

TIMELINES in GLOBAL STUDIES

Milestones in World History: Since the 1490s

Last updated: 12 / 2025

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1490s-1648: Age of Discovery & Early Colonialism

- European maritime expansion, the start of transatlantic trade networks
- Columbian Exchange reshapes ecologies, diets, and disease patterns across continents
- British East India Company (1600), Dutch East India Company (1602)
- 1648: Peace of Westphalia (from outward exploration to internal political stabilization)

1500s-1800s: Atlantic Slave Trade

- Enslavement of Africans in the labour systems in the Americas (peaks in the 1700s, 1800s)
- Plantation commodity regimes (sugar, tobacco, cotton) industrialize coerced labour
- Integration of African, American, and European economies
- Demographic collapse of Indigenous populations in the Americas

1500s-1700s: Scientific and Intellectual Transformation

- 1543-1648: Scientific Revolution (advancements in mathematics, physics, astronomy, biology)
- 1687-1789: Age of Enlightenment (reason, secularism, political philosophy, human rights thought)
- Expansion of literacy, print culture, education; formation of academies and early secular worldviews

1756-1763: Seven Years' War

- The first truly global war
- Britain and France fight worldwide for global supremacy and colonial dominance

1760s-1860s: First Industrial Revolution

- James Watt's steam engine (1769), iron, railways, mechanization of textile, first factories
- Coal mining expansion (primary source of energy)
- Birth of modern capitalism, industrial cities, and global markets
- Mass urbanization, the birth of wage labour and urban working classes
- Mass employment of women and children at factories (followed by UK's Factory Acts 1802-1847)

1776-1820s: Age of Revolutions

- American Revolution (1776), French Revolution (1789)
- Latin American independence movements (1810s-1820s)
- The Americas continue as settler-colonial and slave labour systems--even as rights discourse expands
- The emergence of abolitionism: Britain bans the slave trade (1807) and then slavery (1833)
- The US expands slavery westward until the Civil War (1861-1865)

1791-1804: Haitian Revolution

- The first and only successful revolt that founded a state in the entire 500 years of colonial history
- A crucial event also in the history of resistance to enslaved labour
- Began as a massive slave uprising in 1791 and led to Haiti's independence from France in 1804
- France forced Haiti to pay for its own freedom and crippled its economy for over a century

1861-1865: American Civil War

- End of slavery in the US
- Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution (1865)
- Reconstruction (1865-77): Short-lived expansion of Black rights, followed by backlash
- Jim Crow laws extend and formalize racial segregation (1877-1965)

1868-1912: Meiji Period in Japan

- A transformative era in Japan under Emperor Meiji
- State-led industrialization military modernization
- Adoption of Western science, law, education

1869: The Suez Canal

Global routes from Europe shorten significantly: especially to Asia, East Africa, Australia

1870-1914: Second Industrial Revolution & the First Globalization

- Steel, electricity, oil, the telegraph, the telephone
- Internal combustion engine (cars, early airplanes)
- Assembly lines, mass production, Taylorism, Fordism, rise of organized labour (unionization, strikes)
- Resource extraction from colonies intensify to meet raw material demands
- 1884-85: Berlin Conference formalizes the Scramble for Africa
- The first global integration of economies through free trade, mass migration, and the gold standard

1880s-1930s: The Age of Biopolitics

- Racial science and eugenics entrench hierarchies through law and immigration control
- Census, schooling, and welfare systems extend state power over populations

1885-1908: Rubber Terror in the Congo

Extreme forms of coerced labour under Belgian King Leopold II; emblematic of colonial exploitation

1914: Panama Canal

- Linked Atlantic and Pacific trade networks, and US's east and west coasts, facilitated US's dominance
- Restructured shipping routes and maritime labour markets across the Americas

1914-1918: World War I

- Global conflict involving major empires; reshaped borders, economies, and political orders
- 1919: Treaty of Versailles; League of Nations founded

1917: Russian Revolution

- Overthrow of the tsar; socialist labour ideology
- Inspires global labour movements
- Planned-economy industrialization reframing of work and rights

1918-1920: Global Influenza Pandemic

Tens of millions die, especially in Asia, Africa, and Latin America

1929-1939: Great Depression

- Global economic collapse
- Mass unemployment radicalizes labour
- Rise of welfare states and Keynesianism (stability through public spending)

1939-1945: World War II

- Fascist expansion in Europe, the Holocaust, the atomic bomb
- The US emerges as the new superpower, replacing the British Empire
- Decolonization pressures surge; anti-fascist and anti-colonial movements intertwine

1945-1970s: Decolonization of Asia & Africa

Colonies across Asia and Africa gain independence from European empires

1945-1948: Postwar World Order

- UN founded
- New global norms: Nuremberg Trials, Genocide Convention, UDHR
- Bretton Woods institutions (IMF, World Bank), the dollar-gold system
- GATT (1947) structures tariff regimes and dispute frameworks

1947-1991: Cold War Era

- A bipolar world with two nuclear superpowers; mutually-assured destruction
- USA & Soviet Union; competing capitalist and socialist models, proxy wars
- Developmental states in Asia (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan) pioneer export-oriented industrialization

1954-1968: US Civil Rights Movement

- A reaction to racial segregation, Jim Crow laws, as well as inequalities in workplaces and unions
- Civil Rights Act (1964), Voting Rights Act (1965)

1955-1975: Vietnam War

Cold War proxy conflict; U.S. militarization and global protest movements

1954-1962: Algerian War of Independence against France

First major violent anti-colonial independence struggle

1960s-1970s: Counterculture Movement

Civil rights and antiwar movements challenge consumerism, patriarchy and authority

1970s-1980s: Reemergence of Economic Liberalism

- Deregulation, privatization, outsourcing
- Margaret Thatcher (UK), Ronald Reagan (US), Deng Xiaoping (China)

1971: End of Bretton Woods System

Nixon ends Dollar-Gold convertibility

1973-1974: Oil Crisis

OPEC embargo; stagflation, industrial slowdown

1970s: Four Asian Tigers

- Economists label Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan as the Four Asian Tigers
- That's in reference to their rapid industrialization, export-led growth, and rising living standards
- The Four Asian Tigers emerge as developed economies in the 1990s

1989: Fall of the Berlin Wall

The collapse of Eastern Bloc socialism; global shift toward market economies

1991: End of Cold War & the Second Globalization

- The Soviet Union collapses
- Trade liberalization and global market integration accelerate
- WTO replaces GATT (1995)
- Global Production Networks (GPNs), in formation since the 1970s, now become fully established

1993: The Internet

- CERN releases the World Wide Web into the public domain (1993)
- Mosaic, the first popular browser (1993), Netscape (1994), Internet Explorer (1995)
- Rise of personal homepages (Geocities, 1995), and early search engines (Yahoo, Altavista, 1995)

1994-2000: dot-com boom

- Yahoo (1994), Amazon, eBay (1995), Google (1998)
- Hotmail (1996), Yahoo Mail (1997)
- Tencent (1998), Alibaba (1999) seed China's parallel internet
- dot-com crash (2000)

2003-2010: Web 2.0 & Social Media

- Defined the smartphone as a product with a multi-touch interface and full web browser
- Influencer economies
- Precursors to social web: Wikipedia (2001), Friendster (2002)
- Platforms: MySpace (2003), Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005), Twitter/X (2006), Tinder (2012)
- Devices: iPhone (2007), iPad (2010)

2008: Global Financial Crisis

Housing & credit bubbles burst, major financial institutions collapse; state bailouts

2010s-2020s: Machine Learning, Neural Networks

Breakthroughs in big data algorithms, deep learning and GPU computing

2010s: App & Gig Economies

- Began with the Apple App Store (2008); made possible with the massive adoption of smartphones
- Rise of gig work on mobile labour platforms (ride-hail, delivery, microwork)
- The entire system is enabled by GPS, app stores, and integrated mobile payment systems
- Streaming and creator economies: Spotify, Netflix, Twitch, Patreon (2013), Substack (2017)
- Platforms: Uber (2009), Airbnb (2008), DoorDash (2013), Upwork (2015), OnlyFans (2016)

2014: The Emergence of a New Superpower

China flips the United States in terms of GDP, purchasing power parity.

2020-2022: COVID-19 Pandemic

Worldwide lockdowns; remote work, digital labour acceleration, gig economy expansion

2020s: The Rise of AI

- chatGPT (November 2022), other LLMs and AI tools
- Hidden recommendation algorithms determine what users see on their feeds
- Algorithms operate in closed systems and subtly shape attention, taste, public opinion, culture
- Competing platforms/algorithms: TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts
- Convergence of creator, gig, and AI labour markets; synthetic media and identity blur lines