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IN THE FACE OF A NEW ERA

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- **ABSTRACT**

This essay seeks to analyze both the factors and agents of the process of Globalization in its 3 main Key Elements: The **Political**, the **Commercial** and the **Cultural**.

The new international bridges have raised several topics to discuss, as the presence of powerful nations in the current global order, traditional and modern concepts of Imperialism, evolution of trade, war and different approaches to this status quo...

And with this thesis I intend not only to analyze these matters as well as what are their origins and effects, but to also offer a general overview on the conclusions that I have reached about them.

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Globalization is a term used to describe the increasing connectedness of world cultures and economies [...] trade and technology have made the world into a more connected and interdependent place. Globalization also captures in its scope the economic and social changes that have come about as result. It may be pictured as the threads of an immense spiderweb formed over millennia, with the number and reach of this threads increasing over time. People, money, material, goods, ideas, and even disease and devastation have traveled these silken strands, and have done so in greater numbers and with greater speed than ever in the present age.” (National Geographic. Encyclopedic Entry)¹.

And so, this world scale process caused by the growing advancement in technology, international communication and interdependency has caused a new era for humankind, having severe implications in the fields of politics, economy and culture.

Because of this, local economies have been annexed by a global market, pushing international corporations to grow exponentially, and making international trade become one of the key elements for the economic balance of the world. As a ripple effect, this has made an impact in the field of law as well, causing the international legislation to be uniformized to harmonize the system of free trade in this young global market (This has been archived thanks to the action of several international drivers as The World Trade Organization or The European Union). And of course, affecting the habits of consume and legislation has generated an influence in culture too. That is however, a more subjective matter, since to this day is still unclear if we are approaching closer to the concept of a more “standard global culture”, or not; or if that said concept is closer to a focused western Civilization culture, or a multicultural mix. But one way or another, the political changes driven by fast ideology movements are a quite present reality.

“The sociopolitical world is thus subdivided into rough categories such as “the political”, “the economical”, “the social”, “the cultural”.” (International Sociology Vol. 15 No. 2 . Three concepts of Globalization. Page 180. Jens Bartelson. 2000)².

But all of this changes experienced in the last few decades are just the latest and more successful chapter of a long process that has been slowly developing itself since the dawn of humanity and that has been increasingly speeding up as civilizations have evolved, driven by their markets, technology and political interests.

Its not clear however, when did we really make the first steps towards making this interconnection be globally scaled. Some Historians consider that it was during the Age of Exploration of the **15th century**, when several European kingdoms started searching for shortcuts to China and India, creating new commercial trade routes through the Atlantic (which ultimately caused the discovery of America and the beginning of the colonial empires that revolutionized international trade).

“Many scholars say it started with Columbus’s voyage to the New World in 1492. People traveled to nearby and faraway places well before Columbus’s voyage, however, exchanging their ideas, products, and customs along the way.” (National Geographic. Encyclopedic Entry)¹.

While others state that it was during the **19th Century**, when the Gold Standard was set as the basis of the international financial system (after England fixed its value).

This would be the case of the economists Michael D. Bordo and Antu Panini Murshid, as they describe in their book *Globalization and changing patterns in the international transmission of shocks in Financial Markets*³. According to them, thanks to the classical gold standard, dependence among countries increased over time as they became more integrated in global trends over price levels. However, this ended with the first world war, when the massive expenses of belligerent countries couldn’t be backed up by the trade of said metal.

But the vast majority agree on the **20th Century** being the true beginning of our current scenario. The devastation of the Second World War motivated the allied nations to start different processes of international cooperation to both restore the European economy, and reduce the chances of a massive incident like that to ever happen again. And so, in 1944 the **Bretton Woods Conference** established the **World Bank** (which provides financial aid to low and middle income countries for their development) and the **International Monetary Fund** (Which attempts to promote international trade and secure the financial stability). Later, in 1945 the **Declaration by United Nations** was signed, giving birth to the **UN**. And in 1947, 23 nations signed the **GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade)**, seeking to eliminate barriers for international trade like tariffs and quotas, therefore encouraging economic growth and international commercial deals that would reduce the chances of new wars (as we will see in following chapters).

The arrival of those deals and organizations mixed with the advancements in transport and communication have led us to where we are now. And so, with such radical turns of events over the course of less than a hundred years, its is a huge matter of debate and

analysis how the current globalized situation and the major commercial institutions that drive it, shape the series of events that our nations are experiencing (whether it is from a cultural political or economic point of view).

2. EFFECT IN COMMERCE.

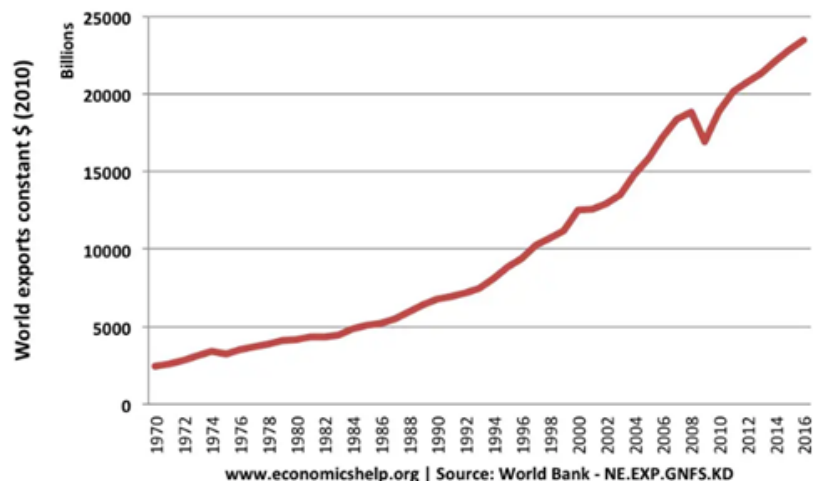
- EVOLUTION OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE: THE SLOW FALL OF PROTECTIONISM

“A powerful force drives the world toward a converging commonality, and that force is technology. It has proletarianized communication, transport, and travel. It has made isolated places and impoverished peoples eager for modernity’s allurements. [...]The result is a new commercial reality—the emergence of global markets for standardized consumer products on a previously unimagined scale of magnitude. Corporations geared to this new reality benefit from enormous economies of scale in production, distribution, marketing, and management.” (Harvard Business Review. Globalization of markets. Page 1. Theodore Levitt. 1983)⁴.

In this article for the Harvard Business Review, Levitt first popularized the term “Globalization”, and he made a very important point clear: The multinational and the global market are not the same thing. The first one operates in a number of different countries and adjusts its products and practices in each (which supposes a bigger cost in marketing and logistics). While the second one operates with considerable constancy, as if the entire world was a single unified market. One of the factors that have motivated this, is how the patterns of consume have been globally standardized, thanks to the bigger sense of unified culture caused by the open gates of communication that trade and politics have developed.

But we’ll get to that in the chapter of **Cultural Effect**. The point right now is that (as said in the introduction) with the slow but steady approach towards the true Global Market, the growth of multinational corporations has generated a massive interdependence, making international trade become the key element for the future of all nation’s economies (see Figure 2.1). With constant deals that mobilize billions in products, sources of energy and labor, the idea of a completely selfsustained country is uncommon; and we have sank the world into a ultra consumerist system in which four mighty giants have risen: **The United States**, followed by **The European Union**, followed by **China**, followed by **Japan**. All of them aggressively competing while also depending on each other in this massive system that keeps most of humanity fed and employed.

Figure 2.1. Evolution of World exports of goods and services. (Source: World Bank⁵)

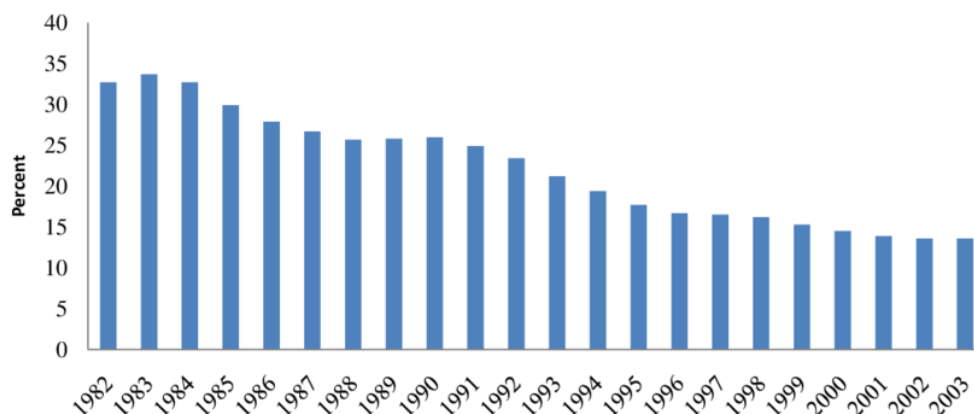


There is no longer a country that only needs to care about its local market and in-nation businesses, since now they all are just an engine of a much bigger machine. And since they have to deal with this gigantic and unpredictable world sized market, the debate that they have faced through the advancement of Globalization has been about to whether follow a more open or closed trade policy in order to both develop commercial deals and/or compete with other countries.

For a long time, the common position was in favor of **Protectionism**. Because under this system, the use of trade barriers (such as tariffs, subsidies, import quotas, export control...) forces foreign producers to impose a higher price for their products to compensate the extra cost of selling in a country, therefore, making it easier for local businesses to compete against them. And so, following that principle, this method was believed to be the proper way to defend the nation's economy.

However, for many decades now, the general consensus internationally has grown in favor of advancing towards a free trade system (see Figure 2.2).

Figure: 2.2. Evolution of average tariff rates in developing nations (Source: NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH- UNILATERAL TARIFF LIBERALISATION. By Richard Baldwin⁶)



This change of mindset probably happened because as time has passed, the increase of international commercial relations supported arguments in its favor, which have been defended by such relevant figures as Adam Smith (considered the father of modern economics) in his magnum opus:

“Trade which, without force or constraint, is naturally and regularly carried on between any two places is always advantageous.” (The Wealth of Nations. Page 521. Adam Smith. 1776)⁷.

Said opposite perspective states that trade barriers harm the consumers purchase power, since due to the restrictions that complicate foreign competition, there is not enough incentive for local markets to reduce prices, which also leads to a decrease in demand that eventually causes job losses. Therefore, they favor producers at the cost of reducing economic growth in the long run.

Free trade on the other hand, (as its properly put by the *International Journal of Trade, Economics and Finance, Vol. 3. Protectionism and Free Trade: A Country’s Glory or Doom?*⁸) follows the basic principle that no country has all the goods/services that it needs, yet every nation is rich in certain commodities that others lack. So facilitating trade to easily exchange them is beneficial for both sides and contributes to economic growth. For example, while the US consumes a lot of coffee, it doesn’t have the appropriate climate to grow coffee beans. But Brazil and Colombia on the other hand, do have this suitable climate; and thanks to that (and the fact that they are closer to US land than other big producers as Switzerland and Germany, which supposes lower costs of transport) they have become huge exporters for the American coffee industry (see Figures 2.3 and 2.4).

Figure 2.3. Leading coffee Importing countries worldwide in 2020 [million U.S.D] (Source: UN Comtrade⁹)

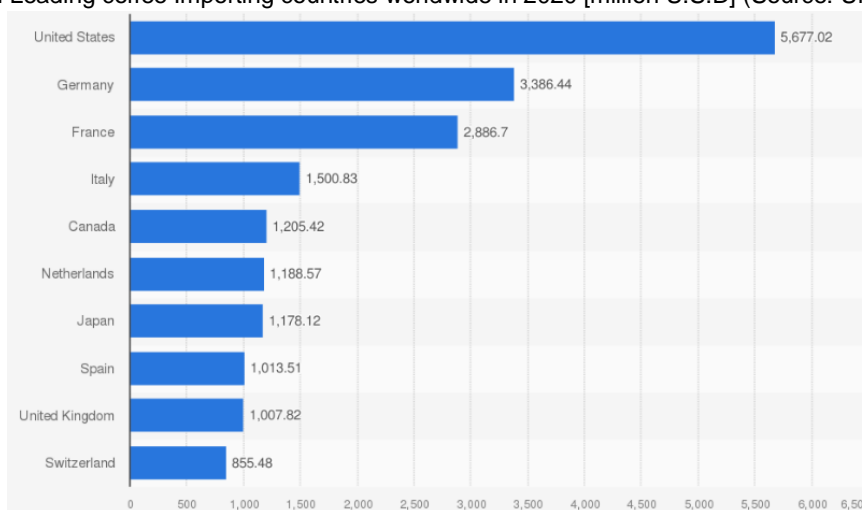
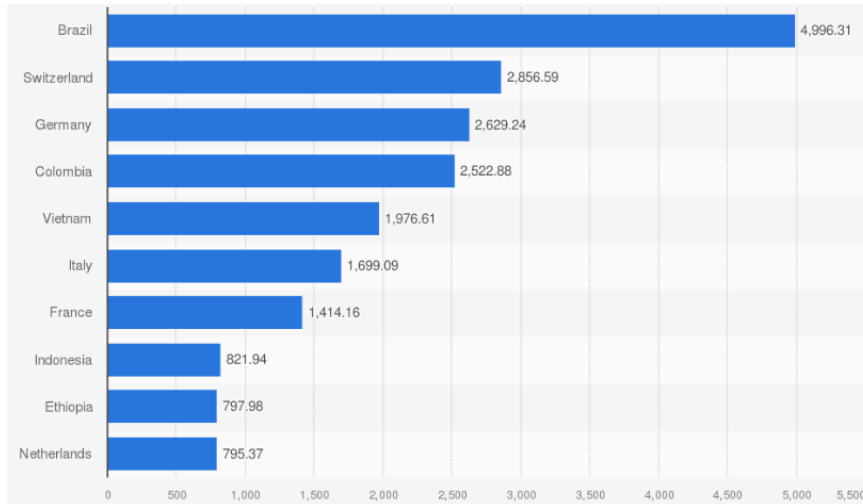


Figure 2.4. Leading coffee exporting countries in 2020 [in million U.S.D] (Source: UN Comtrade⁹)



Besides, even if we are talking about a commodity that the country itself can produce, lacking foreign alternatives can suppose a weak supply chain that will easily break at the face of obstacles, as in we have witnessed in recent months with the American milk formula crisis.

To put it in context¹⁰, we are talking about a product that due to health reasons, many new born babies need to survive, and in this country, because of the high tariffs and strict rules imposed by the **FDA (Food and Drug Administration)**, only 2% of its existences is imported, while 90% of its production is controlled by four giant companies: Nestlé USA, Perrigo, Mead Johnson Nutrition and Abbot (which represents around half of the whole market).

But back in February, Abbot's laboratory closed its biggest production plant after it was discovered that 4 babies suffered of bacterial infection caused by its milk. And to make things worse, there were already severe problems in the production levels of the industry caused by the arrival of the Covid pandemic (something that we'll talk about later). So when at the beginning of this year the American birth rates increased, there wasn't enough supply to face the new demand, which made millions of families struggle to get this basic good, forcing them to even try to produce it themselves. Because of this, the American president, Joe Biden, started the **Operation Fly Formula¹¹** for massive importation. Which proofs how markets truly need alternative foreign sources to ensure their stability.

And one last crucial factor in this matter is that, as we'll see in the following chapter, removing trade barriers has also been beneficial for the maintenance of peace, by

avoiding wars over resources. So as result, this approach in international commercial relations grew in supporters to the point in which technically all modern day economists stand by it.

This political evolution could be seen in events as the signing of the **GATT**, which after 8 different rounds, supposed the creation of the **WTO (World Trade Organization)** in 1995. The organization that for years now has regulated and facilitated commercial deals between countries, succeeding in the purpose that the ITO didn't accomplished. Just as is very well summed up in *The Role and Functions of the International Trade Organization and the World Trade Organization*¹², it has the function of promoting free and fair trade among its members to both develop their economies and protect international peace. Goals that are achieved by collaborating with other international organizations as **The World Bank** or the **IMF (International Monetary Fund)**; and acting as an international mediator for the settle of trade disputes/negotiations, the administration of commercial deals, and the reviewing of trade policies.

And thanks to this, international trade has grown exponentially, and the average tariff level of the GATT country members has fallen from 22% in 1947, to 5% after the Uruguay Round in 1999¹³.

However, on the other hand, there are circumstances in which barriers are still considered necessary. Because, as the United Nations put it during the Conference on Trade and development¹⁴, this measures can also help the proper development of a nation's infant industry, or the economy a third/second world country that is still unable to compete in equal terms with foreign trade partners.

Therefore, at the end of the day, they can either be beneficial (or even necessary), or a burden for the economic growth of a country and the evolution of the international market as a whole. It all depends on where and when are imposed and under which circumstances.

- FREE TRADE AREAS AND THEIR ROLE

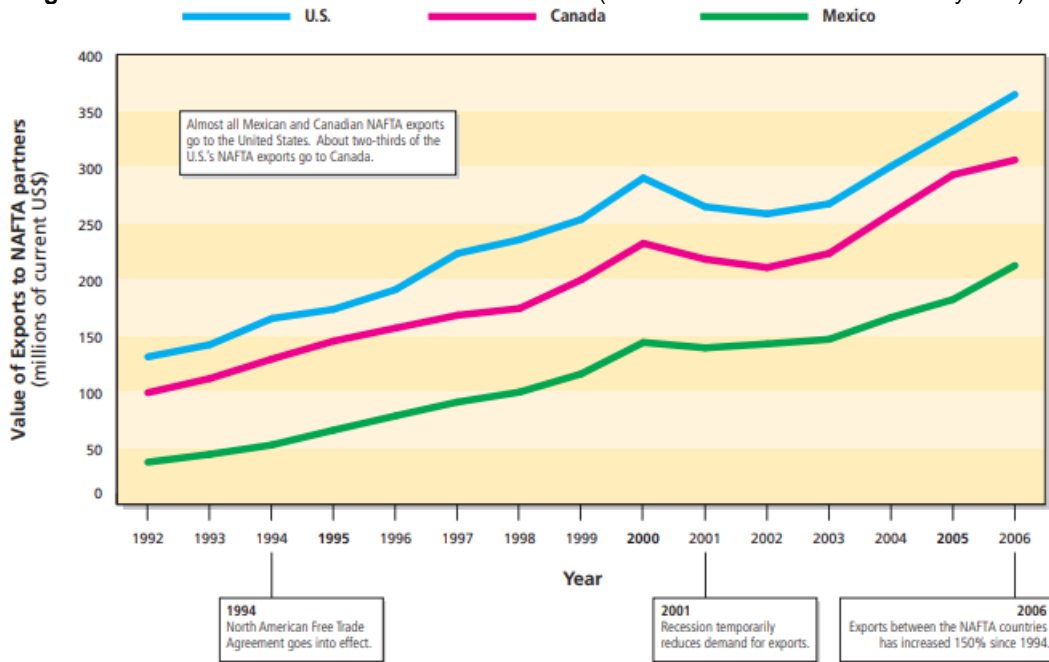
So in conclusion, we are far away from reaching a completely free trade world. And in this middle ground in which said barriers are slowly disappearing, yet they are still part of the world's economy system, new tactics arise for market development/competition, like the signing of **Free Trade Associations** (also a result of the GATT), commercial alliances between different nations that lift barriers among them to have a more competitive position in the global market (see Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5. The world's major free trade associations. (Source: NAFTA; AfCTA; COMESA; AFTA¹⁵)



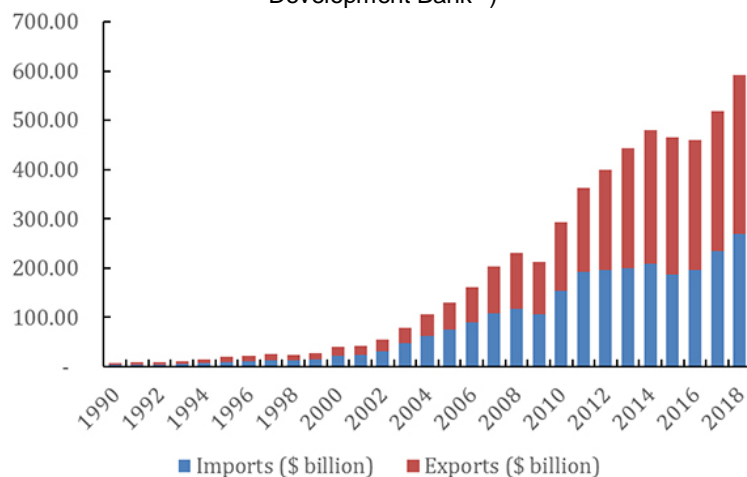
This can be considered quite necessary to keep alive the activity of continents with deep relations among its members, as it's the case of the 3 countries of the North American market: Canada it's the US second largest export market, Mexico is the third one and its second biggest export market, and they both account for about 25% of all of its imports. And the necessity to ensure this relations and encourage their growth is what motivated the signing of the **NAFTA**¹⁶ (**N**orth **A**merican **F**ree **T**rade **A**greement) in 1994 to remove all of their tariffs and import quotas among them (which was fulfilled in 2008). And since then, its presence has successfully contributed to the increase of their trade (see Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6. Evolution of the NAFTA Trade 1992-2006 (Source: Herff Jones Education System)¹⁷



Similarly, this accords can also encourage open trade in traditionally closed nations, just as how the presence of the **ASEAN**¹⁸ (Association of **S**outh**E**ast **A**sian **N**ations) and its corresponding free trade agreement incremented radically the amount of imports/exports of China with the rest of the continent (see Figure 2.7). Which made it into the biggest commercial partner of the association, mobilizing commodities that surpass the 500 billion dollars worth.

Figure: 2.7. Chinese trade evolution (Source: Asia Regional Integration Center database, Asian Development Bank¹⁹)

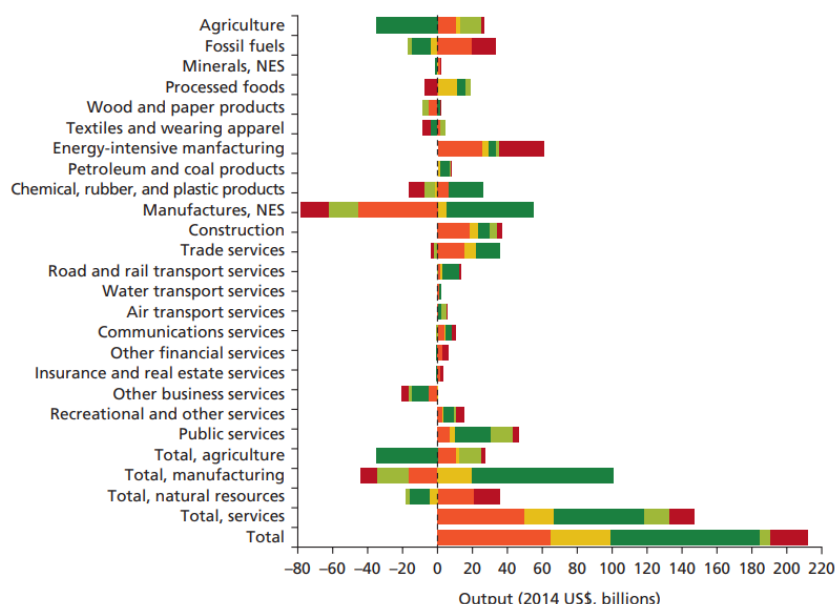


Besides, they can also help boost the economy of countries with a development weighed down by a colonial past, just as the **African Union** is currently trying to do with the **AfCFTA**¹⁸ (The **A**frican **C**ontinental **F**ree **T**rade **A**rea), which became active in 2019

among 55 member states of the continent (becoming the free trade area with the largest number of countries).

Nowadays Africa represents only a 2% of Global trade and 83% of its exports are destined outside of the continent, which its believed to be the result of the costs and complications of inner trade that stops it from reaching its full potential in the global supply chain. That's why the purpose of this project is to create a common continental market by eliminating 90% of their tariffs and facilitating inner movement of good services and labor. And if the estimations of **The World Bank** are correct, this could be the push that the continent's industries need, which by 2035 are expected to increase regional output by 211 billion \$s (see Figure 2.8).

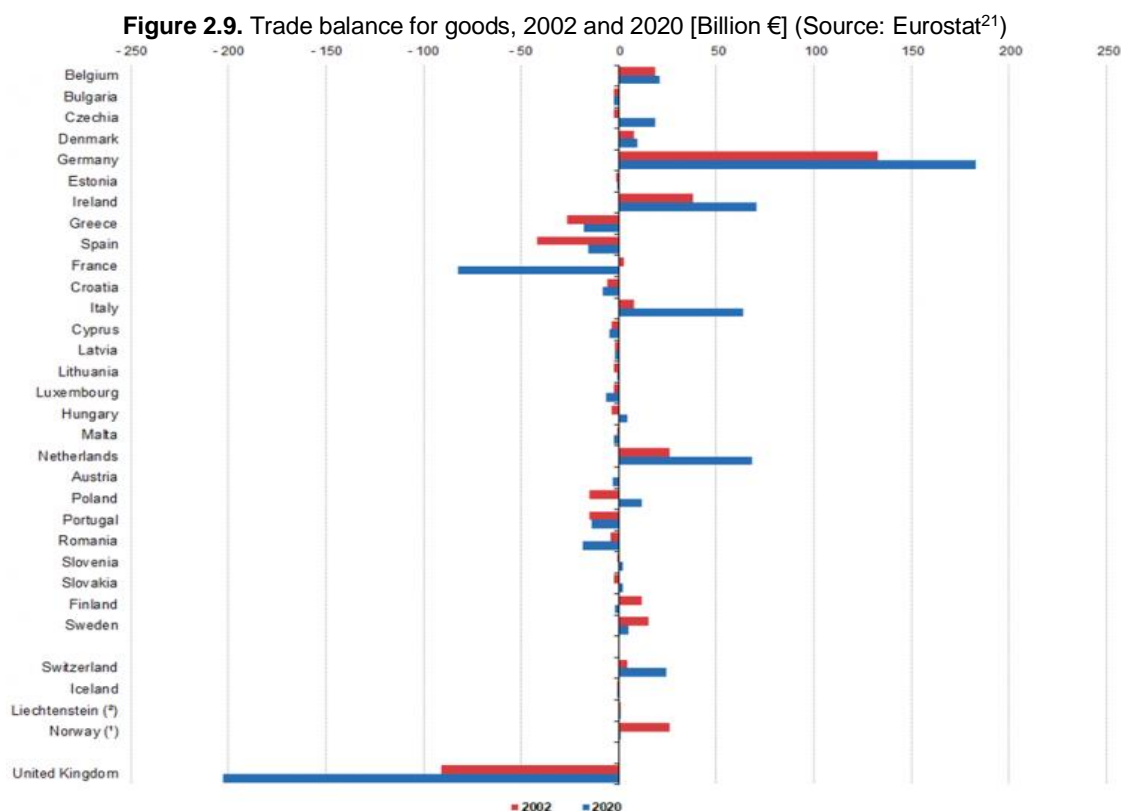
Figure: 2.8. African inner trade evolution (Source: *The African Continental Free Trade Area Economic and Distributional Effects* essay and estimations elaborated by **The World Bank**²⁰)



European countries bet in a collaboration in the form of a Customs Union, giving birth in 1993 to the **European Union**. Under this organization, all nation members remove trade barriers among them, allowing free mobilization of products and labor, while keeping the same barriers to non members, almost working as a single market thus promoting internal industry and business. And its presence has supposed a huge event for the global market, and has caused a variety of different outcomes among its members.

If we compare the year 2002 (when the Euro was introduced as the common currency) with the year 2020 (when Coronavirus caused the most recent crisis in the continent), according to the data collected by Eurostat: Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and

Slovakia grew from a position of trade deficit for goods to having trade surplus. But on the other hand, France Austria and Finland had the opposite reaction, with their trade position for goods falling from a surplus to a deficit. While other countries like Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden had already a trade surplus 2002 that was increased, with the exception of Sweden (see Figure 2.9).



And due to such different results, the debate between openness/closure has taken form in the continent as the question of if its worth continuing to belong to the Union. And even though the vast majority seems to be in favor of staying, Euroscepticism is still on the table among the conservative political wings. In fact, the most remarkable event of this matter would be the Brexit, the process in which the United Kingdom abandoned it last year, which had major repercussions for both the country and the continental.

As seen in *Understanding the economic impact of Brexit*²¹, the vast majority of economic studies considered that breaking with the EU would cause more harm to the UK than staying (even though estimations varied about the expected amount of damage), because at that point, the commercial relations with the rest of the continent had become one of the foundations of country's economy. Thanks to the commercial bridges granted by the Union, trade with the EU accounted for around half of UK imports and exports.

And due to this, the UK's economy had evolved into a state of dependence with the continent, just as the rest of the member states among each other. Therefore, the increase in trade barriers would suppose a negative impact on the UK growth.

The essay concluded positioning itself with pro-free trade arguments, according to which, the advantages of the union encourage each country to specialize in the production of the goods and services in which they have a comparative advantage. This leads its members to collectively collaborate in trading with each through whatever production they are more advanced in than their partners, incentivizing the development of their strongest industries.

However, the Brexit movement kept winning supporters through the years due to 3 key issues that supposed staying in the Union²³: The membership Fee; that cost 18 billion \$ per year. The high levels of immigration; since the UK is expected to receive about 2.7 millions of people by 2030, which makes many citizens worry for stability of the job market. And potential trade opportunities; because although the EU received 44% of the nation's exports, some considered that the Union was holding the country back from reaching its full potential in new foreign markets where its influence had been growing.

But on the other hand, the anti Brexit sector had its respective counter arguments. Firstly, due to the corresponding rebate and subsidies of nation members, the cost of membership was actually reduced to 8 billion \$ per year (which supposes only 0.4% of the GDP). Secondly, the vast majority of the recent waves of migrants didn't originate from Europe, so breaking with the continent wouldn't make much difference. And thirdly, it was also a commonly shared belief that leaving the security of the Union for a theoretical trade improvement with other markets was a risk too big to be worth taken.

The debate was deep and multilayered, which is probably why it took years until it was finally closed by the decision of leaving. So we could see it as great example of the complexity of today's global commerce and all the ripple effects that its shifts cause.

Effects that of course, go by hand with other sides of society as political changes or power of influence.

- CURRENT SITUATION AND NEW CHANGES

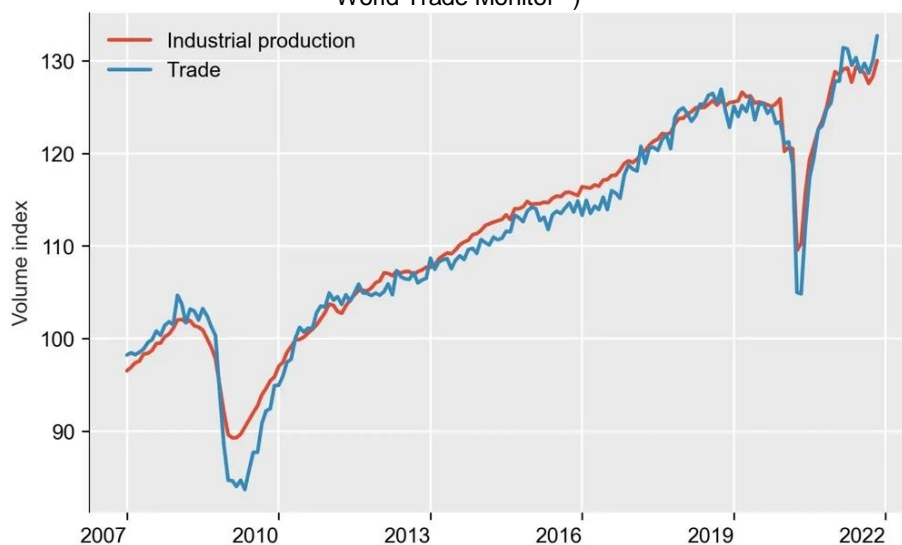
During the last years however, we have lived certain events that have altered international relations, causing distribution problems and pushing a bigger presence of protectionism. The first one is the arrival of the Covid19.

In the last month of 2019, this new disease was discovered in the region of Wuhan, China, and soon evolved into a pandemic. And even though its mortality rate was estimated by the **WHO**²⁴ (**World Health Organization**) to be of 3.6%, it was its exceptionally quick expansion through the world which made it cause about 6.18 million deaths over the course of two years.

In an attempt to content its spread, many governments started policies of bigger control over their borders, and by consequence, over their trade as well. And this added to the barriers that had already been rising in some markets, made international trade fall even deeper (see Figure 2.10), which contributed to the idea of supposedly national self-sufficiencies, caused recession and a huge inflation.

“With the pandemic, issues of economic security quickly became issues of national security, and the role of the state in the economy increased. When you have the three largest trading bloc economies moving in that protectionist direction, that impacts everyone else. And that suggests a longer-term prospect.” (EY Global Trade Policy Leader. Doug Bell. 2021)²⁵

Figure 2.10. World evolution of Industrial Production/Trade (Source: OECD calculations based on CPB World Trade Monitor²⁶)



However, it seems that with the improvement of the situation trade stabilized again, what made economic analysts expect an economic recovery and the beginnings of a deflation. However, this year we are facing yet another obstacle that has lengthened this period of decrease: The Russian-Ukrainian war, which has disrupted the supply chain of both countries with the rest of the world, causing critical repercussions.

For one side, Ukraine is among the five biggest cereal producers in the world, its agricultural exports provide enough to feed around 400 million people in the world and represents about half of the global supply of sunflower oil²⁷. But the invasion endangered its crops, and according to the UN's agency, **FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization)** 30% of its agricultural production will probably be lost.

And to guarantee national supply, the government forbids to export these products (except for special exceptions), which could eventually cause a massive food crisis, increasing prices between 8 to 22% and putting 8 to 22 million people at risk of malnutrition.

On the other side, Russia is one of the world's largest producers of fertilizers, but due to all the commercial sanctions that the country is currently facing to stop the invasion, its distribution has also been hampered. This has caused its price to increase radically, which will only further worsen agricultural production and distribution worldwide, making said food crisis an even closer reality.

3. EFFECT IN POLITICS.

- FROM THE CONQUER OF LAND TO THE CONQUER OF MARKETS.
THE FALL OF TRADITIONAL IMPERIALISM.

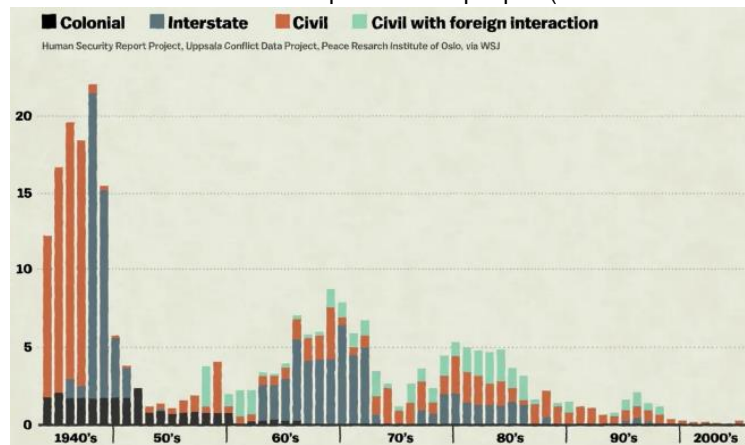
Due to said international alliances and market shifts caused by the new globalized wave of trade (mixed with wars and other conflicts) the political world scenario has gone through a radical evolution in recent History.

The Political scientist Francis Fukuyama exposes this idea through the changes experienced during the 20th Century, with the fall of fascism (seen in the defeat of The Nazi Regime and the Mussolini regime in World War II, between 1939 and 1945) and the fall of communism (seen in the defeat of the Soviet Union in the Cold War, between 1947 and 1989). According to him, that is a sign that the war of ideologies has ended, with international trade and political clashes pushing humanity onto the final stage of the free market democracy, or as he calls it "*The End of History*".

“What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such [...] That is the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.” (The End of History and the Last Man. Page 3. Francis Fukuyama. 1992)²⁸.

His point might be supported by the fact that during the last decades we have lived one of the most peaceful periods in human History, and despite the presence of certain military tensions between the East and the West, there hasn't been any other major global conflicts (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1. World-wide battle deaths per 100.000 people. (Source Joe Posner/Vox²⁹)



This is considerably different from previous eras of globalization, when advancements in means of transport and increases in interconnectivity would suppose an expansion in imperialism and its consequent wars. The growth of markets beyond borders not only has repercussions in trade, since it feeds all international power struggle. Besides, History proves over and over that international economic interests can push governments to militarization and wars, and the biggest is the web of interconnected economic interests, the biggest is the armed conflict between nations if that massive house of cards ended up collapsing.

A relevant example would be the time period between the late 1900s and the early 20th Century; an era of industrialization, colonization and trade expansion that made the European market grew closer than ever before. However, that new interconnection was too delicate and was mixed with a dangerous sense of Nationalism generated by the rise of continental Empires (particularly, the British and French). And of course, this led to a web of alliances and arms races between the growing European powers that would eventually turn against each other (As described in the article *The 4 M-A-I-N causes of World War I: Militarism, Alliances, Imperialism, Nationalism*³⁰).

Now on the other hand, there is a series of factors that make the global political scenario be more stable, despite being way bigger. The first difference being that those previous periods lacked the presence of the international intermediary organizations that we have today, like the **United Nations**, which supports diplomatic alternatives in international conflicts to reduce their chances of escalating into war. As Scott Pauls (chair of the Department of Mathematics at Dartmouth College) wrote in the *Journal Physica A*³¹, their analysis over its effect confirms that it has had a considerable impact in international political decisions. So even if it doesn't prevent all armed conflicts, there is no doubt that it has played a role in maintaining peace.

Similarly, the new complex web of military alliances, as the NATO (**N**orth **A**tlantic **T**reaty **O**rganization), differs from the ones that caused WW1 because their global size supposes a huge interconnected dependence (way bigger than the one seen among the European empires) that stops declarations of wars from being an option. Skyler Cranmer (Professor of Political Science at the Ohio State University) describes military alliances nowadays as a network so immense, that as a ripple effect end up preventing conflicts among a larger group of countries than the two that have signed the treaty (Source: *A three-degree horizon of peace in the military alliance network*³²).

But what is probably the biggest peace enforcement is the open global market, because Historically, commercial barriers have been the main reason for Empires to clash over resources in trade wars that would eventually turn into actual military conflicts.

According to the *Economics and Finance, Vol. 3. Protectionism and Free Trade: A Country's Glory or Doom?*³³, during the 17th and 18th centuries Europe was sank into constant wars predominantly caused by protectionist governments, while the United States was fighting in their revolution against the British mainly due to their tariffs and taxes.

Later in 1930, facing a recession caused by the American overproduction of the time, the US President Hoover signed the **Smoot-Hawley Act**, which raised tariffs on over 20.000 imported goods, some to 100% levels (ignoring the warnings of 1028 prominent economists). And in response, over 25 other governments retaliated with similar import laws in less than a year. As result, international trade was completely disrupted, and the entire world was plunged into the Great Depression for the rest of the decade, which would led to World War II.

We can conclude therefore that just as Frederic Bastiat (French economist, writer and legislator) summed it up: "*When goods cannot cross borders, armies will*"³⁴.

But as seen in the previous chapter, during the last century global politics have been pushing forward an elimination of this barriers. And as International Trade rose as the foundation of the new industrialized/globalized world, the land's value (which used to be the motivator of all power hungered forces in the struggle over resources) paled in comparison to its importance for all nation's economies.

In the *International Journal on World Peace*³⁵, chapter: *There will be no World War 3!* (Written by Masse Bloomfield in 1996) this is described as what made imperialism (at least as its classic definition) become no longer profitable and disappear. World War II was the threshold that clarified this change, because it was an imperialistic conflict from which it was no longer possible to gain anything useful; and for both victors and losers meant the vast destruction of property, the death of millions of people, and a massive recession.

This is opposite to old agricultural eras, when the conquer of land meant the gain of more resources for an empire, and therefore, the increase of their wealth. Because for unindustrialized closed markets that had low trade with the exterior, the economy was as simple as knowing that a bigger territory meant more fields for farmers to work, more mines to exploit, and more citizens to tax. But with the arrival of the previous century,

and the growth of industrialization and international markets, that form of reasoning could no longer work.

The advancements in technology created fast chain production, made the economies be more focused in city factories (rather than farming lands), and facilitated transport for trading with other countries. And as stated before, that allowed them to buy from foreign partners the commodities in whose production they weren't specialized. Thus, imperialistic wars were no longer worth it. Because the destruction caused in other nations slowed their productivity and damaged the continental (or global) market as whole, which of course, damaged the economy of the invading country as well.

Nowadays wars are less profitable than ever before because countries (specially the most powerful and influential ones in the global market) are too dependent on each other by commercial interests to truly consider attacking any of their enemies.

If one of the giants falls, as a domino effect, it will drag the rest with them. And just as Francis Fukuyama would probably state, we have to thank that to the economic evolution that has been gradually pushing the world towards the free international market. Because we reached this peace by slowly destroying the protectionist measures that once stopped different nations from working as a unified supply chain.

But can we ensure that this peace is truly sustainable?

Well, to put it on perspective with the time in which the journal was written, there are two countries that Bloomfield took as examples of the evolution in traditionally imperialistic nations. The first was Japan, whose industrial growth without any additional land proofed that they don't need it to achieve economic power, and that therefore, they have no need for war or colonialism anymore.

And the second one was Russia, which in the 90s had already starred in land grabbing conflicts with Ukraine, Siberia, and Eastern Europe, only to find that those interventions weren't beneficial for their future, to which he concluded: *“The Russians may have finally learned the lesson of the present industrial order: That land and imperialism are not the keys for economic success [...] We can be relieved that there will be no World War III between industrialized nations”*. However, recent events show that he may have been wrong, since even if in the modern world in which land is not worth a war, there are other factors in which Imperialism can still live on.



-WE FOUGHT THAT WAR, HATING THE ENEMY WITH YOUTHFUL ENTHUSIASM, WITHOUT THINKING OF HOW THE ENEMY COULD ONE DAY BECOME AN INTERESTING MARKET FOR OUR PRODUCTS. AND WHY DIDN'T WE THINK OF THAT? BECAUSE WE FELT MORE LIKE A HOMELAND THAN AN EXPORTING COUNTRY. WASN'T OUR LACK OF VISION FUNNY?

Image 3.1. That War. (Source: Mundo Quino³⁶)

- THE UKRANIAN WAR. WHEN THE CHAIN TURNS AGAINST ITSELF.

One important characteristic of markets is that they are unpredictable, and not always stable. And while the shifts of a nation's market would mainly affect the country itself, the shifts in a global market can cause much bigger repercussions. Like the unleash of a series of massive events that could threaten the stability world. And we are currently living a Historic event that proofs this.

Months ago, when Ukraine announced its annexation to the NATO, the political tension grew between this country and Russia, who saw its position severely threaten by this international military alliance (led by the United States) having control over such big territory of their border³⁷.

As the previously quoted Masse Bloomfield said, imperialism seem to be long gone among the super powers of the world (including the Russians) due to the loss of the

land's strategic value. However, there are many other factors to consider that shape this huge game changing decisions. Not only political or economical, but cultural and societal as well.

James Goldgeier (Professor of International Relations and served as Dean of the School of International Service at American University) approached this topic in his book *Promises made, promises broken? What Yeltsin was told about NATO in 1993 and why it matters*³⁸. There he explains how the 1990s were a humiliating decade for the conservative spirit of Russia (which of course includes their president Vladimir Putin, a former KGB agent and notorious nationalist), due to the imposed American presence and vision on Europe. And so, after decades of nuclear tension and propagandistic war against their worst enemy, the cold war ended in feeling of impotence that grew into a nationalistic resentment. That could be seen later in 2008-Georgia and in 2014-Ukraine, where Putin stated that there would be certain lines that he wouldn't allow NATO and the European Union to cross. Recent events proof that such threats.

The most important moral of the story is that neither the United States and the Europeans nor Russia found an acceptable role for the latter in European security after the Cold War.

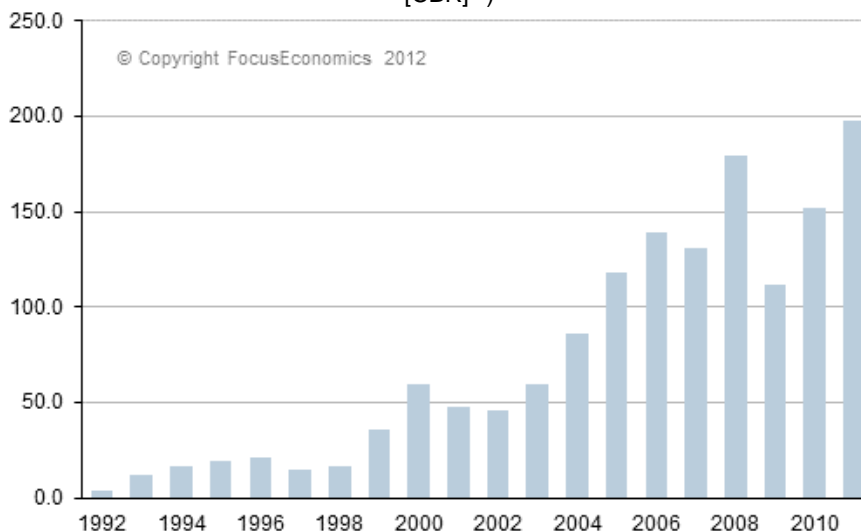
This led Russian president Vladimir Putin to order an army mobilization towards the borders of said country, which of course, was condemned by both Europe and the United States, since that supposed a threat to both the NATO and the continent as well. The world seem closer to a great war than what had been in decades, however, the economic implications that supposed the conflict were believed enough to stop both sides from crossing that line.

To explain this, we could contrast the situation with a pre-globalized market scenario: Decades ago, the USRR had far smaller economic relations with its enemy nation the USA, since during the cold war they decreased radically. The fact that there was no significant dependence among them was probably one of the factors that made the threat of war feel imminent, since there was no probability of trade loss holding them back.

According to the *American-Soviet trade*³⁹ essay written by the historian William David McIntyre, back in 1943, the United States imported \$87 million worth of goods from Russia and Russia imported \$28 million worth from the United States. But with the start of the Cold War, the volume of trade decreased to the point in which one or two big shipments could double the monthly amount of goods dealt with each other. And by 1958 their commercial relations were only 0.5 per cent of total Soviet foreign annual trade, and to only about 0.01 per cent of the American.

But with the ending of the Union, and the progressive fall of international trade barriers, that changed, leading the country to the position of dependence that has today (see Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2. Russian Trade balance in USD billions. (Source: Central Bank of the Russian Federation [CBR]⁴⁰)



Similarly, the URSS had a far inferior relation with western Europe, being the source of about 3% of their natural gas. But nowadays, with that number increased to a 45 %, The European Union depends on the gas trade that receives from Russia, and similarly, Russia depends too much of the revenue of such trade (both for revenues and market shares). So the hope for peace was that the stakes were considered too high for the Russian government to consider the sacrifice worth it. But here is when the previously mentioned global market shifts came into place.

Russia started its plans to diversify its gas flows to the east, and eventually decided that China could work as a replacement for Germany in that trading, so once it was clear that losing the relations with the EU was an affordable cost for the military retaliation, they entered in action.

The 24th of February of 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, and the massive ripple effect started. The ruble collapsed, the dollar rose, the price of gas skyrocketed and the value of oil increased, making gas and diesel more expensive as a result, which would later trigger inflation and cause a crisis in the transport market.

Soon, the United Nations started working in a peace resolution that demanded Russia the immediate and unconditional withdraw of its army from the Ukrainian territory. A total of 141 countries voted in favor⁴¹, which would have supposed the use of any measures

necessary to stop the invasion (including the military force), but Russia voted against it. And the negative vote of any of the five permanent members of the Security Council (The United States, the United Kingdom, France, China and Russia, the five nuclear powers) means the veto on a resolution, so the Security Council was prevented from acting, making the UN completely powerless against the unilateral violent actions of one of its members.

Besides, with all the trading changes and alliances determining the position and alliances of several countries in the world, it was hard to see the line between market and politics in them anymore.

The Chinese president Xi Jinping announced that his nation would have a neutral position in the conflict, not supporting Russia yet asking the west to not take actions against the country, since they would soon become important trading partners⁴². Something similar was seen with India (the third biggest importer of Russian oil behind China and the United States), that as reported by The Washington Post⁴³, abstained on the UN resolution of condemning the invasion of Ukraine and quickly bought 3 million barrels of oil at a deep discount. And even though the purchase is relatively small considering the level of Russian production and Indian demand, the sale was seen as a sign that the country was determined to retain its commercial relations with Moscow.

On the other hand, Venezuela's president Nicolas Maduro first took Putin's side (which was predictable considering the huge debt his country has with Russia and the absolute anti American spirit of its government), but later rectified and sided with the USA when the American government considered using Venezuela as a substitute for Russia's sourced oil⁴⁴.

And to complicate things more, Joe Biden stated that the United States would defend every inch of the NATO territory, and that if the nation (and by consequence, all of its allies) ends up playing a direct role in the conflict, there is no doubt that as feared, it will become World War 3⁴⁵.

So to sum it up, the UN, the military alliances, and the huge economic implications that were supposed to be the foundations of the new Global order weren't enough to make the peace of the End of History last longer than a few decades. And at the end of the day, war became just another movement that the invisible hand of the market adapts to. Just as António Guterres (Secretary-General of the United Nations) stated in his social media: *"The war in Ukraine also shows how the global addiction to fossil fuels is placing energy security [...] & the entire global economy at the mercy of geopolitics."*⁴⁶

However, not everything is lost. The global market can still prove that its new stability is strong enough to stop this problem before reaching again this fate. By now, although many countries have helped Ukraine by sending both military and humanitarian aid they haven't directly participated in the war (Stopping the conflict from escalating as it happened with the two previous World Wars), and instead have used the new and alternative way of responding to imperialistic threats: Commercial sanctions.

The EU and USA have cut their banks from the **SWIFT** messaging system (The **S**ociety for **W**orldwide **I**nterbank **F**inancial **T**elecommunications, a crucial network for global financial activities), and have prohibited financing energy Russian entities or having transactions with numerous companies/individuals of the country, which has severely harmed its economy⁴⁷.

This are precisely what have stopped India and China from fully supporting Russia so far. Despite being hungry for the new and opportunistic trade deals of this catastrophe, they are also aware of the economic retaliation that those two powers would use against them if they dared to side with their new biggest enemy. Therefore, only time will say if this actions are enough to avoid the direct military intervention, that would make the web of alliances turn against itself (being a peace enforcement that finally self-destructs by its own weight).

So far we can conclude international commercial interests have shaped the world into an interconnected and (relatively) peaceful supply chain. But those interests can easily make everything fall back into chaos... and can similarly motivate order once again. Now all that is left is to wait for this event prove if is humanity who controls this market (being able to use it not only for economic growth but also to preserve peace) or is this market what controls humanity (making the imperialist spirit live on, simply substituting the conquer of land for the conquer of economic/military global influence).

Fukuyama for his part hasn't abandoned his idea that the end of history has arrived. But it seems that he is aware that this does not prevent us from encountering obstacles and defects (in our own institutions) that we will overcome, strengthening our union and evolution⁴⁸.

- FROM THE CONQUER OF MARKETS TO THE CONQUER OF INFLUENCES.
THE RISE OF MODERN IMPERIALISM.

And in the controversy over the maintenance of this order, the question usually arises about what steps should be taken to protect it. Which brings one of the most relevant topics of global politics: No country is free from the chain of events of the interconnected world, so who are the great voices that should influence it and how should they act?

George Soros approaches this with the Al-Qaeda terrorist attack against the World Trade Center the 9th of September of 2001⁴⁹.

This is when according to him, the people of the most powerful nation in the world discovered that not even they are invulnerable to the never ending global domino effect; and that what happens beyond their borders affects them directly. And in this new scenario, his position is that the USA should take advantage of both its military and economic supremacy since its power supposes the responsibility of leading the world in the unavoidable new era of Globalization (that should be embraced while also considering all its corresponding duties and dangers) to secure peace and democracy.

In his own words, there are two opposite ways for a powerful nation to use its ability to shape the new world order: *Political realism* (based on the interests of the state) or *Idealism of the open society* (based on the interests of humanity). And the United States has chosen Political Realism, which is usually the one to succeed and the one that has granted them their current supremacy, since the underlying principle of globalization is competition. But he also considers that the journey for the development and protection of the world is something that requires a cooperative effort between nations. So the idealism of the open society is also necessary, but it can't be achieved without the American leadership.

However, that mentality is not shared by everyone. In fact, it's vastly considered a dangerous reaction to the shattered illusion of the US invulnerability. And many would see it as a spread of fear among its citizens, that later morphed in both a feeling of uncertainty (with a social effect that we'll discuss in the following chapter) and a huge sense of nationalism that encouraged a problematic view of the American role in geopolitics.

Dr. Manfred B. Steger, for example, also analyzed the American sociopolitical implications of the terrorist attack in *From Market Globalism to Imperial Globalism: Ideology and American Power after 9/11*⁵⁰, but with opposite conclusions. He claimed that

many politicians and relevant figures took advantage of that chaos to transform the idea of market globalism into an *Imperial Globalism*, that supported president George W. Bush's unilateralistic international policies. An ideology of hegemony without compromise, that as he described, saw America playing an imperial or even “messianic” role in the world.

A good example of this would be the process in which the Iraq intervention of 2003 was approved, which was later proven to have been illegally manipulated in favor of American interests. As it was leaked by the linguist Katherine Gun⁵¹, the **GCHQ** (**G**overnment **C**ommunications **H**eadquarters) collaborated with the **NSA** (U.S. **N**ational **S**ecurity **A**gency) to blackmail the diplomats of six swing nations (Angola, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile, Guinea, and Pakistan) whose votes could determine the decision over starting an invasion to end the regime of Saddam Hussein. The war lasted between 2003 and 2011 and caused about 900.000 deaths, from which there were between 363.000 and 387.000 civilians. Despite the intervention being justified by the Bush administration over supposed links to al-Qaeda and possession of weapons of mass destruction, it has been widely criticized, specially because its believed that what truly motivated it was the fact that Iraq has the second largest reserves in the world (112 billion barrels).

And this event may have been enough to make George Soros partially reconsider his position, as he later said in 2004: "*We claim to be liberators, but we turned into oppressors*"⁵¹. Making Ukraine and Iraq become two side of the same coin in this issue of global politics/economics.

It is with no doubt necessary to keep the global supply chain working peacefully. But it is also our responsibility to not let it be manipulated by imperialist interests that harm the wellbeing of others. Because even if land is not as valuable as it used to be, there are other motivators for the conquerors nowadays too. The goals of the most powerful forces have always been what truly move all the gears of the world, and under the new focus of globalization, that can either be beneficial or destructive.

4. CULTURAL EFFECT.

- THE NEVERENDING EVOLUTION OF OURSELVES.

In the first chapter we summed up the factors influenced by globalism as the **political**, the **economical**, the **social** and the **cultural**. And if they are presented like this, is because they all work as connected gears, since the activity of one always causes a reaction in the rest. So, in a way, they are all just one engine.

As we know, the bigger the markets grow, the faster technology advances, since its motivated to innovate in new ways of production and transport to satisfy the increasing demand. And the faster technology advances, the faster goods mobilize, which motivates the growth of markets, causing an unending loop of growth in interconnection that makes the world evolve, becoming smaller and making all of its regions become closer. Humanity has gone through events like that with the construction of the Roman roads, or the construction of the British navy, both cases that developed intracontinental and extracontinental trade and became the pillars of their respective empires. And even though their rising was full of blood spilling (as mentioned in previous chapters), it also supposed an evolution in political thinking and forms of reasoning, as it always happens with this processes, because just as goods mobilize, so does **information**.

That unification is what ultimately caused the creation of the first borders, countries and cultures. And now that trade and transport know no boundaries, some consider us to be approaching the next step in our evolution: The slow disappearance of said borders in favor of a kind of globalized culture (or at least in some aspects, without having to be an absolutely unified idea). Although it is still debatable who holds most of the reins of it.

In 1976 Richard Dawkins published **The selfish gen**⁵², in which he made an analysis of the concept of society as if it was a living creature that is born, matures, adapts to changes and eventually dies. And the key comparison to explain this theory was the identity and ideas that unites the members of a collective as the genetic code of this creature.

In his own words, life is formed by genes that as we know, have the capacity to replicate themselves forming the creature and endowing it with the characteristics that define it. And this phenomena works the same way in human interaction. Culture has its own genes, or how he called them "Memes" (An expression of his invention that derives from the greek word **Mimeme**, which means To replicate).

This memes are the basic units of cultural transmission, working in the same way that a virus does. They infect the mind of a subject through the communication that is part of the social experience, cause a reaction in him, and then proceed to replicate into new hosts (the people that this person will interact with).

“But do we have to go to distant worlds to find other kinds [...] of evolution? I think that a new kind of replicator has recently emerged on this very planet. It is staring us in the face. It is still in its infancy [...], but already it is achieving evolutionary change at a rate that leaves the old gene panting far behind. [...] Tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes Fashions, ways of making pots, or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool, leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool, by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation. If a scientist hears or reads about a good idea, he passes it on to his colleagues and students, he mentions it in his articles and lectures. If the idea catches on, it can be said to propagate itself...” (The Selfish Gene. Page 249. Richard Dawkins. 1976)⁵².

Eventually, they end up infecting an entire community in a feedback loop as if it was an epidemy, to the point in which they shape the way of acting or thinking of the collective host. And so, certain memes set roots strong enough into a society to actually survive several generations, becoming a part of its people in their view of the world, their traditions, morals, political views... Ultimately shaping what they consider a “normal behavior”, and developing what is known as **culture**. Dawkins even defends his atheism stating that every God is simply a specially powerful meme created by this process.

“God exists, if only the form of a meme with a high survival value, or infective power, in the environment provided by culture” (The Selfish Gene. Page 250. Richard Dawkins. 1976)⁵².

This explains how the faster information mobilizes, the faster a society evolves. And that’s why, for example, the invention of the printer, and its consequent advancement in the expansion of press, knowledge, and critical thinking, its considered one of the factors that motivated the Renaissance.

Therefore, the previous mentioned empires had the mediums to expand their memes and make their cultures grow immensely. So much, that they even affected many others that came after theirs, allowing the British empire to make English the most spoken language in the world. And that is the kind of influence that every major power still seeks,

and the reason of why channels of communication are considered a powerful tool for the conquer of the minds, which leads to other forms of conquest.

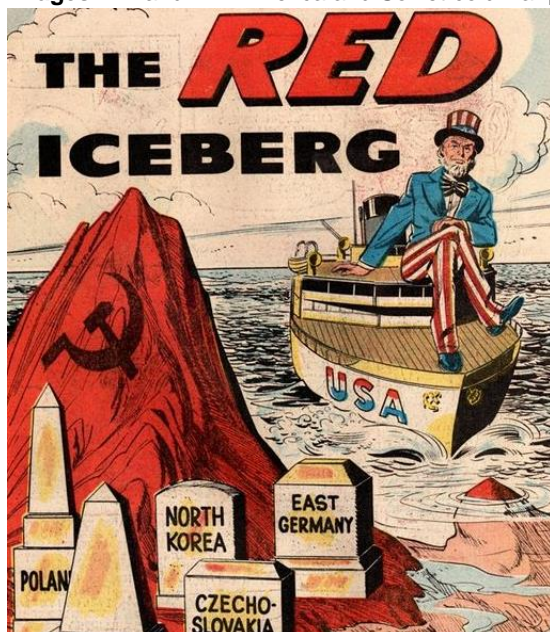
- EXPANSION AND MEDIATIC POWER.

Either in the new trends that are born in the demand of a market (because a specific product becomes fashionable), or in the revolutions that cause coups (because the discontent of the citizens solidifies into a rebellion), memes create collective ideas, and with this, new movements and tendencies that generate constant changes in a society and write the direction that it takes.

So understanding/manipulating culture is an important part of politics and commerce, since it controls both the patterns of government and consume. And that's something that we constantly see in publicity and propaganda: An attempt of creating an idea and spread it as much as possible, to make a societal shift that favors someone or something (like a politician to be chosen as president, or a new toy to be asked by many children for Christmas).

Therefore, it is in the climax of major changes when the bigger powers fight for taking as much part of the reins of the cultural reaction as they can. For example, during the cold war, when both the URSS and the USA feared that the ideological expansion of their enemy would make them lose the support of their own citizens (like in Images 4.1 and 4.2).

Images 4.1. and 4.2. America and Soviet cold war propaganda. (Sources: Genially⁵³ and CubaDebate⁵⁴)



Similarly, we can see that today in the mediatic battle between Russia and the west for describing the events of the invasion of Ukraine. Western media (seen a common enemy among commercial/military allies) agrees in the necessity of fully condemning the invasion, while Russian media (under a unilateral government that wont allow its citizens to leave its side) describes it as something “necessary” for stopping a supposed nazi threat, and takes measures to avoid any opposition: Like criminalizing public criticism of the war, and blocking most of the independent media and social networks (as Twitter and Facebook) to ensure that the military intervention is not discredited.

Its all a matter of being able to expand the memes that are beneficial for the increase of a power’s influence, and in the case of more authoritarian rulers, also a matter of stopping the expansion of exterior memes that could threaten it (through censorship).

That’s why book burning has been a common practice through History (when they were the only channels of meme propagation) at the hands of religions, imperial conquests, monarchic absolutism, authoritarian regimes (see Images 4.3 and 4.4)... Always with the purpose of the ruling powers to stop other forms of reasoning to spread and reshape the cultural/political status quo that granted them their supremacy.

Images 4.3 and 4.4.

First recorded book burning in History.

China 213 B.C. Ordered by Emperor Qin Shi Huang.

(Source: Qi Dynasty-Ancient History⁵⁵)



Hitler Youth members burn books.

Germany 1938.

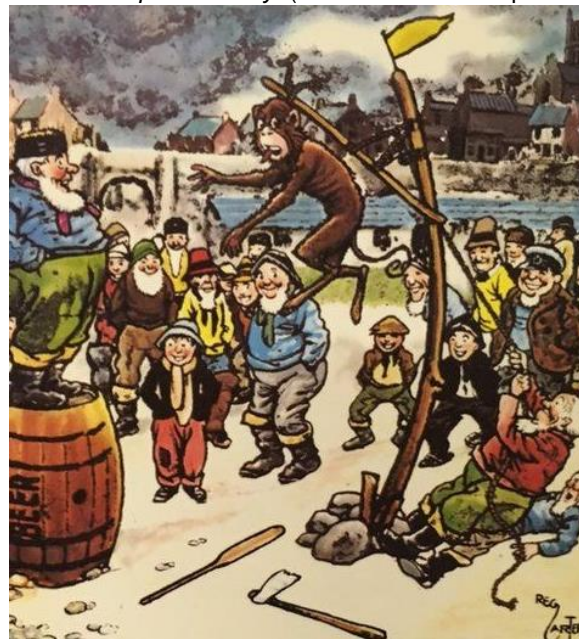
(Source: Smithsonian Magazine⁵⁶)



So of course, during the times of classic imperialism, matters like the true reasons for a country to go to war were harder to grasp for the common citizen, since the sources of information needed to construct their concept of reality were short in number and absolutely controlled by their rulers. Therefore, their God was the only true God, their memory of History was the only truth, and the war against the enemy was always justified and necessary.

This is an issue described in *the tale of the Hartlepool monkey*, a legend about how during the Napoleonic wars (1803-1815), a French ship sank at the coast of an English village, having as sole survivor the captain's pet: A monkey dressed in a French army uniform. The ignorant villagers had no idea of what kind of animal was that, so they just assumed that he was a French soldier, since his behaviour and inhuman appearance were what they associated to the much hated enemies of their nation (about which they also knew nothing). So they put him on trial, found him guilty of being a spy, and sentenced him to death (as illustrated in Image 5.5).

Image 5.5. *The Hartlepool Monkey.* (Source: Huw evans picture Agency⁵⁷)



But nowadays, things are much different. And thanks to the recent revolution in the technology of communication, most of the people in the first and second world are constantly connected to countless sources of information, which provides them a wider variety of memes that increase their critical thinking and makes the “official version” of facts be more easily questioned.

This is something that is demonstrated among many citizens of Russia, who unlike the people of Hartlepool, don't dehumanize the enemies of their country or blindly believe the military propaganda. Because even with all that media manipulation, there are still enough ways for memes to reach them and grant them a different perspective than the one given by their government (as seen by the 5000 people who were arrested for mobilizing in the streets against the war or by the reporter of Image 5.6, who hold a sign in television accusing the channel of spreading lies).

Image 5.6. "Say no to war.
Stop the war. Don't believe the propaganda.
They are lying to you". (Source: NBC58)



And that's one of the first glimpses of the apparent Global Culture: Individuals grow beyond the collective meme web of a nation's culture, and become part of a superior world web that offers them new perspectives and knowledge.

The only possible way to ensure an absolute obedience of a society would be to cut most of the connections with that web, creating well controlled and engaged memes within the borders of a country. This would be the case of the government of China, who puts special effort in controlling any form of foreign influence over their nation's culture, reaching such radical levels as for example, banning the image of the popular cartoon *Winnie the Pooh* due to the mockery in the internet that compares its looks to the ones of president Xi Jiping (see Image 5.7), which makes them see it as a symbol of disrespect to their authority

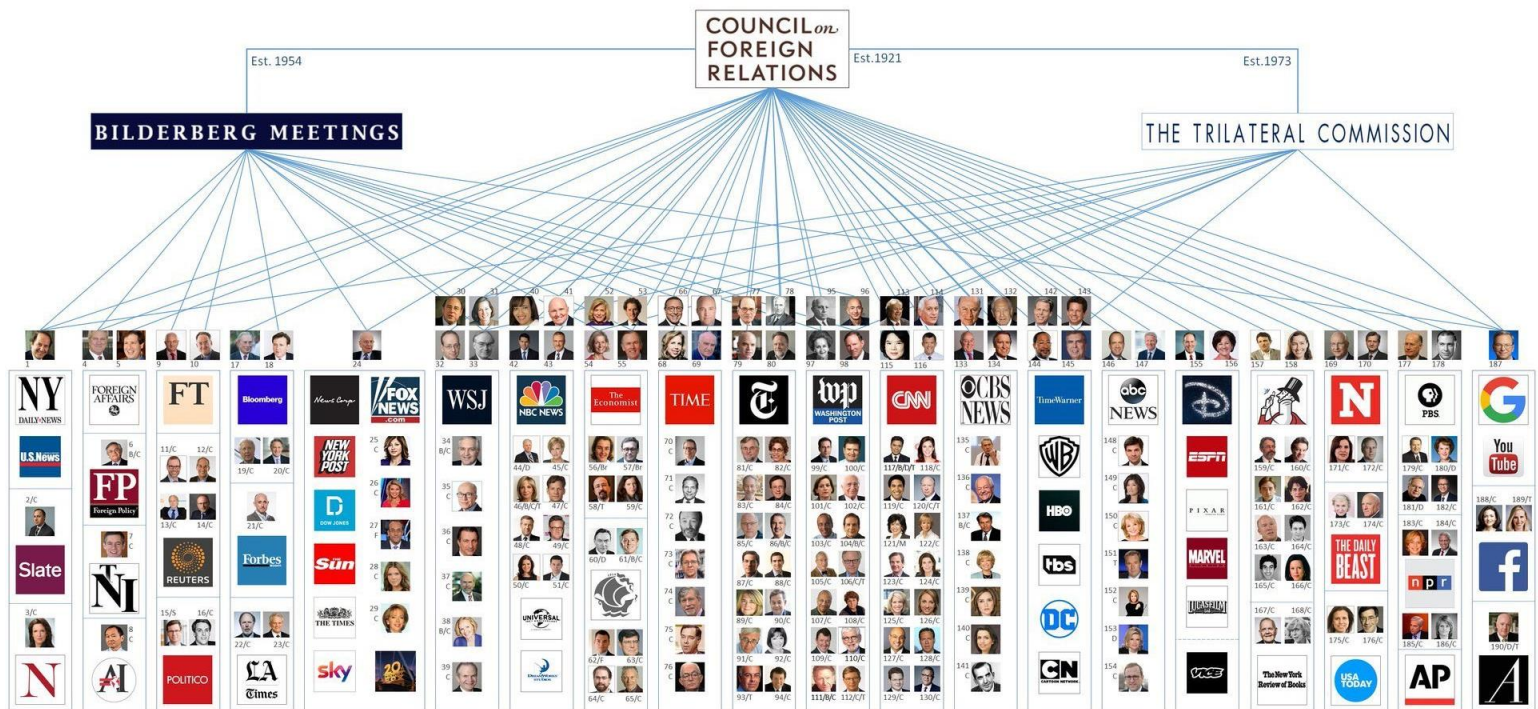
Image 5.7. Xi Jiping the Poo. (Source: Asia Media International⁵⁹)

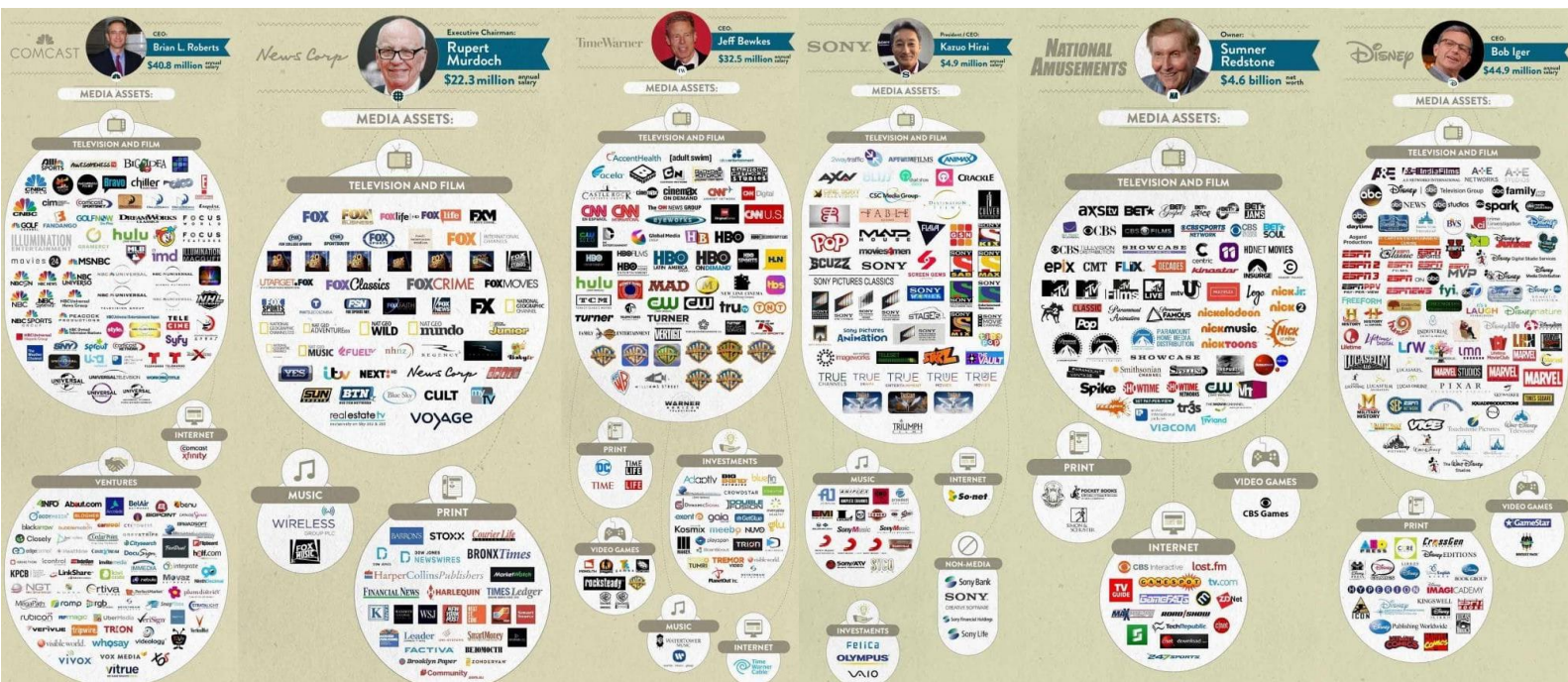


Besides, only a small number of foreign movies are allowed to be released in this country each year, accepting only those that don't contain anything that the regime considers inappropriate for the audience; and even editing those that make the cut to make sure that they fit with their ultra conservative standards. That being case of the movie *Fight Club* (1999. Director: David Fincher) which originally ends with a successful terrorist attack to destroy several buildings, but in the Chinese version closes with a note to the viewers stating that the police *"rapidly figured out the whole plan and arrested all criminals, successfully preventing the bomb from exploding"*⁶⁰. Probably because the idea of their citizens witnessing law officials failing at protecting peace was seen as too problematic.

That being said, the number of foreign films that they release annually has been increasing over the years, being originally 20 and then changing to 34 in 2012⁶¹. And even though that is a minuscule improvement, it may show some evolution in the cultural openness of the country, possibly as a side effect of the increase in its international trade caused by the **ASEAN**. But this obsession over closeness (that is one of the pillars of their whole political system and identity) doesn't give signs of ending any time soon. And it is caused afterall, by the fear of the mighty ideological presence of the west, which is absolutely ruled by the mediatic empire of their biggest enemy, the United States (see Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3).

Figures 5.1, 5.2. and 5.3. The American Empire and its Media (Source: Swiss Policy Research⁶²)



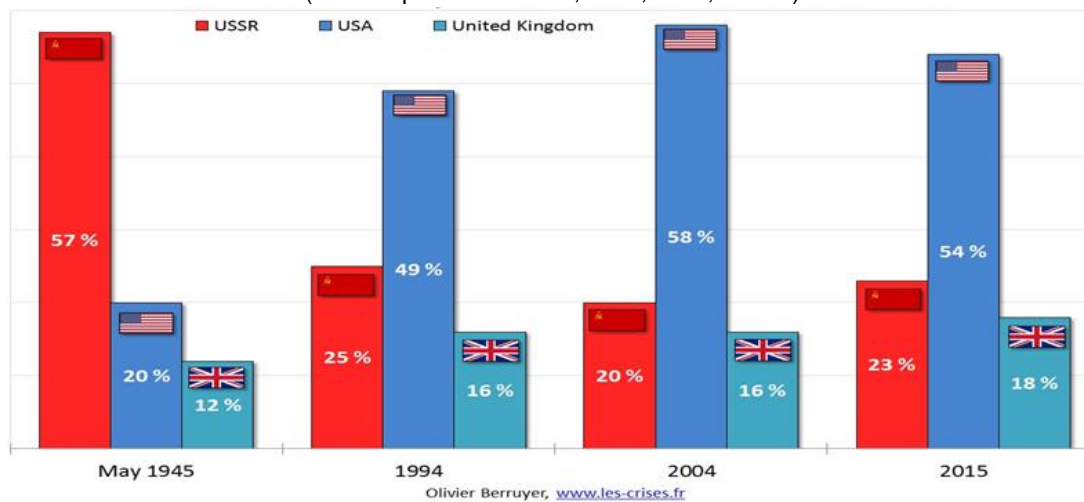


Such power over media and entertainment is what makes this country the biggest agent of memes in the world, having a global influence that is therefore, not only military and commercial, but also cultural. And that is something that we have witnessed in fields like cinema, an industry that they absolutely dominate and that has worked as a bridge for their international image.

If we look back to the times of the Cold war, science fiction movies about alien invasions became quite common productions of American movie studios. And of course, the portrayal of an unknown enemy from beyond, armed with weaponry of mass destruction, was an obvious allegory for the fear of the Soviet Union and a possible nuclear war. An special example would be *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978. Director: Philip Kaufman), which is an allegory for the Witch Hunt of soviet spies in American land. Similarly, war movies also played a huge role, since they would tend to portray the American army as the most heroic faction of the alliance that defeated the Nazi Empire in World War 2. And that has clearly caused an actual cultural effect.

In 1945, 1994, 2005 and 2015, **The French Institute of Public opinion**⁶³ pulled a survey among the citizens of France to determine which country had contributed the most to the defeat of Germany in II World War. And as we can see in the Figure 5.4, there was a huge change of public opinion in the following decades after the conflict.

Figure 5.4. French Poll: “In your opinion, which country contributed the most to the defeat of Germany in 1945?”
(Source: polls IFOP 1945, 1994, 2004, 2015⁶³)



This is why it is argued that the new globalized culture is mainly a western focused one. However, despite that, America is not the only powerful presence in the current global picture.

As should be clear by now, in the past, memes had less mediums for their expansion, mainly advancing through imperial conquests. But nowadays, they do it through the massive international trade that allows people from all countries to be able to consume products and media from every origin.

In the chapter of **The Effect in Commerce** it was mentioned how the first popularization of the term of **Globalization** originated from Theodor Levitt's *Globalization of Markets*, which explained the approach to this concept in the standardized patterns of consume at a global level. And now we can see this evolution in action. When borders mean nothing, all country's products slowly become of common consume.

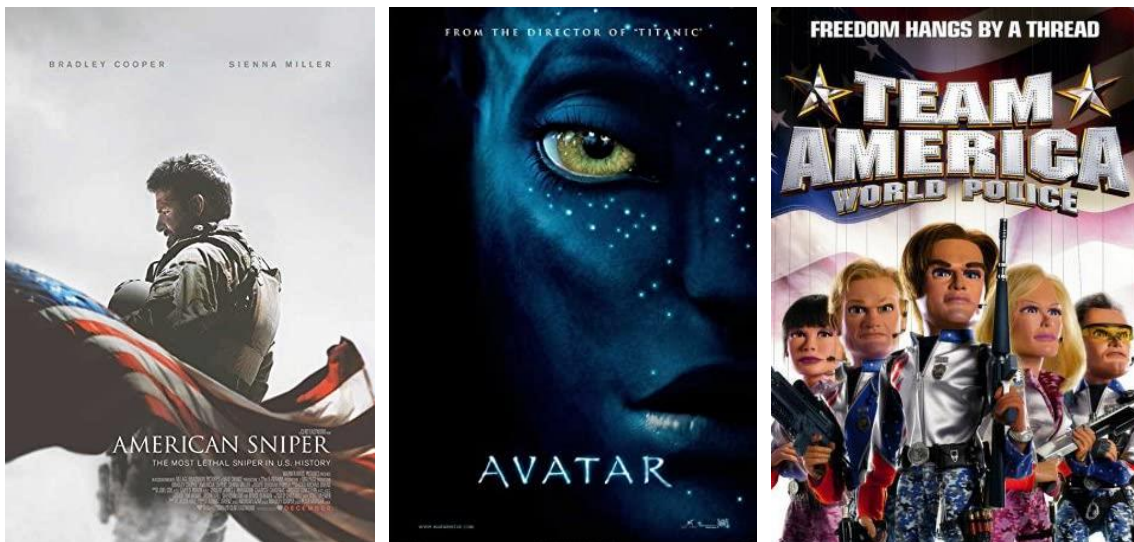
Under that focus we can understand why *The Simpsons* is also a beloved show in every continent despite being a parody of the middleclass American family, or why the Japanese citizens consume western novels and comic books just as western countries consume Japanese mangas or novels. And it doesn't stop there. All over Europe you can find Indian/Chinese restaurants, there are more schools of sevillana dance in Japan than there are in Spain, and movies and TV shows produced in any country can be consumed through streaming services by people of any other country without national or cultural differences supposing a challenge.

“Companies must learn to cooperate as if the world were one large market- ignoring superficial, regional or national borders.” (The Globalization of Markets. Theodor Levitt. 1983)⁴.

We could see the cultural effects of this change when in 2020, *Parasyte* (2019. Director: Bong Joon-Ho) became the first non American movie to win the Oscar to the best movie⁶⁴, which supposed a big advancement in this artistic field. Not only the movie was foreign, but it belonged to a quite different society than the western environment on which Hollywood had been focused during the entire History of this art⁵². The director stated that this could be due to the fact that the social criticism of the movie (based in the lowest social classes been ignored in South Korea) can easily work on any audience no matter its origin: *"I tried to express a sentiment specific to Korean culture, [but] all the responses from different audiences were pretty much the same. Essentially, we all live in the same country, called Capitalism"*.⁶⁵

And of course, all this new wave of cultural changes is also affected by the constant massive events that have shaped the political/economical side of the world (Once again, they are all 3 gears). Memes adapt to their environment and also change it, being paths for different messages and points of view. For example, with the previously mentioned controversy over the role of the United States as the leading military force of democracy after 9/11: There have been movies with a message in favour of American interventionism like *American Sniper* (2014. Director: Clint Eastwood. Image 5.7), movies with a message against it like *Avatar* (2009. Director: James Cameron. Image 5.8), and even movies that take a middle ground like *Team America: World Police* (2004. Director: Trey Parker. Image 5.9).

Images 5.7, 5.8. and 5.9. Movie posters. (Sources: Amazon.com⁶⁶ and Lunchbox Theatrical Production⁶⁷)



But opposite ideologies don't only clash in big media like movies. They are all over journalism, Television, social networks... As an endless debate shifted by every new conflict: If a political scandal comes to light, the path that the government should take will be discussed; if a war breaks out, the reasons that have motivated it will be discussed; if a mass shooting happens, the law on gun control will be discussed...

Currently, memes have the mediums to reach every corner of the Earth, making them more powerful than ever before, and by consequence, making societal evolutions be more radical and faster. But having such titanic ways of continuous communication can be overwhelming. If the point of a meme is to create a collective host that has similar thinking patterns, now the collectives can grow much bigger and absolutely opposite to each other, leading to a huge polarization (which can be perceived in fields like social media). What at times can be truly chaotic.

- FEAR AND CONFUSION. A WORLD TOO BIG?

And one of this collective ideologies has resulted precisely from the fear that the birth of a "global culture" means the death of the nation's culture.

We are talking about the set of memes that the members of a society have grown with during their entire life, and therefore, have shaped their concept of themselves. And so, even though so many people embrace the new status quo of cultures blending (considering a way of making industries grow), others reject it almost as a protective mechanism against what they consider a threat to their identity.

This may be one of the factors of the recent rise of the alt right around the world, since it is an ideological sector that feeds on patriotism and the rejection of foreign influence through protectionism, more immigration control, and not giving into the demands of international organizations (as the **UN** or the **EU**). Ideals of closeness that have earned the support of the biggest conservatives.

However, in recent years, certain sectors have let those feelings grow into the point of paranoid obsessions. To be specific, for many people this is not just a debate about trade barriers or international organizations, but also about a conspiracy that seeks destroying our autonomy for the creation of a new global order puppeteered by shadowy exterior forces. A social reaction that became very obvious during the 2020 pandemic (As depicted in Images 5.10, 5.11 and 5.12).

Images 5.10, 5.11 and 5.12. Alt right conspiratorial theorists cartoons. (Sources: Graphicart-news⁶⁸)



Despite being a shocking event, many experts had warned us for years that it was a matter of time before it happened, due to the immense web of transport connections around the world that we have today (Just as the economist Vaclav Smil, author of *Global Catastrophes and Trends: The Next 50 Years*⁵⁴; or the virologist Stephen Morse, author of *A Dancing Matrix*⁵⁵).

We could see it in a similar way as George Soros saw the attack on the World Trade Center. As a sign that now that humanity is closer than ever before, all actions can have repercussions for everyone.

And with this sudden catastrophe, that feeling of uncertainty and distrust for the interconnected world only grew stronger. A fear that would evolve into the anti vaccination theories that accused Covid of being a hoax, and the medical measures just a plan of the shadow elites to scare us into submission (See Images 5.13, 5.14, 5.15).

Vaccines were now considered to have microchips of mental control, or sterilization serums to reduce the population of the world, and even Bill Gates was seen as the mastermind of this globalist operation that would probably include his 5g waves for the brainwashing of humanity (since he was one of the figures that had publicly warned of the possibility of a pandemic, which was seen as too much of a coincidence). But one way or another, the bottomline of the theorists was always the same: Accepting the directives of international organizations was an attack on the personal freedom of citizens aimed at destroying individualism in post of a globalized culture where everyone moves in the same direction.

Images 5.13, 5.14 and 5.15. The Anti vaxxer movement. (Sources: The Guardian⁶⁹, Type Investigations⁷⁰, Snopes.com⁷¹)



There is no doubt that during the last decades there has been a considerable increase on the level of followers of conspiratorial theories, reaching even the point of actually believing that the earth is flat (a secret hidden once again by those shadow elites). And in an almost predictable way, this new trend is believed to have started (once again) after 9/11/2001. Soon after the terrorist attack, theories started to arise around the idea of this event being an inside job orchestrated by George Bush to justify the Iraq intervention.

And even though there isn't enough evidence to back them up, they are still commonly shared today.

And this might be an obvious effect of the increasing level of uncertainty and distrust among the population of the globalized politics and culture. After all, those thoughts revolve around the fear of not knowing the true intentions of the major powers that run the world, and not knowing what great twist from the other side of the world will affect us next as a domino effect.

There is always an excuse for a military intervention, no matter it is Ukraine or Iraq. And there are always interests that move every decision, because just as it should be clear by now: Everything is part of the market.

That loss of trust in classic sources of information to know the true motive of the powerful agents was mixed with the arrival of social media, which is a medium that can easily propagate fake news.

And as a chaotic mix of different factors, the massive paranoia of not understanding who moves the threads and what motivates changes exploded in the 21st Century.

5. CONCLUSIONS.

The recent chapters of Globalization have marked a before and an after in the evolution of Human civilization, which has caused a variety of different effects.

For the first time in our History, nations all around the world are working, moving, collaborating and competing in the same field, which encourages them to reach their full potential and bring new political/commercial and cultural advancements.

We have made a huge step forward by approaching the world to a common supply chain that has put an end to the Era of classic Imperialism, reduced the chances of war, helped industrial growth and created bridges among different cultures that form the beginning of a sense of unity. And just as the old saying goes: *Unity makes strength, strife wastes*.

However, just as in any game changing event, there is always a power struggle between the strongest forces to reach the top in a destructive process. The old times of land conquest and new Empires rising may be gone, but that doesn't mean that the imperialist hunger has disappeared (its debatable if that's even possible). And afterall, the bigger we grow, the more we want, and considering our current size, that supposes huge consequences.

There are international organizations whose objective is to harmonize relations between countries, but their will is easily bent by the most powerful voices, who take advantage of their position, even if they result harmful. Similarly, the new complexities of trade can benefit some nations much more than others, and bring other forms of conflict. And in a matter of knowledge or information, we are more resourceful than even before, but that can also cause confusion and dangerous massive reactions.

Its because of this that some people believe Humankind to be in its "teenage years". Experiencing its coming of age is a difficult process that supposes finding new powers and capabilities, but also learning their corresponding responsibilities.

It will be a long and confusing process until we can exploit the true full potential of this new stage of our species lifetime. And maybe when that time arrives, the last remnants of the imperialistic and conquering human mentality will have truly disappeared, or at least will have been greatly reduced.

Until then, we will continue to try to consume and control as much as we can. And that mentality is what has helped us evolve to reach our current position, but at the cost of damaging the planet and hindering international relations.

And since now we are bigger, so are the consequences of our actions.

So I can personally conclude that in the face of a New Era, we should not feel powerless and frightened to the point of taking refuge in foolish nationalism (which mistakenly believes that we were better on our own); nor should we ignore the flaws in our new reality that we must fix by working together.

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