



NATIONALISM AND GLOBALIZATION: RECONFIGURING INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND ALLIANCES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract:

This paper discusses the effects of rising nationalism on globalization, focusing on international trade, alliances, and cooperation in Europe, the United States, and Asia. It compares Brexit, the America First policy, and the China Belt and Road Initiative. It combines realism, liberalism, and constructivist theoretical outlooks through a qualitative comparative case study approach. The findings indicate that nationalism fails to prevent globalization but transforms it into selective, transactional and sovereignty-based interdependence. Trade policies have shifted toward strategic control, with a focus on protectionism, export controls, and supply chains aligned with political interests. The cohesion of alliances such as NATO, the EU, and ASEAN is also being eroded by domestic political pressures, which are eroding commitment and cooperation. Multilateral co-operation on climate change, migration, and global health has become more divided as states seek national sovereignty rather than collective action. The paper shows the necessity of progressive governance systems that balance the national agendas and international duties. This research offers evidence and theoretical understanding of the trend of nationalism that is changing the international order. It provides a guideline for policymakers and international organizations operating in a world becoming more nationalistic.

Keywords: Nationalism, Globalization, International Trade, Sovereignty, Populism, EU, NATO, Belt and Road Initiative

1. Introduction

Nationalism in the contemporary world has become a force to be reckoned with, transforming the world order. Nationalism, which focuses on a nation's interests, culture, and identity, has become increasingly prominent, especially with the rise of populist leaders in Europe, the United States, and parts of Asia. This has resulted in the reconfiguration of nationalist interactions between states in areas previously regarded as part of globalization. In the modern definition, nationalism tends to appear as a rejection of the concepts of world interconnection and interdependence, as well as protectionist policies, the tightening of borders, and withdrawal from world agreements and organizations (Hoffmann, 2012).

Globalization, the process of the growing interconnectedness of nations in trade, technology, culture, and international institutions, has been the hegemonic paradigm in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Globalization has led to economic development, technological advances, and cultural exchange. Nevertheless, with the recent emergence of nationalism, driven by economic concerns, cultural panic, and political populism, some of the successes of global co-



operation are beginning to bear fruit. With the rise of nationalist policies, there is a concern about the direction of the globalization process and whether international cooperation can be effective(Mann, 2012)

1.1 Research Question

This research study aims to respond to the following main question:

- ❖ What is the implication of the emergence of nationalism on international trade, alliances, and collaboration, especially in Europe, the United States and Asia?

The study aims to investigate the concept of nationalism as a remodeling of the world's economic and political relations and how it questions the traditional model of state collaboration.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research has the following objectives:

- ❖ To investigate how nationalism has shaped the international trade policy, with its implications of protectionist policy and trade wars.
- ❖ To explore the role of nationalism in political alliances, specifically the European Union (EU), NATO and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the influence of nationalist rhetoric and policies on such alliances.
- ❖ To explore the role that nationalism is playing in global collaboration in major aspects like climate change, international security, and migration.
- ❖ To determine the long-term effects of increasing nationalism on how globalization will be in the future, especially in the economic interdependency and international promotional activities.

1.3 Contextual Background

The idea of national self-determination is the genesis of nationalism as an ideology, emerging historically in response to imperialism and colonialism. Nationalism is an ideology that encourages a group of people who share similar cultural, lingual and historical connections to rule themselves. But the modern use of nationalism has been more linked to the populist and right-wing politics that, in most cases, focus on the policies of exclusion (based on race, ethnicity, and religion). One factor that has led to the emergence of the idea of nationalism is the perceived negative impact of globalization, including the loss of local cultures, employment displacement, and increasing inequality(Neuberger, 2001).

Globalization, in turn, can be defined as the process of interconnection among countries, economies, and societies through trade, communication, and policy collaboration. It has resulted in the liberalization of markets, the growth of transnational corporations, and the development of international institutions such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Over the decades, these institutions helped states collaborate, thereby bringing about a more interdependent world. Nevertheless, the development of nationalism, which priorities national interests and sovereignty, has created a sharp contrast with the principles of globalization, questioning the liberal order established since the post-World War II period(Friedman, 2005).

1.4 Globalization and Nationalism: A Dilemma.

Nationalism and globalization are in a state of tension and conflict. Whereas globalization aims to eliminate obstacles to trade, communication, and travel, nationalism seeks to control and protect national boundaries more closely. This has led to a tension in many forms, especially in international trade. The United States, under former President Donald Trump, and other European nations have introduced protectionist policies, such as tariffs, quotas, and trade wars,

driven by nationalist movements. The so-called America First policy, for example, focused more on domestic industries at the expense of global cooperation, resulting in poor trade relations with other states, such as China and the European Union (Mearsheimer, 2018). Likewise, the Brexit vote in the UK was motivated by nationalistic concerns about taking back control of borders and reducing the power of the European Union (Ruzza, 2021).

Nationalism is also a problem of political unions and international collaboration. The emergence of populist governments, especially in Hungary and Poland, has heightened tensions within the European Union. Such governments have opposed EU-based policies on immigration, climate change and economic reform, arguing that they are weakening national sovereignty. Likewise, in Asia, nationalism has contributed to increased tensions among nations, e.g., the Make in India campaign by India, where the focus on local production at the expense of foreign investment in the country is being pushed by the government, and the foreign policy of China under Xi Jinping, which has thrown a spanner into global power structures (Romein, 2021).

1.5 The Importance of the Research.

The study is important because it offers insights into how global governance is evolving in an era in which nationalism is challenging the tenets of globalization. Nationalist movements can also alter the future of international relations by reducing international cooperation and fostering more competitive, yet less cooperative, relations. Understanding the effects of nationalism on international trade, alliances, and cooperation is of paramount importance to policymakers, diplomats, and international organizations that aim to navigate the intricacies of this new political order.

Moreover, this study can be added to the wider field of International Relations, as it contributes to the theoretical debate between globalization and nationalism. This research will provide an all-encompassing view of the interaction of these forces and the future of global cooperation in a world where nationalism is supreme, by examining case studies in Europe, the United States, and Asia.

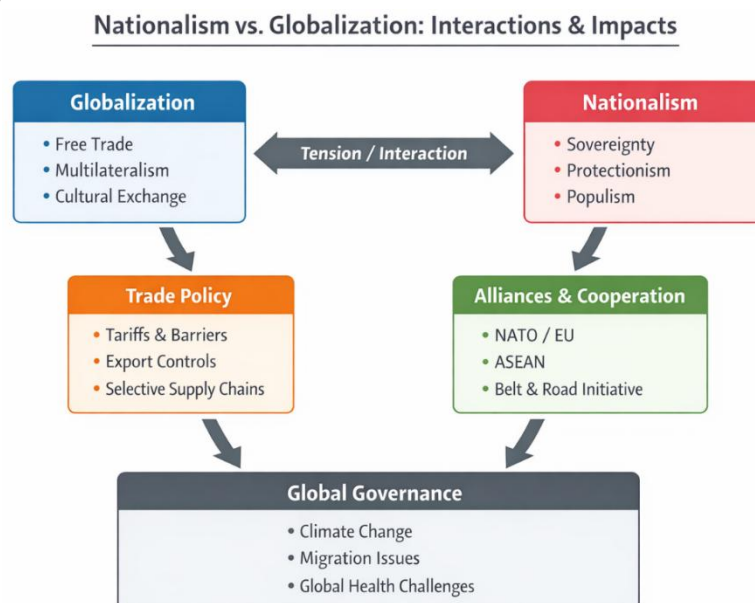


Figure 1, Nationalism interacts with globalization to shape trade, alliances, and global governance.

2. The Idea of Nationalism in Modern Era.

In its modern manifestation, nationalism is not merely an affection for a nation, but a political philosophy that seeks to place the claims, identity, and autonomy of a nation-state above the claims of the world as a whole or supranational commitment. In the past, nationalism originated in the 19th century, when countries were striving for independence and sovereignty during the colonial and imperial periods. Nationalism, throughout this time, was regarded as a liberation movement and as a means of gaining self-determination. Still, in the modern world, it has continually been a means to political movements to offset the perceived undesirable consequences of globalization (Conversi, 2016).

The contemporary occurrence of nationalism, however, is not the same as it was in the past. Whereas classical nationalism was focused on gaining political independence from colonial states, contemporary nationalism has adjusted to the pressures of globalization, including immigration, the opening of trade boundaries, and the growth of transnational institutions (Hobsbawm, 2012). In modern times, populist leaders have tended to define nationalism as the subjugation of national sovereignty and power by global institutions and agreements. This repositioning of nationalism has been most pronounced in Europe, the United States, and Asia, where nationalist discourse has been on the rise as a reaction to the economic, social and cultural shocks of globalization (Hobsbawm, 1990).

2.1. Influences That Contributed to the Emergence of Nationalism.

There are a few reasons for the increased prominence of nationalism in the contemporary world. Economic inequalities within and between countries have also been caused by economic globalization, which has contributed to the free movement of capital and goods across borders. Whereas some areas have benefited from the positive effects of globalization through heightened trade and investment, others have been sidelined, leading to local communities developing animosity (Rodrik, 2020). These economic inequalities have offered fertile ground for nationalist movements to thrive on promises to reclaim national economies, save their own industries, and restrict foreign competition (Stokes, 2017).

The other major contributor to nationalism is immigration. Most countries have undergone demographic changes driven by global migration, economic opportunity, war, and climate change. In Europe, as an example, the flow of refugees and migrants has led to the rise of nationalist movements that focus on national culture and national identity defence. These movements tend to construct immigration as a challenge to national values and social solidarity, and to present themselves as guardians of traditional cultural values (Krastev, 2017). On the same note, the development of right-wing nationalism, especially during the leadership of the former President Donald Trump, has been driven by the fear of illegal immigration and the influence of migrants on the American job market and social services (Inglehart & Norris, 2016).

2.2. The relationship between nationalism and populism is symbiotic.

The emergence of populism is also closely related to nationalism, as both ideologies draw on the same grievances, rooted in economic and cultural insecurity. To gain support, populist leaders frequently use nationalist discourses that position them as representatives of the ordinary population resisting elites, international organizations, and political institutions (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). Trump in the US, Marine Le Pen in France, and Viktor Orbán in Hungary are among the populist leaders who have used the fear of economic dislocation, immigration, and loss of national identity as a selling point to promote their nationalist politics. They present themselves as protectors of the country against foreign aggression - whether of

imbalances in trade, foreign competition, or immigration - and they tend to use rhetorical weapons of division and exclusion (Varriale, 2020).

Nationalism and populism are more visible in Europe, where nationalists have attacked the European Union (EU) by portraying it as a bureaucratic institution that, at the expense of national sovereignty, undermines national interests. A good example of how nationalism and populism can work together to undermine existing international frameworks is the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom, during which a nationalist Leave movement successfully argued that the UK should quit the EU (Ashcroft & Bevir, 2016)

2.3. Asian Nationalism: An Emerging Trend.

Although nationalism has been linked to Western political movements, it has also become prominent in Asia. Nationalism in some of these countries, such as China, India and Japan, has been used to strengthen political power and national pride. Indeed, in China, President Xi Jinping has infused a vision of Chinese nationalism, focusing on the past mightiness of the Chinese and its future as a global superpower. This nationalism has been manifested in China's aggressive foreign policy, asserting its territorial claims in the South China Sea, as well as in its Belt and Road Initiative, which seeks to expand China's influence in Asia and beyond (Zhao, 2021).

In the same way, the increased power of Hindu nationalism, with its emphasis on the cultural and religious identity of the Hindu majority, has been noted in India with the rise of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), the ruling party led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This type of nationalism has informed the domestic and foreign policies in India, such as how it deals with Pakistan and its policy concerning immigration with its neighboring countries (Jaffrelot, 2003). Nationalism in Japan has taken an alternative form, aiming to maintain the unity of Japanese culture and the country's role in ensuring regional security. The emergence of nationalism in Japan is directly associated with the changing military stance because of the increasing North Korean and Chinese threats. Nationalist rhetoric in Japan frequently emphasizes the need for a more powerful military and for greater foreign policy independence, undermining the pacifist ideals that have been dominant in Japan since World War II (Wilson, 2013).

3. Nationalism's Impact on International Trade

Nationalism has redefined the direction of international trade by compelling governments to view trade policy as an instrument of sovereignty, domestic political legitimacy and strategic rivalry, rather than as a means to achieve economic efficiency. This shift in orientation can be seen in the three interconnected trends: the heightened use of tariffs and non-tariff barriers, the strengthening of export controls in pursuit of geopolitical objectives, and a preference of more desirable supply chains that are no longer premised on the pure cost efficiency (Kemboi, 2024)

3.1. Uncertainty, fragmentation of trade and protectionism.

One of the major ways in which nationalism influences trade is by normalizing protectionism. When trade is seen as a national threat, governments are tempted to adopt apparent restrictive policies that send the message of control to the national audience. Although restrictions fail to significantly reduce global trade volume, they may raise transaction costs and reduce efficiency through integrated production networks (Rahman, 2004). The WTO reported that recent shocks and geopolitical rivalry have heightened fragmentation strains and raised the likelihood that trade will be organized around conflicting blocs rather than multilateral guidelines. Another indicator of a policy instrument that is becoming more relevant to the UNCTAD to ensure the objective of securing the home supply, reducing the geopolitical competition, and

altering the investment decisions in support of the goal of local processing and local production is the growing role of export controls (Kunkel, 2014)

3.2. Case study: United States

Nationalist trade politics became prominent in the United States during the US-China tariff escalation that began in 2018. According to Chad P. Bown, the United States imposes so-called special tariffs on much of China's imports, and China responds by imposing them on a wide array of US exports, resulting in significant changes to the bilateral trade geometry. These actions changed firms' incentives by raising costs, creating ambiguity about future rounds of tariffs, and shaping sourcing and assembly decisions (Bown, 2019).

Based on UNCTAD's analysis of the tariff incident, it is demonstrated that US tariffs against China significantly reduced imports of tariffed products. Other countries increased their export share in the same product lines, indicating trade diversion rather than an outright reduction in global trade. This form of nationalist trade policy can, over time, undermine trust in the soundness of rules-based trade and strengthen a more prudent attitude to cross-border investment and long-term strategic supply-chain management (Kunkel, 2014).

3.3. Case study: Europe

This has coincided with nationalist pressures on European policy discourse on trade governance and sovereignty since Brexit, as well as broader populist-nationalist mobilization across several EU countries. One of the most notable EU reactions has been the formulation of so-called open strategic autonomy, which explicitly links trade policy to resilience, security, and the EU's ability to act autonomously in essential spheres (Bertram, 2023). The research briefing by the European Parliament describes how open strategic autonomy came to the fore in the EU's trade policy review and, as part of a wider shift, emphasised instruments that protect EU economic interests at the cost of being selectively open (Damen, 2022).

This is important to your argument, since European trade policy is no longer viewed through the prism of liberalization and market access. It is also contextualized in the protection of strategic areas, management of dependencies, and enhancement of screening tools. It is not comparable to full protectionism, yet it represents a trade stance defined by sovereignty issues appealing to nationalist politics within the regional scope (Malamud & Schenoni, 2025).

3.4. Case study: Asia

Nationalism in Asia affects trade by combining domestic industrial policy with regional rivalry. State-based solutions focus on self-reliance stories and domestic import substitution, whereas major-country arrangements seek to define markets and supply chains in the new geopolitics. At the regional level, the literature on ASEAN economic integration suggests that frameworks such as the ASEAN Economic Community and RCEP have become increasingly important amid increased protectionism, as regional agreements can stabilize trade relations amid heightened nationalist pressures in domestic politics (Shimizu, 2021).

This gives you a valuable empirical argument for your paper: nationalism in Asia does not necessarily undermine trade cooperation in the region. Rather, it tends to drive co-operation toward regionalism, in which trade integration is sought within politically agreeable groupings, with sensitive sectors safeguarded through domestic policy instruments (D'Costa, 2012).

3.5. The implications of this for globalization.

In the United States, Europe, and Asia, the nationalist politics of trade are more likely to produce selective openness: governments are involved in trade, but enlarge the defensive instruments, increase the strategic controls, and focus on politically trusted partners. This leaves a trading system characterized by increased policy uncertainty, heightened risks of fragmentation, and reduced trust in the universality of multilateral rules. This preconditions

your next part on alliances, as trade fragmentation is increasingly intertwined with alliance politics and security obligations (Schumacher, 2024).

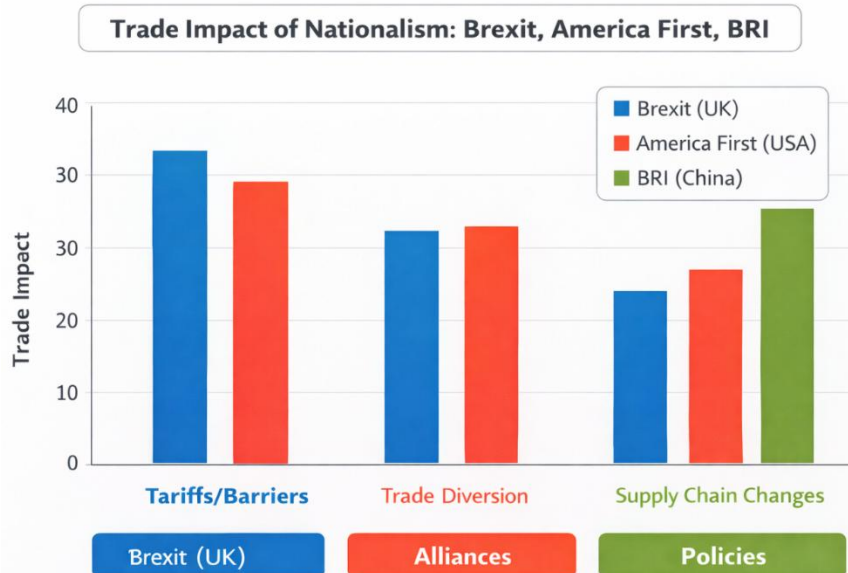


Figure 2. Illustrates the comparative trade impact of nationalist policies across the three case studies

4. Nationalism and Its Effect on International Alliances

Nationalism is the reshaping of alliances, in which leaders change how they defend collaborative efforts. Alliances are based on shared perceptions of threats, credibility, and a readiness to accept constraints in pursuit of common interests. Nationalist politics usually repackages those limitations into the intolerable "losses" of sovereignty, providing local pressure to insist on special treatment, renegotiate commitments, or redistribute burdens on partners. The literature on alliance cohesion suggests that when national preferences are not identical, and domestic political incentives strengthen unilateral postures, maintaining cohesion becomes even harder in the face of an alliance's institutional survival. This part will examine the effects of the alliance from three regional perspectives: the United States and NATO; the internal cohesion and external relations within the European Union; and the centrality of ASEAN in the great power rivalry (Kunertova & Schmitt, 2025).

4.1. United States and NATO: burden sharing, credibility and transactional bargaining.

The discourse of nationalism within the United States has taken on NATO on several occasions through the lens of burden-sharing and increased allied defence expenditure. Academic data on NATO burden-sharing conflicts indicate that these conflicts are not recent; rather, nationalist representation makes them more visible, more individualized, and more transactional, which can undermine the sense of commitment without any official withdrawal (Koivula, 2021). In cases where the obligations of alliances are seen as a business, the cost of credibility increases, as partners must prepare for policy changes driven by local audiences rather than external threats. Meanwhile, the disintegration of collaboration may be reinforced by exceptional exogenous shocks. There is evidence from NATO following the Russian invasion of Ukraine that suggests the shock led to increased unity and a collective defence orientation in the short term, at least because the threat environment made common interests clearer. However, the literature also warns that unity will fade when crisis pressure dissipates again, especially in a scenario in



which nationalist messages of unreasonable burden and lack of agency are resorted to in domestic politics once more (Hardt, 2024). Stated briefly, nationalism does not necessarily destroy NATO, but it preconditions cohesion, which is more dependent on the intensity of threats and on domestic political periods (Kunertova & Schmitt, 2025).

4.2. Europe: EU cohesion, strategic independence and alliance organization.

Nationalism also influences alliances in Europe in two interconnected ways. First, it strains EU internal cohesion by pressuring governments to place greater emphasis on national control rather than collective decision-making in the foreign and security policy domain. Second, it changes the EU's external stance on strategic autonomy, which is based on the EU's ability to act without reliance in the most important areas. The EPRS monitor records the transformation of the concept of strategic autonomy into a cross-policy agenda, encompassing security, technology, trade resilience, and crisis response capacity (Koivula, 2021).

This agenda cuts across with the transatlantic management of alliances. Burden sharing can be enhanced through strategic autonomy, thereby strengthening European capabilities. Still, it also creates tension when it is perceived as an attempt to distance itself from US leadership or to duplicate NATO's functions (Unit, 2022). According to the policy analysis of strategic autonomy in EU external action, the concept is also linked to European sovereignty, which can gain political momentum when nationalistic parties argue that Europe cannot afford to be exploited or disintegrated by other powers (European Papers, 2023). The most important effect of an alliance is not total disengagement with allies, but rather a more intricate coordination space in which solidarity relies on a trade-off between national sovereignty discourses and the needs of collective action.

4.3. Asia: Alliance avoidance, ASEAN and controversial regional cooperation.

Nationalism in Asia shapes patterns of alliance by managing rivalry and avoiding binding commitments. The ASEAN's institutional structure already prioritizes consensus and non-interference, and nationalism reinforces these trends by curtailing members' acceptance of stringent enforcement measures. Global Studies Quarterly asserts that intensified competition between the US and China has eroded ASEAN's centrality to the point that superpowers seek alternative forums or relegate ASEAN-led processes to mere symbols rather than substance (Beeson, 2022).

Simultaneously, multilateral platforms are employed to maintain manoeuvre space for ASEAN states. Studies of ASEAN reactions to competition between the US and China state that the earliest reaction shifted to strategic anxiety as rivalry escalated, since rivalry diminishes the capability of ASEAN to establish the agenda as well as makes it harder to unify the separate members who hold varying levels of threat perceptions and economic relations. This is important to your paper because nationalism in Asia tends to strengthen hedging behavior: states want to work together, but oppose alliances that would be domestically described as giving up independence (Beeson, 2022).

4.4. Synthesis: the nationalist effect on alliances.

In these areas, nationalism finds its most effective expression in altering the conditions of alliance. It makes compromise in the home country costlier, fosters a bargain-based approach to transactions, and heightens the salience of the sovereignty framing. Alliances are not necessarily going to die, and in certain cases, they may even get stronger when acute threats are involved; yet it is cohesion that is more susceptible to domestic cycles and perception gaps among members. This prepares the following section of your outline on global cooperation: the same nationalist motives that damage global alliances also demoralize multilateral cooperation on climate, migration, and global health (Kunertova & Schmitt, 2025).

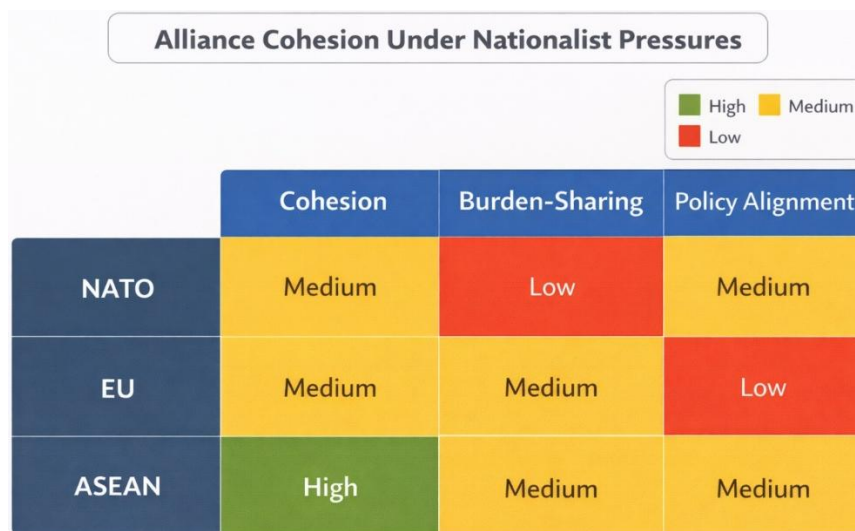


Figure 3. Illustrates the relative cohesion and policy alignment of major alliances under nationalist pressures

Nationalism’s Impact on Global Cooperation

In addition to trade and alliances, nationalism has contributed significantly to the general trends of global cooperation. Multilateral cooperation relies on trust, mutual definition of problems, and state readiness to accept short-term, individualistic restrictions in exchange for long-term collective benefits. These pillars are challenged by nationalism, which emphasizes national sovereignty, national political legitimacy, and unilateral determination of policy outcomes. The growing power of nationalist discourses makes governments less willing to bind themselves to international structures, especially in areas of policy where cooperation involves sharing a burden and where a state monitors its own adherence (Lake et al., 2021).

Global Government and Multilateralism Dilution.

The undermining of multilateral institutions may be considered one of the most apparent consequences of nationalism. Scholars have noted that nationalist politics have decreased trust in the effectiveness of global governance, as international organizations are becoming distant, inaccessible, or hostile to national interests (Acharya, 2014). Such erosion does not always lead to formal withdrawal from institutions; rather, it often manifests as selective compliance, slow adoption of commitments, and a decrease in financial or political support (Tallberg et al., 2018). Consequently, the world becomes unpredictable, and cooperation becomes disjointed. The difficulty is especially evident in institutions designed to address collective action challenges, including climate governance, global health, and migration. These spheres need to be maintained through cooperation and mutual trust, which becomes impossible when the leaders of nations view international commitments as foreign pressure on national sovereignty (Lake et al., 2021).

Case Study 1: Cooperation in Climate Change.

Successful climate governance is a long-term commitment and serious domestic realisation. Nevertheless, the nationalist agenda of economic competitiveness and energy security can often limit the adoption of policies, even when the state is a member of international climate frameworks (Falkner, 2016).

States may be imprisoned in the middle and in the status of gradual change because of political lock-in and fragmented incentives, which strengthen the patterns of stuck co-operation (Bernstein & Hoffmann, 2019).



Smart coalitions and catalytic strategies are likely to give a feeling of motion, but nationalist framing makes commitments more political and reduces domestic policy stability.

As a result, world climate collaboration is more based on loose arrangements and a weak group than on stronger, binding commitments (Hale, 2020).

Case Study 2: The Governance of International Migration.

Nationalism transforms migration and refugee policies, as migration is seen as a challenge to national and security, as well as welfare, structures. Such a view diminishes states' readiness to share the burden or to accept binding norms (Collier & Betts, 2017).

European and North American states have given more priority to border control and deterrence rather than to multilateral coordination. It becomes bilateral or ad hoc cooperation, resulting in discontinuous governance, as they have different levels of protection. The effect of nationalist pressures is that they do not facilitate the establishment of stable, transparent international migration systems that strengthen collective responses to displacement crises (Lavenex, 2018).

Case Study 3: Global Health and Crisis Cooperation.

The tension between national interests and the common good is evident during global health crises. International health institutions can be weakened by nationalist policies on pandemics, which may lead to rivalry over medical supplies, vaccines, and information exchange (Fidler, 2020)

Geopolitical competition and a national-first approach during the COVID-19 pandemic weakened trust and limited the scope of coordinated responses.

The post-COVID process, including the WHO Pandemic Preparedness Agreement of 2025, indicates that problems persist. Major absenteeism and political scandal, e.g., the United States not attending, reflect continued sovereignty issues (Reuters, 2025a; Reuters, 2025b).

This illustrates how nationalism may limit responses to emergencies and institutional reforms over time, undermining the international community's ability to tackle future calamities.

Consequences of International cooperation.

Altogether, nationalism does not kill global cooperation, yet it transforms its form and effectiveness. Cooperation becomes more selective and informal, based on temporary interests rather than meeting long-term targets. Multilateral institutions still exist, but their power and capacity to coordinate are diminished because the politics of nationalism reduce states' willingness to delegate power and comply with common constraints. This change supports a trend of disjointed governance, establishing significant parameters on the extent of globalization in the future (Acharya, 2014).

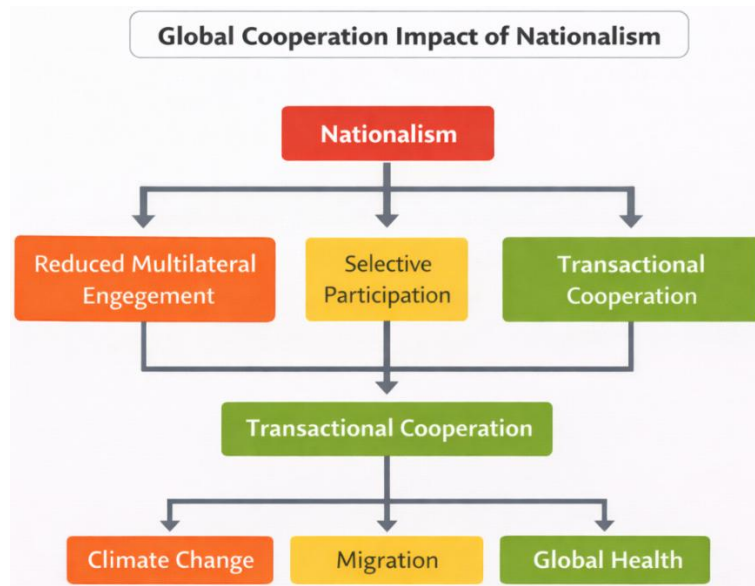


Figure 4. Illustrates how nationalist pressures alter multilateral cooperation in critical global policy areas.

6. Nationalism vs. Globalization: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives

I would describe the tension between nationalism and globalization using conflicting theories of IR, assigning different degrees of significance to power, institutions, domestic politics, and ideas. Together, they can be used to explain why nationalist politics are congruent with ongoing interdependence, even though they poison the rules and expectations that sustain cooperation.

6.1. Realism: sovereignty, competition over security and limitation to cooperation.

From a realist standpoint, globalization does not help eliminate anarchy. States remain the key players, and survival issues dictate behavior. According to structural realism, the international system induces states to fear relative gains and vulnerability, making it hard to engage in deep cooperation because it creates dependency or power centres. Nationalism can be easily categorized in this logic, as it justifies policies that reduce exposure to competitors and safeguard strategic sectors (Waltz, 2014).

Offensive realism also argues that great powers seek to maximize power and security, leading to ongoing rivalry even in the face of high levels of economic interdependence. Within this prism, trade barriers, technological controls, and alliance bargaining are not exceptions to globalization; rather, they are tools of competition within an interdependent system that still exists. Nationalism enhances public support for these instruments by linking security to identity and sovereignty (Mearsheimer, 2003).

6.2. Liberalism: institutions, domestic tastes and the persistence of cooperation.

The liberal theories anticipate greater room for collaboration, as institutions will be able to reduce uncertainty, generate information, and minimize transaction costs. Institutionalism holds that, despite the absence of a strong hegemon, states can collaborate through regimes that organize expectations and punish defection. The liberal position when nationalism is on the rise is not that there is no cooperation, but that cooperation is more politically conditional and compliance is more difficult to secure (Keohane, 1984).

The second liberal mechanism emphasizes domestic society. One liberal theory of international politics holds that state preferences mirror domestic groups and social coalitions rather than merely reflect systemic pressure. Nationalist movements alter the domestic preference environment by elevating constituencies that oppose open trade, immigration, or supranational



legal restrictions to the forefront. The resulting change in preferences subsequently shapes bargaining positions in trade relations, alliance commitments, and international collaboration (Moravcsik, 1997).

6.3. Constructivism: identity, norms and the significance of sovereignty.

Constructivist theory explains nationalism as a shift in collective ideas and identity discourse that defines what states consider legitimate. The important argument is that anarchy does not predetermine a single kind of logic; self-help and power politics are the products of social action and common meaning (Wendt, 2008). Nationalism is important since it redefines interests. It can redefine cooperation as dependency, position compromise as humiliation, and define institutions as threats to who we are, not merely threats to material welfare (Wendt, 1992).

This view also suggests that nationalist politics may undermine institutions because material incentives promote cooperation. With a decline in the legitimacy of multilateral rules, states will tend to comply less, reinterpret obligations or find other forums despite high economic costs.

6.4. Practical perspective 1: Embedded liberalism and the collapse of the postwar bargain.

One such practical concept linking theory and policy is embedded liberalism. The economic order of the postwar period fostered openness and domestic protections, allowing governments to address distributional conflicts and to support international economic integration through politics. Increased nationalism may be seen as an expression that such a bargain is being undermined. As domestic adjustment and compensation falter, openness becomes politically vulnerable, and the nation's leaders feel the urge to reestablish order by rolling back protection and border policies (Ruggie, 1982).

6.4. Practical perspective 2: the trilemma of globalization and political reaction.

A second applicable theory is the globalization trilemma, which holds that maximum national sovereignty, deep economic integration, and national democratic politics cannot be optimized. Nationalist politics are a rebalancing decision: the rulers give priority to sovereignty and domestic responsibility, embracing the limitation of globalization. This does not necessarily mean isolation. It means that it leads to the renunciation of hyper globalization and the increased policy space of home goals (Rodrik, 2011).

6.5. Practical perspective 3: sovereignty as practice of contests.

In real life, the practice often does not conform to norms, even when states invoke the concept of sovereignty. Sovereignty may be handled as a loose activity, in the sense that rulers endorse sovereignty discourse even as they break or trade on it at their convenience. This is embodied in the fact that the concept of sovereignty has always been encircled by hypocrisy, organized so that formal principles and constant exceptions go hand in hand. Sovereignty claims can be exacerbated by nationalism, but states are willing to become selectively constrained to gain security, access to markets, or crisis relief. The distinction lies in the fact that nationalist politics increases the political cost of accepting compromise, driving cooperation toward less vocal, more transactional modes (Krasner, 1999).

Theory	Key Concepts	Application to Nationalism	Implications for Globalization
Realism	Sovereignty, Power, Security, Competition	Nationalist policies prioritize national security and autonomy, justify	Cooperation is conditional, strategic, and selective; interdependence persists

		tariffs, protectionism, and alliance bargaining	but with transactional emphasis
Liberalism	Institutions, Cooperation, Domestic Preferences	Multilateral institutions facilitate collaboration; domestic groups may oppose open trade/immigration under nationalism	Cooperation continues through institutions but is politically conditional; compliance may be reduced
Constructivism	Identity, Norms, Legitimacy	Nationalist identity discourses redefine interests; compromise seen as threat to sovereignty	Multilateral norms are challenged; states may comply selectively; globalization rules delegitimized

Table 1. Summarizes how different IR theories explain the interaction between nationalism and globalization.

7. Case Studies

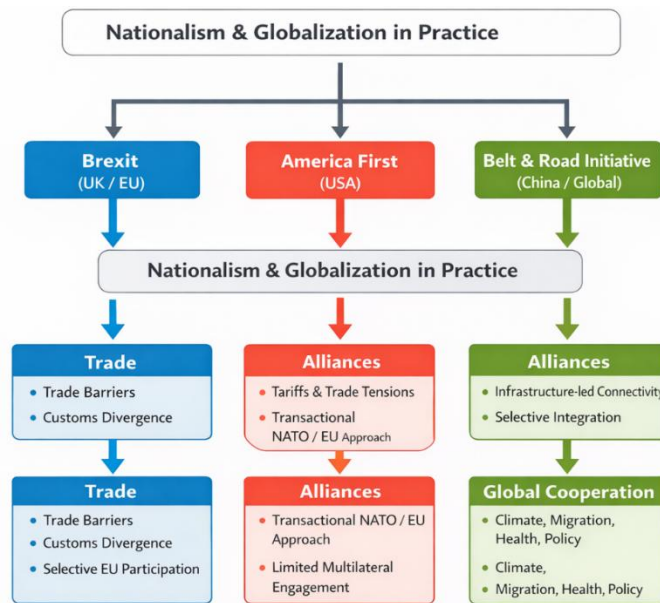


Figure 5. Provides an overview of the selected case studies and their influence on trade, alliances, and global cooperation

7.1. Case Study 1: Brexit and the effect on European trade and alliances.

The best example of nationalism that has been transformed into an institutional exit and consequently the redefinition of trade governance, without mentioning the coordination of alliances, is Brexit. The sovereignty framing of the Leave campaign was not merely a symbolic one, as it generated a legal and regulatory aspect that recreated the historic tension between the UK and the EU over the customs procedures, the rule of origin and regulatory divergence under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). Trade Brexit shows how nationalist agendas of control can create non-tariff barriers despite both parties' desire to maintain trade. Indeed, demonstrates that Brexit also restructured the EU's broader integration ecosystem by strengthening differentiated integration and recalibrating the EU's external economic posture(Wachowiak & Zuleeg, 2022).



The second-order European cohesion and external coordination have been affected by Brexit in terms of alliances. The UK was no longer involved in EU decision-making, reducing the EU's ability to reach internal consensus in certain foreign-policy areas and empowering sovereignty debates within the EU, as Brexit became a point of reference for other nationalist parties. Your argument, in general, is confirmed by the case: nationalism can undermine cooperation not just by opposing certain policies, but also by changing the institutional context in which long-term coordination is carried out (De Ville & Siles-Brügge, 2019).

7.2. Case Study 2: America First and international agreements with implications for the United States.

The America First strategy demonstrates how nationalist framing can alter a state's external commitments without a complete withdrawal from its role as a global leader. Park (2019) claims that the Trump-era vision of the world treated trade and alliances in a transactional way, focusing on unfairness and shifting multilateral rule-making toward renegotiation, pressure, and unilateral tools. It was an important approach to internationalization as it undermined the reliability of predictable commitments and motivated partners to insure against policy changes (Park & Stangarone, 2019).

Nationalist politics used tariffs and renegotiation as the major instruments to signal domestic protection and restore a sense of perceived sovereignty over trade. Recent political economy literature connects the dispersion of tariff-based approaches to broader changes in the global trade structure, in which power distance employs economic instruments to redefine bargaining structures and supply chains (Kim, 2025). America First also bore reputational and credibility costs in terms of alliances and cooperation: even when the exit from formal treaties did not occur, the uncertainty about future commitments led allies to seek greater autonomy and diversification of relationships. The case illustrates that nationalism diminishes the ability to collaborate because it heightens perceived instability in commitments, thereby propagating fragmentation in trade and alliance coordination (Park & Stangarone, 2019).

7.3. Case Study 3: The Belt and Road Initiative and China's nationalist interests in global impact.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) offers an example of nations in which nationalism and globalization are not opposite but mutually exclusive. The BRI projects do not promote anti-globalization in terms of cross-border connectivity; rather, they promote state-led globalization that commits external economic growth to the internal validity and nationalist discourses of national rejuvenation and national political position. Specifically characterize the BRI as a consolidation of foreign policy and economic nationalism, where outbound investment and infrastructure diplomacy are used to achieve development and national power (Jamali et al., 2024).

This is important to your paper because it demonstrates that nationalism can redefine globalization by altering the individuals who determine the process of integration and the conditions under which it occurs. Instead of market-driven openness, BRI is based on state-oriented connectivity, achieved through bilateral compromises, financing, and strategic infrastructure. The review essay on the research on major BRI scholarship by Hall (2022) highlights that the initiative is under extensive research as economic statecraft, in which material projects are connected to influence-building and governance shaping across areas. The BRI could also complicate regional coordination, as it alters dependence structures and bargaining power, particularly for middle- and smaller-sized states caught in the struggle between the US and China (Hall & Krolkowski, 2022). Concisely, the China example reinforces your theoretical argument that nationalism may co-exist with high interdependence,

yet still remodel the principles, structures, and balance of power of globalization(Jamali et al., 2024).

Case Study	Country / Region	Nationalist Policy	Trade Impact	Alliance Impact	Global Cooperation Impact
Brexit	United Kingdom / EU	Leave EU / Sovereignty-first	Trade barriers, customs divergence, selective access to EU markets	Reduced EU cohesion; recalibration of commitments	Challenges in EU-wide policy coordination; selective participation in EU initiatives
America First	United States	Tariffs, renegotiation of international agreements	US-China trade tensions; tariff escalations; trade diversion	Increased transactional approach to NATO; pressure on burden-sharing	Limited participation in climate & migration agreements; focus on bilateral deals
Belt & Road Initiative (BRI)	China / Global	State-led globalization with nationalist framing	Infrastructure-led connectivity; selective trade integration	Alternative alliances with strategic partners; regional influence	Promotes regional cooperation but reflects Chinese strategic interests; selective global projects

Table 2: Comparative Case Study Summary

8. Discussion: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Reconfiguration of International Order

These research results have illustrated that nationalism does not mean the conclusion of globalization, but a change in globalization. In trade, coalitions, and international collaboration, the concept of nationalism reworks the rules, structures, and expectations for how international interaction is conducted. Rather than a linear backlash against globalization, the data indicate a fragmented and politicized centrality of interdependence, where collaboration continues but on a conditional, selective, and more disputed basis (Rodrik, 2011).

8.1. Nationalism and Trade: Liberalization to Strategic Control.

The analysis of international trade reveals that nationalist politics shift trade policy toward strategic management rather than liberalization. In the three regions studied, states remain enmeshed in the global market. Still, they are now much more actively dependent on tariffs, export controls, and industrial policy to defend domestic constituencies and perceived vulnerability (World Trade Organization, 2023). The tariff war between the US and China, the trade friction following Brexit, and the European quest for strategic autonomy all demonstrate that nationalist agendas shift the sphere of trade into a symbol of sovereignty (Wachowiak & Zuleeg, 2022).

It is important to note that the paper demonstrates that nationalism rarely kills trade. Instead, it reroutes trade, disaggregates supply chains, and heightens uncertainty among companies to deter the efficiency gains of globalization whilst preserving interdependence UNCTAD. This supports the premise that nationalism presents a discriminatory openness to isolation (Development, 2023).

8.1. Alliances in the Face of Nationalist Pressure: Holding Together without Necessity.

The analysis of alliances indicates that the notion of nationalism does not destroy alliances but rather alters the logic of alliances. The experience of NATO showed that alliances are resistant to the effects of nationalist rhetoric, particularly in the context of acutely manifest threats, but that their integrity becomes increasingly reliant on perceptions of threats in the present and on domestic political cycles (Kunertova & Schmitt, 2025). Nationalism framing increases transaction costs in alliances by turning the burden-sharing issue into a question of public legitimacy, making it more difficult to plan for the long term (Koivula, 2021).

In Europe, integration is defined by nationalist politics that discuss power over sovereignty and strategic independence, which pose a conflict between the collective facilitation of capability and the threat of dependency (Koivula, 2021). At the Asian level, nationalism consolidates the hedging behavior. It denies ASEAN the ability to take decisive action in the face of US-China competition, leaving it merely a coordination arena rather than a binding alliance. Coupled with these instances, they demonstrate that nationalism makes alliances fragile, even when formal commitments remain intact (Beeson, 2022).

8.2. Transnational Cooperation: Disintegration of Unity.

The article analyzing climate change, migration, and global health presents the most destabilizing impact of nationalism: the undermining of collective action. These areas of concern demand long-term coordination, trust, and burden-sharing, which are compromised when nationalistic discourses portray cooperation as a loss of sovereignty. Climate governance depends more on informal coalitions than on binding agreements, reflecting nationalist opposition to domestic constraints (Bernstein & Hoffmann, 2019).

The same is true of migration governance, in which states are willing to enter bilateral deals and externalize multilateral responsibility-sharing into fragmented and unequal protection regimes. Global health responses also illustrate how nationalism may prevail over an institutional norm in times of crisis, undermining trust and leaving a country less prepared to address future outbreaks. These results affirm that nationalism leads to a shift from multilateral cooperation to ad hoc coordination (Fidler, 2020).

8.3. Theoretical Implications: Uniting the Two Accounts of Persistence and Decline.

The theoretical framework explains why globalization is sustained even under nationalist pressure. The realism approach clarifies the security-based reasoning behind strategic trade controls and alliance bargains (Mearsheimer, 2003), and the liberalism approach emphasizes how domestic preferences change and destabilize cooperation within institutions without incurring interdependence. Constructivism also provides a complementary explanation, demonstrating how nationalist identity discourses restructure interests and delegitimize compromise (Moravcsik, 1997).

Embedded liberalism, practical frameworks, and the globalization trilemma also explain why the nationalist backlash occurs when national adjustment mechanisms fail. Nationalism, therefore, is not an exception but a political reaction to the distributive and governmental constraints of deep globalization (Ruggie, 1982).

8.4. Comparative Case Study Insights.

The case studies supports the overall findings. Brexit is a vivid example of the restructuring of institutions by nationalist exit and coordination costs in the long run. America First shows that nationalism-based leadership can undermine expectations, even without a systematic withdrawal. The Belt and Road Initiative of China demonstrates that, with nationalism, global expansion may coexist but changes the conditions and rules of integration by establishing state-led connectivity. These cases, when combined, show that nationalism reshapes globalization but does not reverse it. The international system remains connected, but it is more politicized, uneven, and dependent on legitimacy within individual nations(Jamali et al., 2024).

Challenge / Issue	Nationalist Effect	Suggested Governance / Policy Action
Trade Fragmentation	Increased tariffs, trade diversion, selective supply chains	Strengthen multilateral trade agreements; diversify supply chains; promote transparency
Alliance Cohesion	Transactional burden-sharing, domestic political pressure	Enhance alliance dialogue; develop flexible cooperation frameworks; emphasize shared security priorities
Climate Change Cooperation	Reduced commitment to global climate agreements	Establish regional coalitions; incentivize climate policies; integrate climate action with national goals
Migration Management	Bilateral or adhoc migration policies; reduced multilateral coordination	Harmonize migration policies; adopt shared responsibility frameworks; strengthen international monitoring
Global Health Governance	Competition over resources, selective engagement	Strengthen WHO frameworks; ensure equitable access to health resources; promote cross-border data sharing

Table 3. Presents actionable policy recommendations for managing the impacts of nationalism on trade, alliances, and global cooperation.

9. Conclusion

This study has discussed the dramatic effect of increased nationalism on the process of globalization, particularly in international trade, alliances, and international collaboration. Even though nationalism has not fully turned back the tide of globalization, it has fundamentally changed its nature. Rather than a direct path of waning world collaboration, we are observing a reformulated globalization in which states remain connected but now cooperate selectively, in a transactional way, and motivated by sovereignty.

Nationalist politics have contributed to the reversal of liberalization in international trade, with protectionism adopted in the form of tariffs and export controls to address national economic stability and security concerns, rather than through multilateral cooperation. Nationalism in trade does not eliminate interdependence; it merely reroutes it, causing fragmentation and disruption of supply chains, which usually make it harder for firms to forecast market conditions and plan long-term growth.

Nationalistic movements undermine the unity of multilateral organizations such as NATO and the European Union. Although coalitions continue to survive, they are not working effectively due to emerging domestic pressure to review burden-sharing and sovereignty. Nationalism, as seen in the EU, has been a source of demands for strategic independence, which is prone to internal conflicts and foreign diplomacy. Nationalism in Asia has led to hedging strategies, in



which states are interested in cooperation but not in binding commitments, which makes cooperation and security in the region difficult.

International collaboration, especially on issues such as climate change, migration, and global health, has been more divided. Nationalist rhetoric undermines the legitimacy of multilateral organizations and common responsibility systems, making it hard to agree on global public goods in the long term. The emergence of nationalism in these regions reduces international organizations' ability to address pressing issues effectively, as national sovereignty becomes paramount over collective action.

The research results in this paper indicate that the international order is changing towards a more transactional and less institutionally united states due to nationalism. However, although nationalism does not bring globalization to an end, it dramatically changes the terms and conditions in which nations relate to each other. With countries still reaffirming their sovereignty, global governance is set to become more regionalized and fragmented, and bilateral agreements and informal alliances are set to play a more leading role.

In the future, policymakers and global institutions have to deal with this new political reality. It is necessary to have flexible, adaptive governance systems and structures that can address the risks of fragmentation and that are cooperative across borders. It will be a difficult process to discover a way to accommodate national priorities and global requirements, and to ensure that global institutions are not rendered useless in a world where nationalism is becoming a key factor in international relations.

Conclusion

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