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Q10

"With the waning of globalization, post-Cold War world is becoming a site of sovereign nationalism." Elucidate.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · GS II · 10 marks · Governance and Policy

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Core demand of the question

- Explain what waning globalisation means in trade, people and institutions
- Show how sovereign nationalism has returned as industrial policy, borders and war
- Elucidate without claiming that interdependence is dead
- Place India in the shift

Revision summary

- **Post-Cold War hyper-globalisation has waned:** WTO strain, export controls, vaccine nationalism, and war.

Sovereign nationalism is industrial policy, data and energy security, and minilateral clubs of States.

Interdependence continues under political licence, not as a religion of efficiency.

India's **PLI**, strategic oil and DPI diplomacy sit inside this shift.

Climate and pandemics still require more than one flag.

Introduction

The post-Cold War years sold a story of **open markets, thinning borders and one institutional kit** (WTO, capital mobility, supply chains). That story has **waned**. States have not gone home to 1950. They have put the **sovereign back in the shop window: tariffs, industrial policy, energy nationalism, and war. The world is a site of sovereign nationalism** in the sense that the State again claims the last word over the chain.

Body**What waned**

Hyper-globalisation after 1991 assumed that efficiency would discipline politics. **WTO** dispute settlement is crippled. **Brexit, America First** and **export controls** on chips and green tech turned trade into security. COVID-19 showed **vaccine nationalism**, then a partial correction. **Ukraine** and Red Sea attacks showed that grain, gas and containers still have flags. Migration politics in Europe and the US thickened borders even as capital stayed mobile. This is not the 1990s brochure.

Sovereign nationalism

Sovereign nationalism here is **not** only ethnic populism. It is **friend-shoring**, **critical minerals**, **data localisation**, **Atmanirbhar** and **IRA-style** subsidies. China never left the sovereign-developmental State. Others have copied the mood. **BRICS** expansion and **minilateral** clubs (Quad, I2U2, IMEC) are coalitions of sovereignties, not a world government. The UN is busy and blocked - which is the next 15-marker's terrain.

Interdependence remains in semiconductors, oil and climate. Nationalism decides **who is allowed to be interdependent with whom**.

India

India liberalised without becoming a small open economy. It now speaks **strategic autonomy**: Russian oil, US technology, Gulf capital, African votes. **PLI schemes**, digital public infrastructure as diplomacy, and caution at the WTO on agriculture are sovereign tools. They can slide into protection that hurts consumers. The elucidation is complete only if one adds: **climate and pandemics still ignore passports**, so a world of only sovereign nationalism will fail those tests.

The post-Cold War site is therefore **a marketplace with walls**, not a museum of autarky.

Flow diagram

1990s open kit -> Waning

Waning -> Sovereign industrial border war

Sovereign industrial border war -> Selective interdependence

India -> Selective interdependence

Conclusion

Globalisation as an ideology has waned; supply chains and data still cross borders. Sovereign nationalism sets the terms of those crossings. India is a player in that mood, not a spectator, and still needs clubs for climate and health that no single flag can run.

Facts & figures

WTO appellate paralysis

The dispute body's blockage is a marker that trade law no longer sits above great-power conflict.

Friend-shoring

Relocation of supply chains toward political partners rather than toward the cheapest node.

Production Linked Incentive (PLI)

India's production-linked incentive schemes as a sovereign industrial-policy tool after the open-market decade.