

For nationalistic regimes, similar COVID-19 policies are the sincerest form of flattery

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Evan Mistur. Credit: UT Arlington

Analysis from a University of Texas at Arlington assistant professor of public policy suggests that nationalistic governments around the globe are more likely to copy other nationalistic governments in responding to

the current pandemic.

Evan Mistur, a UT Arlington assistant professor in the College of Architecture, Planning and Public Affairs, outlined his findings in "The Sincerest Form of Flattery: Nationalist Emulation During the COVID-19 Pandemic," published in the *Journal of Chinese Political Science*. He collaborated on the paper with John Wagner Givens, assistant professor at Kennesaw State (Ga.) University.

"While leaders often claim responses are based on the best available advice from scientists and public health experts, recent [policy](#) diffusion research suggests that countries are emulating the COVID-19 policies of their neighbors and political peers instead of responding to domestic conditions," Mistur said.

Nationalism is an ideology that values [national identity](#) over belonging to other groups and seeks distinction and preservation of that identity "by the nation, for the nation." At its most extreme, it rejects the status quo and seeks to reassert the will of an imagined national community over a political or cultural space.

Despite being geographically distant and featuring extremely varied political systems, development levels, and governance capacity, many countries with nationalistic tendencies duplicate each other's changing policies during the pandemic.

"We determined that leaders in those nationalistic countries are not necessarily letting [scientific data](#) drive their decision-making during the pandemic," Mistur said. "We looked at countries like France and Italy, both of which had total lockdowns. We also looked at the U.S. and Brazil, which represented that nationalistic turn.

"Nationalist regimes seem to favor certain approaches toward the

[pandemic](#). They emulate each other."Givens said these results show "not only new mechanisms of policy diffusion, but also growing international cooperation among nationalist regimes and leaders."

Provided by University of Texas at Arlington

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