

# Tackling rising despair is vital for a cooperative world



**Martijn Lampert**

Research Director,  
Glocalities



**Panos Papadongonas**

Senior Research  
Consultant, Glocalities

Martijn Lampert leads the Glocalities values, cultures, and trends research program covering 63 countries, based on more than 400,000 completed surveys. He is fascinated by people's inner and outer drivers, structures of meaning and world mythology. Martijn has more than 2 decades of experience in conducting values-based research and helping organizations connect with audiences at a deeper level. Lampert's mission is to contribute to a higher level of understanding between people, organizations and cultures.

Panos Papadongonas is Senior Research Consultant at Glocalities. He has a background in the social sciences and international development studies. Panos has an innate interest in different cultures and helps organizations understand what drives people around the world. In this way, organizations can effectively position themselves to resonate with and mobilize citizen audiences.

Glocalities' research over the past decade has provided insights into what drives support for international cooperation within a global society. Importantly, we believe international cooperation can be better communicated to align with the values and orientations of more conservative segments of society, broadening public support. *Put another way, building support for global cooperation is about appealing to people's values and igniting hope across the political spectrum, not winning a debate.*

**According to our analysis of a decade of international Glocalities' research, despair is increasing among younger generations and there is growing polarisation between men and women.**<sup>11</sup> While young women have significantly strengthened their embrace of liberal and anti-patriarchal values over the last decade, young men have not. In fact, while in 2014 older men were the most conservative and younger men were significantly more liberal, almost 10 years later that has reversed.

At the same time, during the past decade, there has been a surge in feelings of hopelessness and societal discontent among younger men and women (under 24). At the same time, older people (above 55) have generally become more hopeful and content with society as it is. Increasing feelings of despair and disillusionment are also present among citizens aged 25–34 and to a lesser extent among citizens aged 35–54. The following figure summarises these trends.

Please see the chart available via the link provided in the end notes, which visualises this trend.<sup>12</sup>

Feelings of hopelessness, societal disillusionment and rebelling against cosmopolitan values partly explain the rise of radical right anti-establishment parties in many countries. Their message increasingly resonates with disillusioned young men, who are veering from liberal to conservative, and who do not feel that establishment parties are serving their interests.

**When mapped onto support for international cooperation, these trends are a cause for concern.** We find that pro-cooperation people generally have a hopeful outlook on life and are also strongly freedom oriented<sup>13</sup>, while anti-cooperation people tend to be much more pessimistic and control oriented<sup>14</sup>.

When people despair, they tend to shift their focus to their immediate environment and locus of control. Little wonder that the radical right parties benefiting from this despair are generally much less inclined to support multilateral institutions or promote international cooperation. With younger age cohorts increasingly despairing over the past decade, and younger age cohorts of men stagnating in progress towards liberal values, support for cooperation may be increasingly under threat.

**Clearly, then, countering despair is a crucial aspect of building support for global cooperation. But rather than trying to shift conservative attitudes, we should instead appeal to them.**

Societies and population segments the world over will always have a range of attitudes based on culture, upbringing and other factors, and so giving every person a reason to want global cooperation irrespective of their value base is far more realistic than attempting to shift the world to one set of values.

Over the last decade, studies of moral reframing – which involves presenting a position in a way that aligns with an individual's moral values – have shown its effectiveness across a wide range of polarised topics.<sup>15</sup> To quote from our original trend survey report, *“The capacity to navigate a polarized environment through a lens of shared values is paramount for leaders, policymakers, and communicators alike. This necessitates the ability to empathize with various national and international citizen groups and perceive the world from their perspectives.”*

At Glocalities, we measure the appeal of archetypes for storytelling.<sup>16</sup> Archetypes are universally recognised patterns and symbols deeply embedded in human culture, such as the hero, rebel or explorer. They tap into universal feelings and instincts, making stories more resonant. For example, Nike's 'Just Do It' slogan embodies the hero archetype.

Let's look at an example. The ruler archetype typically resonates with people who value strong governance and stability. While it can be (mis)used by autocratic and authoritarian leaders to promote narratives denigrating international cooperation, it is also possible to use it to foster a constructive narrative for international cooperation. There are two dimensions in particular that we must build into narratives to foster support for global

cooperation among these groups who favour control over freedom.

First, we must emphasise the importance of strong governance, strategic alliances and international law to prevent conflict, reduce risks and maintain order. International cooperation enhances a nation's ability to lead on the global stage, setting standards for security, growth and stability. By collaborating with international allies, national interests and global stability can be safeguarded much better than by attempting to do so independently.

Second, we must highlight the value of efficient structures created by multilateral agreements and international partnerships. These frameworks reduce risk and promote fair trade, economic growth and innovation. Such collaborations foster an environment where businesses and economies can grow responsibly, offering opportunities for an ambitious young generation to develop and thrive.

With a deeper understanding of how people's attitudes and values foster or undermine support for global cooperation, we can craft narratives to increase support – a far easier task than shifting the attitudes themselves (in the short term at least). Coupled with a universal desire to counter rising despair, there is an opportunity here to strengthen global identities.

“While in 2014 older men were the most conservative and younger men were significantly more liberal, almost 10 years later that has reversed.”