Global Cooperation: Can we build on it?

- Findings and perspectives -

Midterm Conference

Concept Paper

1–3 July 2015

Three years after its inauguration, the Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research invites key experts of this new and interdisciplinary research area to its Midterm Conference. Aim and purpose of this conference are multifold: The Centre wants to introduce some of the research projects it has initiated over the last years; we are also interested in identifying new research paths addressing the pressing challenges in the area of cooperation research. Beyond, the conference aims to bring together experts from different disciplines to create a community in the area of global cooperation research. In brief: the conference aims to implement relevant parts of our mission statement.

A. Keynote (Wednesday 1st July 2015; 18:00–20:00)

"Good faith cooperation? Why global cooperation sometimes succeeds (and mostly not)"

Climate change, nuclear proliferation, and the threat of a global pandemic have the potential to impact each of our lives. Preventing these threats poses a serious global challenge, but ignoring them could
have disastrous consequences. How do we engineer institutions to change incentives so that these global public goods are provided? Referring to past success and failures, Scott Barrett, Professor of Natural Resource Economics at Columbia University, suggests how international cooperation, institutional design, and the adequate use of incentives can work together to ensure the effective delivery of global public goods.

B. A Look into the Laboratory of the Research Units: Negotiating Global Cooperation (Thursday 2nd July 2015; 09:00–20:00)

In recent academic discourses there is a trend to apply the term “negotiations” differently. Instead of seeing it as a means of coordinating the communication of rationally acting stakeholders, it is understood as a more complex social process of cultural imbedded deliberations. Thus, in an attempt to better capture global challenges of cooperation their analysis should not only structure presumed “objective” positions of interest, but also include the different cultural perceptions and normative expectations that are guiding the search for solutions for these challenges, be it in the context of climate change negotiations or at summits to overcome the global financial crisis or with regard to Western military interventions. Against this background, the four research units of the Centre are addressing the challenges of negotiating for global cooperation from different angles in the respective four panels:

As will be further elaborated below, Research Unit 1 looks at processes of negotiations from a micro-perspective of individual interactions; Research Unit 3 focuses on non-Western perspective of global cooperation; Research Unit 2 examines the role of “gifts” in the context of reciprocal expectations in negotiating processes; Research Unit 4 explores whether global democracy is desirable as an engine for global cooperation.

Panel 1

International Negotiations, Institutions and the Human Factor

International negotiations continue to be one of the most important forms of global cooperation. They make possible collective action as well as enable agreements on binding norms and rules. International organizations frequently form the context within which diplomats and other experts negotiate policies on behalf of their governments. This panel will deal with the question what role the “human factor” – i.e. cognitive limits, social and cultural embedding, emotions, and social psychological factors – plays in such settings. To explore how this impacts the chances for success of cooperation, we will make insights from experimental economics, linguistic anthropology and neurosciences speak to theories of international relations.

Panel 2

Non-Western Perspectives on Governing the World

The political and economic rise of non-Western states is arguably one of the most important changes in current world politics. The broader implications of this development are still not sufficiently
understood, however. Are we about to witness a seminal power shift in international relations, along with deep cultural and economic transformations: rejection of pluralism, return of religion, state-based capitalism? Or is it more likely that these “new” actors will be socialized into the established practices and institutions, so that we merely can expect to see partially different players playing the same game? The panel will ponder these questions by analyzing different actors and different perspectives on governance beyond the confinements of the (post)-industrial West and the Global North.

Panel 3

Is Global Democracy Desirable? Shifting Democratic Legitimacy in a World in Crisis

As political action inevitably shifts beyond national borders, it becomes obvious that the future is transnational. However, the effects and possibilities of this frequently mentioned diagnosis remain largely vague in terms of our notion of democratic governance. In what way is global democracy possible and where are its limits? Which effects and risks arise from renewed justifications of democracy, particularly regarding claims of legitimacy among citizens in a world society? How are conventional participatory practices changing as democracy increasingly shifts away from its foundation of legitimacy on the nation-state level? Are paradoxical developments resulting from different democratization processes at the global level ultimately leading to reduced democratic legitimacy? These questions touch upon normative and philosophical dimensions and challenge us to come up with new visions of democratic governance. This could possibly help us overcome the now chronic problem of legitimation among overwhelmed governments, particularly in the aftermath of the global economic and Eurozone crises. On the other hand, these developments also call for a critical perspective that holds the potential of unveiling losses of democratic values through emerging forms of global democracy. Most pertinently, these losses could be significantly worsened through democracy’s simultaneous dependence on and incompatibility with the capitalist world economy as well as citizens’ decreasing confidence in the capacity of global governance. By bringing together relevant voices from different disciplines, the panel not only focuses on conceptual matters. It also addresses contemporary empirical examples such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations and the Hong Kong and Gezi Park protests.

Panel 4

Gift and Reciprocity in International Society

In response to the growing dissatisfaction with both utilitarian and normativist theories we have witnessed in recent years a blossoming of social research inspired by Marcel Mauss’s essay The Gift as well as attempts to derive a general theoretical argument from this text about the reproduction of society through multiple obligations to give, receive and reciprocate. The key advantage of the concept of gift-giving – defined as generous gesture without guarantee of reciprocation – is that it allows for a systematic account of ubiquitous yet underexplored practices such as unilateral concessions, debt forgiveness, charitable donations or mutual assistance. Against this background, the panel explores the importance of gift and reciprocity in international society by focusing on global case studies. Global and international interactions lend themselves particularly well to gift-theoretical analyses because they
are not regulated by an overarching state authority. At the same time, the notorious lack of a supreme authority in the international sphere makes it politically relevant to search for mechanisms that might induce cooperation between sovereign parties facing common threats such as climate change, sovereign debt crises or global poverty.

C. Aspects of Global Cooperation

Roundtable discussion

International Courts and Global Cooperation – The Status / Rulings of the ECHR: Lessons for the Concept of Universality

International law and multilateral agreements aim to set up uniform standards to facilitate global cooperation. Trite but true, the lack of coercive mechanisms challenges the implementation of those norms even if a judicial organ was established for supervision. This is particularly evident in the area of human rights. Though only operating at a regional level, the European Court for Human Rights seems to have mastered this challenge by gaining a high degree of legitimacy not only among the citizens of member countries but also among member states themselves. De facto the court operates in many of the member states as a court of last instance on human rights issues. This round not only identifies the reasons for the Court’s legitimacy, but also examines whether and under which circumstances this model could work at a global level.

D. Future Trends in Global Cooperation Research & Analysis
(Friday 3rd July 2015; 09:00–12:30)

Recent events have helped to better identify actual challenges and deficits of global cooperation as a point of departure for future research. They are resulting from a shift in the global power structure (emerging powers), the gaining strength of authoritarian regimes, multiple concepts of world order, and an increase in radicalization of some groups (for example: IS). Also against this background, how do we need to adjust the research agendas related to global cooperation and what kind of new research questions are emerging?

Experts from various think tanks / research institutes that relate parts of their research agenda to “global cooperation” are sharing their views and visions.

E. Synthesizing the Findings of the Conference – The Way Ahead