:
Identity, otherness, and narratives of global order**

The last few years have seen the emergence of a right-wing populist discourse on Chinese social media that combines the claims, vocabulary, and style of right-wing populisms in Europe and North America with previous forms of nationalism and racism in Chinese cyberspace. In other words, it provokes a similar hostility towards immigrants, Muslims, progressive social movements, and the so-called 'liberal elites', known as the 'white left' in Chinese online communities. This article examines how, in debating global political events such as the European refugee crisis and the American presidential election, well-educated and well-informed Chinese internet users appropriate the rhetoric of 'Western-style' right-wing populism to paradoxically criticise Western hegemony and discursively construct China's ethno-racial and political identities. Through qualitative analysis of around one thousand postings retrieved from a popular social media website, this research shows that by criticising Western 'liberal elites', the discourse constructs China's ethno-racial identity against the 'inferior' non-Western other, exemplified by non-white immigrants and Muslims, with racial nationalism on one hand; and formulates China's political identity against the 'declining' Western other with authoritarian realism on the other. The popular narratives of global order criticise Western hegemony while reinforcing a state-centric and hierarchical imaginary of global racial and civilisational order. We conclude by conceptualising the discourse as embodying the logics of anti-Western Eurocentrism and anti-hegemonic hegemonies. This article 1) provides critical insights into the changing ways in which self/other relations are imagined in Chinese popular geopolitical discourse; 2) sheds light on the global circulation of extremist discourses facilitated by the internet; and 3) contributes to the ongoing debate on right-wing populism and the 'crisis' of the liberal world order.

Chenchen Zhang is a postdoc researcher at the Recherche et Etudes en Politique Internationale (REPI) and the Centre for East Asian Studies (EAST), Université libre de Bruxelles. Her research interests lie broadly within social and political theory, political geography, and international relations. Her work has appeared in journals including *Citizenship Studies*, *Geopolitics*, *European Journal of Social Theory*, and *Journal of Historical Sociology*. She received her PhD in Political Science from Université libre de Bruxelles and PhD in Political Theory from LUISS Guido Carli University.

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Altes AKH, Campus, Spitalgasse 2, yard 2, entrance 2.3

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