

Conclusion



Editor / Resort Leader / Group Leader

Valentin Grangier is a French student of International Relations at Leiden University, specialising in East Asia and the Indo-Pacific. Focused on geopolitics, security, and regional dynamics, he analyses power interplay, ASEAN's role, and shifting alliances. Passionate about Japan, with intermediate Japanese, he blends constructivist, realist, liberal, and democratic perspectives to explore the region's political, economic, and security challenges.

EPIS Report on International Economic Relations

The combined insights from the EPIS International Economic Relations report ensemble show that trade wars today are a lot more than just symbolic gestures of economic protectionism; they are a very potent geopolitical leverage tool that changes the structure of global value chains, supply relationships and the strategic considerations of not only big, but also small states. The group of papers has brought together different analytical perspectives and a wide array of empirical evidence, making several key issues and their ramifications particularly noticeable.

To start with, trade wars have a real economic impact on a society, contributing to the rise in prices of consumer goods, dislodging entire sectors of the economy, and inflating rates not only within the country but also in those interlinked markets. The local producers are far from winning their competition sustainably, since in reality tariffs are mostly a regressive tax and a major source of inefficiency, which even in most cases can cause more job losses than job creations in the targeted sectors. Industry examples like steel, aluminium, and consumer goods show that the initial gains are very quickly burned away by the losses from manufacturing, agriculture, and other sectors interlaced with supply chains. Secondly, the spillover is international, and it speaks deeply and persistently. The global agriculture has been dramatically changed owing to mutually imposed tariffs and redirected trade flows (e.g., the war on soybeans between the US and China), as well as the manufacturing hubs and the commodity markets have been affected, almost always with irreversible effects. New economies, which usually depend on high demand from the big markets, have suffered from financial turmoil; at the same time the mature economies have experienced slower growth and deterioration of wages and investments. Thirdly, local networks and global structures are challenged by the new age of economic conflicts. The heavily interwoven trade agreements of Indo-Pacific, the steadiness of ASEAN, and the spreading of the high-standard bilateral trade agreements such as the CPTPP are three features that together sketch the international scene as one of diversification, risk management, and large-scale institutional change. Nevertheless, in the present time, digital trade pacts and tech collaboration are becoming more and more crucial, thus pointing to the shift from the traditional competition model to the data-driven one in a new era. Fourthly, the implementation of economic policy for strategic coercion purposes, by the example of the case of China's tariffs on Australia and, progressively, the US tariffs, has proven to be the reason why trade wars very infrequently stay disengaged. They initiate the reshuffling of connections, foster defensive economic nationalism, and push governments to find new partners and devise anti-coercion measures. While at the same time cuts in international aid and development support, along with the imposition of protectionist measures, increase the exposure of low-income regions to various kinds of risks, including health, migration and social stability.

In the end, the EPIS reports and policy briefs highlight that dealing with the trade wars issue should be done through multilayered tactics: increasing market diversification and institutional resilience, using digital innovation and tech standards, bringing back trust into multilateral forums, and at the same time, security concerns should be balanced, and there should be commitment to open and inclusive global trade. Politicians will have to depend on adjustment, cooperation, and foresight to successfully navigate the international economic relations, which are transitioning into a new era with higher stakes and major consequences.

Trade wars are more than just protecting borders or domestic industries. These conflicts entail the reshaping of future global trade, governance, and diplomatic order, which, in turn, call for a thorough understanding, flexible leadership, and staying committed to long-term stability and prosperity