



SCRIPTS Newsletter  
February 2026



## FROM THE DIRECTOR

With the start of the new year, SCRIPTS has entered its second funding period. During the past seven years, the Cluster has focused on the forms of contestations of the liberal script and its causes. SCRIPTS 2.0 places stronger emphasis on the consequences of contestations and on the conditions of democratic resilience.

Work is already well underway. Proposals for new research projects are currently under review; the selected projects will be launched over the summer. The research units have aligned their objectives with the new programme. We have also established a new research unit “Science”, which examines contestations over knowledge, expertise, and epistemic authority in liberal democracies.

A central innovation of the second funding period is the annual SCRIPTS Forum, which offers a reflexive space for experimental and interdisciplinary engagement with the cluster’s research. Each year, SCRIPTS members are invited to submit a proposal for a particular theme. The current Forum focuses on how contestations related to artificial intelligence are reshaping political order across liberal and authoritarian contexts and is led by the Principal Investigators Anita Gohdes and Genia Kostka.

As SCRIPTS 2.0 takes shape, we look forward to keeping in touch and sharing our work with you in the seven years ahead.



Warm regards

Tanja A. Börzel

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## NEWS

### **Anette Eva Fasang Elected to the Leopoldina**

We congratulate Anette Eva Fasang, Principal Investigator at SCRIPTS and Professor at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, on her election to the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina. The Academy honors her outstanding contributions to sociological research on social inequality, family dynamics, and life-course processes.

Read more on our [website](#).

### **SCRIPTS Featured on Podcast “Exzellent erklärt”**

SCRIPTS is featured in a new episode of the German-language podcast *Exzellent erklärt – Spitzenforschung für alle*. In the episode, SCRIPTS members Thomas Risse and Henrik von Homeyer discuss how academic research and foreign policy interact, the tensions between scientific and political logics, and how knowledge exchange between science and diplomacy works in practice at the SCRIPTS Impact Hub at the German Federal Foreign Office.

Listen to the episode [here](#).

## RESEARCH

### **SCRIPTS Forum**

We are delighted to announce the launch of the SCRIPTS FORUM — a unique academic initiative combining research and knowledge exchange. The year’s forum, *Emergent Digital (Dis-)Orders: AI Governance between Liberal and Authoritarian Scripts*, explores key questions at the intersection of digital transformation and political order.

Check our [website](#) for the upcoming activities and lecture series

### **Alexander Libman on Propaganda in Autocracies**

In a new interview, SCRIPTS Principal Investigator Alexander Libman discusses why propaganda has become a central instrument of contemporary authoritarian rule. Drawing on his research on Russia and China, he explains how narratives complement repression, shape legitimacy, and differ across regimes. The interview accompanies a recent publication by Libman on authoritarian propaganda.

Read the full interview on our [website](#).

### **Genia Kostka on AI and Global Powershifts**

SCRIPTS Principal Investigator Genia Kostka discusses how artificial intelligence is reshaping political power, governance, and global competition, with a particular focus on China. She also co-leads this year's SCRIPTS Forum on AI governance together with Anita Gohdes.

Read the interview on our [website](#).

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Book on Contestations of the Liberal International Order**

The edited volume *Deep Contestations of the Liberal International Order* (Oxford University Press, 2026) is now published and freely available in open access. Edited by Antje Wiener, David A. Lake, and Thomas Risse, the book examines how the liberal international order is being challenged and reshaped, drawing on interdisciplinary research on polarization, identity politics, and institutional resilience.

Read the Book [here](#).

### **Working Papers**

Several new SCRIPTS working papers explore key dynamics of the liberal script. Topics range from decolonial life-course research in Senegal and populist language in India to gender equality debates in Africa and questions of state justification and territorial annexation.

Discover the latest papers and the full list on our [website](#).

### **News SCRIPTS Blog Posts**

Over the past months, SCRIPTS researchers have published a series of insightful blog posts addressing key debates on liberal societies worldwide. Recent contributions explore global support for non-discriminatory access to jobs (Jürgen Gerhards and Johannes Giesecke), examine how world expos like Osaka 2025 project visions of the future (Lesar Yurtsever and Jessica Gienow-Hecht), and analyse the gap between citizens' support for liberal principles and their dissatisfaction with democratic performance (Heiko Giebler).

Discover these and other posts on the [SCRIPTS blog](#).

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

We are planning a range of public events in the coming months and look forward to sharing them with you. To stay up to date, please visit regularly our website, where all [upcoming events](#) and details will be announced.

### 3 Questions for:

#### **Julten Abdelhalim, Science Manager Collaborative Research at SCRIPTS**

*How would you describe your position?*

My work lies at the intersection of research, coordination and strategy. I connect people, ideas and projects to facilitate collaborative work.

*What interests you most about your work?*

The topics covered in the upcoming SCRIPTS funding phase are fascinating and very diverse.

*What projects are you currently working on?*

I am currently involved in launching SCRIPTS' new projects for the next three years, coordinating upcoming publications and planning next year's SCRIPTS Conference.

*Julten Abdelhalim joined SCRIPTS in December 2025. Across Cairo, Freiburg, Durban, New Delhi and Heidelberg, she researched contestations of the liberal script, led a postdoctoral project on gender and revivalist movements, and moved into science management.*



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