

THE NATION'S BEGINNINGS**Issues Connector: Global Interdependence**

Different civilizations and peoples have traded with one another for thousands of years, exchanging ideas and customs as well as goods. During the Age of Exploration, Europe changed the way that civilizations interacted on a global scale, leading to a rapidly increasing degree of mutual dependence among the world's nations. Global interdependence is primarily economic but it affects political and cultural life as well. Global interaction has had many positive effects, such as the spread of medical knowledge, but it has also caused many conflicts and problems.

The Columbian Exchange (1500s)

The Columbian Exchange refers to an exchange of products, plants, animals, diseases, and ideas between Europe and the Americas that began when Christopher Columbus first encountered Native Americans in the Caribbean. Many Europeans came to the Americas, bringing weapons, animals, plants, and bacteria and viruses to which Native Americans had never been exposed. This exchange resulted in the deaths of millions of Native Americans. Scholars estimate that the Native American population declined by 90 percent in the century following European contact. This decline led the colonies to depend on the West African slave trade for laborers. Poor Europeans and enslaved Africans and Native Americans cultivated American crops such as tobacco, potatoes, and corn—as well as traditional European crops such as sugar—to send back across the Atlantic. Suddenly, Europe had a growing food supply, and its population increased dramatically. The Columbian Exchange was characteristic of a new form of global interdependence that emerged as European countries pursued colonial empires. An excerpt from a letter Columbus sent back to Spain expresses the motivation behind his voyage. Unfortunately, the process of colonization had devastating effects on the peoples of the Americas and Africa. Bartolomé de Las Casas, a missionary who journeyed to the Americas in the 1500s, details the tragic consequences of colonialism in an excerpt from *Brief Account of the Devastation of the Indies*.

The War of 1812 (1812)

Throughout the late 1700s, Britain and France warred almost constantly. The United States tried to stay out of these conflicts but neither European nation respected American neutrality. In 1808, Congress passed a bill forbidding trade with Britain and France and with any of their possessions in North America. This proved unpopular among American merchants and farmers, who sold goods to these two countries. The United States was economically bound to Europe and to other parts of the world. This economic interdependence made it difficult to remain neutral and divided the interests and opinions of American citizens. In 1812, the United States abandoned its neutrality and went to war against Britain to protect its trading rights. The excerpt from James Madison's Second Inaugural Address highlights the ways in which foreign trade and access to the high seas entangled the United States in war.

THE NATION'S BEGINNINGS**Issues Connector: Global Interdependence****NAFTA and the WTO (1990s)**

The United States came out of World War II as an economic and military superpower. Throughout the rest of the twentieth century, U.S. corporations spread across the globe in search of more resources, labor, and markets. In the late 1900s, European nations formed a common economic community in which they lowered trade barriers. This kind of open trade among nations is called free trade because it lowers or removes tariffs, which are taxes on imports from other countries. In the 1990s, the United States, Mexico, and Canada decided to do the same. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) took effect on the first day of 1994. At the same time, efforts were underway to establish an international organization that would oversee global tariffs and trade relations. In 1995, the World Trade Organization (WTO) began operating with more than a hundred member nations. The WTO sets and enforces rules for international trade, resolves disputes, and works with developing nations. Critics claim that the organization acts primarily in the interests of multinational corporations, but supporters insist that it helps expand trade and raise living standards around the globe. The statements made by President Bill Clinton and Ed Rosario, an international labor leader, express opposing viewpoints on the benefits of global free trade.

Globalization Debated (2000s)

Globalization refers to the trend toward economic interdependence that has been underway since the Age of Exploration and the Columbian Exchange. However, globalization is not just an economic process. The growth of communication technologies, such as the Internet, and advances in transportation have made the exchange of goods and ideas around the world more instantaneous. People who live in Asia operate telephone and computer services for people in the United States. U.S. corporations send medicines and other technology all over the globe. People in the United States consume food and use fuel that is largely produced in other nations. Many people want to extend the free trade areas that already exist. Others worry that focusing on global trade without considering human rights and the distribution of wealth and resources will lead to more deprivation, conflict, and environmental destruction. Ralph Nader, a former presidential candidate, and Thomas Friedman, a journalist, present different interpretations of globalization.

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"[T]heir Highnesses may see that I shall give them all the gold they require, . . . spices also, and cotton, [and] slaves, as many of these idolators as their Highnesses shall command to be shipped."

—Christopher Columbus, *Letter to Louis De Santangel, 1493*

"On the northern side of Cuba and Hispaniola the neighboring Lucayos . . . have the healthiest lands in the world, where lived more than five hundred thousand souls; they are now deserted, inhabited by not a single living creature. . . . More than thirty other islands . . . are for the most part and for the same reason depopulated, and the land laid waste."

—Bartoleme de Las Casas, *Brief Account of the Devastation of the Indies, 1542*

"On the issue of the war are staked our national sovereignty on the high seas and the security of an important class of citizens . . . Not to contend for such a stake is to surrender our equality with other powers [nations] on the element common to all . . ."

—James Madison, *Second Inaugural Address, 1813*

"This agreement will create jobs, thanks to trade with our neighbors. . . . NAFTA is essential to our long-term ability to compete with Asia and Europe."

—President Bill Clinton, *remarks at the signing of NAFTA, 1993*

"[Free trade agreements] destroy jobs for many while creating work for only a few. A growing number of our peoples are left worse off, while a small elite is enriched."

—Ed Rosario, *speech to the International Trade Forum, 1998*

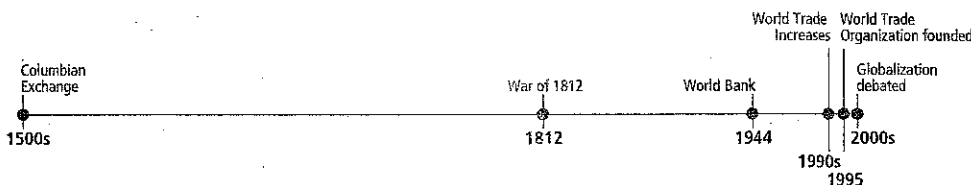
Global Interdependence

"The global corporate model is premised on the concentration of power over markets, governments, [and] mass media . . . Far better for countries to focus on building domestic markets through land reform, microcredit for small businesses, use of local materials for housing and renewable energy solar-style."

—Ralph Nader, *"In the Public Interest," 1999*

"[I]t is now possible for more people than ever to collaborate and compete in real time with more other people on more different kinds of work from more different corners of the planet and on a more equal footing than at any previous time in the history of the world . . ."

—Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat, 2006*



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Directions: Use the excerpts on the previous page to complete the chart below by identifying potential negative and positive consequences of global exchange and interdependence. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.

Potential positive consequences	Potential negative consequences

1. What does Columbus claim to have found for Spain?
2. What does de Las Casas say has happened to many islands in the Americas?
3. **Contrast** In what ways do Clinton and Rosario differ in their assessment of free trade agreements?
4. **Contrast** In what ways do Nader and Friedman differ in their opinion of global markets?
5. **Link Past and Present** How do you think workers and political leaders in the United States should respond to increasing global interdependence?