

# Institutional leadership during tough times

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## Propositions

- 1) To advance our understanding of the resilience of IOs facing challenges, we must go beyond external factors and account also for IO agency, institutional leadership, and IO responses. The nature of a challenge is not a key determinant of institutional leaders' role in IO responses.
- 2) IO responses generally consist of the early recognition stage (sense-making) and the subsequent solution stage (meaning- and response-shaping). IO institutional leaders can play critical roles in both of those stages.
- 3) Institutional leaders may take critical action to push strategic initiatives (authoritative roles), foster agreement and garner support (facilitative roles), and act as figureheads to publicly defend their IOs (symbolic roles).
- 4) IO leaders will be better at playing a role in IO response processes if their IOs confer them with greater authority and bureaucratic capacity. However, whether IO leaders' actually take the helms of their institution during moments of challenge depends on their leadership competences.
- 5) The Liberal International Order depends on the institutional pillars on which it is sustained. Securing the continuity of such institutions implies securing that of the order.
- 6) Just like their national counterparts, IOs are vulnerable to shocks and pressures. Relying on the insights from the Public Administration discipline is helpful for advancing our understanding of how pressures affect IOs, and how IOs can cope with them.
- 7) The IR scholarship on IOs needs to rethink our understanding of IO agency and its manifestations. More focus on individual leaders and other relevant actors within IO bureaucracies can improve our understanding of how—and under what conditions—IO agency can be observed.
- 8) The WTO is the most central institution within the global trade arena. Nevertheless, its bureaucratic leadership suffers from limited institutional authority. As the Appellate Body crisis shows, the WTO deserves more teeth to ensure its continued and full functionality. For that, much-needed institutional reforms are needed.
- 9) The PhD candidate's best friend is good coffee.
- 10) The PhD candidate's worst friend is any over-imagined worry.