

Clues Sheet

The United States has always engaged in international trade, but by the beginning of the 21st century, the way that goods were globally produced had changed significantly. Now, rather than simply being made in one country and sent to another, components are often manufactured in numerous locations, sent elsewhere to be assembled, and shipped once again for finishing and sale. With fast and inexpensive transportation, corporations are free to search the world for cheap labor and supplies, and for new markets in which to sell their items. The financing of this trade has given rise to huge multinational firms that no longer represent the interests of any single country.

Increased global production and consumption have made some people concerned, and others optimistic, about the future. Many people hope that global production will help industrialize and improve living standards around the world. Others fear that the consumption of goods by wealthy countries could lead to exploitation of the environment and labor force of poorer countries.



5-1 Container port, 1990s (Courtesy of Maersk Sealand, photograph by Nick Souza)

The Los Angeles/Long Beach, California, ports are gateways to Asia. Cranes lift containers on and off ships, trains, and trucks. Container ports transform waterfront landscapes. This port extends over 7,000 acres, including connecting railways and highways. West Coast ports handle the majority of imported containerized goods coming into the United States. Inside many of these containers are electronics, machinery, clothing, and shoes.



5-2 Global workforce, 1990s (Courtesy of Madhu Kapparath/Livewire Images)

General Electric has a research center in Bangalore, India. Thousands of people are employed as engineers, researching new medical equipment and machinery such as washing machines that use less water. Some of these scientists once left India for jobs in the United States. Now, many are working in their homeland for the same company.



5-3 The Immigration and Naturalization Service at the airport, 1970 (Courtesy of INS History Office and Library)

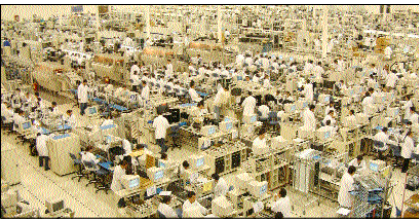
Los Angeles International Airport has been called today's Ellis Island. In 2000, more than 28 million Americans were foreign-born; of that group, over 50 percent are from Latin America, about 25 percent are from Asia, and about 15 percent from Europe.¹ Immigrants typically bring native foods and traditions to their new home, affecting the tastes of all Americans.

**5-4 Well-traveled skirt, 2003 (Smithsonian Institution photograph)**

Before reaching the store, components that make up a skirt like this often travel the globe. The fabric may originate in one nation, while cutting and sewing may be done on separate continents. One common experience of clothing is that it travels long distances in a container. The green container seal protects the unit from theft, as the container cannot be opened without breaking the seal.

**5-5 United Parcel Service international delivery, 1990s (Courtesy of UPS and Brian Rogers)**

This delivery service flies to over 200 countries, making over one million international deliveries daily. Speed is critical: as soon as the plane lands, the cargo is unloaded. At several global airport hubs, “smart” labels trigger a network of computer-operated machines that sort and track packages faster than one per second.

**5-6 Technical workers, 2000s (Courtesy of Flextronics International)**

This industrial park in China manufactures electronics: cellular phones, computers, and printers. Many companies seek locations where labor is inexpensive and local raw materials can be found for the lowest possible price. This company has other industrial plants in Mexico, to serve the United States, and in Hungary, to serve Africa and the Middle East.