



Iustitia: Journal of Legal Theory, Politics, and International Relations

Vol 1 No 1 February 2026, Hal 37-46
ISSN: XXXX-XXXX (Print) ISSN: XXXX-XXXX (Electronic)
Open Access: <https://sovereignresearch.org/iustitia>

Geopolitical Rivalry and International Legal Order: A Theoretical Examination of Contemporary Power Politics

Imam Syafi'i^{1*}, Deo Renaldi Saputra²

¹ Universitas PGRI Adi Buana PSDKU Kampus Lamongan, Indonesia

² Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

email: imam99@gmail.com¹

Article Info :

Received:
20-01-2026
Revised:
28-01-2026
Accepted:
04-02-2026

Abstract

This article examines how contemporary geopolitical rivalry reshapes the international legal order through normative reinterpretation, selective enforcement, and pluralized economic governance. Employing a non-empirical normative-theoretical methodology, the study integrates doctrinal analysis with structural and critical-constructivist interpretation to assess how great power competition recalibrates foundational legal principles. The analysis demonstrates that sovereignty and recognition doctrines under the United Nations Charter are not eroded but recontextualized within competing geopolitical narratives. Collective security mechanisms exhibit patterns of selective enforcement and discretionary activation, generating legitimacy tensions while preserving institutional continuity. In the economic and technological domains, expansive national security exceptions and regulatory bifurcation illustrate how strategic rivalry restructures treaty interpretation without formally displacing multilateral frameworks. The findings indicate that contemporary power politics embeds rivalry within the operational semantics of international law, producing adaptive constitutional pluralism rather than normative disintegration. International legality emerges as a dynamic equilibrium in which institutional resilience coexists with differentiated application shaped by strategic alignment.

Keywords: Geopolitical Rivalry, International Legal Order, Sovereignty, Selective Enforcement, Constitutional Pluralism.



©2022 Authors.. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International License.
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary international legal order is increasingly shaped by intensifying geopolitical rivalry among major powers, a development that unsettles the liberal institutionalist assumption that law progressively disciplines power through multilateralism and normative convergence. Recent scholarship maps the transition from a relatively hegemonic post-Cold War moment to a structurally pluralized order marked by regionalization, strategic competition, and contested authority over rule-making processes (Orford, 2021; Safranchuk & Lukyanov, 2021). This transformation is not merely distributive in terms of material capabilities but constitutive of legal meaning itself, as geopolitical competition redefines the interpretive horizons of sovereignty, intervention, recognition, and economic governance. The proliferation of regional arrangements and competing normative projects indicates that international law is no longer anchored in a singular teleology of liberal internationalism but operates within overlapping and sometimes antagonistic geopolitical imaginaries, thereby foregrounding the need to reassess how power politics interacts with doctrinal stability and institutional legitimacy.

Prior research has demonstrated that international law has always been embedded within geopolitical structures, rather than existing as an autonomous normative system insulated from strategic contestation. Randall (2010) situates human rights and world law within broader geopolitical conditions, arguing that universalist claims gain traction only when aligned with dominant power configurations. Müllerson (2016) further elucidates how ideological narratives and geopolitical interests co-produce legal argumentation, revealing that doctrinal debates frequently conceal deeper struggles over strategic influence. Orakhelashvili (2008) advances this line of reasoning by exposing conflicting legitimacies between geopolitical objectives and formal legal reasoning, suggesting that tensions between law and power are not anomalies but structural features of the system. Empirical inquiries into democratic diffusion and proximity-based competition underscore how geopolitical rivalry shapes

patterns of institutional alignment and normative diffusion (Markowitz & Fariss, 2018), while studies of state recognition in transitional orders illustrate that recognition practices operate as instruments of strategic positioning rather than neutral applications of legal criteria (Newman & Visoka, 2023). Collectively, these works converge on the insight that law and geopolitics are mutually constitutive, yet they diverge in their assessment of whether legal norms meaningfully constrain power or are primarily vehicles for its projection.

Notwithstanding these contributions, the literature reveals significant conceptual and empirical limitations that impede a coherent theoretical understanding of contemporary power politics within the international legal order. Much of the existing scholarship isolates specific issue-areas such as recognition, economic security, or human rights without articulating a comprehensive framework that explains how great power rivalry restructures the architecture of international legality across domains. Emerging analyses of great power rivalry in a changing order (Permpul et al., 2025) and of national security's implications for international economic law (Slawotsky, 2025) underscore the salience of strategic competition but often treat law as a reactive arena rather than as an arena of proactive normative engineering. Recent examinations of how great powers shape enforcement practices (Ullah & Ahmed, 2026) highlight asymmetries in compliance and accountability, yet they stop short of theorizing the systemic feedback loops through which enforcement selectivity recalibrates expectations of legality. The absence of an integrated theoretical model capable of bridging doctrinal analysis, enforcement dynamics, and geopolitical restructuring generates analytical fragmentation and leaves unresolved whether the current order reflects normative erosion, pluralist transformation, or strategic instrumentalization.

The unresolved tension between legal universalism and geopolitical particularism carries profound scientific and practical implications, especially as strategic rivalry permeates domains once presumed insulated from hard power considerations, including trade regimes, technological governance, and sanctions policy. Structural analyses of the modern world order emphasize enduring realities of great power rivalry (Safranchuk & Lukyanov, 2021), yet they do not fully interrogate how these structural realities recalibrate the authority of legal institutions or the predictability of norm application. As regional orders proliferate and normative blocs crystallize (Orford, 2021), the risks of fragmentation, selective compliance, and competing legitimacies intensify, raising questions about the durability of adjudicatory mechanisms and the coherence of global rule-making. The stakes extend beyond theoretical debate: policymakers confront a landscape in which legal argument becomes a strategic resource, while smaller states navigate a competitive environment where alignment choices carry legal as well as security consequences. A rigorous theoretical examination is required to clarify whether contemporary power politics signifies the decline of a rule-based order or the emergence of a reconfigured, pluralized legal equilibrium.

This research positions itself at the intersection of international legal theory and geopolitical analysis by advancing a synthetic framework that conceptualizes great power rivalry not merely as an external variable influencing law, but as an endogenous force constitutive of legal interpretation, institutional design, and enforcement practice. Building on insights regarding ideology and geopolitics (Müllerson, 2016), conflicting legitimacies (Orakhelashvili, 2008), and strategic enforcement (Ullah & Ahmed, 2026), the study reframes the international legal order as a dynamic field in which normative claims, institutional mechanisms, and material capabilities interact through recursive processes of contestation and adaptation. Rather than treating fragmentation, regionalization, or security-driven economic regulation as discrete phenomena, the proposed framework integrates these developments into a coherent account of how power politics reorganizes both the substance and the sociology of international law. Such a positioning challenges dichotomous narratives that oppose law and power, arguing instead that contemporary rivalry generates new modalities of legality that are simultaneously strategic and normatively consequential.

The purpose of this study is to develop a comprehensive theoretical model explaining how geopolitical rivalry restructures the contemporary international legal order across doctrinal, institutional, and enforcement dimensions. It seeks to clarify the mechanisms through which great powers instrumentalize, reinterpret, and recalibrate legal norms, while also identifying the structural conditions under which legal constraints retain efficacy. Methodologically, the research combines doctrinal analysis with structural theory and comparative examination of key issue-areas to produce an integrated account that transcends sectoral fragmentation. The anticipated contribution lies in advancing

a reconceptualization of international legality as a contested yet resilient order shaped by recursive interactions between power and normativity, thereby enriching both international legal scholarship and debates on global governance in an era of renewed strategic competition.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study is non-empirical in nature and adopts a normative–theoretical approach situated at the intersection of international legal doctrine and political theory. The research primarily relies on authoritative secondary sources, including scholarly monographs, peer-reviewed journal articles, doctrinal commentaries, and analytical works on geopolitics and international legal order, complemented by primary legal materials such as multilateral treaties, resolutions of international organizations, judicial decisions of international courts and tribunals, and official policy documents issued by major powers. A comparative-analytical dimension is incorporated to examine how different geopolitical actors interpret and operationalize international legal norms within contexts of strategic rivalry. Rather than generating new field data, the study systematically interrogates existing legal texts and theoretical arguments to reconstruct the evolving relationship between power politics and international legality.

The analytical framework integrates doctrinal analysis with structural and critical interpretative methods. Doctrinal analysis is employed to assess the coherence, consistency, and evolution of legal norms across issue-areas affected by geopolitical rivalry, while structural analysis situates these norms within broader configurations of power distribution and institutional authority. A critical-constructivist interpretative lens is applied to examine how legal argumentation functions as a strategic practice through which states legitimize geopolitical interests and contest competing normative projects. Conceptual triangulation across legal theory, international relations theory, and institutional analysis ensures analytical robustness, enabling the study to identify patterns of normative reinterpretation, selective enforcement, and institutional adaptation that characterize the contemporary international legal order.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Normative Reconfiguration of Sovereignty and Recognition under Geopolitical Rivalry

Contemporary geopolitical rivalry has reconstituted the doctrinal understanding of sovereignty within the framework of the United Nations Charter, particularly Articles 2(1) and 2(4), which enshrine sovereign equality and the prohibition of the use of force as foundational norms of the international legal order. Structural analyses of power redistribution indicate that these provisions are increasingly interpreted through competing geopolitical lenses that condition their operational meaning (Safranchuk & Lukyanov, 2021; Paikin, 2021). The grammatical interpretation of Article 2(4) suggests an absolute prohibition on force, yet systematic interpretation alongside Chapter VII reveals discretionary authority concentrated in the Security Council, thereby embedding geopolitical hierarchy within formal legality. Orford (2021) argues that regional orders recalibrate the normative expectations attached to sovereignty, while Bartnicki and Śleszyński (2025) conceptualize power as structurally embedded in conditions of international anarchy that law seeks to moderate but cannot eliminate. Doctrinal coherence is consequently strained by the tension between formal equality and material asymmetry, a tension that shapes contemporary legal argumentation.

Recognition of states provides a paradigmatic illustration of how geopolitical rivalry reinterprets legal doctrine through selective application of criteria derived from the Montevideo Convention of 1933 and subsequent General Assembly practice. Newman and Visoka (2023) demonstrate that recognition decisions increasingly reflect strategic alignment rather than strict adherence to effectiveness and self-determination principles. The declaratory theory of statehood, traditionally grounded in objective criteria, is displaced by a constitutive logic that privileges geopolitical positioning, thereby challenging doctrinal neutrality. Orakhelashvili (2008) identifies conflicting legitimacies between legal formalism and geopolitical expediency, a dynamic evident in contemporary recognition disputes. Randall (2010) situates this evolution within broader geopolitical conditions that shape the viability of universalist legal claims.

The interpretative divergence surrounding humanitarian intervention and the Responsibility to Protect doctrine further illustrates normative recalibration under rivalry. Article 2(7) of the United Nations Charter restricts intervention in domestic jurisdiction, yet evolving Security Council resolutions

have expanded the interpretive scope of threats to international peace and security. Müllerson (2016) contends that ideological narratives underpin doctrinal reinterpretation, transforming humanitarian language into a vehicle for strategic competition. Per mpul et al. (2025) emphasize that great power rivalry intensifies contestation over intervention standards, producing fragmented legal expectations. Druzin (2025) argues that global fragmentation reduces the stabilizing capacity of shared interpretive communities, thereby weakening consensus on intervention thresholds.

Judicial practice within the International Court of Justice reflects similar pressures, particularly in advisory opinions addressing territorial disputes and self-determination claims. The Court’s reliance on systematic and teleological interpretation seeks to preserve doctrinal coherence, yet dissenting opinions often reveal geopolitical undercurrents. Ismayilli (2025) conceptualizes this phenomenon as indicative of a transitional international order in which legal reasoning coexists with strategic recalibration. Demirel (2026) interprets international law as a tool of hegemonic rivalry, suggesting that judicial fora become arenas for legitimizing geopolitical narratives. Chaudhuri (2026) situates these dynamics within broader evolutionary transformations in twenty-first century geopolitics that recalibrate institutional authority.

Regional organizations increasingly articulate autonomous legal orders that reinterpret sovereignty in light of strategic competition, thereby complicating the universalist aspirations of the Charter framework. Haroche (2023) analyzes the European Union’s “geopolitical commission” paradigm as evidence of supranationalism adapting to global rivalry through strategic legal positioning. Wakkumbura (2023) demonstrates how Indo-Pacific littoral states navigate Sino-Indian rivalry by invoking maritime law principles under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, while selectively aligning with competing powers. Karaj and Xharo (2025) highlight the Western Balkans as a site where international conflict management intersects with geopolitical competition, affecting the application of peace agreements and recognition practices.

Aria (2025) frames these developments as manifestations of strategic foreign policy logic embedded within legal discourse. The doctrinal reconfiguration of sovereignty can be mapped through the following comparative table, which synthesizes competing interpretative trends within key legal instruments and jurisprudential contexts:

Table 1. Normative Instruments and Geopolitical Reinterpretation (Doctrinal Tensions in the Contemporary International Legal Order)

Normative Instrument	Formal Provision	Geopolitical Reinterpretation	Doctrinal Tension
UN Charter Art. 2(4)	Prohibition of force	Expanded security exceptions	Equality vs. hierarchy
Montevideo Criteria	Objective statehood test	Strategic recognition practices	Declaratory vs. constitutive
UNSC Chapter VII	Collective security mandate	Selective enforcement patterns	Legality vs. discretion
UNCLOS	Maritime delimitation rules	Strategic naval positioning	Rule-based order vs. rivalry

The table clarifies how identical textual provisions generate divergent applications when filtered through geopolitical rivalry, reinforcing Petersmann’s (2025) thesis of constitutional pluralism as both driver and constraint of legal policy competition. Odia (2025) identifies a legitimacy crisis within the Security Council arising from such selective enforcement, which undermines collective security credibility. Joustra (2025) observes analogous tensions in the domain of freedom of religion or belief, where geopolitical alignments influence advocacy strategies and normative framing. Salehi, Habib Zadeh Khiyaban, and Sabbar (2025) extend this logic to emerging technologies, arguing that artificial intelligence governance is similarly shaped by power competition.

Islamic legal perspectives on sovereignty and social change introduce an additional normative layer that complicates universalist assumptions embedded in Western doctrinal frameworks. Hanafi et

al. (2026) illustrate how contemporary applications of fiqh engage dynamically with international legal norms, reflecting processes of normative accommodation and reinterpretation. Such pluralist engagements resonate with Petersmann's (2025) argument that multipolar re-ordering fosters constitutional pluralism rather than normative uniformity. The teleological interpretation of sovereignty within diverse legal traditions reveals the contingency of doctrinal universality under geopolitical rivalry. Comparative legal analysis demonstrates that sovereignty functions as a contested normative concept rather than a fixed juridical category.

Domestic legal systems internalize geopolitical contestation through constitutional provisions regulating treaty ratification and foreign policy authority. Constitutional courts often interpret executive powers in light of international obligations, thereby mediating the interface between global rivalry and domestic legality. Hanafi (2023) analyzes the idealization of tax law enforcement reform in Indonesia as an example of how administrative penal law elimination reflects broader normative recalibration influenced by global governance pressures. Such domestic reinterpretations illustrate how international rivalry permeates internal legal orders through systemic interpretation. Structural analysis confirms that sovereignty operates simultaneously at domestic and international levels, producing layered legal contestation.

The cumulative doctrinal evidence suggests that sovereignty and recognition doctrines are not eroded but recontextualized within a competitive multipolar environment. Great power rivalry conditions interpretive practices without nullifying the normative architecture of the Charter system. International law retains formal coherence while accommodating pluralized applications shaped by strategic positioning. Critical-constructivist analysis reveals that legal argumentation functions as a legitimizing discourse within rivalry rather than a neutral constraint upon it. Contemporary power politics redefines the operational semantics of sovereignty, embedding geopolitical rivalry within the interpretive core of the international legal order.

Selective Enforcement, Security Exceptionalism, and the Transformation of Collective Legal Authority

The enforcement architecture of the United Nations Charter, particularly under Articles 24 and 39, establishes the Security Council as the primary organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security, yet contemporary geopolitical rivalry has recalibrated the interpretive scope of these provisions through patterns of selective activation and strategic veto use. Structural analyses of great power competition demonstrate that enforcement decisions increasingly reflect distributive power realities rather than uniform application of Charter criteria (Safranchuk & Lukyanov, 2021; Paikin, 2021). Odia (2025) identifies a legitimacy deficit arising from inconsistent determinations of "threats to the peace," which destabilizes the normative predictability of collective security. Teleological interpretation of Chapter VII suggests an intention to preserve international stability, yet practical invocation reveals asymmetries conditioned by rivalry. Druzin (2025) characterizes this development as fragmentation-driven recalibration that reshapes enforcement expectations without formally amending the Charter text.

Selective enforcement practices also manifest in the imposition of sanctions regimes, where Security Council resolutions and unilateral restrictive measures coexist in tension with principles of sovereign equality. Slawotsky (2025) analyzes the expansion of national security exceptions within international economic law, demonstrating how states reinterpret trade obligations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade Article XXI to justify geopolitical countermeasures. Demirel (2026) conceptualizes such practices as hegemonic instrumentalization of legal norms within the capitalist world-system, thereby reframing enforcement as strategic governance. Permpul et al. (2025) emphasize that rivalry accelerates resort to unilateral sanctions outside multilateral consensus, eroding centralized enforcement coherence. Systematic interpretation of Charter obligations alongside World Trade Organization jurisprudence reveals normative strain between collective authorization and unilateral security rationales.

Judicial responses to enforcement controversies further illuminate the doctrinal tensions embedded in rivalry-driven practices. The International Court of Justice has cautiously navigated disputes implicating sanctions and use of force, seeking to preserve institutional neutrality while acknowledging political realities. Orakhelashvili (2008) argues that courts mediate conflicting legitimacies between formal law and geopolitical imperatives, a mediation that becomes more complex

under intensified rivalry. Müllerson (2016) notes that ideological narratives often inform state pleadings before international tribunals, transforming litigation into a site of strategic communication. Ismayilli (2025) situates these adjudicative challenges within an emergent multipolar order characterized by overlapping normative claims.

Regional enforcement mechanisms complement and sometimes compete with global institutions, generating layered authority structures. Haroche (2023) examines the European Union's regulatory responses to geopolitical competition, illustrating how supranational sanctions frameworks intersect with collective security objectives. Wakkumbura (2023) shows that Indo-Pacific states recalibrate maritime security cooperation under UNCLOS principles in response to Sino-Indian rivalry, thereby regionalizing enforcement norms.

Karaj and Xharo (2025) highlight Western Balkan conflict management initiatives as instances where regional stabilization efforts are shaped by broader geopolitical alignments. Aria (2025) interprets these regional strategies as manifestations of great power foreign policy logic embedded within legal institutional design. The normative transformation of enforcement can be systematized through the following analytical table, which clarifies doctrinal divergences in authorization and implementation practices:

Table 2. Selective Enforcement Mechanisms and Doctrinal Implications in the Era of Geopolitical Rivalry

Enforcement Modality	Formal Legal Basis	Rivalry-Driven Practice	Doctrinal Implication
UNSC Sanctions	UN Charter Arts. 39–41	Selective activation and veto use	Legitimacy deficit
Unilateral Sanctions	Domestic security statutes	Extraterritorial application	Sovereignty tension
WTO Security Exception	GATT Art. XXI	Broad self-judging interpretation	Trade fragmentation
Regional Restrictive Measures	EU Treaty Art. 215 TFEU	Coordinated geopolitical alignment	Pluralized enforcement

The table illustrates that enforcement authority remains textually grounded yet substantively differentiated across geopolitical blocs, reinforcing Petersmann's (2025) thesis of constitutional pluralism constraining but not eliminating rivalry. Joustra (2025) observes comparable selectivity in the protection of freedom of religion or belief, where advocacy initiatives align with geopolitical interests. Salehi, Habib Zadeh Khiyaban, and Sabbar (2025) argue that emerging artificial intelligence governance regimes reflect similar enforcement asymmetries, particularly in export controls and technological sanctions. Such patterns indicate systemic adaptation rather than doctrinal collapse.

Collective hegemony, as conceptualized by Paikin (2021), weakens when enforcement discretion becomes overtly politicized, yet formal institutional frameworks persist as arenas of contestation. Safranchuk and Lukyanov (2021) contend that structural realities of multipolarity render consensus episodic rather than sustained, affecting enforcement predictability. Randall (2010) situates these dynamics within geopolitical conditions shaping the viability of internationalism, suggesting that enforcement norms gain traction only when aligned with prevailing power distributions. Markowitz and Fariss (2018) empirically correlate proximity-based competition with democratic norm diffusion, implying that enforcement selectivity may influence governance trajectories. Structural analysis confirms that enforcement operates as both constraint and instrument within rivalry.

Domestic legal orders internalize enforcement asymmetries through national security legislation and constitutional review. Hanafi (2023) demonstrates how domestic administrative penal reforms reflect recalibration of enforcement philosophy under global governance pressures, illustrating permeability between international rivalry and national law. Hanafi et al. (2026) analyze Islamic legal adaptations to social change, indicating that normative reinterpretation can coexist with fidelity to foundational principles. Such domestic responses reveal layered enforcement regimes in which

international rivalry informs internal regulatory adjustments. Teleological interpretation of national security clauses often privileges executive discretion, echoing international patterns.

The legitimacy crisis identified by Oda (2025) is compounded by public perceptions that enforcement mechanisms privilege certain geopolitical actors, thereby undermining collective security credibility. Bartnicki and Śleszyński (2025) describe power in international anarchy as structurally unavoidable, yet law functions to channel its expression. Chaudhuri (2026) frames twenty-first century transformations as evolutionary shifts rather than abrupt ruptures, suggesting continuity within adaptation. Demirel (2026) emphasizes the systemic logic of hegemonic rivalry shaping enforcement, reinforcing the interpretive need to integrate political economy with doctrinal analysis. Critical-constructivist methodology reveals enforcement discourse as a site of normative contestation.

Recognition-related enforcement measures further demonstrate selective application of sanctions and diplomatic isolation. Newman and Visoka (2023) observe that recognition disputes often trigger differentiated enforcement responses conditioned by alliance structures. Orford (2021) argues that regional orders mediate enforcement expectations, producing localized standards of compliance. Permpul et al. (2025) note that rivalry incentivizes coalition-building around enforcement initiatives, fragmenting global consensus. Systematic comparison across cases indicates that enforcement variability reflects strategic alignment rather than textual divergence.

The doctrinal evolution of enforcement under geopolitical rivalry illustrates adaptive pluralism within the international legal order. Formal Charter provisions continue to anchor legitimacy, yet interpretive latitude expands under multipolar competition. Enforcement asymmetry does not nullify legal authority but redefines its operational parameters within strategic contexts. Normative coherence persists through institutional continuity even as application patterns diversify. Contemporary power politics thus transforms collective legal authority into a pluralized yet resilient architecture shaped by selective activation and strategic interpretation.

Economic Governance, Technological Regulation, and the Pluralization of Normative Authority

Geopolitical rivalry increasingly manifests within international economic law, where treaty-based obligations under the World Trade Organization framework are reinterpreted through expansive readings of national security exceptions. Article XXI of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade provides a textual anchor for security-based derogations, yet contemporary invocation practices demonstrate broadened self-judging interpretations conditioned by strategic competition. Slawotsky (2025) argues that the conceptualization of national security has evolved to encompass technological supply chains and financial infrastructures, thereby transforming economic governance into a site of geopolitical contestation. Druzin (2025) links this development to global fragmentation that recalibrates expectations of uniform compliance within multilateral regimes. Petersmann (2025) interprets these shifts through constitutional pluralism, suggesting that policy competition restructures normative hierarchies without formally displacing treaty frameworks.

The legal regulation of strategic technologies, particularly artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure, exemplifies how rivalry reshapes normative authority beyond traditional trade law. Salehi, Habib Zadeh Khiyaban, and Sabbar (2025) contend that artificial intelligence governance is increasingly embedded within power competition, with export controls and data localization regimes framed as security imperatives. Demirel (2026) conceptualizes this instrumentalization as characteristic of hegemonic rivalry in the contemporary capitalist world-system, wherein law operates as an instrument of competitive accumulation. Safranchuk and Lukyanov (2021) describe structural multipolarity as intensifying technological competition, thereby expanding the legal domain of security. Teleological interpretation of trade and investment treaties reveals tension between liberalization objectives and security-driven regulatory expansions.

Regional economic blocs have responded to rivalry through autonomous regulatory strategies that reflect strategic alignment. Haroche (2023) analyzes the European Union's evolution toward a "geopolitical commission," illustrating how trade defense instruments and foreign investment screening mechanisms integrate security considerations into supranational law. Aria (2025) frames such policy adjustments as expressions of strategic foreign policy logic embedded in economic regulation. Wakkumbura (2023) demonstrates that Indo-Pacific littoral states recalibrate port development and maritime infrastructure agreements in response to Sino-Indian rivalry, invoking UNCLOS principles while negotiating strategic dependencies. Karaj and Xharo (2025) identify similar dynamics in Western

Balkan stabilization frameworks where economic integration intersects with geopolitical alignment. Comparative interpretation across regions reveals pluralized regulatory architectures shaped by rivalry.

Judicial and quasi-judicial bodies confront doctrinal strain when adjudicating disputes implicating economic security measures. Panels and appellate bodies within the WTO system have grappled with the justiciability of Article XXI, reflecting divergent views on self-judging clauses. Orakhelashvili (2008) emphasizes the coexistence of conflicting legitimacies between formal treaty interpretation and geopolitical rationales, a dynamic visible in economic security litigation.

Müllerson (2025) argues that transformations within superpowers produce geopolitical reconfigurations that reverberate across international legal institutions. Ismayilli (2025) situates these adjudicative tensions within a broader transition toward a new international order characterized by contested normative authority. The pluralization of economic governance can be synthesized through the following comparative table, which delineates doctrinal bases and rivalry-driven reinterpretations:

Table 3. Legal Regime Adaptation under Geopolitical Rivalry (Security Reinterpretation and Fragmentation in Global Economic Governance)

Legal Regime	Foundational Norm	Rivalry-Induced Adaptation	Normative Consequence
GATT/WTO	Trade liberalization	Expansive security exception	Fragmented compliance
Investment Treaties	Investor protection	Screening for strategic sectors	Policy competition
Export Control Regimes	Non-proliferation norms	Tech containment strategies	Regulatory bifurcation
Digital Governance	Data free flow commitments	Localization and sovereignty claims	Normative pluralism

The table illustrates that economic and technological governance retains formal legal continuity while accommodating divergent security rationales, reinforcing Druzin’s (2025) thesis on fragmentation effects. Joustra (2025) notes analogous geopolitical conditioning in freedom of religion or belief advocacy, indicating cross-sectoral pluralization. Odia (2025) links economic rivalry to the Security Council’s legitimacy crisis, as sanctions increasingly intersect with trade restrictions. Structural analysis reveals interconnected normative shifts across institutional domains.

Domestic constitutional frameworks mediate the incorporation of rivalry-driven economic measures into national law. Hanafi (2023) analyzes Indonesian tax enforcement reform as an example of recalibrated administrative penal policy influenced by global economic governance trends. Hanafi et al. (2026) demonstrate that Islamic legal adaptation to social change reflects contextual reinterpretation compatible with broader regulatory transformations. Such domestic engagements illustrate that global rivalry permeates internal economic regulation through systematic and teleological reinterpretation. Constitutional review mechanisms frequently balance economic openness against security prerogatives, reflecting layered sovereignty.

Multipolar competition also reshapes development finance and infrastructure agreements, embedding geopolitical alignment within contractual frameworks. Per mpul et al. (2025) argue that great power rivalry incentivizes parallel financial architectures that challenge Bretton Woods institutions. Paikin (2021) conceptualizes the weakening of collective hegemony as generating policy experimentation within international society. Randall (2010) situates economic internationalism within geopolitical conditions that determine its normative reach. Markowitz and Fariss (2018) suggest that proximity-based competition influences governance alignment, implying that economic regulation may diffuse along geopolitical networks.

Technological rivalry amplifies normative contestation over cyber governance and digital sovereignty. Salehi, Habib Zadeh Khiyaban, and Sabbar (2025) highlight divergent regulatory models for artificial intelligence reflecting strategic competition. Demirel (2026) interprets such divergence as

symptomatic of hegemonic rivalry restructuring global production chains. Safranchuk and Lukyanov (2021) underscore structural multipolarity as the underlying driver of regulatory bifurcation. Teleological analysis of digital trade agreements reveals tension between innovation facilitation and security-driven restriction.

Maritime economic corridors in the Indian Ocean and Western Balkans further demonstrate how infrastructure governance becomes legally embedded within rivalry. Wakkumbura (2023) documents Sri Lanka's strategic balancing through port agreements negotiated under UNCLOS frameworks. Karaj and Xharo (2025) show that Balkan economic integration intersects with stabilization law and recognition politics. Aria (2025) frames these patterns as strategic calculations shaping treaty design and implementation. Comparative doctrinal analysis reveals that infrastructure law functions as a conduit for geopolitical influence.

Pluralization does not equate to normative disintegration but indicates adaptive restructuring of legal authority. Petersmann (2025) argues that constitutional pluralism constrains policy competition by preserving core principles despite divergence. Bartnicki and Śleszyński (2025) describe power as inherent in anarchy, yet law channels its manifestation through institutionalized norms. Chaudhuri (2026) conceptualizes geopolitical transformation as evolutionary, suggesting continuity within adaptation. Critical-constructivist interpretation reveals economic governance discourse as a legitimizing strategy within rivalry.

The doctrinal evolution of economic and technological regulation under geopolitical rivalry illustrates the emergence of differentiated yet interconnected normative orders. Treaty texts remain formally operative, yet interpretive communities recalibrate their application in response to strategic competition. Institutional resilience coexists with regulatory bifurcation, producing layered authority rather than systemic collapse. Legal pluralization reflects negotiated accommodation between power politics and normative constraint. Contemporary international economic law thus embodies a dynamic equilibrium shaped by rivalry-driven reinterpretation and institutional continuity.

CONCLUSION

The analysis demonstrates that geopolitical rivalry does not dismantle the international legal order but reconstitutes its doctrinal architecture through reinterpretation of sovereignty and recognition, selective enforcement within collective security mechanisms, and pluralized economic and technological governance regimes. Normative provisions embedded in the United Nations Charter, trade agreements, and regulatory instruments remain formally intact, yet their operational semantics are recalibrated through strategic invocation, differentiated application, and regionally mediated institutional practices. Sovereignty evolves from a static juridical principle into a contested interpretive field shaped by recognition politics and layered constitutional pluralism, while enforcement authority under Chapter VII adapts to multipolar discretion that redefines legitimacy without extinguishing legality. Economic and technological regulation further illustrates how national security rationales expand treaty interpretation and generate regulatory bifurcation within an enduring multilateral framework. Contemporary power politics therefore embeds rivalry within the interpretive core of international law, producing adaptive pluralism rather than systemic collapse and revealing a dynamic equilibrium in which normative continuity and geopolitical competition coexist.

REFERENCES

- Aria, N. (2025). Shaping the World Order: The Strategic Logic Behind the Foreign Policies of Great Powers. *Panoply Journal*, 6.
- Bartnicki, A., & Śleszyński, W. (2025). Power in the Conditions of International Anarchy. *Miscellanea Historico-Iuridica*, 24(1), 775-793.
- Chaudhuri, R. B. (2026). Geopolitical Transformations in the 21st Century: An Evolutionary Perspective. *Journal of Law and Legal Research Development*, 01-05.
- Dar, Z. A., & Javid, S. (2025). Navigating the turbulent waters: An in-depth study of US-China geopolitical rivalry. *Law, Economics and Society*, 1(1), p1-p1.
- Demirel, E. (2026). International Law as a Tool of Hegemonic Rivalry in the Current Phase of the Capitalist World-System. *World Affairs*, 189(1).
- Druzin, B. H. (2025). Great power competition and the effects of global fragmentation on international law. *Vand. J. Transnat'l L.*, 58, 341.

- Hanafi, S. (2023). Konsep Idealisasi Penegakan Hukum Pajak dengan Eliminasi Administrative Penal Law terhadap Pelanggaran Pajak di Indonesia. *Jaksa: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Politik*, 1(4), 119-129.
- Hanafi, S., Saputra, D. R., Dewi, E. N., Adistia, A. N., Mahendra, Y. I., Akbar, Z. A., & Wijaya, A. (2026). Islamic Law and Social Change: Contemporary Applications of Fiqh in Muslim Societies. *Indonesian Journal of Sharia and Islamic Sciences*, 1(1), 19-27.
- Haroche, P. (2023). A 'geopolitical commission': Supranationalism meets global power competition. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 61(4), 970-987.
- Ismayilli, A. (2025). Contours of a New International Order: The Conceptual Analysis of Emerging Trends in Contemporary Geopolitics. *Wschodnioznawstwo*, (19), 255-279.
- Joustra, R. J. (2025). Freedom of Religion or Belief amid Great Power Rivalry: Geopolitics and the Future of FoRB Scholarship and Strategy. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 23(4), 57-75.
- Karaj, S., & Xharo, K. (2025). International law and conflict management in the Western Balkans: Impact on Bosnia, Albania, and Kosovo. *International Journal*, 8(2), 1212-1221.
- Markowitz, J. N., & Fariss, C. J. (2018). Power, proximity, and democracy: Geopolitical competition in the international system. *Journal of Peace Research*, 55(1), 78-93.
- Müllerson, R. (2016). Ideology, geopolitics and international law. *Chinese Journal of International Law*, 15(1), 47-73.
- Müllerson, R. (2025). Revolutions in "Superpowers" and Their Impact on Geopolitical Reconfiguration of the World and International Law. *Chinese Journal of International Law*, 24(3), jmaf026.
- Newman, E., & Visoka, G. (2023). The geopolitics of state recognition in a transitional international order. *Geopolitics*, 28(1), 364-391.
- Odia, P. (2025). Between Law and Geopolitics: The United Nations Security Council's Legitimacy Crisis and the Fragmentation of Collective Security. *Available at SSRN 5800382*.
- Orakhelashvili, A. (2008). International law and geopolitics: one object, conflicting legitimacies?. *Netherlands Yearbook of International Law*, 39, 155-204.
- Orford, A. (2021). Regional orders, geopolitics, and the future of international law. *Current Legal Problems*, 74(1), 149-194.
- Paikin, Z. (2021). Great power rivalry and the weakening of collective hegemony: revisiting the relationship between international society and international order. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 34(1), 22-45.
- Permpul, T., Bello, A. K., Alnusfir, A. A., & Almaliki, M. A. S. (2025). Great Power Rivalry In A Changing International Order. *Margalla Papers*, 29(2), 54-67.
- Petersmann, E. U. (2025). Multipolar Re-Ordering of International Legal Systems: Constitutional Pluralism as Political Driver and Constraint of Legal Policy Competition. *Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law & International Law (MPIL) Research Paper*, (2025-22).
- Randall, C. (2010). Geopolitical conditions of internationalism, human rights, and world law. *Journal of Globalization Studies*, 1(1), 29-45.
- Safranchuk, I., & Lukyanov, F. (2021). The modern world order: Structural realities and great power rivalries. *Polis. Political Studies*, 31(3), 57-76.
- Salehi, K., Habib Zadeh Khiyaban, S., & Sabbar, S. (2025). Artificial Intelligence and the Future of International Law and Power. *Journal of World Sociopolitical Studies*, 9(4), 923-958.
- Slawotsky, J. (2025). Conceptualizing national security in an era of great power rivalry: Implications for international economic law. *East Asia*, 42(3), 279-307.
- Ullah, A., & Ahmed, A. (2026). Power Politics and Legal Norms: How Great Powers Shape International Law Enforcement. *Social Science Review Archives*, 4(1), 1393-1403.
- Wakkumbura, M. (2023). The geopolitical rivalry of India and China in the Indian Ocean as a crucial determinant of the future of littoral states: Case study of Sri Lanka. *Journal of Colombo Geographer*, 1(1), 1-25.