



## Panel 1: Challenges to Global Cooperation

**Date and Time:** Friday 22 January 2021, 14:00-15:30 CET

### The backdrop

According to liberal institutionalist theory, institutions are the remedy to overcome the prevalent anarchy within a community of sovereign states (Keohane, 1984). In the post-war era, this manifested in a rising number of international treaties and organisations such as the United Nations or the GATT agreements (later WTO) on creating a rules-based trade system. Through facilitating international cooperation, these institutions create mutual gains for the overall international community.

Recent years have witnessed increasing numbers of movements against international cooperation, often showing a not negligible degree of democratic legitimacy. For example, the Trump Administration has turned its back on international treaties such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and threatened to exit the WTO – an organisation that was once founded on US ideas of a liberal and open trade system. Similarly, the rise of populism and nationalism in Europe has led to rising Euroscepticism amongst European Union (EU) Member States, culminating in the 2016 UK referendum to leave the EU i.e. Brexit. The following unprecedented and still ongoing withdrawal negotiations are characterized by a high degree of uncertainty about gains and losses and the EUs fear of a domino-effect, potentially marking a new era of international fragmentation.

While the discipline of International Relation presents solid theories and research on how and why states engage in international cooperation and the emergence of international regimes, there is less theoretical ground to account for international disintegration (Walter, 2020). This panel provides a platform to discuss a potential demise of international cooperation, rising public scepticism towards international organisations, and the way forward for actors at the domestic and international level.

### Key Questions addressed by the panel:

- What political, social or economic factors explain the rising scepticism towards international cooperation?
  - Does “economic interests” alone suffice as explanatory variable?
- How do we deal with backlashes against international cooperation when they are democratically legitimated?
  - How does this affect negotiation strategies of the parties?
- How has the role of the mass public changed in recent years?
- Should international institutions be democratically challengeable?
- What does the future of international cooperation hold? Have recent events in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the benefits of international cooperation or shown the grave consequences of the lack thereof?