

Analysis of the Impact of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum on Globalization

Shengnan Fan

Center for Chinese and American Studies, Nanjing University, Nanjing, China
sfan25@jh.edu.cn

Abstract. As the world's most deeply integrated regional entity, the European Union plays a pivotal role in the future trajectory of globalization through revisions to its migration policy. Yet existing research on globalization, European integration, and migration mainly adopt a macro-level analytical lens, with few investigating the evolution of immigration policies. The study conducts a comparative analysis of the European Union's migration-policy framework before and after the enactment of the 2024 Pact on Migration and Asylum. Utilizing migration-flow data and policy documents published by the EU from 2015 to 2023, it investigates the interplay between the Pact and subsequent policy trajectories. The findings reveal that the Pact represents a critical transition in the EU's governance of globalization—from a reactive posture to a strategic, management-oriented stance. Although this shift initially curtailed cross-border mobility, over the long term it has underpinned the progression of globalization toward greater institutional maturity. These insights bear significant theoretical and practical implications for the study of contemporary global integration.

Keywords: globalization, European Union, migration

1. Introduction

The rapid change of globalization in the twenty-first century has been remarkable. From Brexit to the resurgence of U.S. trade protectionism, from the pandemic-caused disruptions to the escalation of geopolitical tensions, all these prompted a reassessment of globalization's underlying dynamics. In this context, the European Union—the world's most deeply integrated regional entity—stands to exert a pivotal influence on the future trajectory of globalization through revisions to its migration policy.

Adopted in 2024, the EU's Pact on Migration and Asylum provides a concrete vantage point for tracing how contemporary globalization is being renegotiated. Because migration policy sits near the core of state authority, shifts in this field often register deeper political, economic, and social realignments. For a bloc that serves as a principal destination for movements from the global South, adjustments to EU rules can redirect migrant routes while simultaneously signaling the Union's current reading of global integration.

Against this backdrop, the study examines the globalization dynamics encoded in the Pact's reforms. It assesses whether the package tends to deepen cross-border coordination and mobility or, instead, marks a calibrated retrenchment—signals commonly associated with de-globalizing pressures.

2. Literature review

2.1. Studies on the evolution of globalization governance theory

Held's work advances a multidimensional account of globalization that cuts across political, social, and cultural registers, treating these spheres as mutually conditioning rather than parallel tracks [1]. Read in this way, immigration policy is not a peripheral administrative field but a site where cross-domain effects become visible, offering leverage for tracing how governance adapts under global pressures. Rodrik's "globalization trilemma" further sharpens the trade-offs: democratic politics, state sovereignty, and deep economic integration cannot be maximized at the same time, and policy choices inevitably privilege one corner of the triangle over the others [2]. Building on this constraint-aware view, Scholte argues for forms of globalization governance that foreground inclusion and sustainability, and he uses that vantage to probe the consequences of European Union migration choices with greater granularity [3].

2.2. Studies on the relationship between migration and globalization

As globalization has intensified, scholarship has moved from treating migration as an outcome to analyzing it as a constitutive element of global change. Hollifield's "migration-state paradox" captures the central tension: governments depend economically on mobile labor while facing political incentives to curb entry, a dilemma that is especially visible within the EU's policy architecture [4]. Castles and Miller push the point further, contending that migrants act not only as products of global integration but also as agents that accelerate it; in turn, shifts in immigration rules frequently disclose a polity's broader stance toward globalization [5].

2.3. Studies on EU integration and globalization

Work linking European integration to globalization treats the EU not simply as a regional project but as an actor that mediates global pressures and domestic preferences. Moravcsik's liberal intergovernmentalism is central here: integration advances when leading Member States, pursuing preference coalitions shaped by their economic and political interests, strike bargains and then delegate selected competences to EU institutions [6]. Read through this lens, shifts in migration policy reflect bargaining outcomes among governments rather than an abstract supranational drift, and the tempo of change tracks moments when state interests converge strongly enough to support further delegation.

Extensive work has been done on globalization, European integration, and migration; however, significant gaps remain. Most studies adopt a macro-level analytical lens, with few investigating the evolution of immigration policies; moreover, most analyses of European migration policy predate the 2024 Pact. Therefore, the study uses policy documents and quantitative data from the EU, employing systematic analysis to address these gaps.

3. Research methodology

This study employs both historical and comparative analyses to further assess the impact of the 2024 Pact on the development trend of globalization by vertically sorting out and horizontally comparing the historical development of the EU's migration policy.

4. The development of EU migration policy

4.1. Foundation stage - from Schengen to Amsterdam (1985-1999)

The origins of the European Union's migration policy date back to the 1985 Schengen Agreement. Originally conceived as a cooperative initiative among five Member States, the Agreement's foundational tenet—free movement across internal frontiers and collective management of external borders—provided the essential basis for future formulation of EU migration policy.

An innovation of the Schengen framework was its reorientation of border control from unilateral national practices to a supranational collective mechanism. This elevation in governance entailed not only technical coordination among participating States but, more crucially, a paradigm shift in conceptualizing borders: internal European frontiers were recast as administrative rather than political boundaries, while the EU's external borders assumed a shared status as the collective perimeter of the Schengen Area, which carries profound political and legal meanings.

Another characteristic of this phase was the depoliticization trend. By removing migration from overt political contestation, this strategy accelerated early cooperation but also planted the seeds for subsequent politicized backlash. The signing of the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty marked the culmination of this stage: by formally assigning immigration and asylum policy to the Union's competence, it established the legal framework for further institutionalization [7].

4.2. The institutionalisation phase - from Tampere to Lisbon (1999-2009)

The entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty opened a new phase in the rapid development of EU migration policy. At Tampere in 1999, the European Council set out the ambition to build a Common European Asylum System, moving the policy center of gravity from technical coordination toward institutional integration. The shift altered not only the scope of regulatory instruments but also the normative premises on which they rested.

Tampere placed rights at the core of the agenda. It underscored a dual commitment: providing protection to those seeking asylum and supporting the integration of lawfully admitted migrants into host societies. In doing so, it recast the Union's self-understanding as a normative actor that aims to exercise moral leadership in global governance and to advance values associated with human rights.

This orientation was consolidated with the 2008 European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, which articulated a more proactive and strategic approach to migration policy [8]. The Pact framed migration as a contributor to Europe's socio-economic development while situating EU action within broader efforts to shape global migration governance.

4.3. Crisis remodelling phase (2015-2023)

The 2015 migration surge marked a turning point for EU migration policy. More than one million people sought entry that year, and the scale of arrivals exposed design limits in the Union's governance approach. It revealed institutional gaps within the existing framework and brought into view sharp value divergences among Member States.

The Dublin System proved brittle under pressure. The "first country of entry" rule ceased to function as intended: Greece and Italy carried burdens well beyond their administrative capacity, while Germany and Austria processed far more claims than anticipated. The episode widened intra-EU fault lines. Governments in Western Europe—prominently Germany—pressed for a solidarity-based response, including mandatory relocation quotas. Several Eastern European states, notably Hungary and Poland, rejected such measures as infringements on sovereignty and cultural identity. These clashes reflected not only divergent policy preferences but also deeper disputes over the Union's values and the direction of integration.

The fallout also shifted the center of gravity from development-oriented framing toward security. Institutional responses followed suit: the Union strengthened border management arrangements and expanded security cooperation with third countries, signaling a clear securitization of migration.

Against this backdrop, the EU launched a comprehensive overhaul of the Common European Asylum System. The agenda included revising the Dublin rules, creating a more unified asylum procedure, and establishing an EU-level asylum agency. In 2020, a new Pact on Migration and Asylum was tabled to recalibrate responsibility-sharing and solidarity. After four years of negotiation, the package was formally adopted in 2024 [9].

5. Drivers of change in EU migration policy

5.1. Internal member state drivers

Change in EU migration policy first gathered momentum inside member states. From 2015 onward, domestic politics across the Union tilted toward parties with populist platforms, bringing sharper demands for restrictive admission rules and renewed pushback against the EU's open-border orientation. These electoral shifts raised the political cost of liberal entry regimes and reweighted national preferences in Council bargaining.

Developments in several large states—especially Germany, France, and Italy—proved consequential. Germany's "open-door" approach during 2015 triggered intense public and parliamentary debate and ultimately led the Merkel government to recalibrate its stance, with downstream effects on the Union's collective position.

Administrative data from 2015–2016 indicate that more than 1.8 million people entered the EU via the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes; on peak days, Greece and Italy received roughly 5,000 and 3,000 arrivals, respectively [10]. The volume and persistence of flows exposed policy weak spots, strained allocation of reception resources, and placed social-cohesion concerns on national agendas. Southern states—Italy, Greece, and Spain—absorbed a disproportionate share of reception and processing, while several Northern members, including Germany and Austria, opposed mandatory burden-sharing schemes. The resulting asymmetry escalated into a political crisis that put intra-EU solidarity under direct stress [11].

5.2. External pressure factors

Global migration dynamics have shifted alongside globalization, and the resulting pressures have shaped the Union's policy choices. Protracted conflicts in parts of the Middle East, wide income gaps in several African regions, and climate-related displacement have combined to raise the volume and persistence of movements toward Europe. Geopolitical shocks—the Russia–Ukraine war, recurring instability in the Middle East, and security crises in the Sahel—have further accelerated demands for governance reform.

A separate catalyst was the sequence of Mediterranean maritime disasters in 2015–2016, which claimed roughly 3,700 lives. Criticism of the EU's slow mobilization on rescue and reception prompted a reassessment of crisis-response arrangements and fed directly into broader policy review [12].

5.3. The role of economic factors

Economic conditions have cut in both directions. Aging populations and labor shortages argue for managed immigration, while cyclical downturns and job-competition concerns heighten public resistance to new arrivals. The COVID-19 pandemic amplified these tensions: disruptions to labor

markets, pressure on public services, and renewed calls for stricter border management all informed the design of more recent policy instruments.

6. Core changes to the 2024 Immigration and Asylum Treaty

6.1. Institutional innovations

The Pact advances several institutional fronts. It introduces a more adaptable approach to responsibility-sharing, allowing member states to meet solidarity obligations through diverse modalities, with the aim of preserving internal balance under mounting global pressures [13,14]. It also strengthens external-border governance by expanding the mandate and operational capacity of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, signaling a more strategic posture toward managing cross-border movements. In parallel, the Pact streamlines asylum procedures to increase processing efficiency and reduce backlogs.

6.2. Changes in values

Normatively, the Pact reweights priorities: while human-rights protections remain affirmed, security considerations occupy a larger share of the policy design space. This recalibration marks an incremental but clear shift in the Union's collective stance toward globalization, with risk management and control becoming more central to migration governance.

6.3. Transformation of the governance model

The Pact outlines a multi-tier, multi-stakeholder model. Alongside EU institutions, it assigns active roles to national governments, regional authorities, international organizations, and civil-society actors. The arrangement broadens participation and distributes implementation tasks across levels, reflecting the increased coordination demands of migration governance in a period of intensified globalization.

7. Impact on the trend of globalization

7.1. Impact on the economic dimension

In the economic realm, the 2024 Pact advances integration by putting migration management on a clearer institutional footing. At the same time, tighter border controls and more exacting asylum procedures necessarily limit some forms of cross-border movement. The Pact also resets the logic of labor migration within economic globalization: the earlier “open borders—let markets decide” posture gives way to “selective openness—policy-guided markets.” In practice, admission channels and incentives tilt toward highly skilled workers, while lower-skilled inflows face additional constraints. This differentiation reflects a strategic reappraisal of how the EU wishes to participate in—and hedge—economic globalization.

This transition reflects the EU's recognition that, in the context of globalization, an unqualified open-border regime may paradoxically impede individuals with genuine needs from accessing legal migration channels. The management-oriented migration policy, therefore, aims to address this shortcoming and, in doing so, advance globalization. Whereas neoliberal globalization traditionally emphasizes reducing state intervention and privileging market forces, the 2024 Pact demonstrates that, in a complex global environment, proactive state management is indispensable.

7.2. Impact of the social dimension

As far as social globalization is concerned, the Pact enforces more stringent standards for intercultural integration and bolsters initiatives that facilitate migrant inclusion. Rather than merely accommodating cultural plurality, it aspires to cultivate shared normative frameworks. To a degree, these measures can enhance intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. However, the Pact's securitization emphasis risks intensifying social fragmentation and widening cleavages among communities. In regions characterized by pronounced anti-migrant sentiment, the revised provisions may further aggravate social tensions. Accordingly, finding an equilibrium between regulatory control and openness constitutes the principal challenge for the new Pact.

7.3. Impact of the political dimension

In the political sphere, the Pact's "proactive management" approach reframes how international cooperation is organized. Classical accounts of political globalization often hinge on partial transfers of sovereignty; by contrast, the Pact treats effective collaboration as a function of flexible, context-sensitive arrangements that let member states decide how to discharge common obligations in light of national conditions. The aim is coherence without uniformity. This logic supports a variant of multilateralism that begins with shared objectives and then engineers differentiated implementation. It also elevates cooperation with third countries, placing greater weight on structured partnerships and external engagement [15]. At the same time, several provisions point toward EU primacy and elements of protectionism—tendencies that, if overextended, could erode the trust and reciprocity on which cooperative global governance depends.

7.4. Impact of the dimension of institutional globalization

In institutional globalization, the 2024 Pact exerts a dual impact. It proactively fortifies mechanisms for international cooperation, particularly in information exchange, capacity-building, and technical assistance, thereby deepening the institutionalization of global migration governance. This reinforced management framework does not seek to restrict globalization but to optimize its contributions to human welfare.

Conversely, the Pact also manifests potential drawbacks: its EU-centric orientation risks undermining the efficacy of existing international regimes. In refugee protection, the EU's policy change may significantly affect the implementation of legal instruments such as the Refugee Convention [16].

8. Conclusion

Through an analysis of the EU's 2024 Pact on Migration and Asylum, this study identifies a fundamental shift in the Union's governance paradigm—from an open globalization model toward a managed-globalization framework. Rather than representing an outright repudiation of globalization, this transition embodies a strategic reevaluation of globalization processes.

The Pact's implications for globalization are multidimensional. Economically, it both facilitates and restricts certain migratory flows; socially, it promotes intercultural exchange while simultaneously risking increased social fragmentation; politically, it strengthens international cooperation but reinforces a distinctly EU-centric perspective. Thus, the evolution of EU migration policy signifies not a complete rejection of globalization but a search for a more sustainable development. Global migration governance now stands at a critical juncture: the unregulated model is under strain, and a managed approach is coalescing, which demands coordinated efforts by national governments, international organizations, and civil society. In this sense, the Pact neither fully

accelerates globalization nor entirely forecloses it; instead, it exemplifies an innovative, practice-oriented adaptation to shifting international conditions, which may guide globalization toward greater maturity.

References

- [1] Held, D., McGrew, A., Goldblatt, D., & Perraton, J. (1999). *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- [2] Rodrik, D. (2011). *The Globalization Paradox: Democracy and the Future of the World Economy*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. 2
- [3] Scholte, J. A. (2005). *Globalization: A Critical Introduction* (2nd ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [4] Hollifield, J. F. (2004). The emerging migration state. *International Migration Review*, 38(3), 885–912.
- [5] Castles, S., & Miller, M. J. (2009). *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (4th ed.). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [6] Moravcsik, A. (1998). *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- [7] Guay, T. R. (1997). The European Union, expansion of policy - making, and defense industrial policy. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 4(3), 404–421.
- [8] Carrera, S., & Guild, E. (2008). The French Presidency's European Pact on Immigration and Asylum: Intergovernmentalism vs. Europeanisation? Security vs. Rights?. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.
- [9] Kaufmann, D. (2020). Debating responsibility - sharing: An analysis of the European Parliament's debates on the Common European Asylum System. *European Policy Analysis*, 7(1), 207–225.
- [10] Eurostat. (2024). *Migration and Migrant Population Statistics [R]*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- [11] Parusel, B. (2015). Solidarity and fairness in the Common European Asylum System—failure or progress?. *Migration Letters*, 12(2), 124-136.
- [12] Spehar, A. (2025). The EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum: Towards a Long-Term Sustainable European Migration Policy?. In *The Depth and Size of the European Union in a Time of War: Interdisciplinary European Studies*, 197-221.
- [13] European Parliament and Council. (2024). *Regulation on Migration and Asylum*. Official Journal of the European Union, L 123/1. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- [14] Casanova Villela, S. (2024). Paradigms of EU New Pact on Migration and Asylum. *Revista de Iniciação Científica Em Relações Internacionais*, 1–9.
- [15] Herbert, E. B., & Olalere, F. A. (2020). What Is Economic Globalization Without Trans-boundary Migration? *Global Trade and Customs Journal*, 15(Issue 10), 493–503.
- [16] OLEKSIEWICZ, I., & ÖZ, S. (2023). The Most Important Changes in EU Asylum and Refugee Policy After 2015. *Humanities and Social Sciences Quarterly*, 30(4-part 2), 219–232.