



Autarky and Immunization from Vagaries of Fortune - Evidence from the Modern World

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Abstract

In an era defined by global interdependence, economic volatility, and geopolitical uncertainty, the pursuit of autarky, which means self-sufficiency in economic and strategic affairs, has emerged as a compelling alternative to mitigate systemic risks and shocks. This paper critically examines whether modern economies can insulate themselves from the vagaries of fortune, including unpredictable financial crises, market shocks, and political instability, through self-reliance or strategic decoupling. Drawing on empirical evidence from different countries, technological advancements, and policy innovations, the study deconstructs the viability of autarkic models in contemporary global dynamics. We explore key case studies, from nations embracing protectionist measures to economies leveraging technological autonomy as a safeguard against external volatility. The analysis challenges conventional wisdom, arguing that selective decoupling in critical sectors, such as energy, digital infrastructure, and national security, can enhance resilience without necessitating total economic isolation. Additionally, we investigate how tech, digital infrastructure and decentralized economies reshape self-sufficiency paradigms in the 21st century. This research contributes to the broader discourse on economic sovereignty, adaptive resilience, and the strategic recalibration of global dependencies, offering policymakers, social transformers, technocrats, and thought leaders invaluable insights into the future of stability in an unpredictable world.

Keywords: *Autarky; Political Economy; Globalization; Resilience; Self-sufficiency*

Introduction

In an increasingly volatile global landscape, where economic tremors reverberate across continents and social cohesion is perpetually tested, the notion of immunization against uncertainty has

gained renewed academic and policy interest. Nations and institutions alike confront multifaceted pressures that range from financial contagion (Hsiao & Chiu, 2024; Gunay & Can, 2022; Akhtaruzzaman et al., 2021), currency devaluations (Rastogi, 2023; Elias et al., 2023), inflation leading to brain drain (Socol & Iuga, 2024), black market expansion, and institutional degradation (Bouazizi, 2020; Elsner, 2021). These disruptive phenomena, collectively which we now refer to as the *vagaries of fortune*, destabilize national trajectories and expose the precariousness of global interdependence. In this context, autarky or the pursuit of self-sufficiency and strategic decoupling has reemerged not merely as a retro economic ideal but as a strategic framework for minimizing systemic vulnerability (Helleiner, 2021; Evans, 2025).

Historically, autarky has often been framed as an ideological relic of wartime isolationism or protectionist zeal (Rose, 2021; Wertheim, 2024). Yet contemporary evidence challenges this narrow perception, revealing its adaptive resurgence in the face of external shocks, trade wars, unilateral sanctions, and supply chain fragmentation (Dieter & Biedermann, 2023; Mariotti, 2022). The past decade has witnessed a recalibration of global economic norms, where nations have experimented with varying degrees of strategic self-reliance (Campanella, 2023; Eder, 2023; Wyne, 2022). This evidence from the modern world offers empirical insights into the viability of autarkic measures as buffers against external coercion and as mechanisms for preserving socio-political agency amid global turbulence.

The catalysts triggering these policy shifts are far from uniform. Sanctions, which are often wielded as geopolitical tools, have precipitated dramatic institutional responses, inducing resistance economies marked by domestic resource mobilization, innovation under constraint, and ideological hardening (Lektzian & Mkrtchian, 2021; Dabrowski & Avdasheva, 2023; Itskhoki & Ribakova, 2024). Likewise, abrupt market shocks and trade decoupling have laid bare the fragility of global value chains, prompting governments to reassert control over critical sectors such as energy, agriculture, finance, defense, tech, and digital infrastructure (Escaith, 2021; Stoddart, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic further amplified the urgency of self-sufficiency, rekindling debates around the balance between openness and resilience, and forcing re-evaluation of economic orthodoxy (Brankov et al., 2021; Wells et al., 2024).

This article explores the contours of autarky not as a binary alternative to globalization, but as a nuanced and context-dependent strategy for immunizing nations from external vagaries. It interrogates the theoretical underpinnings, policy executions, and practical implications of autarky through case studies drawn from the modern world. By critically analyzing the lived experiences of nations facing sustained geopolitical and economic pressure, the paper aims to discern patterns of institutional adaptation and resilience-building. Ultimately, it offers a conceptual and empirical framework for understanding how self-reliance can serve as both a shield and a sword to deflect shocks and assert strategic autonomy in a fractured global order.

Further, conventional economic models, centered around liberalization, comparative advantage, and unfettered market interdependence, have increasingly shown their limitations in confronting real-world complexity (Stiglitz, 2024; Diesendorf et al., 2024). These frameworks often assume frictionless globalization and rational actors, overlooking power asymmetries, systemic vulnerabilities, and coercive geopolitical instruments such as sanctions and trade weaponization (Barbieri, 2024; Haroche, 2024). As global supply chains buckle under unexpected shocks and institutional trust erodes in the face of concentrated disruptions, the old orthodoxy struggles to offer pragmatic solutions for resilience (Baldwin & Freeman, 2022; Herold & Marzantowicz, 2023). Autarky, once dismissed as antithetical to efficiency, now resurfaces as a counterpoint to the fragility embedded in overextended interdependence and offers an alternative lens through which nations can regain strategic agency and recalibrate their economic foundations.

Deconstructing ‘Old Economic Models’

Old economic model philosophies presented their own set of unique challenges that warrant critical economic thinking and theoretical shifts to address emerging and existing challenges of the modern world (Snower & Wilson, 2022; Vines & Wills, 2021). The older economic models were often applied dogmatically, with little regard to local contextualization, institutional capacity, or social equality (Muller, 2023). For instance, economic models such as classical, neoclassical, import substitution industrializations (ISI), structural adjustment programs (SAPs), trickle-down economics among other economic models fail to significantly address modern day challenges faced by some nations [such as those under sanctions, trade wars, invasion, wars, embargoes and so on] (Lefebvre, 2023; Luo, 2024). This failure has pushed some countries towards heterodox economics grounded in power dynamics, social contexts, institutions [and their roles], history, political economies, and social contexts (Jo, Chester & D’Ippoliti, 2022; Ghilarducci et al., 2021).

Heterodox economics focuses on real-world complexities such as uncertainty, inequalities, and historical processes, emphasizes pluralism [including diverse world views], rejects universal assumptions [such as market efficiency and perfect rationality], and challenges orthodoxy (Proctor, 2023; Almeida, 2024; Chester & Jo, 2022). Heterodox economic models offer deeper critiques of power and inequality, provide more inclusive and sustainable development frameworks, and give alternative policy tools and models (Ghosh & Pearson, 2025; Hermann, 2024). Such theoretical shifts build the case for the emergence of autarky, where countries now advocate for economic self-sufficiency and the minimization of reliance on global markets and foreign trade (Helleiner, 2023; Dieter & Biedermann, 2023). Heterodox economics and autarkic behaviour therefore tend to merge based on some of their common principles, such as the critique of globalization, focus on institutions, creation of resilience over efficiency, and developmental sovereignty (Künü & Eren, 2024). There is burgeoning evidence that various countries are now adopting autarkic or semi-autarkic economic models and strategies to survive, thrive, and assert their sovereignty (Prabhakar, 2024; Helleiner, 2023).

The emergence and re-emergence of autarkic models are in response to the failures of the older economic models and are being used by nations as response measures to emerging or new challenges (Helleiner, 2023; Acemoglu et al., 2023). Some level of success evidenced in its application in some countries is proselytizing other countries and regions to adopt similar autarkic behaviour as remedies to the modern challenges they face [including sanctions, trade wars, populism, and protectionism, among others] (Kumar et al., 2025; Bednarski et al., 2023). These autarkic models are a sort of recalibration towards resilience, strategic autonomy, domestic industry protection, and pursuit of dominance in the advent of the shortcomings of older economic models (Maihold, 2022; Saxena Nigam, 2021). For instance, autarkic models are increasingly being embraced as a pathway to strategic self-sufficiency in energy, food and tech (such as pharmaceuticals, vaccines, semi-conductors, digital infrastructure, energy, food security, among other sectors) (Bouët et al., 2025; Tirop, 2020). Autarkic models are also being embraced to create geopolitical autonomy to avoid weaponized trade, sanctions, supply chain shocks or diplomatic obstacles (Aronow, 2023; Bednarski et al., 2023). These models aim to protect countries and regions from different forms and types of vagaries of fortune (Helleiner, 2021).

Vagaries of Fortune Manifestations

Vagaries of fortune essentially refer to the unpredictable outcomes, unexpected and inexplicable changes including twists of fate faced by countries and often include the unpredictable economic, environmental, socio and political forces that shape their destinies (Floyd & Webber, 2024; Rodríguez-Clare et al., 2025). Often, the vagaries of fortune manifest in some major forms, namely, either economically, socially or politically and institutionally. Economically, the vagaries of fortune may take the form of inflation and recession, currency devaluations, revenue collapse (especially from oil, gas or other natural revenue sources), financial contagion, wealth disparities, foreign investments exodus, among

others (Claessens & Kose, 2023; Rastogi, 2023). Economically, nations may experience sudden shifts driven by inflation, recession, or unpredictable market dynamics that disrupt growth and stability (Henderson, 2024; BBVA Research, 2025). Currency devaluations often follow, eroding purchasing power and undermining fiscal confidence both domestically and internationally (Rastogi, 2024; Kunkler, 2025). Countries dependent on natural resources such as oil or gas are especially vulnerable to revenue collapse, which can trigger cascading effects across sectors. These disruptions may also catalyze financial contagion, exacerbate wealth inequality, and accelerate the withdrawal of foreign investments, compounding socio-economic fragility (Claessens & Forbes, 2024).

Socially, vagaries may manifest in the form of rising poverty, brain drain or expansion of black markets and war economies (Udeorah & Odiche, 2025; Maharaj, 2023). Socially, the vagaries of fortune can deeply unsettle a nation's cohesion and long-term development. Sudden economic downturns or political instability often drive surges in poverty, straining social welfare systems and widening inequality. In search of better opportunities, skilled professionals may emigrate in large numbers, fueling a brain drain that erodes local innovation and institutional capacity. Meanwhile, informal economies, black markets, and even war economies may flourish in the vacuum of weak governance, creating parallel systems of survival that challenge state authority and undermine lawful progress.

Politically and institutional manifestations may take the form of reduced transparency, resistance economy, hardliner empowerment, regional tensions, disruption to systems such as global oil markets and trading routes, among others (Price, 2024; Fattouh et al., 2022). Politically, the vagaries of fortune can erode democratic norms and institutional integrity, often leading to reduced transparency, diminished accountability, and weakened governance structures. As economic pressures mount, nations may adopt resistance economy frameworks which encourage self-reliance, protectionism, and strategic decoupling from global networks, and this can stifle innovation and international cooperation. These shifts may empower hardliner factions that thrive on nationalistic rhetoric and centralized control, marginalizing moderate voices and intensifying ideological divides.

Institutionally, such instability may ripple outward, exacerbating regional tensions and threatening collective security arrangements. Global systems such as oil markets and strategic trading routes are susceptible to disruption when political volatility fractures the trust that underpins international trade and diplomacy. These shocks may fragment supply chains, recalibrate geopolitical alliances, and impose long-term consequences on interdependence frameworks. Ultimately, the entwinement of political uncertainty with institutional disruption breeds a landscape of fragility, marked by reactive policymaking and tenuous global coordination (Coface, 2025; World Economic Forum, 2025).

Responses to Initiating Factors

The vagaries of fortune rarely arise in isolation; they are often sparked by distinct catalysts that jolt the economic, social, and political equilibrium of nations. Among the most potent causes are sanctions, trade wars and market shocks, which can fracture supply chains and inflate costs (Bednarski et al., 2023; Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025). Sanctions isolate targeted economies and pressure domestic systems into reactive adaptation (Morgan, Syropoulos & Yotov, 2023; Ghironi, Kim & Ozhan, 2024). Sudden market shocks, including financial crashes or commodity price volatility, can ripple outward with destabilizing effects on employment, investment, governance and expose latent vulnerabilities (Arezki, Imam & Kpodar, 2025; Oliynyk et al., 2025). These events, while varied in form and intensity, share a capacity to expose systemic vulnerabilities and trigger a chain of disruptions that compound over time, which reshape national trajectories in unpredictable ways (Garicano, Rohner & Weder di Mauro, 2022; Bednarski et al., 2023). Collectively, these events act as seismic jolts, unleashing cascading consequences that reverberate across social, political, and economic domains (Roscoe et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2025). A closer look at some of these factors is therefore worthwhile.

Sanctions

A major manifestation of vagaries of fortune comes in the form of avalanches of sanctions. These could either be directly imposed on individual countries and their allies or be blanket sanctions targeting a group of countries or regions (Borozna & Kochtcheeva, 2024; van Bergeijk, 2022). Often, countries or regions under sanctions hit back with retaliations by issuing their sanctions or taking a plethora of different actions as response measures against sanctions that have been imposed on them [what we now refer to as immunization through autarkic responses] (Chachko & Heath, 2022; Isaac & Fouda, 2025). In the modern world, several countries have been previously or are currently under or have in the recent decades been placed under varying types of sanctions, and this is supported by the availability of sufficient evidence (Sia Partners, 2022; Arms Control Association, 2025).

For instance, Iran is currently under several sanctions based on different initiating events or triggers such as nuclear proliferation concerns, gross violation of human rights in the country, its support to and for armed groups, violent military escalations, just to name a few (EU Council, 2025; Khalifa & Fouda, 2025). A closer examination of these initiating events is worthwhile. Firstly, for a long time, Iran's uranium enrichment program [enriched uranium increases the likelihood of nuclear weapons development] has raised concerns that the country is racing towards the development of a nuclear weapon. This raises threats to not only regional security and peace, but also poses broader global security threats [which could initiate nuclear war and its devastating consequences] (Arms Control Association, 2025; UN Security Council, 2024).

Secondly, Iran has been accused of backing and supporting militant organizations across the Middle East, including the supply of weapons and other financing to such organizations. The repercussions of these actions on the regional peace and security are often dire [evidenced by drone/missile strikes and threats of militant violence] (EU Council, 2025). Further, the country is often accused on gross human rights violations, such as its crackdown on protests and its discrimination [particularly] towards women (OHCHR, 2025; EU Council, 2025). Additionally, military escalations involving Iran are increasingly becoming common, notably its strikes on regional states and locations that are deemed as fair targets. As a response to the actions, countries [led by the United States] and global bodies such as the United Nations and European Union have instituted a plethora of sanctions against the country (UN Security Council, 2024; EU Council, 2025). Specifically, the United States has for some time now instated and maintained heavy sanctions on Iran targeting the country's military, shipping, energy and banking sectors. This includes restrictions on Iran's oil and petrochemical sales, its financial institutions and shadow banking networks, as well as entities linked to Iran's ballistic and UAV missile programs (Sia Partners, 2022; Arms Control Association, 2025). The United Nations has, on its part, enforced sanctions through its Security Council resolutions. On its part, the European Union has imposed sanctions targeting Iran's nuclear activities, human rights violations and the missile/drone support to regional militias and Russia (EU Council, 2025; Isaac & Fouda, 2025).

Another country currently facing a significant number of sanctions is Russia, which has significantly intensified in the face of its current military aggression and invasion of Ukraine (European Commission, 2023; UK Government, 2025). As a response measures [to the invasion of Ukraine], the European Union instituted a package of harsh sanctions targeting oil and gas exports from Russia's energy sector, financial institutions aiding sanctions evasions, as well as entities in third countries such as China and Turkey that provide military supplies to Russia (GIS Reports, 2025; van Bergeijk, 2022). The United Kingdom launched additional sanctions on Russian military leaders and research institutions developing chemical weapons used in the war (UK Government, 2025). The United States instituted additional sanctions on Russia, including the imposition of huge tariffs [that keep increasing] on countries and entities buying Russian oil and gas (House of Commons Library, 2025; Chachko & Heath, 2022). Ukraine even launched its sanctions against Russia, and aligned its retaliation with the EU's sanctions

packages and continues to call for even harder and more biting sanctions and penalties on countries and entities that buy Russian oil and gas (European Commission, 2023; Floyd & Webber, 2024).

China has not been left out of sanctions responses, but rather, the country continues to witness intensifying sanctions, particularly as response measures against its support for Russia's war in Ukraine, as well as its assertive geopolitical posture (GMFUS, 2025). Current measures include sanctions targeting Chinese firms aiding Russia's war efforts as well as those circumventing existing sanctions against export controls (DIIS, 2022; Global Investigations Review, 2024). In close-by North Korea, the country is navigating a complex web of sanctions. For instance, cyber operatives linked to hacking groups [such as Andariel] are under sanctions for cyber espionage, attacks and hacking attempts, including crypto theft that is then used to fund WMD and ballistic missile programs (U.S. Department of State, 2025; Hacker News, 2025). African countries have also not been spared, with the United Nations, European Union, and United States (OFAC) currently imposing sanctions and embargoes on some countries. For example, Central African Republic has an arms embargo, asset freezes and travel bans, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has sanctions on armed groups and individuals, Libya has an arms embargo as well as oil and gas restrictions, Somalia has sanctions focussed on militant groups and arms trafficking, Sudan has sanctions related to conflict and human rights abuses, South Sudan has an arms embargo and sanctions on political and military leaders (UN Security Council, 2025; Business Insider Africa, 2025; Sanctions Scanner, 2025).

Trade Wars

Trade wars, which are the economic conflicts that arise when countries impose quotas, home subsidies, devaluations, tariffs and other trade barriers on each other's services and goods as retaliatory measures for perceived unfair trade practices, are now a flourishing manifestation (Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025; Morgan, Syropoulos & Yotov, 2023). Tariffs on imports make foreign goods more expensive, quotas limit the quantity of goods that can be imported, government subsidies to domestic industries aim to outcompete foreign rivals, and currency devaluations aim to make exports cheaper and imports more expensive (Rastogi, 2023; Akhtaruzzaman et al., 2021). While trade wars seek to protect domestic industries, encourage local job creation, reduce trade deficits (theoretically), and pressure countries to change policies [which is what we now refer to as a form of immunization], they have some negative effects. For instance, trade wars raise prices for domestic consumers, significantly disrupt global supply chains, increase inflation and slow down economic growth, as well as damage done to investor confidence and diplomatic ties (Garicano, Rohner & Weder di Mauro, 2022; Baldwin & Freeman, 2022; Bednarski et al., 2023).

Current evidence documents ongoing trade wars around the world. The United States and China have been at it since 2018 up to now. This particular trade war was triggered by U.S tariffs imposed on Chinese goods over Intellectual Property (IP) theft and an existing huge trade imbalance (House of Commons Library, 2025; Floyd & Webber, 2024). The U.S has also imposed sweeping export controls on AI chips and semiconductor tools on China (DIIS, 2022; Global Investigations Review, 2024). China responded by imposing its own set of trade tariffs on U.S exports, including restrictions on rare earth exports and tariffs on Western goods and services (Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025; Morgan, Syropoulos & Yotov, 2023). The European Union has been roped into this trade war with U.S threats to impose tariffs (up to 50%) unless an acceptable trade deal is reached (European Commission, 2023; Haroche, 2024). European countries caught in these crosshairs are currently aggregating efforts to avert such trade wars, or even considering retaliating with a set of their tariffs [and face the emerging consequences] (Garicano, Rohner & Weder di Mauro, 2022; Floyd & Webber, 2024). The European Union has also slapped tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs) over subsidy concerns (issued in China), with China hitting back with duties on European products [such as brandy, dairy and pork] (Global Investigations Review, 2024; EU Council, 2025). On its part, the UK has agreed to agreeable trade terms to avoid a full trade war with the

U.S and the UK is already witnessing domestic impacts of the trade wars and is pursuing other strategic alternatives such as exploring Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS) trade routes as remedies to the now persistent trade wars (House of Commons Library, 2025; Haroche, 2024).

Market Shocks and Unpredictable Financial Crises

Market shocks and unpredictable financial crises are a sort of economic earthquakes due to their sudden, disruptive and in most cases devastating nature (Barth & Schreft, 2025; Fornaro & Wolf, 2023). They often end up having significant impacts on the form and shape of financial systems, cause a plunge in investor confidence and may trigger global ripple effects (Zhang et al., 2022; Evgenidis & Malliaris, 2022). Market shocks come in various forms and include financial shocks, policy shocks, supply and demand shocks or Black swan events (Tabash et al., 2024; Barth & Schreft, 2025). Financial stocks may take the form of market crashes, currency devaluations or banking liquidity crises. Policy shocks include sudden changes in interest rates, tariffs or regulations, while supply/demand shocks generally include natural disasters, wars, or pandemics, which may disrupt production or consumption (Fornaro & Wolf, 2023; Stuart & Black, 2022). Black swan events are the rare, unpredictable occurrences that have massive impacts, such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic or the 2008 financial crisis (Taleb, 2023; FasterCapital, 2025). Such events have significant effects on markets because they cause destabilization, leading to panic selling or volatility spikes, which can also spill over across sectors or countries, leading to global financial crises (Li et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2022). Often, market shocks lead to policy responses and cuts in interest rates or even bailouts (Evgenidis & Malliaris, 2022; Fornaro & Wolf, 2023). For instance, the current Russia-Ukraine war, which began in 2022, triggered a spike in energy prices, disrupted global supply chains and rattled global markets (Henderson, 2024; ECB, 2022). The current US tariffs shock of 2025 has led to fears of trade wars and inflation (Rodríguez-Clare et al., 2025; BBVA Research, 2025). The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 caused sharp market declines and economic shutdowns never seen before, which were then followed by stimulus-driven recovery strategies (Li et al., 2025; World Economic Forum, 2022). The 2008 global financial crisis led to a global recession that had devastating effects (Evgenidis & Malliaris, 2022; FasterCapital, 2025).

Common Autarkic Behaviour/Models

Countries and regions are responding to the vagaries of fortune through the application of various autarkic models. These include Domestic Industry Protectionism [including subsidies to support domestic production], Trade Wars, Import Substitution, Emphasis on Self-Reliance, Innovations and workarounds, State Planning, Parallel Institutions to create domestic alternatives, Strategic Decoupling, Retaliatory Sanctions, Supply Chain Nationalism, among others. A closer analysis of what each of these autarkic behaviours encompasses is worthwhile.

Domestic Industry Protectionism

The need to protect domestic industries is a common autarkic behavioural response used by affected countries (van Bergeijk, 2022; Fornaro & Wolf, 2023). This includes domestic industry substitution as a means of shifting a country towards economic self-sufficiency by replacing imported goods and services with local substitutes (Bo, 2023; Barth & Schreft, 2025). Often, countries applying this strategy institute a plethora of policy measures which seek to minimize or even eliminate entire reliance on foreign markets and instead focus on fostering domestic industry growth (Rodríguez-Clare et al., 2025; Tabash et al., 2024). The practice of domestic industry protectionism uses techniques such as imposition of high tariffs or trade quotas, provision of subsidies and incentives to promote and support domestic production, investments in human capital and infrastructure to support industrialization and installing regulatory barriers to curb foreign competition (Stuart & Black, 2022; BBVA Research, 2025). Domestic industry protection has some added benefits, such as reducing vulnerabilities to global market

shocks, creating jobs, improving national security by controlling some strategic sectors, as well as the development of domestic capabilities and innovation (FasterCapital, 2025; Henderson, 2024). However, some of its drawbacks have been documented, such as limited variety of products/services, stifling innovation, higher consumer prices and inefficiencies from sheltered industries (Evgenidis & Malliaris, 2022; Taleb, 2023).

Innovations and Workarounds

The emphasis on innovations and workarounds focuses on solving problems under pressure while simultaneously cutting imports (Fornaro & Wolf, 2023). Autarkic innovations focus on developing new technologies, processes and substitutes that aim to replace foreign alternatives (Barth & Schreft, 2025; FasterCapital, 2025). Conversely, workarounds include the tactical adjustments which allow a country to continue functioning despite existing sanctions or restrictions (Morgan, Syropoulos & Yotov, 2023; Chachko & Heath, 2022). Workarounds often end up driving innovation because limited access forces new ways of thinking, encourages local adaptation, underground economies and DIY cultures flourish, and governments may relax regulations or fund R&D to encourage alternatives (Evgenidis & Malliaris, 2022; Tabash et al., 2024; Kim, 2024).

National Security Framing

Governments can frame their autarkic behaviour through national security to safeguard against external threats and as a development strategy (van Bergeijk, 2022). The emphasis here becomes about strategic autonomy rather than isolation (Fornaro & Wolf, 2023; Henderson, 2024). Some governments have invoked national security threats to protect their critical industries such as energy, food and defence, secure their supply chains during wars or geo-political tensions, prevent sabotage or espionage in sensitive sectors such as tech and infrastructure, or to maintain their sovereignty over some strategic resources and decision making (European Commission, 2023). Such a framing allows nations to implement some protectionist measures and policies, including tariffs, export controls, and investment restrictions, among others, without appearing to be economically aggressive (Rodríguez-Clare et al., 2025; BBVA Research, 2025). By framing autarkic responses as necessities for national security interests, countries and regions mitigate risks such as exposures to sanctions, embargoes and supply chain disruptions (Chachko & Heath, 2022; GIS Reports, 2025). Additionally, it enables countries to own and protect sensitive technologies, builds resilience during global instabilities and reduces dependence, enhancing bargaining power in international relations (Evgenidis & Malliaris, 2022; FasterCapital, 2025).

Parallel Institutions to create Domestic Alternatives

Creation of parallel institutions is a powerful way of expressing autarkic behaviour and reflects strategic efforts by countries to build strong internal systems that replace or replicate global ones, particularly when countries are barred or prevented from accessing international institutions, or when it is politically desirable to do so (Helleiner, 2023; Campanella, 2023). By creating domestic structures, countries have demonstrated that they can reduce their dependence on foreign systems and assert their authority over critical domains (Dabrowski & Avdasheva, 2023; Bo, 2023). Some of the parallel institutions already exhibited in some countries include academic and research networks [such as conferences, journals and think tanks], tech platforms [such as social media, search engines or cloud services], financial systems [such as domestic payments networks that replace SWIFT], legal and regulatory bodies [such as arbitration courts or national standard agencies] among other such institutions (DIIS, 2022; Morgan, Syropoulos & Yotov, 2023). By building these institutions, countries assert their sovereignty, build resilience, maintain control [especially of sensitive sectors], reduce dependence on foreign systems, and are symbolic because they signal independence and national pride (Dieter & Biedermann, 2023; Haroche, 2024). Further, the building of such parallel systems and institutions

responds to emerging or existing geopolitical pressures, sanctions or strategic decoupling (Garicano, Rohner & Weder di Mauro, 2022; Escaith, 2021; Floyd & Webber, 2024).

Strategic Decoupling

Strategic decoupling is the conscious distancing from foreign alliances, supply chains or systems as a response to geopolitical tensions, national security concerns, economic sanctions or coercion, and technological dependence (Haroche, 2024; Dabrowski & Avdasheva, 2023). It is a proactive measure which is strategically calculated, and often it is framed as a pathway to strategic autonomy (Helleiner, 2023; Campanella, 2023). Strategic decoupling often involves the setup of parallel institutions, the reshoring of supply chains and local R&D (DIIS, 2022; Floyd & Webber, 2024). In the environment of current global tensions, strategic decoupling is gaining popularity and has become a mainstream policy tool (Garicano, Rohner & Weder di Mauro, 2022; Escaith, 2021). Countries using it emphasize that it is not isolation but rather a means of buffering interdependence to protect national interests (Dieter & Biedermann, 2023).

Retaliatory Sanctions

Some countries respond by issuing a set of their sanctions as retaliatory measures against the punitive measures issued by another country (Borozna & Kochtcheeva, 2024). These counter-measures typically involve the imposition of counter-tariffs or restrictions on goods or services from sanctioning countries (Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025; van Bergeijk, 2022). It includes blacklisting companies or individuals involved in the original sanctions, restrictions of financial and investment flows from sanctioning countries and the suspension of diplomatic and economic ties and agreements (DIIS, 2022; European Commission, 2023). These actions seek to inflict economic pain, assert political defiance and even push for reversal of sanctions or negotiation (Floyd & Webber, 2024; Garicano, Rohner & Weder di Mauro, 2022). Often, the imposition of retaliatory sanctions is accused of unintentionally accelerating autarkic tendencies, and often, they come with economic and political costs (Dabrowski & Avdasheva, 2023; Campanella, 2023). This becomes more pronounced in countries which lack internal capacities to replace what has been lost from global trade (Bo, 2023; Helleiner, 2023). Retaliatory sanctions have also been linked with increased inflation and inefficiency, reductions in consumer choices and quality, and could even lead to long-term economic stagnation (Rastogi, 2023; Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025).

Supply Chain Nationalism

Countries can also practice autarkic behaviour through supply chain nationalism, where they aim to significantly minimize or even eliminate their reliance on foreign supply chains and instead choose to prioritize domestic production and the reshoring of critical industries (Maihold, 2022; Bednarski et al., 2023; Herold & Marzantowicz, 2023). In practice, this involves policy measures which prioritize national control over supply chains, particularly for strategic goods and services such as semiconductors, vaccines, pharmaceuticals, energy and food (Brankov et al., 2021; Tirop, 2020; Bouët et al., 2025). By restricting imports and imposing tariffs, domestic sourcing becomes the preferred choice (Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025; Stuart & Black, 2022). Governments may provide subsidies to local industries to support local manufacturing, R&D and encourage innovation (Campanella, 2023; Fornaro & Wolf, 2023). Countries also begin to have strategic stockpiles of essential goods to reduce their dependency on global markets (Garicano, Rohner & Weder di Mauro, 2022; Baldwin & Freeman, 2022). By reshoring production and supply of some goods and services, countries can also bring production back to their motherland from overseas (Dieter & Biedermann, 2023; Helleiner, 2023).

Case Studies

This part of the study now looks at specific case studies and, for a more nuanced analysis, splits the cases regionally. The case study studies focus on discussions of autarkic behaviours and models from

Asian countries, Europe, the Middle East, North America and Africa in that order. The aim here is to elucidate how different countries have adopted autarkic models in response to the challenges that they faced as pathways to strategic self-reliance. Through the use of various autarkic models, the countries and regions discussed hope to self-inoculate or immunize themselves from the various vagaries of fortune that they encounter in hope of building more resilient and self-reliant economies.

Case Study One - North America

The United States, through its Defence Production Act, prioritizes domestic sourcing for military needs (Stoddart, 2022; Campanella, 2023). The United States Chips and Science Act (2022) creates incentives for domestic production of semiconductors to reduce reliance on East Asian supplies (Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025). The U.S. instituted export controls on advanced tech such as AI chips and quantum computing to China to maintain U.S. dominance (DIIS, 2022; Global Investigations Review, 2024). The U.S. through the National Science Foundation Fundings, prioritizes domestic research and innovation to reduce reliance on foreign breakthroughs (Dieter & Biedermann, 2023; Baldwin & Freeman, 2022). The U.S maintains stockpiles and reserves of critical medical supplies to avoid dependency during emergencies as strategic autarky measures (World Economic Forum, 2022; Floyd & Webber, 2024). The Inflation Reduction Act (2022) created provisions that favoured domestic production of clean energy technologies (Campanella, 2023; Henderson, 2024). Under the 'America First' policies under President Trump, the U.S pursued economic nationalism and emphasized that domestic production was preferred (Wertheim, 2024; Rose, 2021). Significant efforts were and are being made to reshore production of various goods and services in a spirited effort by the United States to reduce trade imbalance (Maihold, 2022; Baldwin & Freeman, 2022). For instance, such reshoring efforts are targeting critical industries such as semiconductors and pharmaceuticals (Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025). The United States has also instituted a plethora of tariffs and barriers on imports from China, Mexico and the EU with a sole objective of protecting American industries (House of Commons Library, 2025; Morgan, Syropoulos & Yotov, 2023). This sparked the onset of trade wars and retaliatory tariffs in response to actions by the U.S (Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025; Floyd & Webber, 2024). There is now documented evidence that the United States is retreating from globalization, with the U.S. trade-to-GDP ratio being on a steady decline after peaking in 2011 (Campanella, 2023; Wyne, 2022).

Canada has adopted selective autarky measures in response to global disruptions and shifting geopolitical dynamics (Haroche, 2024; Bednarski et al., 2023). These include autarkic tendencies in medical supply chain resilience to reduce reliance on foreign supplies, energy independence by emphasizing on domestic energy development, and programs to support food security initiatives such as supporting local agriculture and food processing to reduce its dependence on imported food particularly in remote regions (Brankov et al., 2021; Bouët et al., 2025). Canada is also putting heavy investments in mining and refining research to support development of domestic tech and clean energy industries (Campanella, 2023; Baldwin & Freeman, 2022). This includes funding to support battery manufacturing and EV assembly plants to build self-reliance in the auto sector (World Economic Forum, 2025; Ghosh & Pearson, 2025). Canada has encouraged consumers to prioritize Canadian-made goods and services, echoing autarkic sentiments (Dieter & Biedermann, 2023; Helleiner, 2023). On its part, Canada imposed retaliatory tariffs such as those imposed on U.S steel and aluminum in order to protect domestic industries (House of Commons Library, 2025; Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025). Foreign investments are reviewed in Canada particularly in industries such as tech, energy and infrastructure to safeguard national interests (Global Investigations Review, 2024; Haroche, 2024). Canadian agencies such as NSERC and the Canada Foundation for Innovation support domestic research to reduce reliance on foreign tech breakthroughs (Campanella, 2023; Baldwin & Freeman, 2022).

In Mexico, the state has prioritized control over oil and gas through PEMEX, resisting attempts to privatize and avoiding foreign investments in hydrocarbons (Fattouh, Economou & Mehdi, 2022;

Dabrowski & Avdasheva, 2023). Several government incentives target local production sectors such as cement, steel and the automotive industry in order to minimize import dependence (Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025). Mexico banned GMO corn and Glyphosate to protect native crops and reduce its reliance on U.S. agricultural imports (Bouët et al., 2025; Brankov et al., 2021). Restrictions on foreign ownership in the Lithium sector in Mexico in 2022 further document Mexico's autarkic behaviour (Campanella, 2023; Haroche, 2024). The country is also pursuing efforts to keep sensitive data within its national borders and reduce dependence on foreign cloud servers (Global Investigations Review, 2024; Stoddart, 2022).

Case Study Two - Europe and Middle East

EU Nations invoked national and regional security as justification for autarkic responses focusing on strategic autonomy in energy and digital infrastructure to minimize dependency (Haroche, 2024; Campanella, 2023). Europe created the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) to bypass U.S. sanctions on Iran (EU Council, 2025). The European Union instituted various post-COVID strategies, such as building local capacities for medical supplies and green technologies (World Economic Forum, 2022; Baldwin & Freeman, 2022).

In recent years, Russia has aggressively embraced autarkic measures particularly after Western sanctions and geopolitical tensions (Dabrowski & Avdasheva, 2023; Garicano, Rohner & Weder di Mauro, 2022). The state controls the oil and gas sector through entities such as Gazprom and Rosneft ensuring that it maintains strategic control over exports and imports and domestic supplies (Fattouh, Economou & Mehdi, 2022; Henderson, 2024). Russia has also pivoted by expanding energy exports to China and India to reduce reliance on European markets (European Commission, 2023; GIS Reports, 2025). Russia began importing substitution on a grand scale [especially after its annexation of Crimea in 2014] and the avalanche of sanctions in response (Mulder, 2022; Floyd & Webber, 2024). Major investments have been made in domestic tech, transport and infrastructure to reduce foreign reliance. This includes the Yandex and domestic tech ecosystem to foster homegrown alternatives that compete with Western tech giants (Bo, 2023; Campanella, 2023). Russia developed its own domestic banking payment systems [Mir] to replace Visa/Mastercard, to respond to sanctions that led the country to be cut off from the international SWIFT banking system (DIIS, 2022; Morgan, Syropoulos & Yotov, 2023). Russia is also encouraging de-dollarization and instead opting for trade in Russian rubles as an alternative currency, especially with BRICS countries (Garicano, Rohner & Weder di Mauro, 2022; Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025).

The Russian Central Bank diversified away from U.S. dollar assets towards gold and yuan (Kunkler, 2025; Rastogi, 2023). Russia invoked national security threats as a justification for autarky on domestic agriculture, aviation and finance (Dieter & Biedermann, 2023; Dabrowski & Avdasheva, 2023). Restrictions are in place on use of foreign software with government agencies being required to use Russian-made software, and companies must store Russian user data within the country (Bo, 2023; Global Investigations Review, 2024). Cybersecurity measures have also strengthened domestic control over internet infrastructure and digital surveillance (Stoddart, 2022). Russia also exited from several international treaties or suspended participation in several global agreements, such as arms control and human rights conventions (UN Security Council, 2024; Price, 2024). After Western countries imposed several sanctions on Russia for annexing Crimea and invading Ukraine, Russia retaliated by issuing a set of its sanctions. These included the banning of food imports from the U.S., EU and other Western allies (European Commission, 2023; House of Commons Library, 2025). Russia also tightened foreign investment rules to minimize FDI from the West and increased its strategic control over certain key sectors (DIIS, 2022; Morgan, Syropoulos & Yotov, 2023). The result of this was the recorded growth in domestic industries [such as agriculture], foreign dependency decreased, and the Russian economy became more insulated (Bednarski et al., 2023; Garicano, Rohner & Weder di Mauro, 2022).

Iran suspended its cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog [meaning unmonitored enrichment and use of Uranium] (UN Security Council, 2024; Arms Control Association, 2025). Iran's nuclear program is framed as a symbol of self-reliance and a desire to master advanced technologies without any foreign interference (Isaac & Fouda, 2025; Khalifa & Fouda, 2025). This strengthens the country's conservative factions, who protest that diplomacy with the West is futile (Campanella, 2023; Helleiner, 2023). Iran has invested in local refining of fuel to reduce reliance on imported fuels, particularly after sanctions targeted fuel imports (Sia Partners, 2022; Dabrowski & Avdasheva, 2023). Iran built its own indigenous defense and nuclear technology while it was under embargoes (Arms Control Association, 2025; Khalifa & Fouda, 2025). Iran also uses barter trade networks to circumvent sanctions and restrictions (Morgan, Syropoulos & Yotov, 2023; DIIS, 2022). Iran has built the domestic internet infrastructure (National Intranet – Halal Net) to control digital space and reduce foreign influence (Bo, 2023). Iran has also developed offensive and defensive cyber capabilities to assert digital sovereignty (Stoddart, 2022; OHCHR, 2025). Iran maintains state control over oil and gas through companies such as the National Iranian Oil Company and Petropars, with tight controls over the country's vast energy sectors (EU Council, 2025; Fattouh, Economou & Mehdi, 2022). Iran has also encouraged de-dollarisation, choosing instead to trade in local currencies with trade partners such as Russia, Turkey and China (Garicano, Rohner & Weder di Mauro, 2022; Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025). The Iranian Central Bank has also shifted reserves to gold and non-Western assets in order to avoid freezing or seizure (Rastogi, 2023; Kunkler, 2025). Iran has also explored cryptocurrencies as tools to circumvent sanctions (Morgan, Syropoulos & Yotov, 2023). Iran also seeks military self-reliance by producing its own missiles, drones and defence systems, often in defiance of international sanctions and embargoes (Arms Control Association, 2025; UN Security Council, 2024).

Case Study Three - Asia

In March 2025, China issued new implementation regulations expanding the reach of its Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law (AFSL). This includes targets on foreign entities which harm China's security, sovereignty or development interests (Bo, 2023; DIIS, 2022). The law also allows seizure of assets, bans on foreign investments and restrictions on entities with such measures targeting various tech, finance, legal and education services (Global Investigations Review, 2024; Floyd & Webber, 2024). China accelerated chip design and AI development to reduce its reliance on U.S technology (Campanella, 2023; Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025). China is also building parallel financial and trade systems across Central Asia, Africa and the Gulf as measures to test the limits of the enforcement of Western sanctions (Garicano, Rohner & Weder di Mauro, 2022). China's dual circulation strategy reduces its reliance on foreign tech amid U.S tensions (Maihold, 2022; Helleiner, 2023). China's BeiDou satellite navigation system was built as an alternative to the U.S. controlled Global Positioning System (GPS) (Bo, 2023). China issued retaliatory tariffs on agricultural imports such as pork and soybeans. It instituted retaliatory controls on critical minerals like germanium and gallium (Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025; DIIS, 2022).

North Korea is responding and evading sanctions by operating through ally intermediaries such as China and Russia and deepening ties with these close allies [both country presidents have visited each other countries to strengthen diplomatic, military and strategic ties as well as exhibit defiance to the rest of the world that they are capable of overcoming the avalanche of existing sanctions] (UN Security Council, 2024; Hacker News, 2025). North Korea also uses shadow networks and domestic substitutes for banned imports (U.S. Department of State, 2025). India's Atmanirbhar Bharat promotes self-reliance on defence and pharmaceuticals by promoting domestic manufacturing (Campanella, 2023; Tirop, 2020). India created the Unified Payment Interface (UPI) to promote a domestic digital payments ecosystem (Dieter & Biedermann, 2023; Baldwin & Freeman, 2022). India revised retaliatory duties against the U.S. after Washington hiked tariffs on steel and aluminium. India proposed increased tariffs on American products like almonds and walnuts, citing WTO norms (Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025; House of Commons Library, 2025).

Case Study Four - Africa

In Africa, various countries have pursued selective self-sufficiency in key sectors driven by nationalism, the desire to control resources and developmental targets (Bouët et al., 2025; Campanella, 2023). For instance, Nigeria and Algeria have nationalized and tightly regulated their oil and mineral sectors in order to have control over revenues (Fattouh, Economou & Mehdi, 2022; Dabrowski & Avdasheva, 2023). Many governments maintain ownership of key sectors through state ownership in strategic industries such as the mining sector in Zambia and the telecoms sector in Ethiopia to reduce foreign influence (Haroche, 2024; Dabrowski & Avdasheva, 2023). Local content laws, such as in Kenya and Ghana, require that companies must use local labour, materials and services as a means of having control over certain strategic sectors (Bouët et al., 2025; Brankov et al., 2021). In Zimbabwe, controversial land reforms sought to redistribute land to local farmers and reduce the level of reliance on foreign agri-business (Campanella, 2023; Helleiner, 2023). In the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries like South Africa and Senegal developed local vaccine production capacities to avoid global supply bottlenecks (World Economic Forum, 2022; Baldwin & Freeman, 2022).

Some countries have put in place tariffs and quotas as protective measures to shield local industries in sectors such as food processing, manufacturing and textiles (Kumar, Swamy & Pavani, 2025; Stuart & Black, 2022). Continental agreements such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) seek to reduce dependence on external trade by boosting intra-African trade (Bouët et al., 2025; Garicano, Rohner & Weder di Mauro, 2022). Nigeria and Kenya are pushing for more local data storage to minimize reliance on foreign tech, with other countries significantly investing in local start-ups and innovations to achieve digital independence (Global Investigations Review, 2024; Haroche, 2024). Further, military-led governments such as Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger are pursuing nationalist economic policies as a pathway to self-reliance (Price, 2024; Campanella, 2023).

Proposed Interventional Autarky Model

The reviewed case studies document how various countries have pursued and use autarkic strategies to maintain self-reliance and overcome some of the vagaries of fortune that have come their way. The autarkic measures are both proactive and reactive, and countries are expected to continue using various autarkic models given the dynamic geo-political and social environments. This study is done with the ultimate objective of proposing a common model that is widely applicable across regions, sectors or countries. Based on the discussions advanced herein and the plethora of examples provided, the study develops a common autarkic model. We propose an Autarkic Model that carries with it key features drawn from country case studies, evidence that has already been discussed. The idea here is to aggregate and present an applicable model that carries with it common features of autarky practices. Any omissions of some features, factors or variables are solely borne by us [the author]. This is an inaugural model, and forms a basis for future improvements as evidently detailed in 6.1 and 6.2 below:

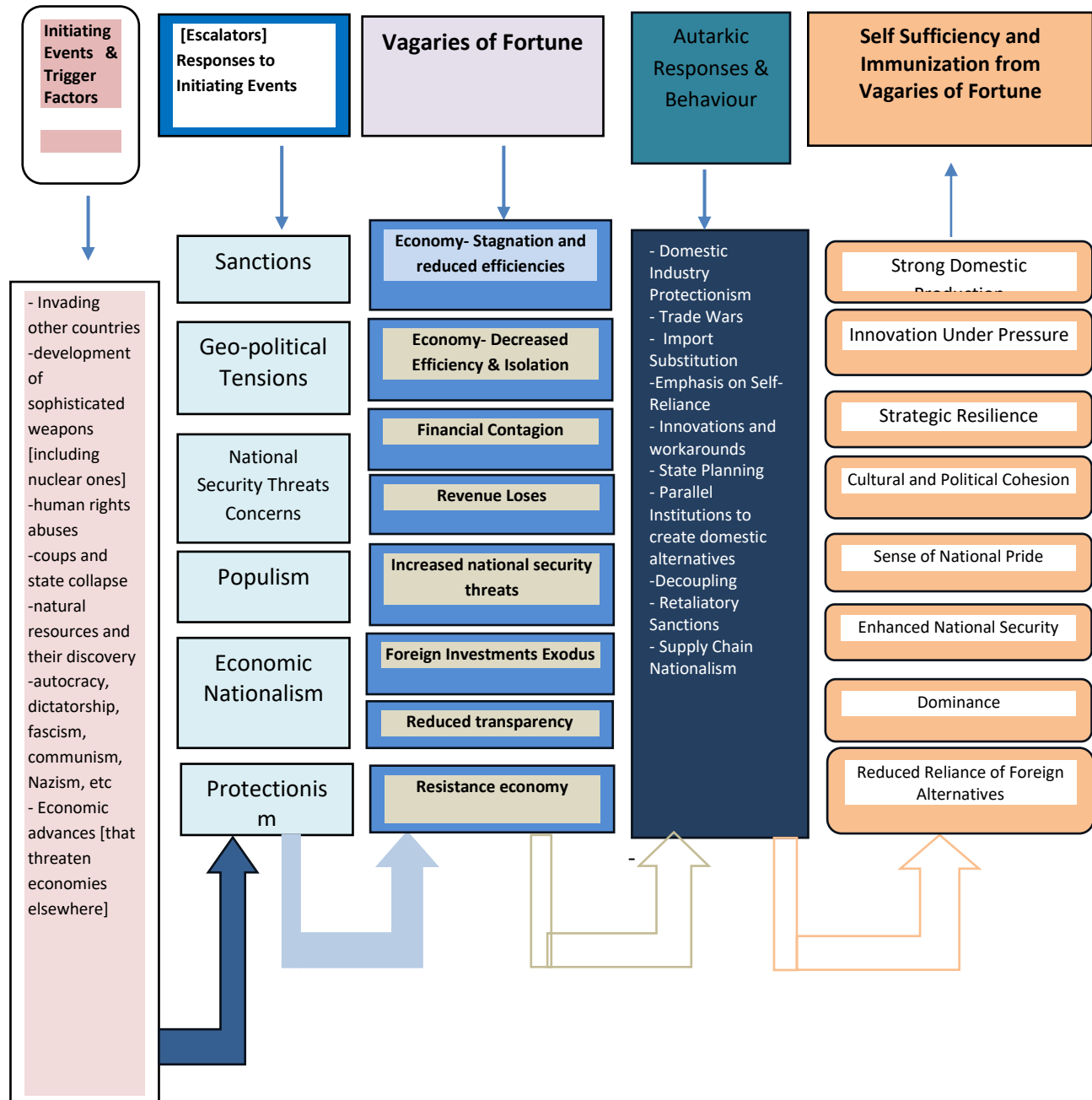


Figure 1: A Proposed Autarkic Common Model

Source: (Author Developed, 2025)

An explanation of the model is done in sub-sections 6.1 and 6.2.

The Autarky Model Steps

The autarky common model has five steps or domains, namely, Initiating Events & Trigger Factors, [Escalators] Responses to Initiating Events, Vagaries of Fortune, Autarkic Responses & Behaviour and finally, Self Sufficiency and Immunization from Vagaries of Fortune. Each of these steps is now discussed.

Initiating Events & Trigger Factors

This is the first stage of the autarky model, and these are the initiating factors, triggers or what we now refer to as [starters]. These include factors such as invading other countries, development of sophisticated weapons [including nuclear ones], human rights abuses, coups and state collapse, natural resources and their discovery, autocracy, dictatorship, fascism, communism, Nazism, and other leadership styles, economic advances [that threaten economies elsewhere] and such other relevant triggers (the list can be quite lengthy). Once any or a combination of these trigger factors have taken place, they provide ground for step two, the escalators, which are the responses made to initiating events.

[Escalators] Responses to Initiating Events

The second step is escalation, which is the responses made to triggering events. These include heightened geopolitical tensions, national Security threat concerns, populism, economic nationalism and protectionism. Geopolitical tensions serve as an escalator encompass strategic rivalries among nations, often rooted in competing interests over territory, resources, ideology, or influence. These tensions manifest in diplomatic standoffs, military posturing, and shifting alliances that can reshape regional or global stability. Another escalator is national security threats, which include risks that endanger a nation's sovereignty, infrastructure, or citizenry. These include cyberattacks, terrorism, espionage, disinformation campaigns, and threats to energy and food systems. Populism as an escalator is the political approach that claims to represent the will of the common people against perceived elites. It often emphasizes nationalist sentiment, direct leadership, and skepticism toward established institutions, and can emerge from both left and right-wing ideologies. Economic nationalism is another escalator which advocates for prioritizing domestic industries, labor, and capital over global integration. It involves policies that support local production, control foreign investment, and assert economic sovereignty. Finally, protectionism as an escalator is a policy stance that restricts international trade to shield domestic industries. It utilizes tools such as tariffs, import quotas, and regulatory barriers to manage foreign competition and nurture national economic interests. These autarky escalators lay the ground for the next step, which we now refer to as the vagaries of fortune.

Vagaries of Fortune

At the heart of autarky are the vagaries of fortune, where countries or regions suffer [sometimes immensely]. Vagaries describe the unpredictable shifts in economic, political, or environmental conditions that can dramatically alter a nation's trajectory. These may include sudden commodity price crashes, unexpected natural disasters, geopolitical upheavals, or global financial crises. For instance, oil-dependent economies have historically experienced boom-and-bust cycles due to the volatile nature of global oil prices. Similarly, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face heightened vulnerability to external shocks, such as climate change and trade disruptions, while lacking the resilience to recover swiftly. In essence, the phrase captures how external forces beyond a country's control can shape its development path, often with disproportionate consequences for less diversified or structurally fragile economies.

Autarkic Responses & Behaviour

In order to survive, build resilience and overcome the vagaries of fortune, countries or regions often institute various autarkic behaviours and responses. These act as remedies to try and address the issues and challenges that they face. Often, autarkic behaviour depends on the type of vagaries that a country or region has experienced. Autarkic behaviour typically manifests through domestic industry protectionism, trade wars, import substitution, emphasis on self-reliance, innovations and workarounds, state planning, parallel institutions to create domestic alternatives, strategic decoupling, retaliatory sanctions and supply chain nationalism. Governments may impose tariffs, quotas, or outright bans on

imports to shield local industries, while simultaneously investing in sectors deemed critical to national resilience, such as energy, agriculture, and defence. Currency controls and capital flow regulations are also common, aimed at preserving financial sovereignty and limiting exposure to global market fluctuations.

Self-Sufficiency and Immunization from Vagaries of Fortune

Self-sufficiency and immunization from the vagaries of fortune represent a nation's proactive stance against external volatility and systemic shocks. Self-sufficiency entails strong domestic production, innovation under pressure, strategic resilience, cultural and political cohesion, sense of national pride, enhanced national security, dominance, and reduced reliance on foreign alternatives. By cultivating domestic capabilities such as in food production, defense, finance, tech, energy, manufacturing, or healthcare, countries or regions can reduce reliance on unpredictable global markets and geopolitical dynamics. Immunization, in this context, refers not to medical vaccination but to the broader insulation of national systems from erratic fluctuations in commodity prices, financial contagion, climate disruptions, sanctions, or diplomatic tensions. Together, these concepts underscore a resilience-oriented framework where countries, particularly those with fragile economies or limited diversification, seek to buffer themselves from the capricious nature of global fortune. This strategic posture is especially critical for developing regions, where exposure to external shocks can derail progress, deepen inequality, and compromise long-term sustainability.

Immunization and Vindicating Autarky

Autarky is often viewed as a strategic buffer against the unpredictable tides of global politics and trade (Campanella, 2023; Helleiner, 2023). When nations rely heavily on external sources for energy, food, technology, or finance, they expose themselves to vulnerabilities stemming from international sanctions, embargoes, or economic disruptions (Mulder, 2022). By cultivating domestic industries and limiting dependence on foreign inputs, a country can essentially 'inoculate' or 'immunize' itself from being coerced or destabilized by outside powers (Dabrowski & Avdasheva, 2023; Dieter & Biedermann, 2023). Just as vaccines bolster a body's defence system against disease, autarky builds internal resilience and ensures vital sectors continue to function even if global supply chains fracture, sanctions intensify, war rages, markets collapse, or diplomatic relationships sour (Garicano, Rohner & Weder di Mauro, 2022; Baldwin & Freeman, 2022).

Beyond physical goods, autarky can shield nations from the ripple effects of financial contagion, geopolitical tensions, or supply chain bottlenecks such as those seen during pandemics or major conflicts (Claessens & Forbes, 2024; Gunay & Can, 2022; Bednarski et al., 2023). It provides a mechanism for economic continuity in times of global uncertainty, allowing a nation to maintain stability, preserve national sovereignty, and reduce the leverage that other states or international institutions may hold over its decision-making (Campanella, 2023; Haroche, 2024). While full autarky is rare and often impractical in a deeply interlinked world, selective self-reliance, especially in strategic sectors like agriculture, energy, finance, and defence, serves as a pragmatic form of economic immunization in an age of growing interdependence and political flux (Bouët et al., 2025; Fattouh, Economou & Mehdi, 2022; Brankov et al., 2021).

At its core, autarky also reflects a philosophical and cultural stance and a commitment to preserving national identity and decision-making autonomy in a world where economic entanglements often blur sovereignty (Helleiner, 2021; Wertheim, 2024). When countries insulate key sectors from foreign influence, they are not just protecting supply chains, but rather, they are safeguarding the freedom to act independently, without the pressure to conform to external agendas (Campanella, 2023; Haroche, 2024). This insulation can empower governments to pursue policies tailored to local needs and values, rather than adjusting them to appease international expectations or avoid economic penalties (Dieter &

Biedermann, 2023; Ghosh & Pearson, 2025). In this way, autarky becomes a strategic assertion of self-determination, reinforcing a nation's ability to weather global storms with its principles intact (Helleiner, 2023; Eder, 2023).

Some nations deliberately choose a path of solitude, not out of hardship but from a deep sense of autonomy. They define their own boundaries with purpose, resisting external pressures and influence (Rose, 2021; Elias et al., 2023). Through self-reliance, they cultivate what they need internally, steering clear of dependence on global systems driven by profit and exploitation (Campanella, 2023; Almeida, 2024). Their independence is not born of arrogance, but from a commitment to shaping their future with native values and resources (Helleiner, 2023; Maharaj, 2023). While international trade and cooperation may offer tempting opportunities, these nations remain steadfast, honouring their vision and traditions without compromise. At the heart of this is autarky and all its principles and features (Dieter & Biedermann, 2023; Eder, 2023).

Conclusion

This paper has looked at autarky and how and why countries are using it in the modern world. Autarkic responses by affected countries or regions often aim to respond to the socio-political and economic consequences of sanctions, national security threats and interests, trade wars, market shock, embargoes and so on. In an increasingly volatile global environment, autarky has resurfaced as a strategic response to the vulnerabilities exposed by geopolitical tensions, economic disruptions, and technological dependencies. While complete self-sufficiency remains elusive in a globalized economy, selective autarkic practices have become vital instruments for nations seeking to safeguard sovereignty, maintain continuity, and buffer against external shocks. These measures, ranging from reshoring supply chains and building parallel institutions to asserting control over critical sectors, reflect a deliberate recalibration of national priorities in pursuit of resilience. Across the world, diverse autarkic strategies have emerged, shaped by unique political, economic, and cultural contexts. Major powers have adopted industrial policies to reduce reliance on foreign technology and finance, while emerging economies have pursued resource nationalism and domestic innovation to reclaim agency over strategic sectors. In regions facing sanctions or diplomatic isolation, autarky has evolved into a tool of defiance and survival, enabling states to maintain functionality despite exclusion from global systems. Even liberal democracies have embraced elements of economic nationalism, recognizing the need to protect vital industries and infrastructure from external influence.

Autarky also carries a deeper philosophical dimension. It reflects a commitment to self-determination and the preservation of national identity in a world in which global entanglements often dilute autonomy. By insulating key sectors from foreign control, nations are not merely protecting supply chains, they are asserting the freedom to craft policies aligned with local values and long-term developmental goals. This strategic insulation empowers governments to resist external pressures and pursue independent paths without compromising their principles. Ultimately, autarky is not a rejection of global engagement but a reconfiguration of it. It offers a framework for navigating uncertainty while preserving strategic autonomy. As global interdependence becomes increasingly fraught with risk, the selective embrace of autarkic principles may define the next phase of national economic strategy one that balances openness with control, cooperation with caution, and integration with independence. The paper has also proposed a common autarky model that is universally applicable.

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