# Historical Development of Globalization Through Trade and Technology

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## Globalization, Technology, and the Expansion of Social Relations

Globalization can be defined as the spatial expansion of social relations and the rise of the imaginary globe. Earlier inventions and innovations like steam engines, supercomputers, and internal combustion engines indeed portray that globalization is a phenomenon with deep historical roots. However, the above inventions came as a result of earlier technological innovations such as windmills, water wheels, print presses, and gunpowder, just to mention a few. It's interesting to note further that to be in a position to explain these inventions, we further need to critically examine even earlier technological achievements like human evolution and the development of language. Globalization can be seen as sequential and follows chronologically. The aim of this paper will be to unveil the history of globalization by using theories and ideas to establish if it's a new phenomenon and also compare theories and concepts to the readings by Allen, Mintz, and Sakamoto.

We begin by looking at the prehistoric period from (10000BCE -3500BCE). It's believed that a small group of hunters and gatherers reached South America. This marked the end of the tedious and long process begun by African ancestors to settle the five continents a million years ago. This helped in the global dispersion of the human species. During this period, hunters and gatherers spread all over the five continents. However, the major event began when humans started producing their food. This was brought about by the existence of naturally occurring animals and plants that could be domesticated and also the continental disparities in the population size and geographical area (Steger 24). These two factors eased agricultural settlement in the fertile regions of China, New Guinea, Northwestern India and North Africa. Further, wandering nomads settled into tribes ruled by chiefs and priests, hence replacing the decentralized system of the hunters with a more centralized system. Other than food production, this system supported craft specialists who invented technologies like pottery and basketry, iron tools, and ornaments made of precious metal, among others. This, therefore, could earn the name "The Great Divergence".

Secondly, we have the pre-modern period between (3500BCE-1500CE). This period was characterized by the invention of writing in Egypt, central China and Mesopotamia. This ran concurrently with the discovery of the wheel in Southwest Asia. The above inventions strengthened globalization. The

wheel, for instance, spurred major infrastructural innovations like animal carts and the construction of permanent roads that eased the movement of people and goods. Writing, on the other hand, helped in coordinating social activities, hence leading to the formation of large states and empires (Steger 26). Examples of these empires include the Roman Empire, Persian Empire, Empire of Ghana and Mali, among others. However, the most influential empire of this premier period was the Chinese Empire, which was marked by inventions like natural gas, redesigned plowshares, printing, the compass, paper, metal clocks, gunpowder, and silk fabrics, just to mention a few. During this period, major trade routes like the Silk Road were created to link the Chinese to the Roman Empire, hence facilitating trading. The end of this era was marked by major global trade networks that connected significant trade regions, hence enabling cultural and economic exchanges that triggered massive migration. Migration, in turn, led to an increase in population, hence the creation of urban centers.

## Early Modern Trade and the Rise of European Global Power

The early modern period 1500-1750 is the third period between the European Renaissance and the Enlightenment. It was marked by the rise of European metropolitan centers through the use of inventions like mechanized printing, windmills, postal systems, and revised marine technologies, among others. The important aspect that strengthened globalization was the embodying of new values of unrestricted wealth accumulation and individualism (Steger 28). This hence explains the capitalist system. There was also revision and modification of political and military alliances which brought out warfare as a vital spur of globalization.

The fourth is the modern period (1750-1980s). This period was marked by the incorporation of science and technology. The industrial regimes created in the subsequent period required new power sources like electricity and petroleum. Also, there was the establishment of global infrastructure in both rail and water transport. This was complemented by the development of communication technology. This era was also characterized by a population explosion leading to immigration between different countries, which led to new surveillance techniques (Steger 29). It is also the period marked by political alliances and the formation of labor parties and political programs.

Lastly, there is the contemporary period from the 1980s. In an attempt to create an integrated global market, this period was characterized by the deregulation of national economies by combining ICT in every aspect of the business (Steger 30). This has seen major interactive communication networks like the Internet, digital media, wireless communication and online social marketing tools.

## Steger, Mintz, and Competing Histories of Global

# Integration

Comparing Steger and Mintz's theories and concepts reveals some differences. Unlike Steger, who discusses the history of globalization defined by five periods, Sidney Mintz demonstrates the role played by the Caribbean region in fueling the Industrial Revolution, which is an aspect of globalization. According to Mintz, the large population of African slaves in the Caribbean working in the sugar plantations, together with modern capitalism, fueled the Industrial Revolution. Another notable difference is that while Steger's theory is keen on exploring globalization in all aspects, Mintz's studies only explain cultural globalization by looking at the culture of the Africans in the Caribbean (Mintz 405).

Allen and Sakamoto's studies differ from Steger's. In their studies, they examine the evolving Japanese culture and where it lies in its engagement with globalization. Further, they explain the essential interactions between the flow of this culture and the constant development of globalization (Allen 12). Therefore, Allen & Sakamoto link globalization to Japanese culture, while Steger relates globalization to past events.

In conclusion, it's important to note that globalization is a chronological process that dates back to the history of evolution. Steger has explained the phases of globalization by looking at different time periods. Also, Allen & Sakamoto's and Mintz's studies are crucial in trying to understand the history of globalization. In light of this, we can conclude that globalization is not a new phenomenon and has been a major driver of different economies.

# Works Cited

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