

## EISA PEC 2023 16th Pan-European Conference on International Relations

### University of Potsdam, 5–9 September 2023 Envisioning a new normal

Potsdam has some history when it comes to constructing new political visions. During the final days of the Second World War, the Potsdam Conference was where the leading Allied Powers, represented by Joseph Stalin, Winston Churchill, Clement Attlee, and Harry Truman, held the final of its three summits on postwar order. Among other things, they discussed how to administer Germany after its unconditional surrender, revise borders, transfer German populations in Europe, and end the war in the Pacific. The meeting, in a sense, was a historical transition point from the crisis of the war years towards a new era marked by radically different notions of the international in political, economic, and social terms.

In 2023, the need for new visions of social and political order seems no less pressing. In light of the still ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic, the rise of Russian militarism and imperial ambitions, conservative backlash and democratic backsliding in many parts of the world, the more and more visible effects of climate change and global warming, and many other forms of crises and unruliness around the globe, reading the news has turned into literal 'doom-scrolling'. Likewise, academic analyses of global politics are painting an increasingly gloomy picture that mirrors empirical turmoils.

All the more is there a need for hope, creativity, and courage in reimagining the international. Clearly, an academic gathering is not and should not be a political conference. Yet, we believe that when the International Relations community comes together, there is ample potential for productive positivity. So rather than reproducing the pessimism that seems to have befallen society and academia alike, it is our intention to use this year's conference theme for a call to collectively look for visions of a 'new normal'.

We understand the new normal as an altered political, economic, and social order arising out of a period of crisis. Imagining a new normal by definition implies breaking with old certainties, with entrenched habits, and not least also with established patterns that we as analysts and interpreters of the world are accustomed to. The conference theme in this sense encourages us to creatively explore what a new normal could look like in (geo)political, social, economic, ethical, and not least scientific terms. The search for a new normal forms a cross-cutting theme that is inextricably entangled with all aspects and subfields of the academic discipline of IR.

What lessons can we learn from the recent and ongoing global crises and how can we mobilise these lessons for the future? What values and visions of good life shall a new normal reflect? What institutions, modes of knowing the world, and socio-material arrangements shall support these new orders? How can we make sure that we do not reproduce the very inequalities that are deepened by the current crises? And how can we as researchers, teachers, citizens, and individuals help co-produce a new normal?

The 16th Pan-European Conference on International Relations invites participants to explore visions of a new normal—in empirical, political, or theoretical contexts—to interrogate the epistemic, institutional, and material structures that these visions are embedded in, and to critically assess the prospects and challenges of rethinking global politics.