

# Lecture 3

## Is globalisation 'new'?

8 March 2006

# 3 broad schools of thought

(Held *et. al.*, 1999)

- various distinctive accounts of G:
- in the debate on globalisation, the two differing sides of the continuum may be called the “sceptics” & the “hyperglobalisers”
- the third school has been termed “transformationalists”

# 3 ways of understanding G

- **1. Hyperglobalisers** see G as a completely new era in human history
- traditional national states are becoming ‘unnatural’ and have no place in a global economy
- this view is heavily dependent on neoliberal economic reasons that glorify global competition and a single global market
- G is seen primarily as an economic phenomenon

## 3 ways of understanding G

- **2. Sceptics** also base their observations on the economic understanding of G (levels of economic interdependence); arguing that G is a myth
- contemporary level of G does not represent a historical precedent, i.e.. the extent of contemporary G is exaggerated
- they also doubt that the world is becoming less state-centric; on the contrary, the states are taking on even greater burden in terms of regulation and promotion of economic activities across borders

# 3 ways of understanding G

- **3. Transformationalist** thesis is based on the belief that G is that key force which causes fast and deep social, political and economic changes in contemporary societies
- because these are new processes, never before experienced in history, the states and governments must adapt to this new world reality which no longer distinguishes between ‘international’ and ‘domestic’, and ‘external’ and ‘internal’ affairs
- G is a powerful transformative force

# Sceptics & hyperglobalisers

- the sceptics often claim that most of the debate is only a fashionable ‘globalisation talk’, some even call it ‘globaloney’
- some sceptics deny G’s existence altogether
- globalisation is not what hyperglobalisers would like us to believe; it is a much more (geographically) limited and uneven process (we will explore this point further in Lec. 8)
- the sceptics would argue that there is not much that is new about G => **Is G primarily a phenomenon of the modern age?**

Is G a new phenomenon?

# How old is G?

How to limit the historical scope of G?

- 1.) the second half of the 20th century = G has entered a new phase, it has intensified and accelerated
- 2.) 19th century and its ground-breaking developments
- 3.) 16th century and the emergence of modernity and the capitalist world system
- Which of these perspectives is right?



# How 'old' is G?

- 1.) Dramatic expansion and acceleration of global exchanges in the last four decades really is a quantum leap in the history of globalisation
- 2.) It is also true that the technological innovations of the Industrial Revolution are closely connected to contemporary forms of G
- 3.) But time-space compression occurred already five centuries ago
- G has been happening for much longer than the last few decades
- roots in earlier periods are significant

# History of globalisation

(Steger, 2003)

- Dramatic technological and social leaps in history  
=> new levels of intensity and global scope
- Different historical periods can be separated according to the pace of social exchanges and widening of their geographical reach
- Chronology: novelty of each period & continuity of the phenomenon
- Beware! Linear view of world history & Eurocentrism

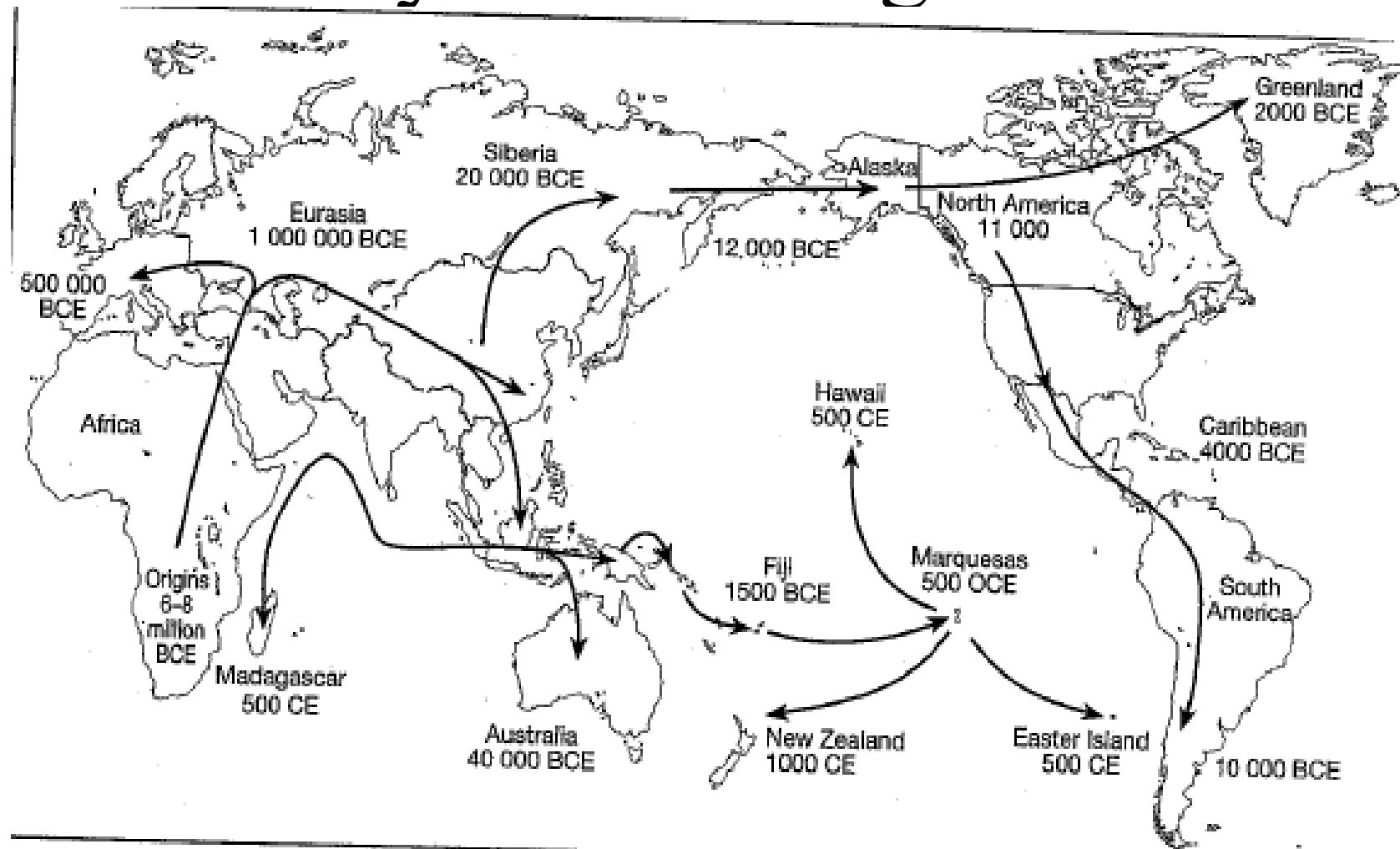
G through human history

# Prehistoric period

(10,000 BCE – 3,500 BCE)

- Ancient human migrations took place 100,000 to 50,000 years ago ('protoglobalisation')
- 12,000 years ago small groups of hunters and gatherers reached the southern tip of South America – the end of the long process of settling all continents that begun more than one million years ago

# Early human migrations



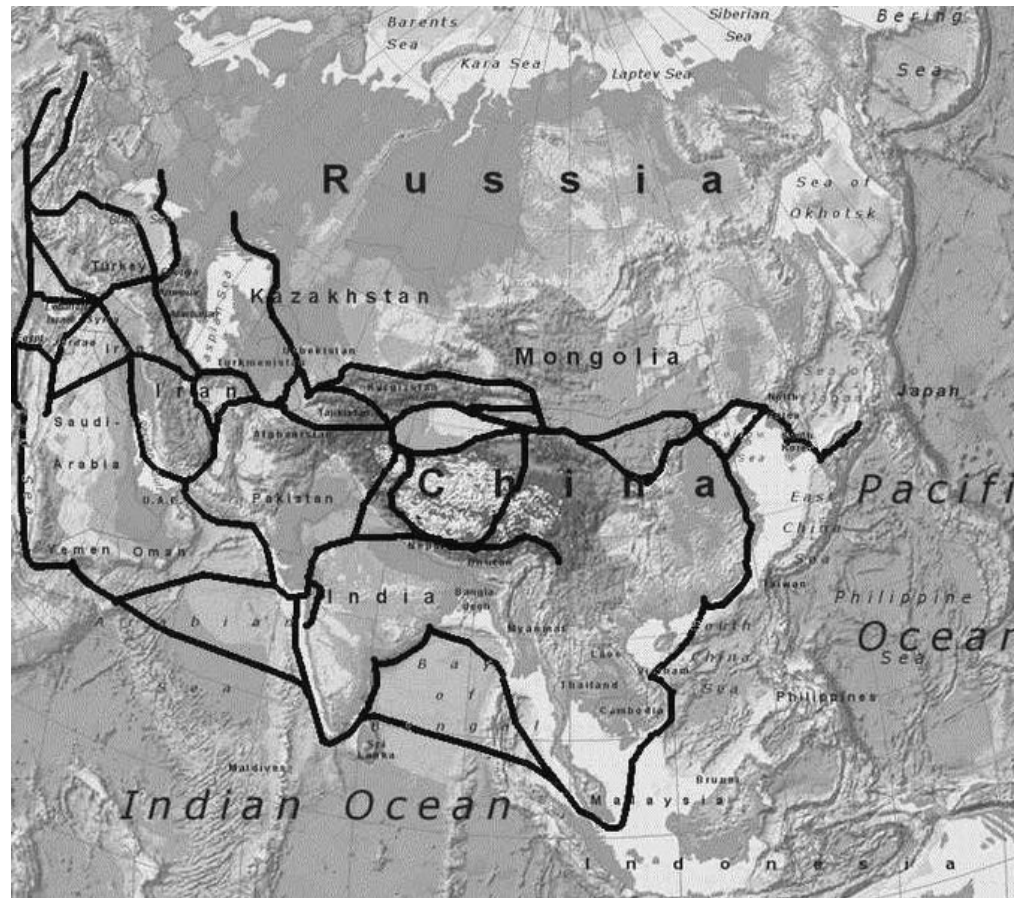
# Premodern period

(3,500 BCE – 1500)

- The invention of writing (Mesopotamia, Egypt, central China)
- The invention of the wheel (Southwest Asia)
- Results: spread in communication, coordination of complex social activities
- The age of empires: exchange of culture, technology, expansion of trade and markets (cf. The Silk Road), migration, spread of infectious diseases, the rise of world religions

# The Silk Road

great Eurasian land route linking the Chinese and the Roman Empires



# The agents of G

- In the earlier stages of history, the agents of G were:
- Adventurers
- Traders
- Preachers
- Soldiers



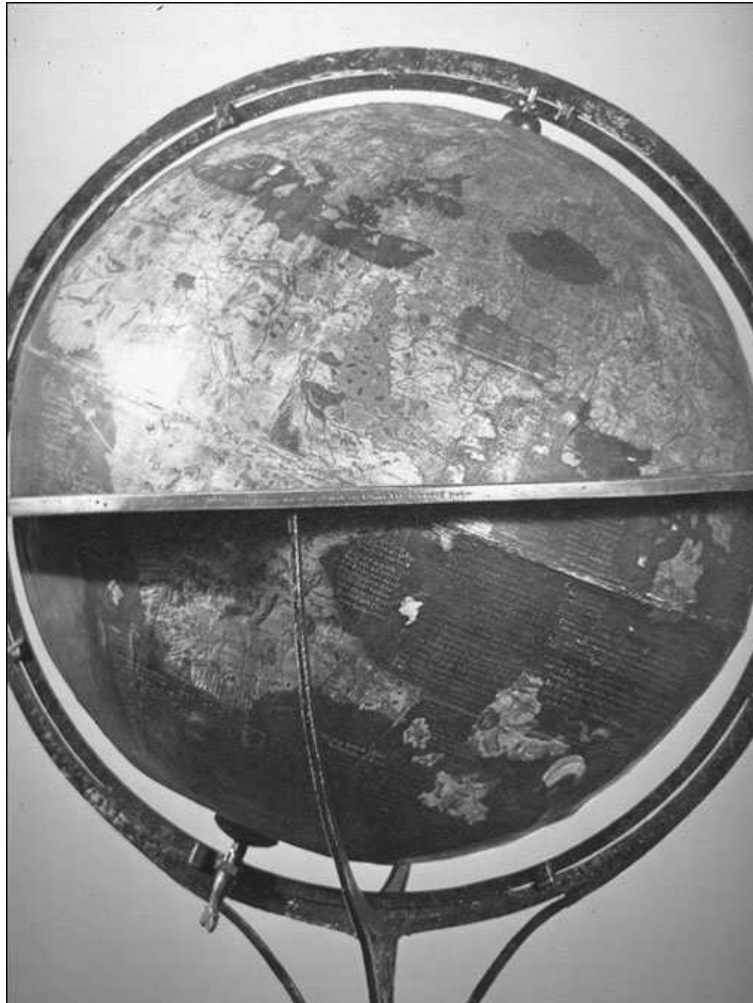
# Early modern period

(1500 – 1750)

- 1492 Martin Behaim makes the first known **globe** as a representation of the earth
- 1492 Christopher Columbus lands on a Caribbean island => the ‘discovery’ (!) of the New World
- The early 1600s: first big enterprises (think TNCs!): Dutch and British East India Companies
- The rise of the sovereign territorial states

# Martin Behaim's globe

earliest surviving terrestrial globe



# Killing the natives



# Modern period

(1750 – 1970)

- Think of the consequences: conquest, colonisation, exploitation, slave trade, forced population transfers within the Americas, racism...
- Growth of industry, trade, railroads, navigation, communication... – innovations in transportation and communication technologies
- 19th century explosion of science and technology
- Volume of world trade dramatically increased between 1850 and 1914

# Modern period

(1750 – 1970)

- Time-space compression: steam engine, steam ship, airplane; telegraph, telephone, radio, mass circulation newspapers, film, television...
- Population explosion, massive migrations
- The age of nationalism

# Contemporary period

(1970 onward)

# Shrinking the world further

- Satellites, Internet, mobile phones...
- Easy availability of technology shrinks time and costs: 1 billion Internet users, data transfer costing much less than before

# Contemporary period

- Quantum leap in the history of globalisation: worldwide interdependencies, global exchanges
- From now on, we limit the application of the term 'globalisation' to this contemporary period
- However, we keep in mind the earlier dynamic processes



# Readings for Lecture 4:

- **From The Globalization Reader** (Lechner & Boli):
- **Sociology of the Global System** Leslie Sklair
- **Realism and Complex Interdependence** Robert O. Keohane & Joseph S. Nye
- **World Society and the Nation-State** John W. Meyer et. al.

# A note on presentations

- After you will each present a text you read, the group of students (presenters of that week) will organise and lead a class discussion:
- the group will summarise the main arguments of the readings and lead a class discussion revolving around pros and cons of the readings
- PRO: in favour of; CON: against
- “Pro and con” is short for *pro and contra* "for and against" (*L. pro et contra*)