

## **COVID-19 as a challenge to the liberal script**

COVID-19 is a major challenge to the liberal script. To fight the spread of the virus, governments around the world have adopted far-reaching measures, often imposing severe restrictions to personal freedoms of citizens. What is more, many governments have relied on executive decrees and emergency legislation to make fast decisions to combat the pandemic rather than relying on democratically legitimated decision-making bodies.

At the same time, massive protests against governments have emerged in response to the Corona measures and societies have become increasingly polarized. For instance, the “Querdenken” movement in Germany started out as a loose network, but has gained increasing support throughout the pandemic and has contributed to a radicalization of society. The assassination of a young student reminding a customer to wear a facial mask at a gas station, as well as the violent protests against leading politicians, are just the tip of the iceberg.

Finally, COVID-19 has also been a major challenge for the liberal international order. Even though a number of vaccines have been developed in record-time, global vaccine distribution is extremely unequal. As of early 2022, an estimated 50% of the global population is fully vaccinated against COVID-19, but while over 85% of citizens are vaccinated in the top 10 countries, only less than 3% of citizens are vaccinated in the bottom 10. The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically revealed the limitations of the liberal international order in achieving a fair global distribution of vaccines.

The project investigates the liberal modes of democratic decision-making in crisis (1), how the vaccination campaign and the related anti-Corona measures have affected political trust and polarization in Germany (2), public support for different modes of vaccine production (3).