

THE RISE OF REGIONALISM IN A FRAGMENTED GLOBAL SYSTEM**Rabbimov Og'abek Tolib o'g'li**

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Annotation: *This paper explores the resurgence of regionalism in the context of an increasingly fragmented global system. As multilateral institutions face growing challenges and global cooperation becomes more fragile, states are turning toward regional frameworks to ensure economic stability, political security, and strategic influence. The paper analyzes the driving forces behind regional integration, including geopolitical shifts, trade tensions, the weakening of global governance, and the impact of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. By examining case studies from regions like the European Union, ASEAN, the African Union, and the Eurasian Economic Union, the study highlights how regionalism has evolved as a pragmatic response to global uncertainty and offers both opportunities and risks for international relations.*

Keywords: *Regionalism, globalization, fragmentation, multilateralism, regional integration, global governance, geopolitical shifts, trade blocs*

The global order is undergoing a period of profound transformation. Multilateral institutions that once anchored international cooperation are increasingly challenged by great power rivalries, economic protectionism, and shifting political alliances. In this environment of global fragmentation, regionalism has reemerged as a powerful force reshaping the international system.

Unlike the universalism of global institutions, regionalism offers states a more flexible and often more cohesive framework for addressing shared interests. From economic unions to political alliances, regional organizations are being used to bypass gridlocked global platforms and promote regional solutions to regional problems. This trend has accelerated in recent years, as global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and geopolitical conflicts have exposed the limitations of global governance.

The return to regionalism reflects a strategic recalibration by states seeking greater autonomy, resilience, and influence in a multipolar world. It also raises important questions about the future of globalization, the relevance of international law, and the

prospects for inclusive global cooperation. This paper aims to explore the causes and consequences of regionalism's rise and assess its implications for the evolving structure of the international system.

In recent decades, regionalism has experienced a notable resurgence as states seek alternative pathways for cooperation, development, and security in an increasingly fragmented global environment. While globalization once promised seamless economic interdependence and the dominance of multilateral institutions, recent global developments have exposed the limitations of this vision. Trade wars, rising nationalism, pandemic-driven disruptions, and geopolitical tensions have challenged the coherence of the global order. As a result, regional organizations are emerging as more practical and politically viable platforms for managing shared interests and achieving collective goals.

One of the key drivers behind the rise of regionalism is the decline in trust toward global governance institutions. Bodies such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the World Health Organization have faced criticism for inefficiency, politicization, and unequal representation. Many states, especially in the Global South, perceive these institutions as being dominated by the interests of powerful states, which limits their ability to provide fair and inclusive solutions. Consequently, regional arrangements are increasingly viewed as mechanisms that offer more equal footing, faster decision-making, and stronger policy coherence.

Economic integration is one of the most prominent forms of regionalism. Organizations such as the European Union (EU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) illustrate how regional blocs are working to enhance trade, reduce barriers, and create collective bargaining power on the global stage. The EU remains the most advanced example of regional integration, having achieved a common market, a single currency (the Euro), and supranational institutions. ASEAN, while more intergovernmental in nature, has made significant progress in economic harmonization and political coordination among Southeast Asian countries.

Security-driven regionalism has also gained traction. In the face of transnational threats such as terrorism, organized crime, cyberattacks, and regional conflicts, countries are forming defense and intelligence-sharing frameworks. The African Union has developed peacekeeping capabilities, while the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in the post-Soviet space aims to coordinate regional responses to security challenges. These efforts indicate a growing recognition that regional security issues often require regional solutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated regionalist tendencies. Faced with slow and uneven global responses, countries within certain regions began coordinating pandemic management, border policies, and vaccine distribution through regional mechanisms. For instance, the African Union's coordination of the Africa CDC and the pooled procurement of vaccines under the COVAX program marked a significant step in regional health governance. Similarly, within the EU, despite initial delays, collective action was eventually taken on pandemic response, economic recovery, and digital transformation.

However, the rise of regionalism is not without risks and limitations. Some regional projects face challenges of internal inequality, political fragmentation, and resource asymmetry. For example, despite its aspirations, the African Union struggles with financial dependency and political coherence among its members. The EAEU faces questions about Russia's dominant role and the limited commitment of other member states. Moreover, regionalism can also lead to the creation of exclusive blocs that may undermine global solidarity, marginalize weaker states, and intensify rivalry between competing regional powers.

Nevertheless, regionalism continues to be a rational and strategic response to global uncertainty. It allows countries to pool resources, increase their collective voice, and protect regional identities and interests in a volatile international system. As power becomes more diffused and multipolarity deepens, regional organizations are likely to play a more prominent role in shaping the norms, institutions, and balances of power that define international relations in the coming decades.

The fragmentation of the global order has led to the re-emergence of regionalism as a key organizing principle in contemporary international relations. While globalization once emphasized universal integration and multilateral cooperation, recent global crises and shifting geopolitical dynamics have highlighted the limitations of these ideals. In this context, regionalism offers a more flexible, responsive, and often more inclusive approach to addressing common challenges.

Through economic, political, and security frameworks, regional organizations provide platforms for cooperation tailored to shared values, geographies, and strategic interests. The increasing relevance of entities such as the European Union, ASEAN, the African Union, and others reflects the growing reliance on regional cooperation to manage global uncertainty, ensure collective resilience, and protect sovereignty.

However, the rise of regionalism also presents challenges, including the risk of exclusivity, uneven development within regions, and potential fragmentation of the

international system into competing blocs. The future of regionalism will depend on its ability to complement—rather than replace—global governance, and to promote inclusive, balanced, and cooperative international engagement.

In conclusion, regionalism is not a rejection of globalization, but rather a reconfiguration of international cooperation in a world where global solutions have become harder to achieve. It represents both a pragmatic response to global fragmentation and a strategic vision for regional strength in an era of uncertainty.

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