

Globalism erosion: elites' struggle for human capital in the era of new identities and conflicts

Erosão do globalismo: a luta das elites pelo capital humano na era das novas identidades e conflitos

Erosión de la globalización: la lucha de las élites por el capital humano en la era de las nuevas identidades y los conflictos

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Abstract

The article examines how global conflicts contribute to the erosion of globalization and reshape the relationships among political elites, social identities, sustainable development, and human capital management. Drawing upon contemporary theories of glocalization, neorealism, leadership studies,

and human capital development, the study proposes the Adaptive Glocalization System (AGS) as a conceptual framework for analyzing nation-state adaptation under conditions of geopolitical uncertainty. The article argues that the weakening of global governance mechanisms and the growing prioritization of relative national advantages encourage political elites to rely increasingly on identity-based mobilization strategies while simultaneously intensifying competition for human capital. Particular attention is paid to rising of right-oriented political projects and their efforts to reconcile sovereignty, national cohesion, and economic competitiveness. Comparative analysis of the United States, Italy, and Argentina demonstrates how different combinations of identity narratives, human capital strategies, and leadership approaches generate distinct adaptive trajectories. The study extends the concept of glocalization by integrating neorealist assumptions concerning strategic competition and introduces the concepts of synergistic and entropic glocalization as alternative developmental outcomes. The findings also suggest that situational leadership provides greater adaptive capacity than predominantly transactional governance models in periods of geopolitical instability. The proposed framework contributes to contemporary debates on globalization erosion, elite adaptation, and sustainable development by offering a new perspective on the interaction between global conflicts, identity politics, and human capital competition.

Keywords

Sustainable Development, Human Capital, Social Identities and Elites, Global Conflicts, Leadership.

Resumo

Este artigo examina como os conflitos globais contribuem para a erosão da globalização e remodelam as relações entre as elites políticas, as identidades sociais, o desenvolvimento sustentável e a gestão do capital humano. Com base nas teorias contemporâneas de glocalização, neorrealismo, estudos de liderança e desenvolvimento do capital humano, o estudo propõe o Sistema de Glocalização Adaptativa (SGA) como uma estrutura conceptual para analisar a adaptação do Estado-nação em condições de incerteza geopolítica. O artigo defende que o enfraquecimento dos mecanismos de governação global e a crescente priorização das vantagens nacionais relativas incentivam as elites políticas a dependerem cada vez mais de estratégias de mobilização baseadas na identidade, ao mesmo tempo que intensificam a competição pelo capital humano. É dada especial atenção à ascensão dos projectos políticos de direita e aos seus esforços para conciliar a soberania, a coesão nacional e a competitividade económica. A análise comparativa dos Estados Unidos, Itália e Argentina demonstra como diferentes combinações de narrativas identitárias, estratégias de capital humano e abordagens de liderança geram trajetórias adaptativas distintas. O estudo amplia o conceito de globalização ao integrar pressupostos neorrealistas sobre a competição estratégica e introduz os conceitos de globalização sinérgica e entrópica como resultados alternativos de desenvolvimento. Os resultados sugerem que a liderança situacional proporciona uma maior capacidade adaptativa do que os modelos de governação predominantemente transacionais em períodos de instabilidade geopolítica. A estrutura proposta contribui para os debates contemporâneos sobre a erosão da globalização, a adaptação das elites e o desenvolvimento sustentável, oferecendo uma nova perspetiva sobre a interação entre os conflitos globais, as políticas de identidade e a competição pelo capital humano.

Palavras-chave

Desenvolvimento Sustentável, Capital Humano, Identidades Sociais e Elites, Conflitos Globais, Liderança.

Resumen

El artículo examina cómo los conflictos globales contribuyen a la erosión de la globalización y reconfiguran las relaciones entre las élites políticas, las identidades sociales, el desarrollo sostenible y la gestión del capital humano. A partir de teorías contemporáneas sobre la glocalización, el neorrealismo, los estudios de liderazgo y el desarrollo del capital humano, el estudio propone el

Sistema de Glocalización Adaptativa (SGA) como marco conceptual para analizar la adaptación de los Estados-nación en condiciones de incertidumbre geopolítica. El artículo argumenta que el debilitamiento de los mecanismos de gobernanza global y la creciente priorización de las ventajas nacionales relativas incentivan a las élites políticas a depender cada vez más de estrategias de movilización basadas en la identidad, intensificando simultáneamente la competencia por el capital humano. Se presta especial atención al auge de los proyectos políticos de derecha y sus esfuerzos por conciliar la soberanía, la cohesión nacional y la competitividad económica. El análisis comparativo de Estados Unidos, Italia y Argentina demuestra cómo diferentes combinaciones de narrativas de identidad, estrategias de capital humano y enfoques de liderazgo generan trayectorias adaptativas distintas. El estudio amplía el concepto de glocalización al integrar supuestos neorrealistas sobre la competencia estratégica e introduce los conceptos de glocalización sinérgica y entrópica como resultados de desarrollo alternativos. Los hallazgos sugieren que el liderazgo situacional proporciona una mayor capacidad de adaptación que los modelos de gobernanza predominantemente transaccionales en periodos de inestabilidad geopolítica. El marco propuesto contribuye a los debates contemporáneos sobre la erosión de la globalización, la adaptación de las élites y el desarrollo sostenible, al ofrecer una nueva perspectiva sobre la interacción entre los conflictos globales, la política de identidades y la competencia por el capital humano.

Palabras clave

Desarrollo Sostenible, Capital Humano, Identidades Sociales y Élite, Conflictos Globales, Liderazgo.

1. Introduction

Over the last three decades, globalization is widely perceived as a dominant paradigm of economic development, political cooperation, and human mobility. The expansion of global production networks, international migration, digital communication, and supranational governance mechanisms contributed to the formation of an increasingly interconnected world in which the mobility of knowledge, labor, and capital became a key driver of sustainable development. Within this framework, human capital emerged as one of the most strategic resources for both developed and developing economies, while international openness was regarded as a prerequisite for innovation, competitiveness, and long-term growth (Borysenko *et al.*, 2022; Kulikov *et al.*, 2022). However, the international environment of the 2020s demonstrates a fundamentally different trajectory. The cumulative effects of geopolitical rivalries, military conflicts, economic fragmentation, migration crises, technological competition, and growing social polarization have challenged many assumptions associated with the globalization paradigm. The Russian-Ukrainian war, escalating tensions between the United States and China, instability in the Middle East, and the growing fragmentation of international institutions contributed to the emergence of a more conflict-prone and uncertain global order. Rather than fostering deeper integration, these developments increasingly encourage states to prioritize national resilience, strategic autonomy, and domestic political consolidation.

From the perspective of neorealist theory, the contemporary international system exhibits many characteristics of intensified competition among states operating under conditions of structural uncertainty (Zahorskyi *et al.*, 2022; Vennet & Geeraerts, 2025). In such an environment, states increasingly perceive human capital not merely as an economic asset but as a strategic resource linked to national security, technological sovereignty, and geopolitical influence. Consequently, competition for highly skilled workers, researchers, entrepreneurs, and innovative capacities became a central dimension of international rivalry. Simultaneously, migration policies are becoming more selective, and many governments are adopting measures aimed at protecting domestic labor markets while attracting strategically valuable talent (Macaluso, 2022). These processes reflect a broader transformation from the liberal logic of global openness toward a more protectionist and security-oriented approach to human capital management.

This transformation generates a significant tension between the universal aspirations of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and increasingly localized interests of national political elites. While the SDGs emphasize inclusiveness, international cooperation, social equity, and global knowledge exchange, contemporary political actors frequently prioritize domestic political legitimacy, national identity, and competitive advantage. As a result, sustainable development strategies are increasingly embedded within national political projects rather than global governance frameworks. An important mechanism through which this transformation occurs is the growing political utilization of social identities. National, cultural, religious, and civilizational narratives are increasingly mobilized by political elites to strengthen social cohesion, legitimize policy choices, and secure political support under conditions of uncertainty. Identity politics thus becomes not merely a cultural phenomenon but a strategic governance instrument. During periods of geopolitical tension and economic insecurity, appeals to collective identities may facilitate social mobilization, justify restrictive migration policies, and reinforce distinctions between “insiders” and “outsiders.” Consequently, the management of human capital becomes inseparable from broader processes of identity construction and political leadership.

These tendencies are particularly visible in countries where right-leaning political elites gained significant influence and where immigration, national sovereignty, and economic protectionism occupy central positions within political discourse. The United States, Italy, and Argentina provide valuable comparative cases for examining these dynamics. Although differing substantially in their economic structures, institutional capacities, and geopolitical positions, all three countries demonstrate attempts to reconcile national competitiveness with growing societal demands for identity-based political representation.

In the United States, growing uncertainty within the international security environment - including strategic rivalry with China, the ongoing war in Ukraine, instability in the Middle East, and challenges to technological leadership - led to aggravating of discussions concerning economic security, border governance, strategic autonomy, and the preservation of national human capital advantages. In Italy, rising Euroscepticism, demographic decline, migration pressures, and concerns about national sovereignty stimulated discussions regarding the balance between European integration and domestic interests. In Argentina, persistent economic instability, political polarization, social inequality, and broader regional challenges - including migration pressures, organized crime, and institutional vulnerability - contributed to the emergence of political projects emphasizing state restructuring, economic nationalism, and renewed definitions of national identity.

To conceptualize these developments, the current study proposes expanded interpretation of glocalization. Traditionally understood as the interaction between global and local processes, we reconceptualize glocalization as a multidimensional adaptive system composed of three interrelated components: (1) elite strategies for managing and attracting human capital; (2) sustainable development objectives and governance priorities; and (3) the pursuit of relative competitive advantages by nation-states within an increasingly unstable international environment. Within this framework, global and local forces may generate either synergistic outcomes that enhance development and innovation or entropic dynamics that intensify fragmentation, social conflict, and institutional instability. Global conflicts function as external shocks that alter the balance between these components and reshape state responses.

The article further argues that leadership constitutes a critical intervening variable in this process. Extending organizational leadership theories to the macro-political level, the study examines the relevance of transactional and situational leadership models for contemporary nation-states. While transactional leadership may provide short-term stability through exchanges of political support for policy benefits, the complexity and unpredictability of contemporary geopolitical conditions increasingly favor situational leadership characterized by flexibility, adaptive decision-making, and strategic foresight. In an era marked by rapidly changing conflict environments and shifting identity structures, the capacity of political leaders to adapt institutions and human capital strategies may become a decisive factor in maintaining national competitiveness and sustainable development trajectories (Hoogen *et al.*, 2025).

Against this background, the purpose of this article is to investigate how contemporary global conflicts contribute to the erosion of globalization, reshape elite strategies toward human capital, and stimulate the political mobilization of social identities. Through a comparative analysis of the United

States, Italy, and Argentina, the study seeks to explain how national elites navigate the tension between sustainable development commitments and the pursuit of national competitive advantages within an increasingly fragmented international order. The proposed glocalization framework offers a novel analytical perspective for understanding the dynamic interactions among leadership, identity politics, human capital, and sustainable development in the emerging post-global era.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Neorealism and Contemporary Global Conflicts

Neorealism remains one of the most influential theoretical approaches for understanding the behavior of states within the international system. Building upon the premise that international order is characterized by anarchy rather than hierarchical authority, neorealist scholars argue that states continuously seek to maximize their security and preserve relative advantages in relation to competitors. In this context, interstate cooperation remains conditional and often constrained by concerns regarding power distribution, strategic vulnerability, and long-term survival. Consequently, periods of geopolitical instability tend to intensify competition among states and encourage policies aimed at strengthening national resilience (Ahammad, 2026; Ronald, 2025). International environment of the twenty-first century reinforced many neorealist assumptions. The resurgence of great-power competition, the growing strategic rivalry between the United States and China, the war in Ukraine, instability in the Middle East, and increasing fragmentation of international governance institutions contributed to a more uncertain and conflict-prone global order. Under such conditions, states increasingly prioritize national interests, economic security, and strategic autonomy over commitments associated with deeper global integration.

At the same time, contemporary conflicts differ substantially from the conventional interstate wars that dominated much of the twentieth century. Current conflict dynamics are increasingly shaped by hybridity and asymmetry, reflecting the integration of military, economic, informational, technological, and sociocultural instruments of influence. Hybrid conflicts frequently involve cyber operations, disinformation campaigns, economic sanctions, technological restrictions, proxy actors, and the strategic manipulation of social and political narratives. As a result, the traditional boundaries between war and peace become increasingly blurred, while civilian populations, economic systems, and information infrastructures become direct arenas of confrontation. The growing complexity of modern conflicts has important implications for globalization. While globalization facilitated unprecedented flows of capital, information, goods, and people, contemporary geopolitical tensions increasingly disrupt these processes. Supply chains are being restructured, migration regimes are

becoming more restrictive, and states are reassessing their dependence on external actors in strategically important sectors. These developments contribute to the gradual erosion of the liberal globalization model that emerged after the Cold War and encourage the reassertion of state-centered approaches to economic and social governance.

Within this evolving security environment, human capital acquires renewed strategic significance (Verbivska *et al.*, 2024). Highly skilled labor, scientific expertise, technological knowledge, and innovative capacity increasingly influence not only economic competitiveness but also national security and geopolitical influence. Consequently, governments are paying greater attention to attracting, retaining, and strategically deploying human capital as part of broader efforts to strengthen national resilience. Migration policies, educational investments, talent attraction programs, and innovation ecosystems are therefore becoming integral components of geopolitical competition.

From a neorealist perspective, the contemporary struggle for human capital can be interpreted as an extension of interstate competition into the social and cognitive domains. States no longer compete solely for territory, military capabilities, or economic resources; they increasingly compete for knowledge, innovation, and human potential. This shift is particularly significant in an era of hybrid conflicts, where technological superiority, adaptive capacity, and societal resilience often determine strategic success. Consequently, understanding the relationship between global conflicts and human capital management becomes essential for explaining the broader transformation of globalization in the twenty-first century.

2.2 Human Capital and Sustainable Development

Human capital theory claims the role of education, knowledge, skills, and health as critical determinants of economic productivity and social progress. Since the seminal contributions of Schultz and Becker, human capital has been increasingly recognized as a fundamental driver of innovation, competitiveness, and long-term development (Schultz and Becker as cited in Oltulular, 2025). In contemporary knowledge-based economies, the capacity to generate, attract, and retain highly skilled individuals constitutes a strategic resource that shapes national performance across multiple dimensions. Meanwhile, the growing importance of human capital is closely linked to the global sustainable development agenda. SDGs especially emphasize the significance of quality education, reduced inequalities, decent work, innovation, and strong institutions as interconnected components of sustainable societal transformation. Human capital serves as a central mechanism through which

these objectives can be achieved, contributing not only to economic growth but also to social cohesion, environmental adaptation, and institutional resilience.

However, the relationship between sustainable development and globalization became increasingly complex. While globalization historically facilitated international knowledge exchange and labor mobility, contemporary geopolitical tensions encourage governments to adopt more selective approaches toward migration and talent flows. Highly qualified workers are increasingly viewed as strategic national assets whose retention directly influences economic competitiveness and technological sovereignty. As a result, states are becoming more active participants in the global competition for talent, often combining restrictive migration policies with targeted initiatives aimed at attracting highly skilled professionals (Bretas & Tippmann, 2025). These developments suggest that national competitiveness foundations are undergoing significant transformation (Caramento *et al.*, 2023). Traditional comparative advantages based primarily on natural resources, geographical location, or low labor costs are gradually being supplemented by new forms of relative competitive advantage. In the context of sustainable development, innovation capacity, human capital quality, institutional adaptability, green technologies, and access to sustainable finance increasingly determine the ability of states to maintain long-term competitiveness. Consequently, management of human capital became inseparable from broader strategies aimed at securing economic resilience and sustainable development under conditions of global uncertainty.

The growing strategic significance of human capital also introduces new political challenges. Governments must simultaneously pursue economic competitiveness, social stability, and sustainable development objectives while responding to domestic pressures associated with migration, inequality, and identity politics. This tension increasingly shapes the behavior of political elites and influences the policy choices adopted by contemporary nation-states.

2.3 Social Identities and Elite Mobilization

Social identity theory suggests that individuals define themselves through membership in social groups and derive a sense of belonging from shared cultural, national, ethnic, religious, or political affiliations (Hu & Cheung, 2024). Under conditions of uncertainty, perceived threats, or social transformation, collective identities often become more salient and influential in shaping political behavior. Consequently, identity formation is not merely a sociocultural process but also an important mechanism through which political actors mobilize support and construct legitimacy. Contemporary globalization generated contradictory effects on social identities. While increased interconnectedness evidently facilitated cultural exchange and transnational interactions, it also, at

the same time, intensified concerns regarding national sovereignty, cultural preservation, migration, and economic security (Arslan, 2025). These concerns frequently create opportunities for political elites to frame public debates through identity-based narratives that distinguish between in-groups and out-groups (Alkharafi & Alsabah, 2025). Such narratives can strengthen social cohesion among specific constituencies while simultaneously reinforcing political polarization.

The relationship between identity and political mobilization becomes particularly significant during periods of geopolitical instability and economic uncertainty. Global conflicts, migration pressures, and rapid socioeconomic change often increase public demand for certainty, belonging, and collective purpose. Political elites may respond by emphasizing national traditions, cultural values, religious identities, or narratives of national revival. These strategies can facilitate support for policy agendas related to border control, labor market protection, economic nationalism, and the regulation of migration flows. In this context, social identities become closely connected to human capital policies. Decisions regarding migration, citizenship, educational priorities, and labor market access are frequently justified through identity-based arguments concerning national interests and societal cohesion. Consequently, the management of human capital increasingly reflects not only economic considerations but also broader processes of identity construction and political mobilization.

2.4 Leadership under Strategic Uncertainty

Leadership represents a critical factor shaping how states respond to complex and rapidly changing environments. Although leadership theories were originally developed within organizational and management studies, their underlying principles offer valuable insights for understanding political decision-making at the state level. As global conflicts become increasingly hybrid, multidimensional, and unpredictable, the effectiveness of national responses depends not only on institutional capacity but also on the ability of political leaders to interpret emerging challenges and adapt strategic priorities accordingly. Transactional leadership focuses on the exchange relationships between leaders and followers. Stability is achieved through negotiated arrangements in which political support is exchanged for economic benefits, security guarantees, policy concessions, or institutional protection. At the state level, transactional leadership often manifests through protectionist economic measures, welfare commitments, labor market interventions, and policies designed to maintain political legitimacy among key constituencies. Such approaches may be effective under relatively stable conditions where risks and policy outcomes remain predictable.

However, the increasing complexity of contemporary global conflicts challenges the assumptions underlying transactional approaches. Hybrid threats, technological disruptions, migration pressures, and geopolitical volatility frequently generate situations in which established policy frameworks become insufficient. Under these circumstances, leaders must respond to rapidly evolving conditions characterized by incomplete information and heightened uncertainty. Situational leadership offers an alternative perspective that implies adaptability, contextual awareness, and strategic flexibility. Rather than relying on fixed policy approaches, situational leaders continuously adjust their strategies in response to changing circumstances. At the national level, this may involve modifying migration policies, restructuring economic priorities, recalibrating international partnerships, or introducing new mechanisms for attracting and retaining human capital. The effectiveness of such leadership depends upon the ability to recognize emerging risks while simultaneously identifying new opportunities for national development. An increasingly important dimension of situational leadership is strategic foresight capability. In environments shaped by geopolitical turbulence and technological transformation, leaders must anticipate potential disruptions affecting labor markets, innovation systems, migration patterns, and sustainable development trajectories. The capacity to combine adaptive decision-making with long-term strategic vision may therefore become a critical determinant of national resilience.

The growing uncertainty associated with contemporary global conflicts suggests that situational leadership may possess important advantages over purely transactional approaches. While transactional leadership can contribute to short-term stability, situational leadership may provide greater capacity for preserving human capital, maintaining sustainable development objectives, and adapting to the evolving dynamics of the international system. This distinction is particularly relevant for understanding how political elites in different national contexts respond to the tensions between globalization, national interests, and the strategic management of human capital.

3. Methodology

The study employs comparative qualitative case study approach to examine how contemporary global conflicts influence elite strategies toward human capital, identity mobilization, and sustainable development. Comparative case study methodology is particularly appropriate for investigating complex political phenomena characterized by strong contextual dependence and multiple interacting variables. By focusing on a limited number of strategically selected cases, the study seeks to identify common patterns and important variations in state responses to global uncertainty. The analysis focuses on the United States, Italy, and Argentina. These cases were

selected through purposive sampling based on three criteria. First, all three countries experienced the growing influence of right-leaning political elites that emphasize national sovereignty, migration control, and economic protectionism. Second, each country occupies a distinct position within the global political and economic system, allowing for meaningful cross-case comparison. Third, all three cases illustrate different manifestations of the tension between sustainable development objectives, national competitiveness, and identity-based political mobilization. From a theoretical perspective, these cases provide an opportunity to examine how the proposed Adaptive Glocalization System operates across countries that differ substantially in terms of economic structure, institutional capacity, and geopolitical position. From an empirical perspective, all three countries recently were characterized by the growing influence of right-oriented political forces that put special emphasis on national sovereignty, migration control, domestic economic priorities, and the pursuit of greater strategic autonomy under conditions of increasing geopolitical uncertainty. These political developments reflect broader tendencies associated with contemporary forms of glocalization, whereby governments seek to reconcile participation in global economic and political processes with stronger protection of national interests and domestic resilience

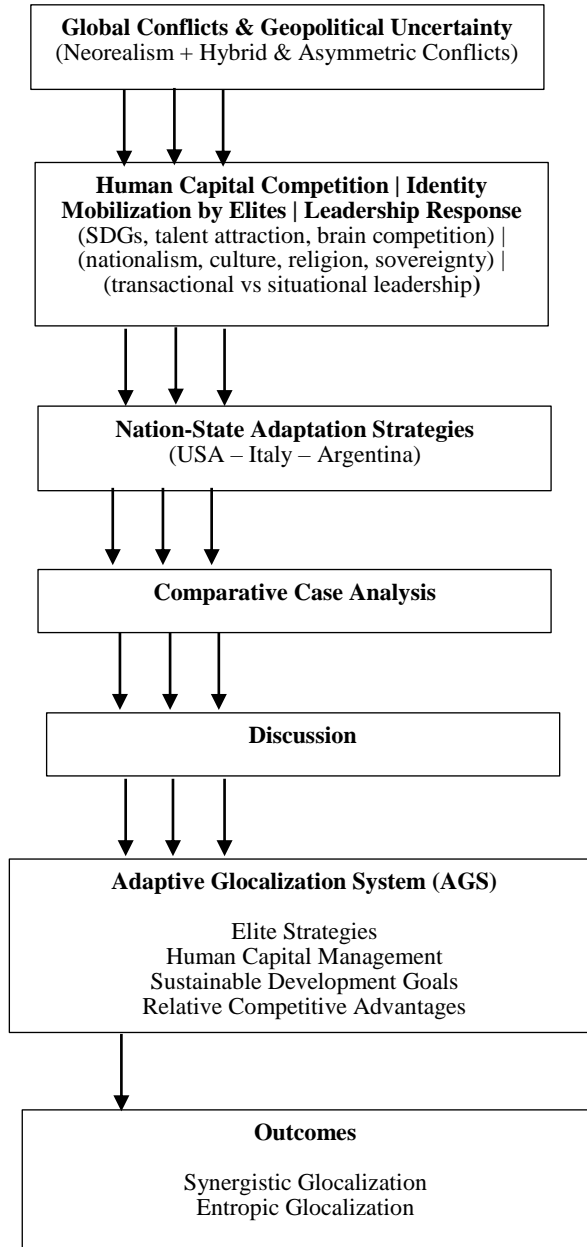
The study utilizes qualitative content analysis of governmental strategies, policy documents, public speeches, migration policies, sustainable development initiatives, and secondary academic literature. Particular attention is devoted to identifying relationships among four analytical dimensions: (1) the impact of global conflicts and geopolitical uncertainty; (2) elite strategies regarding human capital management; (3) the mobilization of social identities; and (4) leadership approaches adopted in response to changing international conditions.

The comparative analysis is structured around these dimensions and seeks to evaluate how different political contexts shape state responses to the erosion of globalization. Rather than testing predetermined causal relationships, the study adopts an exploratory and theory-building orientation. This approach facilitates the development of an integrated conceptual interpretation of the interaction between global conflicts, human capital, social identities, sustainable development, and leadership in contemporary nation-states.

Methodological structure of research is conceptualized in Fig. 1.

Figure 1

Methodological structure of research



* Note: The use of multiple outgoing arrows from “Global Conflicts and Geopolitical Uncertainty” indicates that this variable operates as a common exogenous driver simultaneously affecting three analytically distinct but interrelated dimensions of the study: human capital competition, social identity–based elite mobilization, and leadership responses. Each of these pathways represents a separate mechanism through which global conflicts shape nation-state behavior. In contrast, single-direction arrows are used to indicate sequential and hierarchical relationships between analytical levels. In these cases, each subsequent block is conceptually and methodologically dependent on the preceding one, reflecting a stepwise aggregation process from individual analytical dimensions toward integrated nation-state adaptation strategies, comparative case analysis, and the final emergence of the AGS

To facilitate comparative analysis and strengthen the operational applicability of the proposed Adaptive Glocalization System, the conceptual framework was translated into a set of analytical

dimensions and indicators. This step addresses one of the central objectives of the study: moving beyond purely descriptive interpretations of globalization erosion toward a structured assessment of nation-state adaptation strategies. The selected indicators reflect the key theoretical components identified in the preceding sections, namely human capital management, identity-based elite mobilization, sustainable development priorities, leadership adaptation, and the pursuit of relative competitive advantages. Together, these dimensions provide an analytical basis for evaluating how political elites respond to geopolitical uncertainty and for distinguishing between synergistic and entropic trajectories of glocalization. The operational structure of the AGS is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Operational Indicators of the Adaptive Glocalization System (AGS)

AGS Component	Analytical Focus	Illustrative Indicators
<i>Human Capital Management</i>	Capacity of the state to attract, retain, and develop strategic talent	Skilled migration policies; talent attraction programs; brain-drain/brain-gain trends; investment in education, research, and innovation
<i>Identity Mobilization</i>	Use of collective identities by political elites to strengthen legitimacy and social cohesion	Sovereignty narratives; cultural and national identity discourses; migration-related rhetoric; elite framing of external threats
<i>Sustainable Development Orientation</i>	Integration of long-term development goals into national strategies	Education and innovation policies; social inclusion measures; SDG-related initiatives; institutional resilience programs
<i>Leadership Adaptation</i>	Capacity of governing elites to respond to changing geopolitical conditions	Policy flexibility; strategic foresight; institutional reforms; crisis-response mechanisms
<i>Relative Competitive Advantage</i>	Efforts to strengthen national position within the international system	Technological competitiveness; strategic industries; economic security measures; innovation ecosystems
<i>Glocalization Outcome</i>	Overall balance between global integration and national adaptation	Evidence of synergistic outcomes (resilience, innovation, cohesion) or entropic outcomes (fragmentation, rigidity, human capital losses)

Source: developed by the authors based on: Gusman and Sandry (2022); Dehdari (2018); Li *et al.* (2026)

The AGS indicators presented in Table 1 operationalize the conceptual framework and provide a common analytical basis for the comparative assessment of nation-state adaptation strategies. Rather than measuring globalization erosion through a single dimension, the framework evaluates the interaction among human capital policies, identity mobilization, leadership adaptation, sustainable development priorities, and the pursuit of relative advantages. This multidimensional

approach facilitates cross-case comparison and enables the classification of adaptive trajectories along the synergistic–entropic glocalization continuum.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Erosion of Globalization and the Reconfiguration of Elite Priorities

Conceptual analysis suggests that contemporary global conflicts are contributing to a gradual erosion of the globalization paradigm that shaped international political and economic relations during the post-Cold War period (Khan *et al.*, 2024; Javad *et al.*, 2024). Whereas globalization was largely associated with increasing interdependence, liberalized mobility, and expanding transnational governance structures, contemporary geopolitical conditions increasingly favor strategic autonomy, national resilience, and competitive state behavior. From a neorealist perspective, growing uncertainty within the international system encourages political actors to prioritize relative gains over collective benefits, thereby weakening the institutional foundations of global cooperation. This transformation creates growing contradiction between the universalist logic embedded within the Sustainable Development Goals and the strategic interests pursued by national political elites. The SDGs presuppose international cooperation, inclusive development, and the diffusion of knowledge across borders. However, geopolitical fragmentation incentivizes governments to prioritize domestic stability, economic security, and national competitiveness (Muya, 2024; Huang, 2025). Consequently, sustainable development objectives increasingly become incorporated into national political projects rather than remaining components of a common global agenda.

The cases of the United States, Italy, and Argentina illustrate this tendency particularly clearly. Despite significant differences in institutional capacity and economic development, all three countries experienced the growing influence of right-oriented political forces that place sovereignty, national identity, migration control, and domestic economic protection at the center of political discourse. These developments do not necessarily imply a complete rejection of globalization. Rather, they indicate a selective reinterpretation of globalization through national interests and strategic priorities. This process corresponds to what the present study conceptualizes as a new phase of glocalization.

Unlike traditional interpretations that emphasize coexistence of global and local dynamics, the proposed Adaptive Glocalization System expands the concept by incorporating neorealist assumptions regarding relative advantages and strategic competition. Within this framework, glocalization is understood not simply as the localization of global processes but as a continuous effort by political elites to balance three competing imperatives: sustainable development objectives, human capital management, and the preservation of relative national advantages under conditions of

geopolitical uncertainty. Global conflicts function as external shocks that continuously reshape this balance and force political actors to adapt their governance strategies.

4.2 Identity Mobilization and Elite Strategies in the Era of Global Conflicts

Erosion of globalization is accompanied not only by economic and geopolitical transformations but also by significant changes in the mechanisms through which political elites construct legitimacy and maintain social cohesion. As international uncertainty increases and traditional forms of global governance become less effective, social identities acquire renewed political significance. National, cultural, religious, and civilizational narratives increasingly function as instruments through which elites interpret external threats, justify policy choices, and mobilize collective action (Yakarlar & Peker, 2025). Within the proposed framework, identity should not be viewed solely as a cultural phenomenon. Rather, it constitutes a strategic governance resource that allows political actors to reduce societal uncertainty and strengthen political support under conditions of geopolitical instability. This tendency becomes particularly visible during periods of military conflict, migration crises, economic turbulence, and institutional fragmentation, when demands for security, belonging, and predictability become increasingly salient.

The growing influence of right-oriented political forces in many democratic states illustrates this transformation. Although the ideological foundations of contemporary right-wing movements vary considerably across national contexts, they frequently share a common emphasis on sovereignty, cultural continuity, migration control, and the protection of national interests. Such narratives do not necessarily imply a rejection of globalization as a whole. Instead, they reflect an attempt to selectively redefine the relationship between global processes and local priorities. In this sense, identity politics becomes an important mechanism of glocalization through which global challenges are interpreted and managed within nationally specific political frameworks.

A particularly important consequence of this process is the increasing integration of identity narratives into human capital policies. Under conditions of intensifying international competition, highly skilled individuals become strategically valuable resources whose mobility directly affects innovation capacity, technological development, and long-term competitiveness. At the same time, political elites must respond to domestic concerns regarding migration, labor market competition, demographic change, and cultural cohesion. As a result, human capital management increasingly combines economic rationality with identity-based political considerations. This transformation generates a fundamental contradiction. On the one hand, sustainable development requires openness, knowledge exchange, educational cooperation, and the circulation of talent across borders. On the

other hand, political elites operating within a context of geopolitical rivalry often prioritize the retention of domestic human capital and the attraction of strategically valuable specialists while simultaneously seeking to reinforce national cohesion through identity-based narratives. Consequently, human capital becomes both an economic resource and a political asset embedded within broader projects of national adaptation (Xu *et al.*, 2024).

From the perspective of the Adaptive Glocalization System, identity mobilization represents one of the principal mechanisms through which political elites attempt to reconcile sustainable development objectives with the pursuit of relative national advantages. The effectiveness of this strategy depends largely upon whether identity narratives facilitate adaptive integration or contribute to social polarization. Inclusive and future-oriented forms of identity construction may strengthen resilience and support innovation-driven development. Conversely, exclusionary forms of identity politics risk generating institutional fragmentation and reducing the capacity of societies to attract and retain diverse forms of human capital.

4.3 Leadership Adaptation: Transactional versus Situational Governance of Nation-States

The growing complexity of contemporary geopolitical conflicts raises important questions regarding the forms of leadership most capable of ensuring sustainable development under conditions of uncertainty. While theories of transactional and situational leadership were originally developed within organizational and management studies, their core principles can be extended to the level of nation-state governance. Such an extension offers a useful analytical perspective for understanding how political elites respond to the simultaneous pressures of geopolitical competition, identity mobilization, and human capital management.

At the nation-state level, transactional leadership can be understood as a governance model based on the exchange of political support for economic, social, or institutional benefits. Political legitimacy is maintained through relatively stable arrangements in which governments provide security, welfare programs, economic protection, employment opportunities, or tax incentives in return for public support. Under conditions of relative stability, transactional leadership may contribute to political predictability and institutional continuity. Many governance mechanisms associated with the late globalization era reflected this logic, as economic growth and expanding international integration created opportunities for governments to sustain legitimacy through material improvements in living standards.

However, the erosion of globalization significantly alters the environment within which political leaders operate. Contemporary geopolitical conflicts are increasingly characterized by

hybridity, asymmetry, and rapid structural change. Military confrontations interact with technological competition, migration pressures, cyber threats, supply-chain disruptions, and information warfare. Such conditions reduce the effectiveness of governance models based primarily on stable exchanges between elites and society because both risks and opportunities evolve continuously.

Under these circumstances, situational leadership emerges as a more adaptive governance approach. At the nation-state level, situational leadership may be defined as the capacity of political elites to modify strategies, institutions, and policy priorities in response to changing domestic and international conditions. Rather than relying upon fixed ideological or policy frameworks, situational leaders seek to maintain strategic flexibility while preserving long-term national objectives. This adaptive capacity becomes particularly important in areas directly affected by geopolitical uncertainty, including migration governance, innovation policy, education systems, labor market regulation, and human capital development.

The distinction between transactional and situational leadership is especially relevant within the proposed Adaptive Glocalization System. The AGS framework assumes that political elites must continuously balance three competing priorities: sustainable development objectives, human capital management, and the pursuit of relative national advantages. Achieving such a balance requires not only institutional resources but also leadership capable of responding to rapidly changing circumstances. Transactional leadership may successfully preserve short-term political stability; however, its effectiveness declines when external shocks fundamentally alter the strategic environment. Situational leadership, by contrast, increases the capacity of governments to adapt development strategies, redefine policy instruments, and respond to emerging challenges without abandoning broader national objectives.

Additional advantage of situational leadership lies in its ability to manage the tensions between openness and protection that characterize contemporary glocalization. States require access to international knowledge networks, innovation ecosystems, and highly qualified specialists in order to remain competitive. Simultaneously, they face domestic pressures to protect labor markets, preserve social cohesion, and strengthen national identities. Situational leadership provides greater flexibility for navigating these competing demands, whereas purely transactional approaches often encourage short-term policy responses driven by immediate political considerations.

Within this perspective, the effectiveness of contemporary governance should be evaluated not only through economic performance or electoral outcomes but also through the ability to generate adaptive forms of glocalization. Situational leadership contributes to what this study conceptualizes as synergistic glocalization, whereby sustainable development goals, human capital accumulation,

and national competitiveness reinforce one another. Conversely, excessive reliance on rigid transactional arrangements increases the likelihood of entropic glocalization characterized by policy inconsistency, social polarization, institutional rigidity, and declining adaptive capacity. The distinction between these two trajectories becomes particularly evident in the comparative experiences of the United States, Italy, and Argentina.

4.4 Synergistic and Entropic Glocalization as Alternative Development Trajectories

The Adaptive Glocalization System proposed in this study assumes that glocalization should not be understood as a normatively neutral process. The interaction between global pressures, elite strategies, identity mobilization, and human capital management may generate substantially different developmental outcomes. Consequently, the present research introduces the concepts of synergistic glocalization and entropic glocalization as two alternative trajectories emerging from the adaptation of nation-states to globalization erosion. Synergistic glocalization refers to a condition in which political elites successfully balance sustainable development objectives, national interests, and human capital strategies. In this trajectory, identity narratives contribute to social cohesion without undermining openness to innovation, knowledge exchange, and talent attraction. Human capital is treated as a strategic resource for long-term development rather than as an instrument of short-term political competition. Leadership remains adaptive and responsive to changing geopolitical conditions, allowing governments to integrate local priorities with participation in global economic and knowledge networks. As a result, sustainable development, competitiveness, and social resilience reinforce one another, creating positive feedback loops across political, economic, and social systems.

In contrast, entropic glocalization emerges when the balance among these elements deteriorates. Under this trajectory, identity mobilization increasingly generates exclusionary dynamics, political polarization, and institutional rigidity. Human capital policies become subordinated to short-term political considerations, reducing the attractiveness of national innovation ecosystems and weakening long-term developmental capacity. Leadership becomes reactive rather than adaptive, limiting the ability of institutions to respond effectively to external shocks. The resulting fragmentation contributes to declining social cohesion, reduced innovation potential, and growing tensions between domestic priorities and international development commitments.

The distinction between synergistic and entropic glocalization expands existing interpretations of glocalization by incorporating insights from neorealism and theories of strategic adaptation. Rather than assuming that interactions between global and local forces necessarily produce beneficial outcomes, the proposed framework emphasizes that the developmental

consequences of glocalization depend on the capacity of political elites to manage uncertainty, preserve institutional adaptability, and align human capital strategies with broader societal objectives. This distinction provides the evaluative dimension of the Adaptive Glocalization System and serves as the basis for the comparative assessment of the United States, Italy, and Argentina.

4.5 Comparative Case Analysis: Elite Adaptation Strategies in the United States, Italy, and Argentina

To operationalize the proposed Adaptive Glocalization System, the comparative analysis focuses on three analytical dimensions identified in the conceptual framework: (1) identity-based elite mobilization, (2) human capital management strategies, and (3) dominant leadership approaches. The United States, Italy, and Argentina were selected because, despite significant differences in economic structures, institutional capacities, and geopolitical positions, all three countries experienced the growing influence of right-oriented political forces emphasizing national sovereignty, migration control, cultural identity, and domestic economic priorities. The comparison seeks to identify how these political actors respond to the common challenges generated by globalization erosion and geopolitical fragmentation. Particular attention is devoted to the interaction between identity narratives, human capital policies, and leadership strategies. The analysis further evaluates whether these interactions contribute to synergistic forms of glocalization characterized by adaptive development and institutional resilience, or to entropic forms associated with polarization, rigidity, and declining adaptive capacity.

The analytical structure applied to each case consists of five interconnected dimensions. The first four dimensions (political context, identity narratives, human capital strategy, and leadership characteristics) represent explanatory variables through which elite adaptation strategies are examined. The fifth dimension, glocalization outcome, serves as an evaluative category that allows the classification of observed adaptation trajectories along a continuum ranging from synergistic to entropic glocalization.

4.6 United States: National Competitiveness and Selective Human Capital Attraction

The United States represents one of the most influential examples of how globalization erosion was accompanied by the reconfiguration of elite strategies, identity narratives, and human capital policies. Although the country has historically been one of the principal beneficiaries of globalization, recent political developments reveal growing tensions between global economic integration and demands for national sovereignty, economic protection, and domestic social cohesion

(Abiakam, 2025). The emergence of Trumpism as a dominant force within contemporary American conservatism reflects broader societal concerns regarding deindustrialization, labor market restructuring, migration pressures, and perceived declines in national competitiveness (Kiely, 2021). The “America First” doctrine challenged many assumptions associated with the liberal international order, emphasizing the primacy of national interests over multilateral commitments. While frequently interpreted as anti-globalist, this approach did not seek complete disengagement from global economic processes. Rather, it promoted a selective form of engagement designed to maximize relative national advantages.

Identity narratives occupy a central position within this strategy. Political discourse increasingly raises issues on national sovereignty, border security, patriotic values, and the restoration of American economic leadership. These narratives perform important mobilizational functions by creating a shared perception of external competition and internal vulnerability. Simultaneously, they provide political legitimacy for policies aimed at protecting domestic industries, regulating migration, and reducing dependence on foreign strategic sectors (Barkey, 2021).

Human capital policy within this framework exhibits a notable duality. On the one hand, political rhetoric frequently supports stricter migration controls and prioritizes domestic workers. On the other hand, the United States continues to compete aggressively for highly qualified specialists, researchers, entrepreneurs, and innovators. This apparent contradiction reflects the strategic importance of human capital within contemporary geopolitical competition. Rather than promoting unrestricted mobility, American policy increasingly favors selective attraction mechanisms that prioritize individuals capable of contributing to national innovation capacity, technological leadership, and economic competitiveness. The intensification of technological rivalry with China further reinforces this tendency. Human capital became a critical component of national security strategies, particularly in sectors such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors, biotechnology, cybersecurity, and advanced manufacturing. Consequently, the competition for talent increasingly overlaps with broader geopolitical competition for technological dominance. In this context, human capital is no longer treated solely as an economic factor but also as a strategic resource influencing long-term national power.

From a leadership perspective, the United States demonstrates a hybrid combination of transactional and situational governance characteristics. Transactional elements remain visible through economic incentives, tax policies, labor market interventions, and political exchanges between governing elites and various social constituencies. However, contemporary geopolitical conditions increasingly require situational adaptation. Rapid responses to technological competition,

migration dynamics, international conflicts, and supply-chain disruptions illustrate the growing importance of flexible governance mechanisms capable of responding to changing external conditions.

Within the Adaptive Glocalization System, the United States demonstrates predominantly synergistic tendencies. Identity narratives, although often politically polarizing, are generally accompanied by continued investment in innovation ecosystems, higher education, research institutions, and talent attraction mechanisms. As a result, national competitiveness, human capital accumulation, and adaptive governance continue to reinforce one another despite increasing political fragmentation. Nevertheless, persistent polarization and growing societal divisions indicate the presence of entropic pressures that may challenge long-term sustainability if not effectively managed.

The American case, thus, illustrates a form of adaptive nationalism in which globalization is not rejected but strategically reconfigured. Global engagement remains important, yet it is increasingly subordinated to the pursuit of relative advantages, national resilience, and human capital leadership. This trajectory corresponds closely to the logic of synergistic glocalization, where local political priorities and global competitiveness are integrated within a broader strategy of adaptive national development.

4.7 Italy: Sovereignty, Cultural Identity, and Human Capital Retention

Italy provides a particularly important case for understanding how globalization erosion influences elite strategies in mature democratic systems facing long-term demographic and economic challenges. Unlike the United States, where debates surrounding globalization are closely linked to technological leadership and geopolitical competition, the Italian case reflects the interaction between migration pressures, demographic decline, cultural identity concerns, and the preservation of national competitiveness within the European context (Bruno & Caterina, 2024). The rise of the right-oriented government led by Giorgia Meloni represents a broader transformation of Italian political discourse. The political context is characterized by prolonged economic stagnation, declining birth rates, population aging, youth emigration, and growing public dissatisfaction with supranational governance mechanisms. Within this environment, political narratives emphasizing sovereignty, national traditions, and cultural continuity gained increasing electoral support. Such narratives emerged not only as reactions to migration pressures but also as responses to perceived limitations of existing European integration mechanisms in addressing domestic socioeconomic concerns.

Identity mobilization occupies a central position within this political project. The Italian case demonstrates how cultural and civilizational narratives can function as instruments of political

consolidation without necessarily rejecting participation in broader international structures. Rather than advocating complete withdrawal from globalization, contemporary Italian conservatism promotes a selective form of engagement designed to preserve national autonomy while maintaining access to international markets and institutions. Consequently, identity narratives are employed not merely for political mobilization but also for legitimizing policy choices related to migration governance, demographic policy, and labor market regulation.

Human capital management constitutes one of the most significant challenges facing Italy. Persistent demographic decline and the emigration of highly qualified young professionals intensified concerns regarding the country's long-term developmental capacity. In contrast to purely restrictive approaches toward migration, Italian policy increasingly reflects an attempt to reconcile border control objectives with the need to attract economically productive migrants and retain domestic talent. This dual strategy actually illustrates a central dilemma of contemporary glocalization: states seek to strengthen national cohesion while simultaneously remaining competitive within global knowledge and labor markets. Leadership characteristics in the Italian case reveal a combination of transactional and situational elements. Transactional mechanisms remain visible through efforts to maintain electoral support via social protection measures, economic incentives, and sector-specific interventions. However, the complexity of demographic challenges, migration dynamics, and European political constraints increasingly requires adaptive governance strategies. The ability to adjust policy priorities while preserving ideological coherence reflects important characteristics of situational leadership operating at the nation-state level.

Within the Adaptive Glocalization System, Italy demonstrates an intermediate trajectory situated between fully synergistic and partially entropic outcomes. Identity narratives contribute to social cohesion and political stability, while ongoing efforts to address demographic decline and human capital losses indicate adaptive capacities. At the same time, structural demographic challenges, regional inequalities, and tensions surrounding migration continue to generate entropic pressures that may undermine long-term resilience if not effectively managed. Consequently, the Italian case illustrates a hybrid form of glocalization in which adaptive and entropic tendencies coexist within a continuously evolving political environment.

4.8 Argentina: Libertarian National Renewal and Human Capital Preservation under Conditions of Structural Instability

Argentina represents a distinct yet highly relevant case for examining elite adaptation strategies under conditions of globalization erosion. Unlike the United States and Italy, where debates

primarily revolve around sovereignty, migration, and geopolitical competition, the Argentine case is strongly shaped by chronic economic instability, inflationary pressures, institutional distrust, and repeated cycles of political and economic crisis (Merke & Doval, 2024). These conditions generated fertile ground for the emergence of alternative right-oriented political projects emphasizing economic restructuring, national renewal, and anti-establishment governance. The election of Javier Milei reflects a profound challenge to traditional political arrangements and demonstrates how globalization erosion can interact with domestic institutional dissatisfaction. The political context is characterized by declining confidence in established political elites, persistent macroeconomic instability, and widespread perceptions that existing governance structures have failed to secure sustainable development. Within this environment, political legitimacy increasingly derives from promises of radical reform rather than from continuity and institutional preservation.

Identity narratives in Argentina differ from those observed in the United States and Italy. While national sovereignty remains important, identity mobilization is directed less toward cultural protection and more toward the construction of a renewed national project centered on individual initiative, economic freedom, and resistance to entrenched political interests. The resulting political discourse combines elements of economic nationalism, anti-elitism, and libertarian reformism. Consequently, identity becomes associated not only with collective belonging but also with the promise of institutional transformation and economic recovery. Human capital management occupies a critical position within this agenda. Argentina long struggled with talent outflows, limited investment in innovation ecosystems, and economic conditions that reduce incentives for highly skilled individuals to remain within the country. As a result, preserving domestic human capital and creating conditions for entrepreneurial activity have become increasingly important policy objectives. Unlike the American emphasis on selective talent attraction or the Italian focus on demographic sustainability, the Argentine challenge primarily concerns the prevention of human capital depletion resulting from prolonged economic instability.

The leadership model associated with the Milei administration exhibits strong situational characteristics. Rapid policy adjustments, unconventional governance approaches, and efforts to redefine existing institutional arrangements demonstrate a high degree of strategic flexibility. While transactional elements remain present within broader political processes, the dominant leadership logic is adaptive rather than exchange-based. This reflects the necessity of responding to rapidly changing economic conditions and persistent external uncertainty.

Within the Adaptive Glocalization System, Argentina occupies a position characterized by substantial adaptive potential but also significant entropic risks. The pursuit of institutional reform,

economic liberalization, and entrepreneurial development may generate conditions conducive to human capital retention and national competitiveness. However, the country's structural economic vulnerabilities, political polarization, and social inequalities continue to create uncertainty regarding the long-term sustainability of these transformations. Consequently, Argentina represents a transitional case in which adaptive glocalization remains contested and where synergistic and entropic trajectories coexist in unstable equilibrium.

4.9 Comparative Patterns and the Adaptive Glocalization System

The comparative analysis reveals that the erosion of globalization does not produce uniform political responses. Instead, it generates a spectrum of adaptive strategies through which political elites seek to reconcile national interests, identity mobilization, and human capital management under conditions of geopolitical uncertainty. Despite substantial differences in historical trajectories, institutional capacities, and economic structures, the cases of the United States, Italy, and Argentina demonstrate several common patterns that support the proposed Adaptive Glocalization System.

First, all three cases illustrate the growing influence of right-oriented political forces that challenge key assumptions of the globalization paradigm. Although these actors differ ideologically, they share a common emphasis on sovereignty, national priorities, and the strategic importance of domestic resilience. This finding suggests that globalization erosion contributes not merely to policy adjustments but also to broader transformations in elite perceptions regarding the relationship between national and global interests. Second, identity narratives emerge as central instruments of political adaptation. In all three countries, political elites utilize identity-based discourses to reduce uncertainty, strengthen legitimacy, and facilitate collective mobilization. However, the specific content of these narratives varies considerably. American political discourse gives special attention to national competitiveness and leadership; Italian narratives focus on cultural continuity and sovereignty; Argentine narratives prioritize national renewal and institutional transformation. These differences demonstrate that identity mobilization functions as a context-dependent mechanism rather than as a uniform ideological phenomenon. Third, human capital occupies an increasingly strategic position within national development agendas. The comparative evidence suggests that contemporary competition among states extends beyond traditional economic and military domains into the sphere of knowledge, innovation, entrepreneurship, and talent retention. Human capital therefore emerges as a critical variable linking sustainable development objectives with national competitiveness and geopolitical positioning. Fourth, the analysis supports the proposition that situational leadership possesses greater adaptive capacity than purely transactional approaches under conditions of

globalization erosion. While transactional mechanisms continue to play important roles in maintaining political legitimacy, rapidly changing geopolitical environments require continuous adjustment of policy instruments, institutional arrangements, and strategic priorities. In all three cases, successful adaptation appears closely associated with the ability of political elites to combine strategic consistency with operational flexibility.

These patterns actually shape the basis for the evaluative dimension of the Adaptive Glocalization System. The interaction among identity mobilization, human capital management, leadership adaptation, and sustainable development objectives generates different developmental trajectories ranging from synergistic to entropic forms of glocalization.

The overall comparative assessment of elite adaptation strategies under globalization erosion is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Comparative assessment of elite adaptation strategies under globalization erosion

Analytical Dimension	United States	Italy	Argentina
<i>Political Context</i>	Geopolitical competition, technological rivalry, migration debates	Demographic decline, migration pressures, EU constraints	Economic instability, institutional distrust, anti-establishment politics
<i>Dominant Identity Narratives</i>	America First, national competitiveness, sovereignty	Cultural continuity, sovereignty, national traditions	National renewal, economic freedom, anti-elite reform
<i>Human Capital Strategy</i>	Selective attraction of highly skilled talent and innovation leadership	Talent retention, demographic sustainability, controlled migration	Human capital preservation and entrepreneurial revitalization
<i>Leadership Characteristics</i>	Hybrid, increasingly situational	Hybrid transactional–situational model	Predominantly situational and adaptive
<i>Glocalization Outcome</i>	Predominantly synergistic with entropic pressures from polarization	Hybrid trajectory combining synergistic and entropic tendencies	Adaptive trajectory with significant entropic risks

Source: developed by the authors

While Table 2 summarizes the principal characteristics of elite adaptation strategies observed across the three cases, the proposed Adaptive Glocalization System requires a more systematic assessment of how these strategies interact within the broader framework of globalization erosion. Applying the AGS indicators introduced in Table 1 allows the comparison to move beyond descriptive case narratives and evaluate the relative configuration of identity mobilization, human capital management, leadership adaptation, sustainable development priorities, and competitive positioning. Such an assessment helps to identify the specific mechanisms through which nation-

states navigate geopolitical uncertainty and provides a clearer basis for distinguishing between synergistic and entropic glocalization trajectories. The comparative AGS-based assessment is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

AGS-Based Comparative Assessment of Nation-State Adaptation

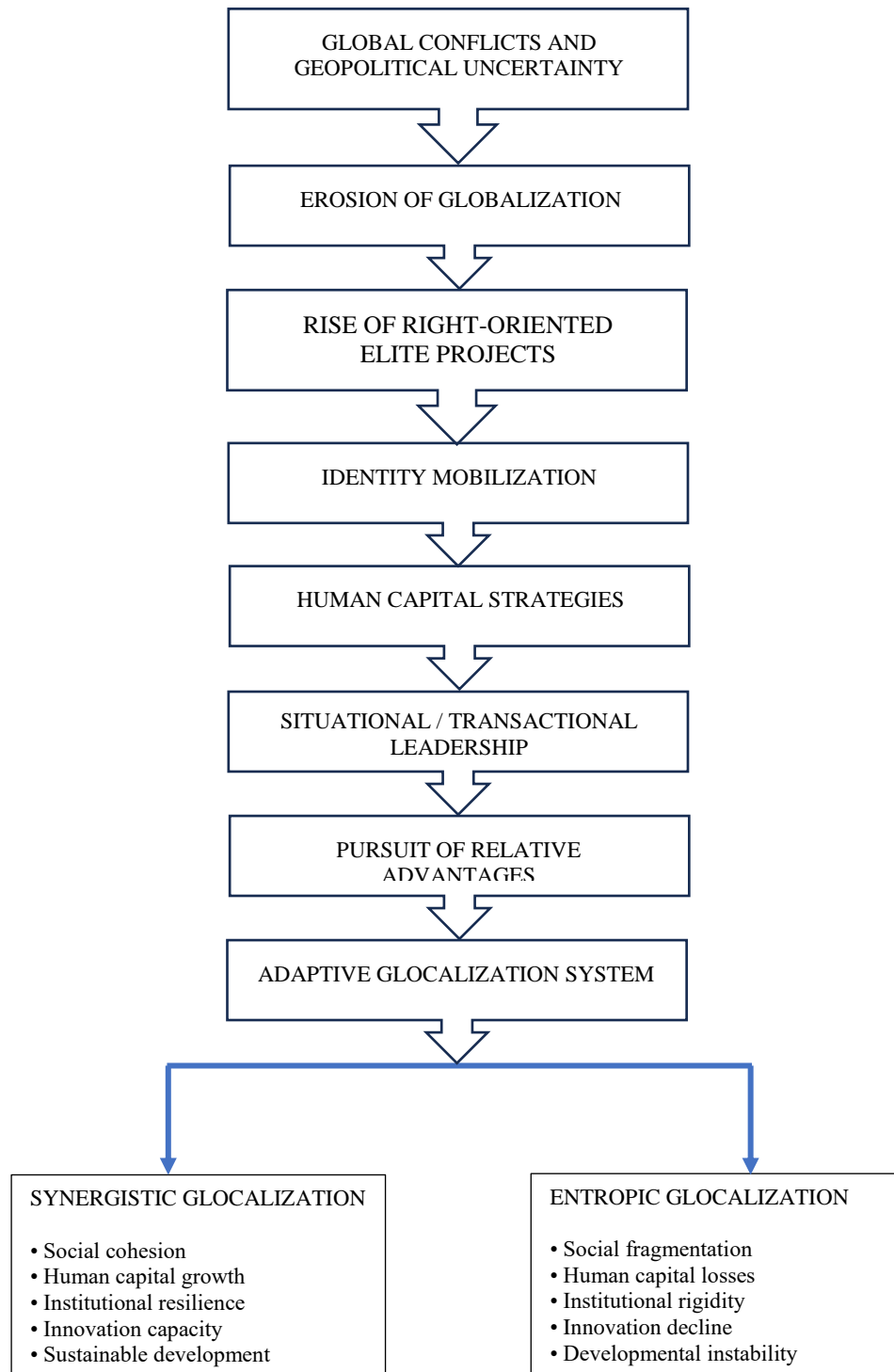
AGS Component	United States	Italy	Argentina
<i>Human Capital Management</i>	Strong talent attraction and innovation leadership	Focus on talent retention and demographic sustainability	Human capital preservation amid economic instability
<i>Identity Mobilization</i>	National competitiveness and sovereignty narratives	Cultural continuity and national traditions	National renewal and anti-elite reform discourse
<i>Sustainable Development Orientation</i>	Innovation-driven competitiveness and technological resilience	Social cohesion and demographic adaptation	Economic stabilization as prerequisite for sustainable development
<i>Leadership Adaptation</i>	Hybrid with strong situational elements	Hybrid transactional-situational approach	Predominantly situational and adaptive
<i>Relative Competitive Advantage</i>	Technological leadership and strategic sectors	Institutional stability within the European framework	Entrepreneurial revitalization and economic restructuring
<i>Glocalization Outcome</i>	Predominantly synergistic	Hybrid synergistic-entropic trajectory	Adaptive trajectory with elevated entropic risks

Source: developed by the authors

The comparison reveals that the observed differences among the three cases are less a consequence of ideological orientation than of the degree of alignment between identity narratives, human capital strategies, and adaptive leadership capacities. Where these elements reinforce one another, synergistic forms of glocalization become more likely; where they remain fragmented or contradictory, entropic tendencies intensify. This relationship forms the basis of the adaptive glocalization trajectories conceptualized in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Basis of the adaptive glocalization trajectories



Source: developed by the authors

The comparative assessment and the adaptive glocalization trajectories presented in Tables 2-3 and Figure 2 demonstrate that globalization erosion does not lead to a uniform retreat into national

isolation. Instead, nation-states develop differentiated adaptive strategies that combine identity mobilization, human capital management, and leadership responses under conditions of geopolitical uncertainty. The empirical comparison of the United States, Italy, and Argentina confirms that political elites increasingly seek to reconcile sustainable development objectives with the pursuit of relative national advantages, while simultaneously responding to domestic demands for sovereignty, security, and social cohesion. These findings support the principal theoretical contribution of the study – the expansion of the glocalization concept beyond its traditional interpretation as a simple interaction between global and local processes. The proposed Adaptive Glocalization System (AGS) demonstrates that glocalization in the contemporary international environment functions as a strategic adaptive mechanism shaped by geopolitical competition, human capital rivalry, and identity-based elite projects. The distinction between synergistic and entropic glocalization further provides an analytical tool for evaluating the developmental consequences of these adaptation strategies.

Moreover, the analysis extends situational and transactional leadership theories to the level of nation-state governance. Comparative evidence suggests that while transactional mechanisms remain important for maintaining political legitimacy, situational leadership offers greater adaptive capacity in responding to geopolitical shocks, talent competition, and rapidly changing development priorities. Consequently, leadership adaptability emerges as a critical factor determining whether states move toward synergistic or entropic glocalization trajectories. These findings provide the basis for the broader conclusions regarding elite adaptation, sustainable development, and the future evolution of globalization under conditions of persistent international instability.

5. Conclusions

The study examined how global conflicts contribute to erosion of globalization and transform the relationships among political elites, social identities, sustainable development, and human capital management. The analysis demonstrates that contemporary geopolitical uncertainty increasingly encourages states to prioritize sovereignty, resilience, and relative advantages over the universalist assumptions that characterized earlier stages of globalization. As a result, competition for human capital is becoming one of the central dimensions of contemporary interstate rivalry. A major finding is that identity mobilization emerged as a critical adaptive mechanism through which political elites respond to growing uncertainty. National, cultural, and civilizational narratives are increasingly employed to strengthen legitimacy, consolidate political support, and justify policy choices related to migration, labor markets, innovation, and national development. The growing influence of right-

oriented political forces in the United States, Italy, and Argentina illustrates how identity-based governance strategies are reshaping the interaction between global processes and local priorities.

Moreover, the study contributes to existing scholarly discourse by extending the concept of glocalization through the incorporation of neorealist assumptions regarding relative advantages and strategic competition. Within the proposed Adaptive Glocalization System, glocalization is conceptualized not merely as the interaction between global and local dynamics but as an adaptive process through which political elites seek to balance sustainable development objectives, identity-based mobilization, and human capital strategies under conditions of geopolitical fragmentation. A second theoretical contribution concerns the application of transactional and situational leadership concepts to the level of nation-state governance. The comparative analysis suggests that situational leadership provides greater adaptive capacity in periods of geopolitical instability because it enables governments to modify policy instruments and strategic priorities in response to rapidly changing external conditions. By contrast, governance approaches relying predominantly on transactional mechanisms appear less capable of addressing complex and multidimensional challenges associated with globalization erosion.

Finally, the article introduces the concepts of synergistic and entropic glocalization as alternative developmental trajectories. Synergistic glocalization emerges when identity narratives, human capital strategies, and adaptive governance reinforce sustainable development and national competitiveness. Entropic glocalization occurs when these elements become misaligned, generating polarization, institutional fragmentation, and declining adaptive capacity. Together, these concepts provide an evaluative framework for understanding how nation-states navigate the growing tensions between global interdependence and national strategic interests in the contemporary international environment.

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