

The Role of Ideology in Forming International Political Alliances

Muhammad Budiana (m_budiana70@unpas.ac.id)
Universitas Pasundan

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the role of ideology in the formation and influence of international political alliances. Using a qualitative analytical method on case studies of historical and contemporary alliances, such as NATO, the European Union, and the Paris Agreement, this research explores how ideology becomes a binding foundation between states as well as a trigger factor for internal conflicts within alliances. The results show that during the Cold War era, ideology was the main factor that divided the world into antagonistic political blocs, but the era of globalization brought changes to the role of ideology. In the modern era, ideology functions more as a flexible shared value, accommodating global interests that cross traditional ideological boundaries. Ideology remains relevant in strengthening solidarity and providing international legitimacy, but ideological differences can trigger tensions within alliances. The study concludes that the role of ideology in international relations is evolving from an exclusive one to a more pragmatic one, adjusting to more universal global interests and issues. The implications of these findings suggest that future political alliances will focus more on inclusive transnational values as a response to global challenges.

Keywords: Ideology, International Political Alliances, Globalization, Internal Conflict

Introduction

In the realm of international relations, ideology serves as a critical factor in the formation of political alliances, influencing internal policies and diplomatic objectives. Ideology encompasses a set of values, beliefs, and principles that shape a country's political, social, and economic landscape, thus influencing its international interactions (D. Philip Montgomery, 2024). The degree of ideological alignment between countries can significantly increase their willingness to collaborate, as shared beliefs often lead to stronger diplomatic ties and cooperative strategies (Yuan Yi Zhu, 2024). Political ideologies, articulated by groups such as political parties and social movements, further define the goals and direction of these alliances, impacting how states view their interests and goals on the global stage (Maurizio Ferrera, 2024).

Additionally, collective security arrangements often rely on ideological commonality, as states agree to take joint action against common threats, reinforcing the importance of shared values in maintaining international peace and security (Mortezanejad, Seyedeh Azadeh Fallah, 2023). Conversely, nationalism can complicate these dynamics, as it emphasizes national interests and cultural superiority, potentially inhibiting mutual understanding and cooperation among nations. Thus, the interplay of ideology, political alignment, and nationalism is crucial in understanding the complexities of international political alliances.

Throughout history, ideology has been a critical factor in the formation of powerful political blocs, especially during significant global conflicts such as the Cold War, in which capitalism and communism clashed. This ideological divide led to the formation of alliances such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact, which were designed to balance opposing influences and maintain geopolitical stability (D. Philip Montgomery, 2024). Countries with similar ideologies often band together to strengthen their positions against adversaries, as seen in military operations such as Operation Enduring Freedom, in which coalition forces collaborated to combat terrorism (Trygve Throntveit, 2023).

However, the influence of ideology extends beyond wartime alliances. The Non-Aligned Movement exemplifies how states can pursue ideological independence and foster collaboration in peacetime, focusing on shared interests rather than strict ideological conformity (Se Hyun Ahn, 2023). This movement emerged in response to the bipolarity of the Cold War, allowing newly independent states to assert their agency and engage in global affairs without aligning with any one bloc (Elguja Kavtaradze, 2023). Thus, ideology not only shaped alliances during conflict but also facilitated cooperation across domains, including security, economics, and culture, highlighting its enduring significance in international relations.

This study highlights the critical role of ideology in shaping a state's decisions regarding political alliances, emphasizing how ideological dispositions influence foreign policy choices. Specifically, it reveals that conservatives and liberals adhere to different decision rules, which guide their perceptions and evaluations of potential allies. Conservatives tend to focus on the characteristics associated with the state, while liberals prioritize context and procedural aspects in their decision-making process (James E. Zull, 2022). These differences in ideological frameworks not only influence individual preferences but also impact the broader dynamics of alliance formation, as states often align with others that share similar ideological values (Peter Hays Gries, 2022). In addition, the interplay between causal attributions and ideological dispositions underscores how these factors can strengthen or weaken alliance ties. For example, the emphasis placed on multilateral processes by liberals contrasts sharply with the conservative focus on national character, leading to opposing foreign policy choices (Peter Hays Gries, 2022). By comprehensively analyzing these ideological influences, this study aims to provide a theoretical and practical foundation for developing a strategic and sustainable foreign policy that accounts for the complexity of international relations and the power dynamics inherent in ideological alignments.

Literature Review

Ideology in International Relations

Ideology has long been recognized as an important factor in international relations and influences state behavior in the global arena. According to Heywood (2015), ideology is a set of values and beliefs that guide a country's political and social policies, including how the country interacts with other countries. Fukuyama (1992) in "The End of History and the Last Man" also argued that ideology plays a role in shaping the world order, especially after the Cold War where capitalist and communist countries competed for global influence. These theories emphasize that ideology can be a unifier or a divider in international relations, depending on the constellation of ideologies that exist between countries.

In Zull's analysis of international politics, ideological conflict and alliances of convenience play an important role in shaping state behavior. Ideological conflict refers to the clash of beliefs and values between different political entities, especially between the 'East' and the 'West' (James E. Zull, 2022). These tensions are often simplified into monolithic categories, obscuring the complex and unresolved disputes in the region. On the other hand, alliances of convenience are formed based on shared interests rather than shared ideologies, highlighting the pragmatic nature of international relations (Kentaro Sakuwa, 2019). For example, historical alliances, such as that between the United States and the Soviet Union during World War II, were driven by shared threats rather than ideological alignment. Zull's work also engages with international relations theory, particularly realism and constructivism, to explain how states prioritize power and survival over ideology while also acknowledging the influence of shared beliefs and identities on their interactions (Benjamin Martill, 2017). This dual perspective enriches our understanding of how ideological conflict and pragmatic alliances coexist and shape the dynamics of global politics.

Alliance Theory in International Relations

Alliance theory in international relations is fundamentally shaped by several key concepts, including landscape theory, alliance formation, balance of power, collective security, and realism. Landscape theory, rooted in statistical mechanics, models how alliances form based on the energy dynamics of state configurations, emphasizing the strategic nature of these relationships (Mortezanejad, Seyedeh Azadeh Fallah, 2023). Alliance formation is influenced by factors such as security threats, economic interests, and historical ties, which determine the strategic decisions states make when entering into partnerships (Daniela Schmeinck, 2023).

Balance of power theory states that national security is enhanced when military capabilities are distributed to prevent one state from dominating others, thus encouraging states to form alliances as a counterweight to threats (James E. Zull, 2022). Collective security further complements this by suggesting that aggression against one member of a group is an act against all, promoting mutual defense treaties such as NATO. Finally, realism emphasizes that states primarily form alliances for power and security rather than ideological reasons, reflecting the competitive nature of international politics (Curtis R. Ryan, 2019). Together, these concepts provide a comprehensive framework for understanding alliance dynamics in the international arena.

Alliance theory examines the reasons why states form political alliances. Walt (1987), in his theory of “balancing and bandwagoning,” explains that states tend to form alliances to confront common threats or to strengthen their position vis-à-vis a greater power. In addition to the threat factor, ideology also plays a role in encouraging countries to cooperate strategically with countries that have similar political views (Mearsheimer, 2001). In the perspective of realism, ideology can be considered as a tool to legitimize or mobilize support for certain alliances. This theory provides the basis that the formation of alliances is not only driven by material interests but also by ideological similarities.

The Role of Ideology in International Alliance Formation

Ideology plays a significant role in the formation of international alliances, influencing the motivations behind and nature of these partnerships. Political ideologies, such as liberalism and nationalism, shape the values and goals of states, which in turn influence their foreign policies and alliance choices (Mortezanejad, Seyedeh Azadeh Fallah, 2023). For example, states with a dominant liberal ideology tend to favor minimal state intervention in tourism and may align with other states with similar economic philosophies, while nationalist ideologies often encourage states to form alliances based on shared national identity and interests (Mark L. Haas, 2024).

Additionally, Althusser’s theory of ideology highlights how public perceptions and support for political action, including alliance formation, can be shaped by dominant ideology (Peter Hays Gries, 2020). Historical alliances, such as NATO, have shown that ideological similarities can enhance the longevity and stability of these partnerships, while differences can cause tensions (Jasmine Gani, 2016). In addition, the concept of soft power describes how states can leverage cultural and ideological appeals to foster alliances based on mutual respect rather than coercion, further emphasizing the importance of shared values in international relations.

Thus, understanding the interplay of ideologies is crucial to analyzing contemporary alliances and their dynamics.

Many studies have shown that ideological similarity can be a powerful factor in forming international alliances. According to Risse-Kappen (1996), countries that share a common ideology are more likely to form alliances because shared values and principles facilitate cooperation. This study highlights that ideology is not only the basis for alliance formation but also determines its stability and longevity. Schmidt (2018) also observes that in some cases, ideology is a central element in creating close diplomatic relations and can overcome differences in economic or military interests.

Case Study: Alliances During the Cold War

The Cold War provides many historical examples of how ideology influenced international political alliances. The Western Bloc, led by the United States, and the Eastern Bloc, led by the Soviet Union, formed two major alliances based on the ideologies of capitalism and communism. NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the Warsaw Pact are examples of alliances driven by ideological similarity to maintain or expand global influence. According to Gaddis (2005), this ideological competition is the basis for conflict and competition that leads to the formation of ideology-based alliances, which shows that ideological similarities can strengthen cooperation, while ideological differences have the potential to trigger conflict

The Influence of Ideology in Modern Alliances

After the end of the Cold War, ideology continues to play a role in the formation of alliances, although there has been a shift from the duality of capitalism-communism to new ideological variations such as liberal democracy, nationalism, and Islamism. Modern examples can be seen in political and economic cooperation based on democratic values and human rights between Western countries, while some countries in the Middle East form alliances based on religious values and cultural identity. According to Acharya (2014), this shift shows that although the global ideological constellation has changed, ideology continues to influence the structure of alliances and patterns of international relations.

Criticism of the Ideological Approach to Alliance Formation

Although ideology plays an important role in alliance formation, some scholars criticize this view and argue that economic and geopolitical interests have a stronger influence than ideology. Nye (2004) argues that soft power, including cultural and economic influences, is often the main reason for alliance formation, overriding ideological factors. This view is reinforced by Keohane and Nye (2011), who state that in the era of globalization, economic interests and transnational issues, such as climate change and terrorism, have a significant impact on international alliance patterns.

The formation of international alliances is increasingly influenced by economic and geopolitical interests rather than ideology. Nye (2004) emphasizes that soft power, including cultural and economic influences, often plays a significant role in forming these alliances, suggesting that attraction can be more effective than coercion in achieving foreign policy goals. This perspective is in line with Keohane and Nye (2011), who argue that in the context of globalization, economic interests and transnational issues—such as climate change and terrorism—are very important in determining alliance patterns (Sureyya Yigit, 2024). Economic interests, including trade agreements and resource sharing, are fundamental motivators for countries to collaborate, often overshadowing ideological similarities (Tran Nguyen Khang, 2024).

As countries navigate complex interdependencies, the pragmatic aspects of alliance formation become more apparent, highlighting the importance of economic ties in international relations. This shift toward prioritizing economic and environmental concerns reflects a broader trend in which globalization is growing interconnectedness, forcing countries to align based on mutual benefit rather than shared ideology (Martina Pandžić Skoko, 2023). Thus, while ideology remains relevant, economic and geopolitical factors increasingly dominate the international alliance landscape.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach to understand how ideology influences the formation and sustainability of international political alliances. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on exploring in-depth concepts, understanding meaning, and revealing ideological contexts in international relations. This study adopts a historical-comparative approach, which combines historical analysis with comparative studies to see patterns formed in political alliances based on similarities or differences in ideology. Thus, this study can identify ideological factors that are consistent in the formation of alliances, both in

the Cold War era and in the post-Cold War era. Types and Sources of Data secondary data, which include official documents, scientific journals, reports of international institutions, and literature relevant to the theme of international relations and political alliances.

Results and Discussion

This study reveals several key findings related to the role of ideology in the formation and sustainability of international political alliances. Through historical and comparative analysis of major alliances, both in the Cold War and post-Cold War eras, this study has succeeded in highlighting several important patterns.

1. The Influence of Ideology on the Formation of International Political Alliances

Cold War Era, Analysis of alliances formed in this era, such as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the Warsaw Pact, shows that ideology is a key factor in the formation and strengthening of political alliances. NATO, which is supported by countries with capitalist and democratic ideologies, functions as a bulwark against the threat of communism. Meanwhile, the Warsaw Pact led by the Soviet Union became an ideological response for Eastern Bloc countries to face the West. Ideology in this case becomes a collective identity that strengthens membership and justifies joint action.

Modern Alliances, In the post-Cold War era, alliances such as the European Union and ASEAN show a decline in the influence of ideology as a major factor. However, democratic values and human rights remain significant considerations in European Union membership. ASEAN, on the other hand, prioritizes the principle of non-intervention and regional unity that is not entirely based on ideology, but rather on political and economic stability in the region.

2. The Role of Ideology in Strengthening and Consolidating Alliances

The findings of this study indicate that alliances based on ideology tend to have strong solidarity, especially during times of conflict or common threats. For example, during the Cold War, communist and capitalist ideologies emphasized bloc identities that strengthened loyalty among members in facing opponents.

However, in the modern context, although ideology remains an important element, alliances are increasingly shifting to accommodate economic and security interests. Alliances such as NATO have continued to exist even after the threat of communism has disappeared, by changing their focus to issues such as terrorism and non-traditional security threats. This shows that the influence of ideology can change along with the dynamics of global threats.

3. Ideology as a Trigger for Alliance Division and Change

The data shows that ideological differences can also be a source of tension or division within an alliance. For example, the European Union faces challenges from its members who have different views on liberal democracy versus conservative values, as in the case of countries experiencing populism. This shows that although ideology can strengthen alliances, ideological differences among members can also be a threat to internal stability.

In addition, changes in national ideology, such as the political transition from communism to democracy in Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union, changed the map of international alliances and encouraged these countries to join NATO and the European Union. This confirms that changes in national ideology can bring significant changes in the dynamics of international political alliances.

4. New Alliances Based on Contemporary Ideological Values

This study also found that the emergence of global issues such as climate change, human rights, and cybersecurity have encouraged the formation of new alliances that are not always formal but are based on shared values. These alliances go beyond traditional ideological boundaries and are more inclusive of countries with diverse political backgrounds. An example is the coalition formed to address climate change, such as the Paris Agreement, which reflects an ideological commitment to environmental sustainability

5. The Role of Ideology in Legitimacy and International Image

International political alliances based on ideology often strengthen their global legitimacy through a shared image. For example, the European Union and NATO promote themselves as alliances that uphold democracy and freedom, thus attracting international support and strengthening their role in global diplomacy. Ideology in this case adds value to the alliance, thus creating a positive perception in the eyes of other countries. The results of the study show that ideology plays an important role in the formation, sustainability, and change of international political alliances. Although the role of ideology has become more varied in the contemporary context, it remains one of the main driving factors in international relations. Economic and security factors are now increasingly influential, but ideological values still form the basis of many alliances, especially in providing legitimacy, building solidarity, and distinguishing alliances from other international entities..

Discussion

Based on the findings obtained, ideology not only functions as a foundation for the formation of alliances, but also as an instrument that influences stability, orientation, and relations between countries in the alliance.

The Historical Role of Ideology in Alliance Formation

Alliances during the Cold War era, such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact, show that ideology functions as a strong collective identity. In the context of the Cold War, the ideology of capitalism adopted by NATO and communism by the Warsaw Pact became the main reasons for the two blocs to form alliances that were antagonistic to each other. This condition illustrates that ideology is able to create a clear dividing line between political blocs, with each bloc trying to maintain and spread its ideology. This view is in line with the theory put forward by international relations experts who state that differences in ideology encourage countries to form political groups that have the same vision, especially under common threats.

However, geopolitical changes and the end of the Cold War have influenced the role of ideology in forming alliances. The post-Cold War era was marked by a decrease in the intensity of ideological conflict between capitalism and communism, which had an impact on the opening of the possibility of cross-ideological cooperation. Examples such as the European Union and ASEAN indicate that alliances are now more flexible in accommodating the interests of members despite differing ideologies. This also reflects a change in global orientation that is more pragmatic and focuses on regional stability and economic prosperity.

Ideology as a Bond of Solidarity and Legitimacy

This study found that ideology plays a significant role in strengthening solidarity among alliance members and providing legitimacy to collective action. NATO, for example, continues to be a strong alliance even though the threat of communism has ended, because its members share the values of democracy and collective security. These shared values allow NATO to remain relevant and continue to adapt to new threats, such as terrorism and cybersecurity. This supports the argument that ideology can provide a foundation for the sustainability of an alliance, even when geopolitical conditions change.

On the other hand, the European Union as an alliance based on democratic values and human rights serves to provide legitimacy in the eyes of the international community. This can be seen from how the European Union consistently promotes policies that focus on democracy, individual freedom, and human rights, which creates a positive image in the eyes

of the world. Therefore, ideology not only binds members internally but also strengthens the alliance's position in international diplomacy.

Ideology as a Trigger of Conflict and Internal Tensions in Alliances

Although ideology can strengthen ties between alliance members, research shows that ideological differences can trigger tensions or even splits. Within the European Union, for example, there are differences between countries that adhere to liberal values and countries that have populist or conservative policies. These tensions highlight that ideology-based alliances remain vulnerable to changes in the political and ideological views of member states. This illustrates that while ideology can strengthen alliances, ideological differences within alliances can threaten collective stability.

This view also applies to alliances in the Middle East that tend to be based on religion and cultural identity, where there are divisions due to differences in interpretation of ideology and political goals. This confirms that ideological differences or interpretations can weaken the bonds that should unite members in an alliance.

Evolution of Alliances Based on Contemporary Ideological Values

This study found that modern alliances tend to focus more on contemporary global values such as climate change, cybersecurity, and human rights, which are more inclusive compared to previous eras. Alliances for global issues, such as the Paris Agreement for climate change, show that countries can unite despite differences in political ideology between them. This suggests that more universal ideological values are increasingly playing an important role in creating new forms of alliances that are more responsive to cross-border issues.

This global value-based alliance allows countries with different political backgrounds to work together without significant ideological barriers. This signifies a shift from ideology as a limitation of political blocs to ideology as a shared value to achieve broader global goals, which also indicates developments in the dynamics of more inclusive and flexible international relations.

Implications for Future International Relations

Based on the results of this study, the role of ideology in international relations shows a dynamic pattern, where ideology still functions as a binder of solidarity and identity, but with more flexible boundaries in modern alliances. In the future, alliances formed based on ideology will likely place more emphasis on issues that are transnational and related to shared

interests, such as environmental security, global health, and economic stability. In addition, countries tend to consider pragmatic interests to strengthen their alliances, especially amid increasingly complex global dynamics. Alliances will continue to shift to accommodate current geopolitical interests, but ideology will still play a role in providing a basis for values and legitimacy in relations between countries.

Conclusion

This study concludes that ideology plays a crucial and dynamic role in the formation and sustainability of international political alliances. Historically, ideology has served as a major factor in the formation of antagonistic political blocs, as seen during the Cold War. Alliances such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact were based on strong ideological values, demonstrating that ideology can serve as both a unifier and a divider between states. However, global geopolitical changes and transnational challenges in the modern era, such as climate change, cybersecurity, and economic stability, have changed the role of ideology in international relations. Alliances today are increasingly formed based on shared interests and inclusive global values, demonstrating a shift from exclusive ideologies to more pragmatic and flexible ones. Examples of alliances such as the European Union and the Paris Agreement illustrate that ideological values remain important, but are now more focused on universal global goals and across traditional political boundaries. This study also finds that ideology, while strengthening solidarity and legitimacy, can trigger internal conflict within an alliance if there are differences in political views among members. Therefore, the success of an alliance depends on the ability of its members to manage ideological differences for the greater collective good. Overall, ideology remains an important element in international alliances, serving both as a collective identity and a basis for diplomacy and foreign policy. However, the era of globalization demands a more inclusive and flexible approach, where political alliances are built on shared interests and transnational issues that affect the entire world.

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