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# Periodizing Globalization: Histories of Globalization

Jan Nederveen Pieterse

## Abstract

The article outlines the analytics and criteria that inform periodizing globalization. It criticizes presentist and Eurocentric views on globalization, the contemporary view, the modernity view (1800 plus) or the capitalism view (1500 plus). It discusses approaches to world history and how globalization fits in. Understandings of globalization, such as multicentric and centrist perspectives, and units of analysis affect how timelines of globalization are established. Taking into account global history going back to the Bronze Age and oriental globalization, these require inserting the Greco-Roman world as part of globalization history. It concludes by outlining phases of globalization in the (very) *longue durée*.

**KEYWORDS:** world history, oriental globalization, world system studies, phases of globalization dies, phases of globalization

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How old is globalization or when did it begin? In view of the contemporary feel of many globalization effects, the question seems moot. The common understanding in media and in many scholarly accounts is to view globalization as a trend of recent decades. “The usual timescale in which ‘globalization’ is considered is at minimum post-Cold War, at maximum post-Second World War” (Wilkinson 2006: 69). A collection of articles on the 2008 crisis, titled “Crises in the era of globalization,” implies a contemporary perspective and refers to recent decades, as Barry Gills’ (2010) introduction confirms. For several social science and humanities disciplines this is the relevant timeframe for the accelerating density of global flows and effects. In economics, cultural studies, communication, media and film studies, studies of advertising, international relations and much political science, the effective database of globalization trends runs from the 1970s or 1980s onward.

What then is the significance of global history, of world-system studies and those who date globalization or world-systems from earlier times? Are these mere antecedents of globalization? Does it make sense that a process as momentous as globalization would just be a few decades old? Understandings of globalization such as “complex connectivity” (Tomlinson 1999: 2) may situate globalization in recent times, but perspectives on globalization such as growing economic, social and cultural flows take us much further back in time.

Several issues are at stake in the question of periodizing globalization. First, because of its presentist leanings much research treats globalization unreflexively, may overlook structural patterns, present as novel what are older features and misread contemporary trends. Second, a presentist view implies a Eurocentric view and thus recycles the massive cliché according to which world history begins with the “rise of the West.” Conventional cutoff points in globalization history, 1500 and 1800, echo old-fashioned Eurocentric history. Third, this view of globalization is not global. It ignores or downplays nonwestern contributions to globalization, which does not match the record and makes little sense in times of growing multipolarity when multicentric readings of world history have become more meaningful. Fourth, it is out of step with wider globalization research. Fifth, the periodization of globalization is not a given and is one of the areas of controversy in globalization research.

Periodizing globalization poses many problems. The aim of this discussion is to make the analytics and criteria that inform periodizing globalization explicit; the treatment is organized around key questions. The first section discusses the problems of presentism and Eurocentrism. The second section scans approaches that inform world history such as universal, civilizational and comparative history, the *Annales* school and world-system studies, and discusses their implications for historicizing globalization. The third section takes up the diverse perspectives on the unit of analysis, a key variable in timing globalization. The

fourth question arises from looking beyond Eurocentrism: if occidental globalization is inadequate and we look further back, then how far back do we go? An alternative thesis, oriental globalization (from approximately 500 CE), poses a further question: if oriental globalization is pertinent, what about its antecedents and infrastructure? Thus the attention shifts to the contributions to globalization of the ancient empires and the Greco-Roman world. Furthermore, many accounts situate these in the timeframe of the Bronze Age and the wider backdrop of Afro-Eurasia. The concluding section reviews the arguments and incorporates the various historical streams and perspectives in phases of globalization.

## 1. PRESENTISM AND EUROCENTRISM

The term globalization emerged first in business studies in the 1970s and then sprawled widely and rose steeply in the 1990s. Its rise followed the postwar development of multinational corporations and subsequent spurts in information and communication technology, jet travel, global value chains, global advertising and global finance.

Because the theme of globalization took off in the 1990s and key texts on globalization were written in this period, much of the discussion is marked by 1990s themes and sensibilities. Then key works on globalization were written so globalization was colonized by then reigning perspectives that were imposed on globalization, even though they were not particularly global. Themes prevalent in 1990s sociology were transposed to globalization, such as Giddens (1990) who defined globalization as an “extension of modernity.” Modernity, of course, is a western project. David Harvey’s (1989) “time-space compression” became an oft-quoted description of globalization, even though the idea of the “annihilation of distance” is mechanical and inappropriate. Yes, communication and travel across the planet has become easier and faster, yet time, space and distance still matter, in some respects more so because access to communication and mobility is differentiated by class, as ample discussions of the intricate relations of the global and the local in anthropology and geography show. What is at issue is the reorganization and re-signification of time, space and distance, rather than their compression or annihilation.

Several disciplines date globalization from the 1970s with the formation of global value chains and accelerated communication (most economics, international relations, political science, and media studies). A further periodization refers to neoliberal globalization, 1980-2000.

In much of sociology the time frame widens for the keynote is modernity, which is assumed to unfold with the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, followed by industrialization, from circa 1800. In political economy and Marxist

views the time frame widens again and the threshold is 1500, following Marx's dictum "the conquest of the world market marks the birth of modern capitalism." Here globalization is equivalent to "modern capitalism." Thus, capstone moments of globalization are 1500 and 1800. Each links back to the Renaissance: the 1500 view via the journeys of reconnaissance and Columbus, and the 1800 view via the Renaissance humanists, the seventeenth-century scientific revolution and the Enlightenment philosophes, setting the stage for modern times. By implication each also links back to antiquity, so these views on globalization incorporate the classical world, but do so via a thoroughly conventional historical lens. Clearly this is an occidental account of globalization, not a global account.

The disadvantage of taking contemporary times as start time of globalization is presentism or ignoring history. The disadvantage of modernity (from 1800) as a cutoff in globalization thinking is Eurocentrism, an "intellectual apartheid regime" (Hobson 2004: 283), a "great wall" (Jennings 2011) that cuts Europe off from global history and gives us a biased and shallow perspective on both history and modernity. The disadvantage of using "modern capitalism" (from 1500) as a cutoff is ignoring earlier forms and infrastructures of capitalism; as Fernand Braudel argued, why not the thirteenth century.

Table 1 gives an overview of disciplines and perspectives on globalization, with their timelines of globalization, listed from recent to early (discussion is Nederveen Pieterse 2009a).

TABLE 1 GLOBALIZATION ACCORDING TO SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES DISCIPLINES

<i>Disciplines</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Agency, domain</i>	<i>Keywords</i>
<i>Political science, international relations</i>	1980	"Internationalization of the state," INGOs	Competitor states, postinternational politics, global civil society
<i>Development studies</i>		IMF, World Bank	Debt crisis, structural adjustment policies
<i>Geography</i>		Space, place	Local-global interactions, glocalization
<i>Economics</i>	1970	Multinational corporations, technologies, banks, finance, hedge funds	Global corporation, world product, global value chains. New economy, sovereign wealth funds
<i>Cultural studies</i>		Media, film, advertising, ICT	Global village, McDonalidization, Disneyfication, hybridization
<i>Philosophy</i>	1950	Ethics	Global problems, global ethics
<i>Sociology</i>	1800	Modernity	Capitalism, industrialism, urbanization, nation states
<i>Political economy</i>	1500	Modern capitalism	"Conquest of the world market"
<i>History, historical anthropology</i>	3000 BCE	Population movements, trade, technologies, world religions	The widening scale of social cooperation. Global flows, ecumene
<i>Biology, ecology</i>	Time	Integration of ecosystems	Evolution, global ecology, Gaia

We can cluster perspectives on globalization according to three main time frames, each of which involves different sets of assumptions (Table 2).

TABLE 2 MAJOR PERSPECTIVES ON START OF GLOBALIZATION

<i>Time frame</i>		<i>Dynamics of globalization</i>	<i>Disciplines</i>
<i>Short</i>	1970	Production and transport technologies, form of enterprises, value chains, marketing; cultural flows	Economics, political science, cultural and communication studies
<i>Medium</i>	1800	Modernity	Sociology
	1500	World market, modern capitalism	Political economy
<i>Long</i>	3000 BCE	Growing connectivity; forms of social cooperation	History, anthropology, archaeology

Norbert Elias (1994) recommended that social science adopt *Breitsicht und Langsicht*, a broad view and a long view. Applying this to globalization research yields wide-angle and historically deep perspectives on globalization. First, several features that are associated with contemporary globalization existed also in earlier eras, which gives us a finer understanding of what is distinctive for contemporary times. Second, the long view breaks the spell of Eurocentrism, which is essentially the nineteenth-century perspective when the West was triumphant. Third, the long view enables us to understand that the contemporary rise of Asia is a comeback, a resurgence, which gives us a clearer perspective on ongoing trends and implies an account of globalization that is more relevant in global contexts. Fourth, the long view syncs with the broad definition of globalization as growing connectivity over time, the growing density in connections between distant locations. Fifth, it breaks with representations of the past as immobile and segmented, which is refuted by research on migrations (Hoerder 2002), travel, technology (McNeill 1982) and the movement of knowledge and religion. Sixth, the long view embeds globalization in evolutionary time. Taken in this sense globalization becomes a human species feature, part of its ecological adaptability and ability to inhabit all of planetary space. It becomes part of Big History which situates planetary evolutionary processes within cosmic evolution (Spier 2010). The disadvantage of the long view, on the other hand, is that globalization becomes too general, too all-encompassing a framework. The counterpoint to this objection is to identify phases and shifting centers of globalization, which is taken up in the closing section.

## 2. WORLD HISTORY, HISTORY OF GLOBALIZATION

Global history is a delta of multiple streams. The widest stream is universal history, which straddles world history and global history. Universal history as a

genre goes back to Greek historiography of the fifth century BCE “in the effort to encompass the notable happenings of all the poleis and their neighbors” (Mazlish 1993: 3). Universal history “acknowledges the totality of history” and “can be understood as the total temporal, spatial and structural process of human development” (Kossok 1993: 93, 96-7). Its lineages include eighteenth-century encyclopedic history, von Humboldt (*Kosmos*, 1845), Laplace, d’Holbach, Kant and Hegel (Spier 2010). Kindred views are Barraclough’s plea for “general history” (1955) and Braudel’s “total history,” “the study of time in all its manifestations” (1980: 69).

Some universal history approaches situate human evolution in a wider context. The *Columbia History of the World* opens with chapters on The Earth and the Universe, The Geological Evolution of the Earth and The Evolution of Life (Garraty and Gay 1972). The recent approach of Big History updates these perspectives, goes back to the Big Bang 13.7 billion years ago, adopts a perspective of cosmic evolution, situates human evolution in the “galactic habitable zone” and observes that humanity represents no more than 0.005 percent of planetary biomass (Spier 2010: 27, 31).

Other approaches to world history emphasize the history of civilizations, as in Toynbee’s classic *Study of History*. McNeill’s *Rise of the West* (1963) was followed by *A World History* (1967). The *Journal of World History* was founded in 1990. World history is a confluence of several currents. Among the oldest strands is the empirical history of trade routes and nodes (as in Pirenne, Curtin). The *Annales* school combines the history of trade networks with structural transformations in the *longue durée*. Another component is civilizational history (as in Gibbon, Spengler). The Chicago school (McNeill, Hodgson) combines civilizational and anthropological history and archaeology. Old-school state-centric and national history widened to regional history (as in Reid, Gunn) and gave rise to comparative studies (as in Bayly, Pomeranz) and to parallel and connected history (Lieberman). Imperial and colonial history and the broad palette of thematic history (economic, social, military, cultural, art history, history of science, of technology, of ideas, mentalities, etc.) all feed into world history. Histories of commodities (such as sugar, salt) make wider trade links visible while histories of diasporas and migration show global social relations. To each of these approaches there are broad and narrow, Eurocentric and non-Eurocentric versions. Eurocentric perspectives count world history from the sixteenth-century rise of the West or, in recent accounts, treat 1500 as a major caesura in global history.

“Globalization” is a latecomer to this delta and figures in later accounts, from the 1990s onward (Mazlish and Buultjens 1993; Hopkins 2002, 2006). Global history, in contrast to world history, refers to “world history in the global age” (Mazlish 1993 articulates the difference). Historians of antiquity used to



view globalization as a “modern” or contemporary phenomenon and kept their distance from it. Hopkins’s volume *Globalization and History* (2002) prompted historians of the ancient world to consider whether the Greco-Roman world is part of globalization history (Pitts 2011). Archeologists also joined the globalization discussion, adopting a networks approach (Labianca and Scham 2006) and focusing on the formation of cities (Jennings 2011).

The timeline of the conventional western history curriculum is the premodern (pre-1500), early modern (1500-1850), modern (1850-1945) and contemporary eras. This timeline echoes in many accounts of globalization (e.g. Held et al 1999, Robertson 2003, Marks 2007). It is also reproduced in Hopkins’s volume, which follows Bayly’s time frame (2004) in which “archaic globalization” (preindustrial, before 1500) is followed by “proto-globalization” (1600-1800), “modern globalization” (from 1800) and “contemporary globalization” (from 1950). The volume’s chapters mostly deal with developments post-1600. In other words, in this account “real globalization” refers to “modern globalization,” which is European, western, and what comes before are preludes to, infrastructures of globalization. This caesura in which globalization unfolds from 1500 or 1800 reaffirms Eurocentrism—“modern history” and modern globalization start with Europe. Informed by comparative studies and acknowledging sprawling contributions to Europe’s takeoff, this global history narrative both opens wider to the past and shuts it by means of the conventional rupture of modernity (a critique is Nederveen Pieterse 2005). While the infrastructures become more visible, the “product” remains European. While this approach corrects presentism it echoes Eurocentrism.

By one account this is a semantic issue. Many historians have traced wide and deep infrastructures of global connectivity without using the term globalization. By another account, terminology matters and periodizing globalization is representing and negotiating world history. Beyond semantics, the essential issue is whether or not a caesura that privileges Europe (read: modernity, modern capitalism, modern world-system, modern globalization) is appropriate. Several contributions to world history, whether or not they use the framework of globalization, question or reject this rupture. McNeill (1979) and Hodgson (1974, 1993) are concerned with broad civilizational lineages, drawing on archeology and anthropology of Childe, Renfrew and others. “Globalization” doesn’t figure in these accounts but neither does a rupture of “modernity.” Many historians reject this caesura (such as Blaut 1993, Stavrianos 1998, Frank 1998, Goody 2006).

Another major current of global history is world-system studies. Wallerstein’s approach combines Marx, dependency theory and *Annales* school history. Wallerstein’s focus on the “long sixteenth century” (1480-1620) follows Marx. Fernand Braudel (1979) rather argued that the onset of modern capitalism

took place in the thirteenth century with Venice and Genoa as centers of the Levant trade. Janet Abu-Lughod (1989) pushed not only the timeline back but also changed the geographical focus, to Egypt and the Middle East. Their arguments are complimentary: while Braudel focuses on the northern Mediterranean, Abu-Lughod looks at the southern Mediterranean, as twin sides of the Levant trade. The Mediterranean circuit was the infrastructure of the Atlantic journeys of reconnaissance, undertaken by Spain and Portugal in league with the Genoese and informed by Arab navigators (Parry 1973). The Mediterranean economy set the stage for the Atlantic economy, the focus of Marx and Wallerstein. In addition Wallerstein (1974) is concerned with the Low Countries and the Baltic trade. Recent accounts treat the Low Countries as an extension of the Mediterranean economy too (Morris 2005). Wallerstein's "modern world-system" which over time has incorporated peripheral areas and continues to do so, is a strong version of Eurocentrism.

Many subsequent world-system studies criticize Wallerstein's Eurocentrism, his preoccupation with the "long sixteenth century" and the Baltic-Atlantic economies, and go further back in time (e.g. Chase-Dunn and Hall 1991, Frank and Gills 1993, Denmark 2000, Chase-Dunn and Anderson 2005, Friedman 2008). Because it is mostly undertaken by social scientists rather than historians, this approach is better known in social science and historical anthropology than in history. World-system studies focus on system features as the unit of analysis: core, semiperiphery and periphery relations, the incorporation of outlying regions, cycles and crises. Much effort has gone into measuring Kondratiev waves of expansion and contraction, A and B phases, via changes in city size (Frank 1993) and variables such as climate change (Chew 2006). Cores and peripheries are now measured in terms of population densities (Gills and Thompson 2006: 11).

Wallerstein's modern world-system is not merely Eurocentric; it is also centrist in claiming a *single* central world-system. Centrism (and its kin universalism) is a trope that is as old as the first civilizations, empires and religions that claimed a dominant status. In nineteenth-century anthropology, diffusionism traced cultural traits to centers of diffusion, in which Egypt held the center stage. New archeological findings from 1912 onward pointed to Sumer and Mesopotamia as older civilizations that influenced ancient Egypt. David Wilkinson (1987) takes this further in the idea that from the confluence of Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations a "central civilization" emerged around 1500 BCE; a restatement of diffusionism that adds Mesopotamia to the classic focus on Egypt.

Frank and Gills (1993, 2000) expand on Wilkinson's argument. They argue that "interpenetrating accumulation" or "interdependence between structures of accumulation and between political entities" ranged wider, extending

to the Levant and to the Indus valley civilization, and occurred earlier, around 2700-2400 BCE (Frank and Gills 1991: 84). Thus they trace the history of the world-system back from 500 to 5,000 years. According to Frank, given “the evidence for the existence of *one* immense Afro-Eurasian world system in the early Bronze Age,” “there is an unbroken historical continuity between the central civilization and world system of the Bronze Age and our contemporary modern capitalist world system”; “the present world system was born some 5,000 years ago or earlier in West Asia, North Africa, and the Eastern Mediterranean” (1993: 392, 387, 390).

Thus while historical world-system studies breaks with Eurocentrism it does not necessarily break with centrism. The notion of a single center lives on in some world-system approaches to globalization; according to Gills and Thompson, “systemic expansion is very much akin to globalization” (2006: 10). Cioffi-Revilla (2006: 87) distinguishes two dynamics of globalization, *endogenous* (“a process of growth or expansion that takes place within a given world region”) and *exogenous globalization* (which “occurs between or among geographically distant world systems that had previously been disconnected from each other”). If we apply this to the Atlantic system, from a European viewpoint its development is endogenous globalization, whereas from the viewpoint of Africa and the Americas it is exogenous globalization; so the distinction is tenuous. Centrist world-system thinkers privilege globalization as system expansion (endogenous globalization) over exogenous globalization. Of course, “incorporation” is a major recurrent process (Hall 2006), but it is only part of the story.

The significance of multiple civilizations is a widely shared premise. Centrist approaches have been outliers ever since Toynbee’s world history. Regional and comparative history has gradually sidelined the once dominant focus on Europe and the West. Eurocentrism, a mainstay of hegemonic history, has been refuted many times over. Wallerstein’s modern world-system has been overtaken by comparative world-system studies; it lives on in approaches that adopt a totalizing take on contemporary world capitalism (such as Harvey 2005 and the transnational capitalist class approach) but has negligible influence in global history. The centrist approach in world-system studies extrapolates dependency theory’s center-periphery structure to the point of reification; its key weakness is that it is too one-directional. Classic world-system theory resembles structural functionalism in overemphasizing structure and has been criticized for downplaying the role of local forces in shaping world systems. Fine-grained studies of imperialism correct centrist metropolitan approaches with peri-centric and web approaches (Fieldhouse 1973, Nederveen Pieterse 1989).

Frank’s thesis of a single world-system raises several problems: the archeological evidence is thin and sparse and the argument is loose (see

comments appended to Frank 1993). Asserting a *continuous world-system* does not make much sense and at any rate must be combined with multiple dynamics and changes of centers and routes. Its heuristic value is minor for the discontinuities are as important as the continuities and its metaphoric value is counterproductive.

Chase-Dunn contrasts continuationist, in the sense of asserting a single continuous world system, and comparativist world-system studies (in Frank 1993: 407). Comparative world-system studies recognizes multiple civilizations (also in the Americas), avoids centrism and does not claim continuity between past world-systems and the contemporary world-system (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997). A variant is Cioffi-Revilla's thesis of a Big Collapse (2006) according to which four earlier world-systems, each with separate origins dating as far back as 10,000 years ago (West Asia, East Asia, South America, Mesoamerica), collapsed in a single world-system from 1500 onward. This is a restatement not just of Wallerstein (who also recognized earlier world-systems) but also of classic Eurocentrism.

A variant on the theme of multiple civilizations is the parallel and connected history approach which recognizes not just multiple civilizational zones but tracks parallel developments across them and argues that they are interconnected but not reducible to one another (Lieberman 1999, 2003). The comparative world-system approach concurs but differs in terms of the unit and methods of analysis by focusing on systems, rather than civilizations. The evolutionary world politics approach concurs as well but emphasizes transformations of political organization over time. Scanning the delta of global history there are several currents, such as anthropocentric and wider evolutionary accounts, and a divide runs between multicentrism and centrism. Table 3 gives a schematic overview.

TABLE 3 APPROACHES TO GLOBAL HISTORY

<i>Approaches</i>	<i>Keywords and Variants</i>	<i>Sources</i>
Eurocentric history	World history ruptures 1500, 1800	Mainstream, Bayly
World history	Multiple civilizational zones	Toynbee, Barraclough, McNeill, etc.
	Parallel and connected history	Lieberman
World-system studies	Modern world-system from 1500	Wallerstein, Cioffi-Revilla
	A single world system 5,000 years	Frank/Gills
	Comparative world-system studies	Chase-Dunn/ Anderson, Friedman
Archeology	Connectivity, networks, cities	Labianca/ Scham, Jennings
Evolutionary world politics	Transformation of political institutions	Thompson, Modelski
Evolutionary history, Big History	Embedded in planetary evolution	Garrathy/ Gay, Spier

In recent work the distinction between the history of world-systems and history of globalization has faded into the background (Gills and Thompson

2006). According to Jerry Bentley the study of “historical globalization” is an approach that “maintains that the world has never been the site of discrete, unconnected communities, that crosscultural interactions and exchanges have taken place since the earliest days of human existence on planet earth, that Europe has not always been a unique or privileged site of dynamism and progress, that identities have always been multiple and malleable” (2006: 29).

### 3. THE UNIT OF ANALYSIS

Units of analysis in approaches to world history include empire (Gibbon), civilization (Toynbee, Spengler), ecumene, denoting the interplay of multiple zones (McNeill, Hodgson), world economy (Braudel), world-system (Wallerstein), networks (Mann, Castells, Chase-Dunn), cities (Jennings) and innovations (Korotayev). The category “globalization” is a latecomer; while world history has a long lineage, “history of globalization” is a recent preoccupation. The question is how does globalization enter the conversation?

Economists prefer hard, quantifiable definitions of globalization. O’Rourke and Williamson (2002, 2004) take as the criterion for globalization the convergence of commodity prices across continents, which they time in the 1820s. Flynn and Giraldez ask, “at what point does the integration of world regions become ‘globalization’?” (2006: 234). In their view globalization means “the permanent existence of global trade” when all major zones of the world “exchange products continuously... and on a scale that generated deep and lasting impacts on all trading partners” (244). “Long-distance connections across the Afro-Eurasian landmass over thousands of years cannot be properly labeled global” because “how can a system be considered global when two-thirds of the globe is disconnected from it?” (244). “Globalization occurred when all heavily populated land masses began sustained interaction in a manner that deeply linked them all through global trade” (235). They conclude that “The birth of globalization occurred in 1571, the year that Manila was founded as a Spanish entrepôt connecting Asia and the Americas” (244). In parentheses, this overlooks that as late as 1585 most trade (pepper, spices, cloves) continued to flow via the Red Sea and Persian Gulf routes, rather than via the Cape route and that Europe’s bullion exports to the East went via the Ottoman and Persian empires (Hobson 2004: 149-50).

The emergence of a *world economy* is a familiar threshold of globalization: “the ‘compression’ of human history into a worldwide system of reciprocal communication... penetrations, influences, and dependencies” or, in Braudel’s terms, the merger of economic worlds into a world economy (Kossok 97). This is often timed to occur around 1500. Braudel and Abu-Lughod date this to the 1200s and research on Asia (Frank 1998) and Southeast Asia (Gunn 2003)

broadly concurs. John Hobson times this much earlier. In his view, while global connections run as far back as 3500 BCE, “the big expansion of global trade occurred during the post-600 period” (2004: 35), so Hobson takes 500 CE as the start time of globalization, under the heading of *oriental globalization*, spurred by “the revival of camel transport between 300 and 500” (34).

A different perspective holds that a *commercial revolution* unfolded from 1000 BCE:

a web of direct commercial ties that linked a very large portion of the world, with active points in the eastern Mediterranean, south China, and India, and with connections to Europe, West Africa, East Africa, Indonesia, Central Asia, the north Pacific and the western Pacific. The main elements of this new system of commerce and its changes from earlier systems of exchange included: an expanded set of commodities; the use of widely recognized systems of money; the development of new technology of shipping, accounting, and merchandising; the establishment of well-traveled commercial routes, with ports and caravanserais; the creation of social institutions of commerce such as trade diasporas; and the development of ideas and philosophies to address the problems of commerce. (Manning 2005: 87; Ehret 1998).

“The era of the commercial revolution was also a time in which major new traditions developed in religion and ethical philosophy. Zoroaster and the Buddha, Confucius, Lao-tse, the Hebrew prophets, the Greek philosophers, Jesus and others preached about the fundamental issues of life, death, community, and destiny” (Manning 89). This era matches Karl Jaspers’ axial age (800-200 BCE) and signals growing global consciousness.

If we adopt a wider criterion and take the development of trade links between distant regions as a minimal threshold of globalization, it leads further back, to the Bronze Age. In Eurasia early trade is mixed in with tribute and booty. Besides silk and cotton from China, early trade includes lapis lazuli, turquoise, agate and beads. The Jade Road from Central Asia to China dates back to 3000 BCE and the early Silk Road, from Xian to the Mediterranean, goes back to 800 BCE (Mair 1998: 64, 258, 555). This matches the timeline of early technologies of commerce such as charging interest on loans, which has been dated back to 3000 BCE in Sumer (Mieroop 2005).

Archeologists such as Jennings (2011) take the formation of cities as the threshold of globalization in the sense of nodal points in connectivity and the emergence of “global culture” (loosely defined). The Uruk period (4200-3100 BCE) ranks “as a critical period of rapid urbanization and social change in the wider Mesopotamian world” with Uruk-Warka as the major urban center, which

at its peak was three times the size of Athens (58). In sum, if we add twentieth-century globalization (also summed up in Table 1), we have the following thresholds for globalization, from recent to early (Table 4).

TABLE 4 THRESHOLDS OF GLOBALIZATION

<i>Time</i>	<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Sources</i>
1980s	Information and communication technologies, containerization; end of Cold War	General
1960s	Multinational corporations	
1820s	Convergence of commodity prices across continents	O'Rourke/ Williamson
1571	All major zones of the world connected by trade	Flynn/ Giraldez
1500	The emergence of a world economy	Marx, Wallerstein
1200		Braudel, Abu-Lughod
500		Hobson
1000 BCE		Commercial ties that link a large portion of the world
3000 BCE	Trade linking multiple regions	Mair, Goody
	Innovations, diffusion of technology, information	Korotayev
4200 BCE	Development of cities	Jennings

However, what most of these have in common is that they are measures not of globalization but of *globality*. They all assume that for globalization to occur there must first be globality, so in effect they diagnose a condition, not the *process* through which it comes about. This reflects a recurrent confusion between globalization as process and as condition or outcome, between globalization and globality. Should globalization be global in a literal sense and encompass the world? Should it refer to conditions that are “sufficiently global” according to a minimum threshold? Rejoinders to this view are, first, as Abu-Lughod notes, global connections are never *entirely* global: “No world system is *global*, in the sense that all parts articulate evenly with one another” (8). Second, globalization is a process, not a condition. Third, recent history of antiquity suggests an analytical shift to a less structuralist and more processual understanding of globalization, a turn to processes, trade routes and nodes, migrations and interconnections (cf. Frank 1996). Here globalization functions as a heuristic, “a shift in attention paid to questions of knowledge, communication flows, actor-network relations, interconnections, spatiality, mediality, agency, etc.” (Holban 2013). Korotayev (2005) adopts this view when he focuses on innovations and technologies as the driver of globalization and Rennstich (2006) adds collective learning.

In many recent accounts the definition of globalization has shifted to growing worldwide connectivity (Nederveen Pieterse 1995, 2009a: 43). This definition is general, matter-of-fact and processual. It implies a long view for obviously growing connectivity is not a recent trend. It does not require a specific, definite beginning. In this view globalization is spurred by transport and communication technologies, institutions of commerce and security conditions.

The rhythms of globalization follow the vicissitudes of connectivity, which are not always in forward motion; there are accelerations as well as breakdowns of connectivity. These dynamics then frame the phases of globalization (discussed below). When connectivity grows so do subjectivities and cultures of connectivity that enable connections to become productive, such as trade languages and ecumenical practices, so at every step globalization is an objective as well as a subjective process.

#### 4. ORIENTAL GLOBALIZATION

As the sixteenth-century Portuguese writer Tomé Pires observed, “Whoever is lord of Malacca has his hands on the throat of Venice” (quoted in Abu-Lughod 291). “Venice survived because Egypt survived, sustained by the persistence of the southern route to Asia,” according to Abu-Lughod (215). Abu-Lughod views the thirteenth-century world system of Egypt and the Levant as part of eight interlinked subsystems which “can be grouped into three larger circuits—the western European, the Middle Eastern and the Far Eastern” (33-34). This matches Frank’s *ReOrient* and historians of Asia and the Indian Ocean. This places the beginnings of a world economy in Song China and India, from 1000 or 1100 CE. Asia remained the driving force of the world economy until 1800 (Frank 1998, Pomeranz 2000, Maddison 2007 concur). A shorthand account of this phase of globalization is the later Silk Routes.

Much of Silk Roads history, in view of its heading, focuses on the east-west movement of trade and culture. This downplays that the east-west movement was preceded and accompanied by west-east movements, from the Middle East to Asia, as part of a long history of osmosis in both directions. An essential part of this history is Muslim traders going east, as far as China and Korea. Muslim traders reconnected China and East Asia with the world economy that was centered at the time in the area of Baghdad and Mecca; reconnected because there were earlier trade links between East Asia and the Greco-Roman world, but the overland silk routes declined after the fall of the Roman Empire (Abu-Lughod 265; Sherrat 2006, Teggart 1939). Ninth-century postmasters in Persia and the Arab world kept detailed records of Asian routes as far as Korea (Hoerder 2002). According to Goody, “In the ninth century there were said to be over 100,000 Muslim merchants in Canton” (2010: 254). Muslim Afro-Eurasia was a vast intercultural expanse in which merchants and scholars traveled; the world of Ibn Battuta, Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Rushd, Maimonides, a world in which Chinese, Indian, Persian, Turkic, Central Asian, Muslim, Arabic, Mongol, Jewish and Berber cultures were interconnected. The *Dâr al-Islâm*, the “abode of Islam” was not the world’s earliest cosmopolitanism but one that stretched further and endured longer than any other (Hodgson 1974, Nederveen Pieterse 2007). This gave rise to



the encounter of the trading religions Buddhism and Islam (Elverskog 2010). Zheng He, the great Chinese mariner and contemporary of Columbus, was a Hui-Muslim, also known as Ma Sanbao and Hajji Mahmud Shamsuddin. Surely the “*Pax Islamica* that stretched from Morocco to Mataram” (Hopkins 2002: 33) is a major part of globalization history.

Abu-Lughod adopts a world-system approach while questioning the definition of world systems (9), so hers is a crossover study that is open to wider horizons. While her focus is the 1250-1350 period as a “world system” she discusses earlier trade and prosperity. She notes that among the routes between Asia and the Levant, by comparison to the northern overland route via Armenia, and the southern Red Sea route via Egypt, the “middle route” via the Persian Gulf was the older and most convenient link; Baghdad declined after the reign of Harun al-Rashid and the Abbasids (191; cf. Kazim 2000, Hoerder 2002). This suggests a timeline similar to Hobson’s. Hobson places the origins of a world economy around 500 CE with the resumption of the caravan trade centered on Baghdad and Mecca: “oriental globalisation was the midwife, if not the mother, of the medieval and modern West” (2004: 36).

Thus, to simplify, we have multiple phases of oriental globalization—Eurasian globalization and east to west movements in the early silk roads; Middle East globalization west to east, with caravan and maritime trade moving towards Asia; and Asian globalization, east to west, from the Tang period onward.

In later work Hobson (2012) distinguishes four historical phases, marked by the varying relative strengths of Oriental and Occidental influences. In the first phase, from 500 to 1450, the extensity, intensity, velocity, and impact of Afro-Eurasian interactions qualify as “proto-globalization.” Orientalization was dominant in the sense that the “proto-global network was crucial for delivering Eastern resource portfolios into Europe.” In the second phase, “early globalization” (1450 and 1492-1830), “the diffusion of ‘resource portfolios’ from East to West” led to the “fundamental re-organization of societies across the world including Europe,” a period he characterizes as “Orientalization dominant and Occidentalization emergent.” The third phase, “modern globalization” (1830–2000), witnessed “Occidentalization in the ascendance, with the West being the dominant civilization,” which was achieved by colonization and neocolonial globalization, i.e. Western capitalism. The current phase, “postmodern globalization,” witnesses “the return of China to the center of the global economy.”

This view differs markedly from Eurocentric accounts, provides nuances of relative influence and credits oriental influences, past and present. I find this perspective meaningful with two provisos. First, it should be viewed as part of wider, long ongoing processes of east-west osmosis further back in time: “globalization is braided” (Nederveen Pieterse 2009a). Second, the terminology

of modernity (and variants premodern, postmodern) carries such Eurocentric luggage that it is best avoided in periodizing globalization. Considering that mapping and timing globalization are codependent, I opt for combining geographical and temporal markers to identify phases of globalization (discussed below).

## 5. THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD AND GLOBALIZATION

If we accept that the Arab-Muslim world was the epicenter of early oriental globalization, we cannot fully understand it without taking into account its Hellenistic character and its role as a “middleman civilization,” brokering between wider worlds. This suggests that starting globalization in 500 CE is inadequate; if this was the onset of a world economy, this too had its precursors. This includes the contributions of the Greco-Roman world both as a nexus between different globalization phases and as a major accelerator of globalization.

The development of a world economy in the strict sense of a trans-regional division of labor that is necessary for social reproduction, does not apply to all ancient empires but does apply to the Roman world, which established and sustained an interregional division of labor that comprised olive-grape agriculture (Gaul, Spain), grain (Egypt, North Africa) and Mediterranean trades (Going 1992, Nayyar 2006). The map of Roman value chains matches the “greater Mediterranean” argued in recent accounts, which extends from Sumer to the Danube (and in the sixteenth century, to Antwerp) (Morris 2005: 36, 45; Horden and Purcell 2000). This included significant trade with India and China (wine, silk, muslin). Silk was part of elite Roman culture and part of Rome’s foreign trade (Cohen 2000: 12) but was not necessary for social reproduction.

The significance of the Bronze Age has been widely discussed (Mair 1998, 2006; Goody 2010). The Bronze Age, stretching across Eurasia, brought plough agriculture, the use of animal traction in agriculture, an urban revolution and the ongoing existence of urban cultures. From this viewpoint the Hellenic-Roman world was a western extension of Bronze Age culture, contemporaneous with the expansion of Han China in the east (McNeill 1979). As part of Eurasian trade and culture networks, the Hellenic-Roman world is linked to the east, is part of East-West osmosis and an East-West hybrid. The Greco-Roman world, then, emerges as a nexus and bridge in-between the Bronze Age phase of globalization and the phase of oriental globalization, starting 500 CE. The Eurasian perspective sheds light on the world of interconnected knowledge, technologies and religions; the world of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, Persia, Phoenicia, Greece and Rome; the world of Karl Jaspers’ *Achsenzeit*, Martin Bernal’s *Black Athena* and McNeill’s *Pursuit of Power* (1982). The Greek Stoics are part of a wider cultural lineage.

This sheds light on wider questions of mobility and global consciousness. With regard to mobility, this view breaks with stereotypical representations of the past as immobile, fragmented segmented, closed off. This has been refuted by research on mobility and migrations during the middle ages, the first millennium and the ancient world (Hoerder 2002) and on the spread of religions, knowledge and technology from the Bronze Age onward (McNeill 1982). Besides, the Greco-Roman world is significant in relation to globalization as subjectivity, or global consciousness, and the evolution of cosmopolitanisms (Edwards and Woolf 2003). The Stoics often figure as an early cosmopolitanism (Nussbaum 2006). Polybius's *Histories* is often mentioned as a precursor of global sociology, centuries before Ibn Khaldun (Inglis and Robertson 2006). After the Punic wars, between 160 and 120 BCE, Polybius wrote,

Now in earlier times the world's history had consisted, so to speak, of a series of unrelated episodes, the origins and results of each being as widely separated as their localities, but from this point onwards [after the Second Punic war] history becomes an organic whole: the affairs of Italy and Africa are connected with those of Asia and of Greece, and all events bear a relationship and contribute to a single end. (*Histories* 1.3, quoted in Pitts and Versluys 2013).

“Orbis terrarium” is an early world consciousness. Let us also note that there was no xenophobia in the ancient Mediterranean world, even if we consider the role and treatment of corsairs, slaves and prisoners of war. The major ancient cosmopolitanisms, the Roman world with Latin and Indic civilization with Sanskrit, overlap in time (Pollock 1996). After the Latin and Sanskrit worlds shrank and gave way to local vernaculars, Islamic civilization and Arabic emerged as the next major cosmopolitan world, bridging East and West, stretching at its widest expanse from Muslim Iberia to China. The Ottoman Millet system—an early multiculturalism—continued the legacy of Mediterranean, Hellenic and Muslim cosmopolitanism.

The Roman world is both globalized and globalizing, both undergoing exogenous globalization and undertaking endogenous globalization. First, Rome is *globalized* as a successor to and westward extension of Egypt, Persia, Macedonia, Greece, the Hittites, the Phoenicians, enabled by precursors, building on their infrastructures—in crisscrossing the Mediterranean, wiring east and west (Geraghty 2007) and as a westward extension of Eurasian culture and the Silk Routes (Teggart 1939, Hill 2011). Witness the “inherent pluralism” of the Roman world and Rome as an eclectic “successor culture” (Versluys 2010: 17). Thus multiple identities and “multiple sources of the self” (Taylor 1989) that are often viewed as characteristic of postmodern times, we find in antiquity as well. For

instance, “King Herod who was appointed king of Judea by the Romans was ‘by birth an Idumean (i.e. Edomite), by profession a Jew, by necessity a Roman, by culture and by choice a Greek’” (quoted in Nederveen Pieterse 2007: 9). Multiple cultural layers and intersecting jurisdictions, then as now, generate multiple identities. While this has been attributed to the middle ages, hence the theme of the “new Middle Ages” (AlSayyad and Roy 2006), it is also valid for antiquity. While the neo-medievalism literature argues that postmodern times resemble medieval times because they share overlapping jurisdictions and crisscrossing loyalties, these conditions also existed in the ancient Greco-Roman world.

Rome was also a *globalizing* force (Hingley 2005). Rome brought aqua, wine and grape culture to northwest Europe. Cologne as the northern boundary of Roman expansion still marks Germany’s wine/ beer, oil/ butter frontier. Rome civilized forested Europe as the Church did in medieval times, as in the Cistercian abbeys that modernized agriculture. The importance of Greco-Roman history for globalization history, then, includes the following. First, it establishes a link between Bronze Age Afro-Eurasia and later developments and helps to make the sway from prehistory to the present intelligible. Second, it matches the thesis of a commercial revolution from 1000 BCE. Third, inserting the intermediate steps sheds light on the Hellenic character and infrastructure of oriental globalization that took shape in the Middle East from 500 CE. Fourth, the plural, creole, multicultural Mediterranean of recent ancient history research debunks another Eurocentric myth, the myth of antiquity itself (as in Bernal’s “Aryan myth” of the classical world). Fifth, it does away with the influential narrative of an East-West split (as in Schliemann’s construction of the battle of Troy, Wittfogel’s oriental despotism and Huntington’s clash of civilizations).

## 6. CONCLUSION: RETIMING GLOBALIZATION

As discussed, assessments of the timing of globalization range widely, from globalization as part of planetary evolution, as a long-term process going back to 3000 BCE and possibly a millennium earlier, as a commercial revolution unfolding ca. 1000 BCE; as a world economy taking shape at 500 CE, 1100, 1200 or 1500; as modernity, 1800; and as a recent trend from the 1960s.

Many globalization studies are steeped in presentism and Eurocentrism. The general principle is, the later the timing of globalization, the greater Europe’s role and the more Eurocentric the perspective (Nederveen Pieterse 1995). The long view gives us a deeper insight in the history and depth of human interconnectedness. While the advantage of taking the long view is that it embeds globalization in the *longue durée* and in evolutionary time, the disadvantage is that globalization becomes too wide and general a category. This requires identifying different phases and centers of global history which, in turn, poses

problems of identifying and labeling periods. The idea of phases of globalization that sync with advances in travel, transport and communication is well-established; the usual reference points for the acceleration of globalization are 1500, the 1800s and the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Robertson 1992). Recent trends then are “contemporary accelerated globalization,” recognizing that there were earlier phases of accelerated globalization.

If globalization is defined as growing connectivity, the rhythms of globalization are a function of connectivity conditions, spurred by transport and communication technologies and conditions of security. On the basis of the preceding discussion we can revisit the timing of globalization, fill in lacunae and show earlier and intermediate phases of globalization (Table 5). Features of the periodization in Table 5 are the following:

- Globalization unfolds with the Bronze Age and Eurasia
- Trade underwent a boost from 1000 BCE and stretched across Afro-Eurasia
- Antiquity and the Greco-Roman world are intermediary phases
- In oriental globalization mark 1, trade flows are primarily eastward, from the Middle East towards Asia
- In oriental globalization mark 2, the balance is westward, from Asia towards the Middle East, resuming the early Silk Routes and with additional maritime spice routes
- Besides the ongoing role of Asia, distinctive for the period from 1500 is the growing role of Europe and the Americas, the triangular trade and the Atlantic exchange
- Characteristic of the phase from 1800 is industrialization along with colonialism and imperialism
- The period from 2000 ushers in new patterns of twenty-first century globalization.

As this discussion indicates, identifying a start time of globalization hinges on the definition of globalization and the unit of analysis. Pinpointing a precise time range requires sifting vast data and evidence, a task appropriate to archeologists. Reviewing the literature I think 3000 BCE is a relevant time range with the additional stipulation of the commercial revolution of 1000 BCE as a major acceleration and deepening of connectivity, which matches many findings.

However, the discussion also indicates that asking when globalization began is not the best question because it refers to a condition rather than to a process. If the unit of analysis is *connectivity*, connections are as old as human history, as old as when people dispersed and wandered across the planet (Gamble 1993). Connections became substantial and sustained once a surplus was generated as a basis for exchange and trade, which points to agriculture, particularly plough agriculture, and urbanization—conditions that were first

available during the Bronze Age. The question “when did globalization begin” makes clear the assumptions that frame globalization; making these explicit is the purpose of this discussion, which seeks to serve as an X-ray of globalization thinking.

TABLE 5 PHASES OF GLOBALIZATION

<i>Phases</i>	<i>Start time</i>	<i>Central nodes</i>	<i>Dynamics</i>
<i>Eurasian globalization</i>	3000 BCE	Eurasia	Agricultural and urban revolutions, migrations, trade, ancient empires
<i>Afro-Eurasian</i>	1000 BCE	Greco-Roman world, West Asia, East Africa	Commercial revolution
<i>Oriental globalization 1</i>	500 CE	Middle East	Emergence of a world economy, caravan trade
<i>Oriental globalization 2</i>	1100	East and South Asia and multicentric	Productivity, technology, urbanization; Silk Routes
<i>Multicentric</i>	1500	Atlantic expansion	Triangular trade, Americas
<i>Euro-Atlantic</i>	1800	Euro-Atlantic economy	Industrialization, colonial division of labor
<i>20C globalization</i>	1950	US, Europe, Japan: Trilateral globalization	Multinational corporations, (end of) cold war, global value chains
<i>21C globalization</i>	2000	East Asia, BRICS, emerging societies, petro economies	New geography of trade, global rebalancing

As connectivity grows so does the awareness and subjectivity of connectivity, so major growth spurts of connectivity have been accompanied by spurts of widening cultural awareness: with the “commercial revolution” of 1000 BCE comes the growth of the “world religions”; with Asian expansion comes the Sanskrit cosmopolis; the Greco-Roman world brings the awareness of “orbis terrarum”; the Atlantic exchange comes with the Copernican revolution, and so forth.

Another lingering question is centrism or multicentrism. Multicentrism is based on the premise of “multiple origins of social complexity, not on a single origin from which social complexity radiated” (Cioffi-Revilla 89). This premise is widely shared. That multicentrism can go together or be interspersed with periods of hegemony does not undo the premise itself. Rather it sheds light on the diversity of practices of empire and hegemony, particularly at the frontiers, whether during the Roman Empire (Wells 1999; Woolf 1997), the British Empire or American hegemony. This is important not merely in historical terms but also conceptually. The premise of multicentrism unsettles the proclivity towards the *singular* that is widespread in social science and the humanities—as in globalization, capitalism, modernity, “the modern world-system,” rather than globalizations, capitalisms, modernities (Nederveen Pieterse 2009b). Bentley

(2006) rightly criticizes “modernocentrism” as a deeper problematic than Eurocentrism.

That globalization has been multicentric all along, as histories of globalization show, is relevant also for contemporary trends. Taking into account the ancient globalizations (Mesopotamian, Afro-Eurasian, oriental), western hegemony is a latecomer. Twenty-first century globalization breaks the two-hundred year pattern of dominant North-South relations with an East-South turn (Nederveen Pieterse 2011), so the era of western hegemony becomes a historical interlude, lasting from approximately 1800 to 2000. Asian dynamics have been the driving force of the world economy during 18 of the past 20 centuries (Maddison 2007), through most of the career of globalization, and present times indicate a return to a historical “normal.”

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