

Road 'trajectory'. Similarly, Russia is ^{back to} creating its own sphere of influence, ^{directly} seen by the annexing of Crimea or the subtle fighting it is doing in the Middle East.

Overall, and while globalization is meant to be a liberal and freeing movement which liberates countries from their ^{internal} (national) patterns of commercialisation and enables them to become truly "world" consumers who make/buy their own choices, it seems that currently, the process is becoming more and more clouded by certain dominant powers. This, going in hand with the theory of anarchism, shows that even without "order" some will emerge as more powerful. In our 21st century, it seems as if the true "leaders" of globalization are becoming the USA, China and Russia and to a lesser extent, the EU and the rest of the BRICS. These, creating their areas of influence, will undoubtedly destroy the free "globalization" and go back to a world with less freedom and multilateralism. ~~It seems that~~ However, it is still early to say that we are back at a bipolar or tri-polar world, as the balance of commerce and trade has changed forever. Today, we have an unprecedented model which balances both our countries' productions, spheres of influences but also many truly global multi-national companies like Apple or Nike. Furthermore, we need to acknowledge that these countries often even act together and create a stable "globalized" world, as seen by the numerous deals the US has sealed with Russia or its recent trade deal with China.

(Our world)

Every day, our world is bombarded by news of new conflicts that emerge between various countries ~~from~~ or between populations, as they each try to assert their power and dominance over the others. As it is often said, International Relations has 2 distinct periods: series of wars punctuated by times of peace. Currently, we notice a balance of both, as we don't have any major war, as in the world wars of the 20th century, but we also have smaller conflicts which could have unprecedented growth and eventually culminate in a 3rd world war. One of the most controversial themes comes from the gigantic country of China, who is pushing to have more territory and consequently, more power. This can be illustrated by its push into the South China Sea, which started in 2014. China has become one of the main superpowers and biggest economies boasting ^a numerous population. As a result of such, it keeps growing and is needing new ways of dealing with the growth. ~~From~~ Since the 1949 revolution, its government has industrialized the country and most of its population went from farming to better conditions. With these, came growing concerns for lack of resources, which are mostly needed by its coastal areas, near the South China Sea, where most of its megacities are located. Therefore, in 2014, the world came to know about China's push into the South China Sea, a move deemed illegal, but which China justified as protectionist and within its own right. In order to explain this conflict, we need to base ourselves on Maritime Law. The UN states that, through international laws, a country's economic zone includes their territory and ~~in~~ the waters that go up to 200 nautical miles away from it. Through

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1. In our 21st century world, it seems impossible for a country to sustain itself independently, without exports (of) and trade or without the aid of international organizations like NATO. However, just like during the extensive period (of) in the 20th century which was fulfilled with wars, we immediately notice that many countries still uphold similar "allies" and establish "spheres of influence" which, according to a liberal perspective, clearly deter (or) globalization processes from fully being global.

We can trace this argument and ideology back to the end of WW2, ^{There,} and through several peace-keeping strategies and organizations like NATO (1949) or UN (1945), it seemed that a globalized movement aiming for peace - and the end of war - was emerging. Soon after, and for much of the later 20th century, the world became once again divided, this time not by the Axis/Allies dichotomy but by the USSR/USA superpower duality. It is important to state that this was the period where two drastically different ideologies surfaced. The US developed a capitalistic society, excelling in all areas and established several deals or treaties with its closest collaborators. For example, NATO was a ^{"Atlantic"} military ~~attitude~~ defense organization which kept peace between US, Canada and many European countries and promised to (eq) defend all against common enemies. On the other side, ~~(Russia)~~ the Soviet Union advanced with its communist vision and ended up overtaking several fragile states like Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, etc. As a countermeasure to NATO, the Warsaw Pact (1955) was created, thus showing that both superpowers

were going to go far in order to establish their dominance, which was seen throughout the Cold War with examples like the Arms Race or the proxy wars in Korea or Vietnam. By 1991, with the culmination of the Soviet Union, the fall of its satellite states and the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain, it seemed as if the US and its allies' goal of defeating the 'Red Evil' was accomplished and the world would now be ruled apacarily, without (threat) threats like Mussolini's (or) fascism, Hitler's nazism or Stalin's communism. Furthermore, as the US had been an advocate for self-determination, we noticed a change in hegemony and power domination. Ever since the end of WW2, (the) (imperialist) imperialistic empires such as the UK, Portugal or Japan collapsed. As countries like India, Indonesia, Angola became independent, it seemed that the world had set stage for new power structures, perhaps more balanced and less hierarchical.

With hindsight, we realize how wrong this conception was. ^{*As it is often hard to see, history doesn't repeat itself, but it rhymes.} Although ideally, the world would thrive with anarchy and no power would definitely triumph, the discipline of International Relations acknowledges that the real world is much messier and harder to manage. Like so, even after the setting of precedents for a true liberal society, where globalization would thrive, we can realize that currently, this process is regressing, as countries are back to creating their own "areas of influence". Nonetheless, it is (a) a given that globalization processes are dominating the world and they need to be discussed. Nowadays, it isn't possible to imagine a car being made 100% in the same country. Due to globalization, and even though it may bring extra shipping costs (from ships, aircrafts, trucks), it is oftentimes cheaper to have an (engine) come from Germany, the doors from Russia and have the assembly in Spain rather than doing it all in Ireland, for an Irish consumer. This because our worldwide system has become so interconnected that it only works when using these connectors. If one day, Ireland begins a trade war with Germany, it would become extremely difficult to purchase even one single car. This same concept can be used to explain the other side of the coin, as to why we can argue that "globalization processes" are regressing. There are more than 200 countries in the world, and it would be

virtually impossible for all countries to establish trade with each other at all times. Therefore, and often due to underlying pressures or cultural/political/historical similarities, some countries are more prone to establish partnerships with other states, which ultimately leads us back to the famous "areas of influence". In order to explain this abstract way of thinking, we can use the example of the EU. Although ^{originally} created to ensure peace and stability in the whole of Europe in the 1950s, it also led to the European Steel and Coal community, which can be considered a backbone of globalization. Here, six European countries (BE, NE, LUX, DE, FR, IT) pooled their resources together, which predominantly stopped them from fighting each other over resources but also led to a much more efficient market. Today, and due to its success the European Community has become the European Union, having been joined by 22 more countries (minus one, due to the meaning Brexit) and has expanded to other areas and goods. Today, we have a full Customs union which boasts free trade within its members and allows globalization to involve them all. (Furthermore,) The EU argument can also be used to sustain the "sphere of influence" problematic. Here, not all European countries are accepted and have to adhere to several close-call (external) models. For example, Baltic states had to wait 10+ years for accession, and this was notably a decision made to deter Russian influence in the area. Still, examples like Ukraine, who had the EuroMaidan crisis in 2014, show that true globalization is held back by these areas of influence. The country, although not being part of the EU or Russia, needs to consistently decide who's side it is on. In 2014, post the crisis and establishing it was not sufficient for the EU, it ended up signing new trade deals with Russia. Looking at this from another perspective, the USA seems to keep influential power and a type of "hegemony", as it won the Cold War and boasts the world's ^{largest} (best) economy. ~~It~~ Even though it is the leader in globalization, as seen by the number of multinational corporations it holds and its relative wealth and funding of projects abroad, we can argue that it is not just a leader but also a "dictatorial" one. While always entering wars to fight for freedom and democracy, we notice that, underlying, there is some type of interest and almost always ends up using it for a country to enter its sphere of influence, this being the case with South Korea or Saudi Arabia. Also, by creating several organizations like NATO or NAFTA, it keeps itself relevant and powerful. On the other side of the world, we notice that globalization, with free trade and more consumerism has led many people out of poverty and many Asian countries like Vietnam and Bangladesh have been able to redeem themselves. Even here, the establishment of ASEAN creates a smaller, albeit controlling, sphere of influence. But, in Asia, it is a given that China has emerged as the winner (all) with globalization. With it, and with the deteriorating influence of ^{"enemies" like} Russia or Japan following the wars, it became one of the most influential countries in the world and today, close to surpassing ^{the} USA's economy. It has also established its sphere of influence and can be seen increasing to places like the South China Sea, Africa (has it supports most of its growing industry) and along the 'One Belt, One

This logic, most of the area in the China South sea belongs to no country, and is truly part of international waters. However, and due to this region being rich in natural resources such as oil, fisheries and being 30% of the global shipping routes, many regional countries try to assert their dominance over it. At this time ^{four} ~~five~~ countries such as China, Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia are disputing the area but China has done the unprecedented. From 2014, Chinese ships were seen, by satellite imagery, dumping sand and gravel into the ocean, covering up "patches" of coral reef and effectively, creating new land mass where they stationed navy and military forces. By doing so, they are approaching the "200 miles ^{radio} ~~radio~~" of ^{sea} ~~land~~ administered by UN laws if what rulings have deemed illegal. China states the entirety of the area, 95% of the sea, ~~(contains)~~ ~~(is)~~ should be its territory, due to historical reasons, however, certain islands ~~on it~~ ~~(that)~~ are within 200 mile radius from countries like the Philippines and therefore directly and legally belong to it. Furthermore, China is not only trying to expand its territory by creating these obsolete artificial islands ^{into the 'Cabbage strategy'} but it is also using its vast and rigorous navy to block off many of the islands in the "Spratly Islands" region. These, which are often inhabited by other local countries, are cut off from supplies by China, forcing them to ~~(eventually)~~ inevitably surrender or strike China-leaning supportive deals. One case, which happened directly with the Philippines was ruled ~~in~~ in favour of the Philippines by the International court in the Hague, but China ignored the rulings and continued its harassment, which shows it will keep trying to assert more power in the region. The situation clearly needs an international intervention, such as with UN, but it seems as if because the area is so "local" ^{will} and easily fall ^{will} under Chinese control, that no one is trying to deter China.

Another important conflict which has manoeuvred and impacted global politicians and (the) civilians has been the resurrection of ISIS in Syria. For context, ISIS was created and inspired post the Al Qaeda jihadi movement in Afghanistan in the war against the Soviets, (1979-89) until 1989. However, one big difference between the two is that ISIS wants to create its own caliphate, where no other but extreme Sharia/Islam law is applied. Following the Iraqi war ^{in 2003} in which the US joined, the Al Qaeda threat following 9/11 was deterred but gave rise to an even bigger problem. Radical leaders, like ~~Zarqawi~~ ^{Zarqawi} ~~Zarqawi~~ ~~(1971-2005)~~ learned various jihadist techniques and was able to leader a new terrorist organization, called ISIS. In 2011, the Arab Spring started many revolutions in the Middle East but Syria's ruler, Assad, was adamant in controlling these. He fought, with the help of Russia, against many rebels, and one of them being ISIS. This terrorist branch, which branched from Al Qaeda stands for Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and due to political and social and economical discontent in the nearby localities, gained many supporters, like for example Syrian military forces who became unemployed ~~during the~~ or even revolutionized during 2011. Throughout the years, ISIS gained territory and achieved its major capital in Mosul, Iraq. By being excessively brutal in all territories it arrives in, many locals who follow Islam but weren't radicalized were forced to adhere, leaving wife and children also be part of the Caliphate. Even if Al Qaeda was deterred by attacks and even killings of leaders like Bin Laden in 2011, ISIS kept growing even further than the region. With internet, ISIS has created an empire full of propaganda which posts beheading videos and promises Muslims change. With the Syrian Refugee Crisis which started in 2015, many have fled to better opportunity areas like Europe, but at the same time we have noticed a ~~big~~ exponential growth in terrorist attacks which are certainly inspired by ISIS, even if by ~~(these attacks)~~ "lone-wolves" who become inspired by social-media propaganda. The prospect of worldwide take over seems imminent and the ^{locals} ~~locals~~ in the Arab states see this happening. ^{so many are even joining.} However, many worldwide forces seem keen to stop this expansion, be it in Europe with migrant limitation, border checks and

criminal/terrorist backgrounds. One big problem is that ISIS has been able to keep its dominance by extracting oil and selling it to collaborators like Saudi Arabia, which initially is an USA ally. The region seems hypocritical, and conflicts are not one sided, making even the powers that are there fighting, confused on what side they're on. For example, USA is against Assad but ~~is~~ ^{tolerates} ~~okay~~ with him in power because he's fighting ISIS. Currently, in 2020, ISIS has been (the) largely defeated and has lost most of its territory, but there are thousands of threats spread around the world with Islamic taught terrorists and one problem still remains about what to do with the defeated, if they should remain or be distributed. After January 2020, the region becomes even more unstable, as Suleimani in Iraq was killed and ISIS may feel more threat to return, as US troops will be occupied with their own defense in Iraq.