Trump's Foreign Policy and the Crucifixion of New World Order

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Abstract

This study interrogates the unilateral foreign-policy of Donald Trump, including the use of tariffs as a geopolitical tool, unilateral military coercion, and expansionist territorial ambitions, and their destabilizing effect on established international norms and institutions. These activities spawned fears of a partial weakening of the liberal international architecture of the post-Second World War and the likelihood of a gradual breakdown of what is conversationally known as the New World Order. Therefore, the main task of this paper was to evaluate how the foreign-policy praxis of Trump led to the crucifixion or gradual destruction of this world order. The paper is based on a Neorealist paradigm, according to which sovereign states, acting in an anarchic international environment, do not consider institutional cooperation and normative restraint as more important than power, security, and national interests. Neorealism provides a prism through which one can understand why dominant states like the United States may resort to self-help policies that erode collective norms. The study adopted a qualitative method and relied on a collection of secondary sources, including peer-reviewed articles, government publications, media coverage, and institutional records. The collected data were subjected to content analysis. The results showed that Trump tariff diplomacy was a coercive leverage, which had put a strain on trade relations with European partners and violated traditional economic governance principles. Unilateral military operations in Venezuela were against the international law and state's sovereignty, which is the core principle of the New World Order. Furthermore, the unilateralism of Trump foreign-policy undermined the multilateral norms, undermined the belief in the collective security architecture of the New World Order, which will hasten the disintegration of the liberal world order. Based on this, the paper proposes the rejuvenation of multilateral institutions, the strict observance of international legal norms, and the retune of strategic diplomacy to prevent the destruction of the New World Order.

Keywords: Trump foreign policy, crucifixion**,** unilateralism, new world order, tariffs, international norms.

Introduction

Over the last ten years, the foreign policy of President Trump has become the subject of a significant scholarly debate, which attracts the interest of not only policymakers and academics but also international institutions. At the center of this debate is the argument that Trump administrations have strategically pursue an America First doctrine. This principle places priority on national sovereignty, transactional diplomacy and unilateral projection of power often at the expense of established multilateral norms and long-term institutional commitments. Instead of strengthening the rule-based architecture, respect to sovereignty, collective security arrangements such as NATO, and foreseeable economic governance, the strategy of Trump has been typified by policies that seem to undermine or avoid these mechanisms (Kanat, 2025). As an example, researchers mention that his speech and actions are characterized by the rejection of institutional norms in favor of ad-hoc exercise of power, undermining the trust in alliances and forcing states to review expectations of American leadership and credibility.

The implications of such dynamics extend beyond the cohesion of an alliance, and include the capacity of such alliances to manage crises and the overall structure of world governance. This has been compounded by confrontational policy decisions, such as abrupt tariff increases, targeted military actions, and so on, which have alarmed long-time allies, and increased geopolitical disintegration in a manner unanticipated by most post-Cold War policymakers. The ensuing tensions have revealed fault lines in the international system as a challenge to the assumptions of the sustainability of the liberal order and its ability to perform effectively in the face of ongoing strategic reinterpretation and institutional skepticism (Smialowski et al., 2025). The fundamental issue about the foreign policy of Trump is that it affects multilateralism, trust in alliances and the NWO stability. These are not confined to the occasional disputes but also to the same principles on which cooperative international relations are built. Analysts have viewed the unilateral shift as a kind of structural destruction that is leading to a high level of geopolitical uncertainty and which may precipitate other world powers to take advantage of the perceived leadership gaps or reexamine alliances priorities as a result of declining U.S. collective security principle (McNamara & Steinberg, 2026; SUS, 2026)

It is within this social milieu that scholars of IR were force to raise these thought-provoking questions: In what ways does this strategy expose not just a loss of confidence in U.S. collective principles, but also hasten the process of fragmenting across institutions that form the basis of collective security and economic cooperation? These rhetorical questions summarize profound concerns of the diplomats and scholars: the uncertainty of mutual diplomatic principles may be converted into the strategic hedging, diversification of alliances and even the establishment of alternative blocs aimed at the reduction of the risks of overreliance on one of the hegemonic actors.

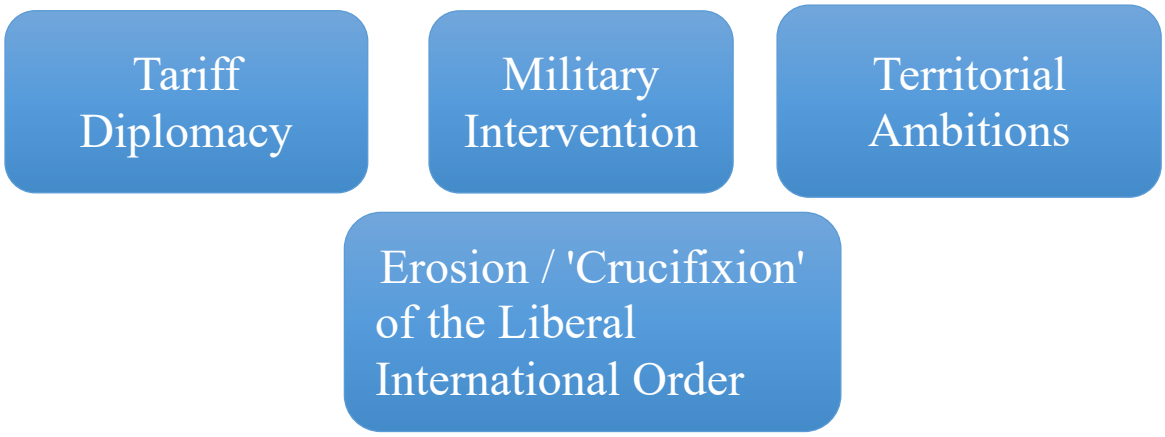
In addition to this, emerging superpowers like China and Russia are increasingly becoming more visible in the policy arenas that used to be controlled by American leadership, and this is another point of concern as to the direction the emerging balance of power in the world. The question is, could the liberal order be replaced by a reconfigured multipolarity, structured in ways that are inspired by realist power competition, as opposed to collective norms? The

timelessness of these problems is supported by professional commentaries and scholarly reviews, which define the foreign policy of Trump as the renegotiation of the boundaries of geopolitical rivalry not by strengthening the status quo but by taking the normative foundations of the NWO by torpedoed and encouraging partner states to diversify their diplomatic and security policies (Landauer, 2026)

Based on such policy orientations, there is a pressing issue in the current international relations; destruction of the liberal New World Order that used to offer predictability, collective security, and cooperation mechanisms in response to a crisis. The post-World War II consensus, founded upon common adherence to multilateral standards, alliances, and institutional leadership, seems to be receding into the background, and in its place is transactional diplomacy, which puts the short-term national benefit above the long-term collective security (Whitehead, 2026). This emergence poses serious questions as to whether the existing international system is able to respond to the new challenges facing the world like transboundary conflicts, climatic changes, and increasing authoritarian challenge without the institutional unity that previously enabled concerted action. It is against this backdrop of normative erosion, strategic realignment, and mounting institutional skepticism that this study was undertaken to examine impact of Trump's Foreign Policy on the New World Order — an inquiry aimed at unpacking the processes, implications, and potential futures of an international order in flux. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1) analyze the impact of Trump's coercive tariff policies — including the imposition of high tariffs on trading partners and threats of tariffs tied to strategic demands
2) evaluate the geopolitical consequences of Trump's assertive interventions in sovereign states — evidenced by escalated military and naval pressure on Venezuela and broader threats of force
3) examine how Trump's pursuit of territorial leverage and renegotiation of strategic relationships — exemplified by his Greenland acquisition efforts and transactional diplomacy with allies
4) critically assess how Trump's unilateral foreign policy actions — including the use of tariffs as geopolitical tools, the application of unilateral military pressure, and the pursuit of strategic territorial ambitions — have contributed to the *cruxification* (progressive collapse) of the New World Order

Conceptual Model: Drivers of the Erosion of the New World Order



Source: Authors' graphy

The study conceptual framework described the correlation between the New World Order, which was the dependent variable, and the foreign policy activities of President Trump, which was identified as the independent variable. It defined three major areas of the foreign policy of the President which included coercive tariff diplomacy, unilateral military interventions, and territorial ambitions. It was assumed that these areas of policy weaken the New World Order principles of multilateralism, sovereignty respect, collective security, institutional cooperation and rule-based governance. Basing on the theoretical structure of Neorealism, the school of thought argues that a hegemonic state, in as far as it pursues power, self-help and national interests at the expense of keeping normative commitments, accelerates the gradual loss of the liberal international system.

Theoretical Underpinning

This study is anchored on the Neorealist theory, one of the main theories in International Relations. Neorealism, which comes from Kenneth N. Waltz's Theory of International Politics (1979), focuses on the fact that without a supra-state authority, states are concerned with survival, the accumulation of power, and self-help. Neorealism emphasizes structural constraints, especially the distribution of power and systemic interdependence, as important factors in determining state action, rather than classical realism, which emphasizes human nature or domestic factors. The main principles are: (1) states as the main actors; (2) international anarchy; and (3) states' quest for security in a self-help environment.

Neorealist principles are evident in the foreign policy of the United States under the Trump administration. The administration's emphasis on state security and strategic advantage was evident in policies like unilateral actions, transactional diplomacy, and the prioritization of national interests over multilateral commitments. This was a strategy that questioned the post-World War II institutional norms, such as collective security arrangements and multilateral trade agreements, and was consistent with the America First doctrine. Empirically, Trump's actions, such as challenging NATO pledges and retaliatory tariffs, illustrate the Neorealist expectation that a hegemon will restructure international institutions to protect its material and strategic interests. The paradigm therefore offers a useful lens for understanding the shifts in U.S. foreign policy: When the established institutions no longer serve a state's interests, power and security concerns take precedence over normative commitments. Thus, neorealism explains why the U.S. adopted policies that prioritized national interests over multilateral cooperation at the risk of undermining the latter (Waltz, 1979; Internazionali & Alcaro, 2026; Overhaus, 2026).

Results and Discussion

Impact of Trump's coercive tariff policies-including the imposition of high tariffs on trading partners and threats of tariffs tied to strategic demands

The tariff policy of Donald Trump since his re-election to the presidency has gone beyond the classic protectionist impulse and become an intentional tool of geopolitical coercion that re-structure the projection of the economic power of the United States on the international scene. Trump stepped up an old-standing obsession with Greenland, an independent Danish island, in early 2026, when he announced a set of tariff levies on a number of European partners as a bargaining chip, should they disobey U.S. strategic demands on the island. On 1 February, the administration announced that Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the United

Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Finland would impose a 10 per cent tariff on imports to the United States, increasing to 25 per cent on 1 June in case of an impasse over Greenland. This action represented a conspicuous break with the traditional application of tariffs as instruments of national industry protection or redressing trade deficits; instead, used tariff power directly as a weapon of coercive diplomacy (Taylor, 2026).

European leaders reacted with strong criticisms to the announcement, saying they were very worried that such coercive action would undermine decades of transatlantic cooperation and jeopardizing the long-standing economic and security alliances. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer called the threat of tariffs as utterly unacceptable and indicated the readiness to take retaliatory measures directly against the U.S. administration; French President Emmanuel Macron called the strategy an unacceptable form of intimidation that would not affect sovereign decision-making (Taylor, 2026).

European Union officials, Ursula von der Leyen and Kaja Kallas, stressed that the United States and its European allies had common security interests in the Arctic, especially via NATO, and that the use of tariffs to seek political concessions would lead to a vicious circle in transatlantic relations (OPB, 2026). This also changed the attitude of the general population in Western Europe, as the polls showed that the positive views of the United States dropped sharply, and the number of people who supported the idea of European autonomy without references to the traditional system of alliances increased, which also highlighted the fact that economic coercion could easily turn into a wider diplomatic backlash (Taylor, 2026). These are indications that the tariff policy of Trump has entangled political pressure; and the use of tariffs as a tool of economic bargaining are completely replaced by the functions of geopolitical power projection; which has an unpleasant effect on the relations between countries and undermines the traditions of cooperation in alliances (Taylor, 2026).

The economic and diplomatic consequences of the coercive tariff policy by Trump have spread throughout the geopolitical and economic environment, transforming the trade relations, the unity of alliances, and the defensive policy instruments in the European Union and other countries. The European leaders were quick to react to the threats of tariff increases in January 2026 such as the planned tariff increase to 25 per cent on goods of NATO partners by stating that such measures are jeopardizing transatlantic relations and would lead to a vicious circle of cooperation (OPB, 2026). This concerted diplomatic counter-offensive indicates a general worry that the use of tariff policy undermines trust and jeopardizes the stability of long-standing security and economic relationships that serve as the pillars of the post-Cold War liberal order. There has been a significant change in the sentiment of the people of Western Europe, with a YouGov-based poll published by The Guardian showing that majorities in Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK now hold an unfavourable opinion of the United States (Taylor, 2026). These drops in popularity may encourage policymakers to seek more ambitious economic independence and less dependence on U.S. policy models, and may have long-term implications on alliances and cooperation.

The European Union has also reinforced its defensive repertoire in the Anti-Coercion Instrument (ACI)-Regulation 2023/2675, which came into force on 27 December 2023 in the anticipation of economic coercion. The ACI gives the EU a legal framework that allows

deterring and, in case of necessity, countering actions by third parties that endanger trade or investment to affect sovereign policy decisions (European Commission, 2024). Scholars underscore the fact that the instrument bridges a gap in the EU trade-defence mechanisms by enabling proportional countermeasures- such as tariffs, investment restrictions and trade controls- against coercive actions (Amberg et al., 2026). The threat of the ACI coming into effect has already affected the strategic calculations in Brussels; analysts believe that its presence is a deterrent and it would be difficult to unilaterally impose tariffs on EU partners without the risk of a strong retaliatory response (Wolf, 2025).

In the meantime, scholarly and financial commentary highlights that the threat of coercive tariffs is disrupting the traditional trade patterns and supply chains, hastening the attempts of EU states to diversify relations and minimize their exposure to foreign pressure (Bulmer, 2026). This is consistent with more general issues of deglobalisation, where trade barriers and protectionist reactions inhibit economic integration across the borders and may slow down long term growth opportunities (Ambrosino et al., 2026).

Evaluating the geopolitical consequences of Trump's assertive interventions in sovereign states—evidenced by escalated military and naval pressure on Venezuela and broader threats of force

The geopolitical implications of the Trump administration aggressive interventions in independent states, especially in Venezuela, are a dramatic change in the U.S. foreign policy and have serious consequences on the stability in the region, the international standards of sovereignty, and the great-power rivalry. The United States sent naval forces, launched maritime attacks, blocked the Venezuelan oil tankers with a naval blockade, and finally engaged in direct military action, including seizing President Nicolás 'Maduro and his wife in Caracas, starting in late 2025 and intensifying in January 2026 (Atlantic Council, 2026). Washington has framed these actions as being a part of a broader counter-narcotics and anti-terrorism campaign, but they have been broadly understood as efforts to coerce regime change and assert control over strategic resources and geopolitical positioning in Venezuela (European Parliament Think Tank, 2026; Saliya, 2026). The application of force, especially without the permission of the United Nations Security Council, has questioned the long-standing international standards that do not allow intervention in the internal life of sovereign states without legal justication, establishing a controversial precedent in the international relations (Hasar, 2026; Sterio, 2026).

The interventions have also spilled over regionally into Latin America and have sounded alarms among the neighboring states and traditional partners about U.S. intentions and the overall direction of hemispheric politics. Other nations like Colombia and Brazil have already spoken out against the increasing level of military pressure and Cuba has accused the U.S. of breaking international law and piracy, especially after the oil tankers of Venezuela were seized (Associated Press, 2025; European Parliament Think Tank, 2026). This polarization shows how the unilateral military pressure may shatter the diplomatic relations and strengthen the regional division. Regional organisations such as the Organisation of American States (OAS) have been drawn into the debate on the issue of respect to sovereignty and it is important to note that U.S military pressure is not just a bilateral problem, but one that has been experienced by wider regional systems of governance. These geopolitical tensions also

make it more difficult to collaborate on transnational issues like migration, organized crime, and economic integration as states adjust their security and diplomatic loyalties according to the perceived external threat (Atlantic Council, 2026).

The global reaction has been equally impacted internationally. The intervention was condemned by major powers, such as China, Russia, and Iran, as an illegal act of sovereignty violation, with Western allies giving mixed responses, some of which supported the goal of fighting authoritarianism but criticized the means used (Le Monde, 2026; The Guardian, 2026; Saliya, 2026). The intervention has sparked arguments on the rules-based international order with critics fearing that the unilateral imposition of regime change by the international community is a threat to the principal principles of the UN Charter and is likely to embolden other nations to do the same, thus weakening norms of collective security (Rediker et al., 2026). According to legal experts, such a strategy may undermine the international legal system, making it difficult to distinguish between counterterrorism efforts and geopolitical hegemony, which is considered by some to reinforce the idea of realist power politics over institutional collaboration (Azzam & Dijkstra, 2026; Wahid et al., 2026).

Trump's pursuit of territorial leverage and renegotiation of strategic relationships — exemplified by his Greenland acquisition efforts and transactional diplomacy with allies

The foreign policy of Donald Trump in the second term of his presidency was a precursor of transactional diplomacy and leveraging territorial power, which is quite unlike the traditional American approach to alliance. One of the most controversial expressions of this approach is the new interest of Trump in Greenland, an independent state of the Kingdom of Denmark (Drezner, 2026). In 2025 and 2026, Trump again expressed his long-standing interest in the acquisition of the archipelago, claiming that the control over Greenland is due to its strategic position in the Arctic, its closeness to the North Atlantic theatre, and possible defensive benefits against the global competitors like China and Russia (Roy & Masters, 2026). The administration also pursued this by appointing a special envoy to Greenland, purportedly to further negotiations on eventual transfer of sovereignty; this action was condemned by the Danish government who saw this as a sabotage of the territorial integrity of Denmark and respect of the autonomy of Greenland (WSJ, 2026). This episode is a clear example of how Trump uses his territorial ambitions to re-establish strategic relationships and gain concessions with allies that do not align with American First Doctrine.

The Greenland gambit has had a major geopolitical backlash. The idea of becoming a part of the United States has been massively opposed by the people of Greenland themselves, and recent polls show that most of them would rather stay in the Danish kingdom and even become more closely tied to the European Union than to the U.S., which demonstrates how the idea of territorial ambitions can backfire and undermine trust (WSJ, 2026). Additionally, the allies of NATO made joint declarations to reassert the sovereignty of Greenland and to underline that the issues of territorial jurisdiction should be the prerogative of the people of Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark (Foreign Policy, 2026). These responses underscore the impact of the transactional framing of Trump, who at one point included the threat of tariffs on European allies that refuse to negotiate the status of Greenland, which has impacted the unity of the alliances and even cast doubt on the credibility of the U.S. leadership in conventional security structures (Time, 2026).

In addition to Greenland, transactional diplomacy by Trump is an indication of a complete change in the principle of alliances. According to scholars, this strategy is the shift of multilateralism and joint strategic planning towards the short-term tactical benefits and bilateral bargaining where economic or security gains are obtained in return of cooperation (Yang, 2026). The implication of this modus operandi is that allies are increasingly evaluating the worth of cooperation with the United States in terms of a transactional principle where they can offer assistance or defence in response to compliant behaviour but not shared norms of cooperation (Brookings Institution, 2026). According to critics, these strategies threaten to erode the long-established standards of mutual respect of sovereignty and collective decision-making - the basic tenets of NOW since the Cold War (Modern Diplomacy, 2026).

Trump's unilateral foreign policy actions — including the use of tariffs as geopolitical tools, the application of unilateral military pressure, and the pursuit of strategic territorial ambitions —leading to the *cruxification* (progressive collapse) of the New World Order

U.S. foreign policy since the start of the second term of President Donald Trump has changed significantly, shifting to unilateralism, economic coercion, and European land ambitions that threaten the institutional foundation of the post-World War II liberal international order, often known as the New World Order (Council on Foreign Relations, 2026). The United States traditionally existed on a multilateral system that valued sovereign equality and followed the international norms that ensured security, economic stability and predictability in international relations. These principles have become increasingly overshadowed by *deal and power politics* and a confrontational stance that puts short-term strategic success above multilateralism, under the doctrine of Trumpian America First (Wiedekind & Boller, 2025). The geopolitical implications of this paradigm shift are immense, with doubts about the effectiveness of international institutions, the strain of alliances and the question of whether the very fabric of the liberal world order is falling apart under the pressure of unilateral state behaviour (Wiedekind & Boller, 2025).

The use of tariffs as strategic geopolitical instruments, and not tools of protectionist economic policy, is one of the most visible shifts in the strategies used by Trump. This tendency can be illustrated by the wholesale application of 25 per cent tariff on the imported Venezuelan oil through the Executive Order 14245, in contrast to the traditional trade policy (Roy & Masters, 2026). Tariff threats on European allies over Greenland, where the United States declared punitive tariffs on imports by allies unless they agreed to U.S. strategic objectives, are more recent examples of the politicisation of tariff policy which undermined co-operation and trust in historical allies (Operation Arctic Endurance, 2026). According to scholars, such economic coercion of allies shatters institutional norms of cooperation and changes the formula of global cooperation, making the United States less a reliable partner and leading to a systemic instability (Roy & Masters, 2026).

Closely associated with tariff coercion is the use of unilateral military pressure by Trump, in most cases, in Latin America. In Jan 2026, the U.S. forces conducted an operation that led to the capture of Venezuela President Nicolás Maduro a move that was locally presented as counter-narcotics and security operation but was internationally condemned as an unwanted intrusion into the internal affairs of a sovereign nation (Roy & Masters, 2026). This form of military aggression is a contemporary rebranding of past doctrines like the Monroe Doctrine,

under which the US could claim dominance in the Hemisphere by using unilateral force and coercive diplomacy (Operation Arctic Endurance, 2026). The effect of the geopolitics is not only on Venezuela, but it is a message to other states that the adherence of the U.S. to non-intervention and the respect of sovereignty as pillars of the New World Order can be subject to short-term strategic considerations instead of long-term standards of international law.

Probably the most notable break with international traditions is the fact that Trump pursues strategic territorial objectives, the clearest example of which are his frequent offers regarding Greenland. After being dismissed in his early presidency as rhetorical hyperbole, the renewed campaign to negotiate control over Greenland, including open proposals of tariffs or force, and the appointment of a special envoy, has led to heightened tensions with Denmark, NATO allies, and Arctic partners (Yhdego, 2026). Scholars believe that this maneuver does not only put the cohesion of the alliance at stake but is also a normative disruption in international relations: a move to seize sovereign territory by forceful measures is a qualitative blur of the legal shield of territorial integrity that lies at the core of the post-war order (Council on Foreign Relations, 2026; Roth, 2026). The policy briefs argue that these kinds of transactions would cause enemies to be estranged, distrust in the effectiveness of U.S. leadership, and a catalyst of revisionist forces to break the established norms, thus, leading to a progressive disdain or cruxification of the New World Order (Arctic Flashpoint, 2025; YIP Institute, 2025).

In addition, such unilateral steps have restructured the international perception about the role of the United States in the global governance. Instead of reinforcing the rules-based system that was able to withstand a few decades of relative peace and collaboration, Trump coercion on tariffs, military actions, and the strategic acquisition of territory have brought confusion, distrust, and competitive re-calibration to allies and enemies alike. The net result is a series of actions that undermine the liberal international order as states reconfigure their foreign-policymaking behavior to insure themselves against U.S. unpredictability and to find other means of cooperation. The loss of the role of the United States in supporting multilateral norms and institutions reduces the role of hegemonic stabilising effect that the United States used to play, and the space of multipolar competition and normative fragmentation, which are the main signs of the cruxification of the New World Order, opens (Wiedekind & Boller, 2025; Marc, 2026).

Conclusion

This research shows that the unilateral foreign-policy policies of the Trump administration, such as the use of tariffs as geopolitical tools, unilateral military interventions, and strategic territorial moves, have helped to erode the liberal international order that was built after 1945. These actions, driven by neorealist theory that focuses on the anarchic nature of the international system and the importance of state security and power over multilateral norms, eroded institutionalized cooperation and trust. Neorealism suggests that when major powers are limited by multilateral structures, they are likely to engage in self-help and power politics, as Trump did with his "America First" policy, which hastened the decline of cooperative structures and multilateral diplomacy.

Tariffs are a good example of how economic policy has become a form of coercive diplomacy, breaking the rules of economic interdependence and trade governance. Tariff threats, such as

those concerning Greenland and other alliances, undermined predictability and credibility in U.S. engagements, and in international relations more broadly, normative trade governance was being pushed aside in favor of unilateral state interests.

Likewise, unilateral military interventions, like the one against Venezuela, were a break from the coalition-based military interventions and the norm of non-intervention. In the neorealist perspective, these are rational moves in a competitive international system in which the hegemon is trying to regain comparative advantage at the cost of multilateral stability. Such interventions eroded confidence in U.S. leadership within global security institutions, destabilized regions, and questioned the legitimacy of longstanding international norms, highlighting how neorealist behavior can simultaneously advance state interests and undermine global cooperative orders.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations were made:

1) To eliminate the destabilizing impact of unilateral coercion of tariffs, the United States and strategic allies ought to reaffirm their commitment to multilateral economic arrangements like the World Trade Organization and strengthen collaborative trade instruments.
2) Since the geopolitical repercussions of unilateral military interventions, policymakers ought to renew their pledges to legal restraints of the use of force in the light of the Charter of the United Nations.
3) Equalize Power Relations by cooperative Leadership: In order to reduce the wider systemic effect of unilateral foreign-policy behaviors, and restore trust in the international order, international leaders are encouraged to engage in cooperative leadership programs that would once again assert collective action in problem-solving.

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