



AT GW'S INSTITUTE FOR EUROPEAN, RUSSIAN, AND EURASIAN STUDIES

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#### Reminder: 'Grassroots Unrest in Europe' Recordings of our 'Grassroots Unrest in Europe'

conference are live on YouTube!



**New Concept Corners** Concept Corner is a series of short interviews with academics focused on a specific idea or concept.



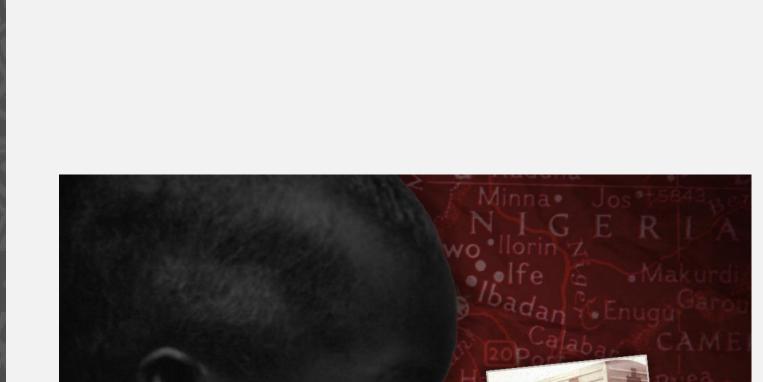


### **Publications**

#### Geert Wilders' win is not a victory "for Freedom"

Stijn van Kessel on the election of Geert Wilders in the recent Dutch election and the illiberal nature of the Party for

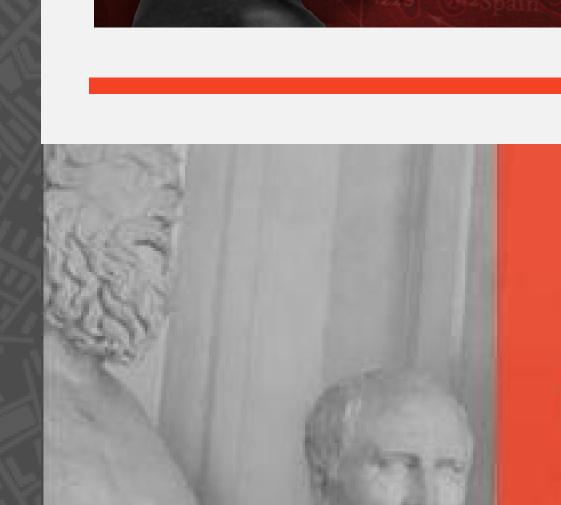
Freedom.





# and Trauma

Luke Amadi and Bruno Onyekuru on the memory of kwashiorkor in post-civil war Nigeria and its divergent implications for postwar children.



## RESOURCE HUB



Paula Ganga assesses the consequences of electing populist leaders, specifically in environmental policy. She employs global data on populist leaders and their environmental policies as well as a case study of Hungary. Ganga finds that populist radical right leaders respond to climate change by doubling down on economic nationalism and prioritizing national goals of development while also asserting that fighting climate change is a Western imposition on domestic politics. Piotr Tosiek proposes a new term, "illiberal neo-intergovernmentalism" to describe and

explain Poland's vision for the European Union, promoted by the Law and Justice-led government after 2015. Tosiek treats the Polish vision as "a concept contributing to theory building," positioned against the functionalist theoretical approach and in the tradition of the intergovernmentalist one. Ultimately, the author suggests that the so-called 'Eurorealist' Polish vision lacks paradigmatic rooting and seems to disregard all previous theoretical achievements. Tosiek thus concludes that "this vision does not have explanatory values, while its normative character is the result of the adoption of Eurosceptic and ultraconservative ideology." W Lance Bennett and Marianne Kneuer put forward a framework to compare the logics of

illiberal and liberal democratic communication, contrasting "traditionally dominant communication norms of tolerance, civility, responsiveness, and reasoned resolution of differences in liberal democracies with transgressions of those norms by illiberal rightwing movements, parties, leaders, and voters." Contra "counter publics" that seek entrance into liberal democratic institutions, the authors suggest that illiberal communication creates "transgressive publics" that seek to exclude others along ethnic or religious lines. Bennett and Kneuer's analysis develops a broader theoretical context in which interactions between illiberal leaders and publics occur, to understand national variations in how communication systems contribute to democratic erosion.

the first American president to "self-consciously endorse an anti-democratic civil religion." Weinstein situates Trump within a longer history of American civil religion and the institution of the American Presidency generally. He then tackles Trump's unique religious and political values, arguing that the closing days of Trump's presidency reveal the core of those values which are expressed through the creation of a new civil religion centered around the Big Lie, that is around the myth that the election was stolen from Trump. The Perils of Populism: The End of the American Century? explores the hidden motivations of populism and its fraught relationship with democracy. It provides novel

perspectives on the "personalization" of political conflict and violence in the United States

Aaron Q. Weinstein argues that Donald Trump was America's first pontifex minimus, i.e.,

and "uncovers the interplay of populism with anti-democratic tendencies." The volume foregrounds diverse but related themes such as populism, settler-colonialism, culture wars, the pandemic, foreign policy, and more, and offers solutions for safeguarding democracy. Hannah M. Ridge surveys democracy in the United States, using two nationally representative American public and expert surveys to determine how Americans construe the word "democracy." Ridge finds that when Americans think of democracy, they often

conceive of it as *liberal* democracy – that is, a democracy with civil liberties and political rights – more so than thinking of democratic institutions alone. Partisanship, education, and political interest are also found to impact citizens' perceptions of democracy. Eric Taylor Woods et al. examine the nationalist rhetoric of Donald Trump and Joe Biden during the 2020 Presidential election, centering how each candidate represented and contested one of the most potent sites of contestation during the election: national identity. The authors find that Biden employed civic nationalism grounded in liberal

myths and symbols while Trump drew on ethnic nationalism grounded in white American

myths and symbols. Woods et al. conclude that both candidates 'framed each other as a

grave threat to the nation's "true" identity and, ultimately, as un-American,' a troubling development for the future of American democracy. Hugo Ekström et al. detail Swedish political discourses preceding the 2022 elections, showing how a rapprochement between "mainstream" political forces and the Swedish far right was executed through the legitimation of discourses around so-called "criminality." The authors argue that this discursive shift towards a focus on criminality can be seen as a "proxy discourse," i.e., the strategic instrumentalization of a real social issue meant to 'prelegitimize "moral panics" around immigration and cultural diversity,' Ekström et al. claim that this suggestion that criminality, immigration, and cultural diversity are inherently connected not only 'supported the political mainstreaming of the Swedish far-right's anti-

immigration stance but also normalized the wider tenets of illiberal, nativist "politics of

exclusion."

Anikó Gregor and Ingrid Verebes provide an insight into the mechanisms of familism in the landscapes of Hungarian NGOs, public and higher education, and academia. The authors suggest that familism can be seen as a governing ideology and an effective political tool meant to offer an alternative to laissez-faire economic and cultural policies, but that the intertwining of 'academic familism' and 'NGO-familism' actually reproduces the ideological underpinnings of the Hungarian neoliberal gender regime. Gregor and Verebes conclude that the embrace of familism by academics risks the "autonomy of science." While familism is promoted most thoroughly by government-friendly NGOs, "the ideology of the importance of families is strengthened even by some bottom-up civil organizations that campaign for a more inclusive family concept as a reaction to the government's idealization of the nuclear, heterosexual, and marriage-based family formations."

Arndt Wonka et al. investigate the European Union's actions against democratic backsliding and how those actions play out in the domestic politics of target countries like Hungary and Poland. They find that illiberal governing parties prefer to focus on defending their own actions, rather than simply blaming the EU for illegitimate interventions in domestic affairs. Relatedly, domestic opposition forces focus on criticizing their country's governments instead of supporting EU actions. Thus, "EU actions...provide domestic actors opportunities to discuss democratic backsliding, but EU actions receive little support [in the media]." Using Prague, Warsaw, and Budapest as case studies, Eliska Drapalova explores the political tensions between populist national governments and liberal subnational governments, and the strategies populists use to challenge local political leaders and their

city administrations. She concludes that in all three cases, local leaders are visible challengers to the populist parties in power at the national level, but that city administrations face increasing tasks, cuts in budget transfers, higher scrutiny from central government, and administrative bottlenecks. Martin Konstantinov presents Bulgarian politics as an example of heterodox ideological configurations or ideological inconsistencies, phenomena that have increasingly spread to the West in recent years. Using survey data and interviews, he develops a conceptual and methodological approach aimed at objectively measuring Bulgarians' political values and

ideological orientations, finding that members of left-wing parties were often socially conservative, members of right-wing parties were often socially liberal, and members of liberal parties were often traditionalists as well. Konstantinov concludes that these findings present a challenge to classical Western political definitions and the traditional left-right spectrum that is often employed. Barak Medina and Ofra Bloch contend that Israel's recent attempts at a judicial overhaul should be understood as part of a deeper transformation of Israel's constitutional identity. Rather than being an attempt to empower the people, the authors argue that the overhaul is in fact about "questioning Israel's commitment to the fundamental principle of equal citizenship," i.e., about preferences for Jewish interests over non-Jewish ones. As such,

Medina and Bloch argue that the judicial overhaul can be seen as one part of a move towards an Israeli state that is more Jewish and less democratic, carrying normative implications regarding its legitimacy. Orlando J. Perez and Christine J. Wade use survey data to examine the evolution of democratic political culture in Honduras. They find that significant backsliding has occurred in the country since 2009 and detail the contours of that backsliding - the decline of the rule of law, rising violence, illegitimate elections, the generalized environment of repression, endemic corruption, and economic decline. Perez and Wade conclude that these developments are largely the consequences of the 2009 coup and

"reflect the underlying structural and political conditions that help explain the unprecedented electoral victory of Xiomara Castro in 2021." Cengiz Aktar recounts Turkey's history of violent nation-building in pursuit of a homogeneous nation-state. Aktar suggests that the fact that this history has never been atoned for breeds a culture of impunity, self-righteousness, and contempt for the rule of law and justice. The presence of these factors pushed the polity towards an "illiberal if not totalitarian essence and praxis," both in its domestic politics and its actions against its constituencies and externally against neighbors through an extensive neo-imperial drive. Aktar concludes that "paradoxically, such an outcome seems to constitute a belated

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retribution for the unaccounted crimes."



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