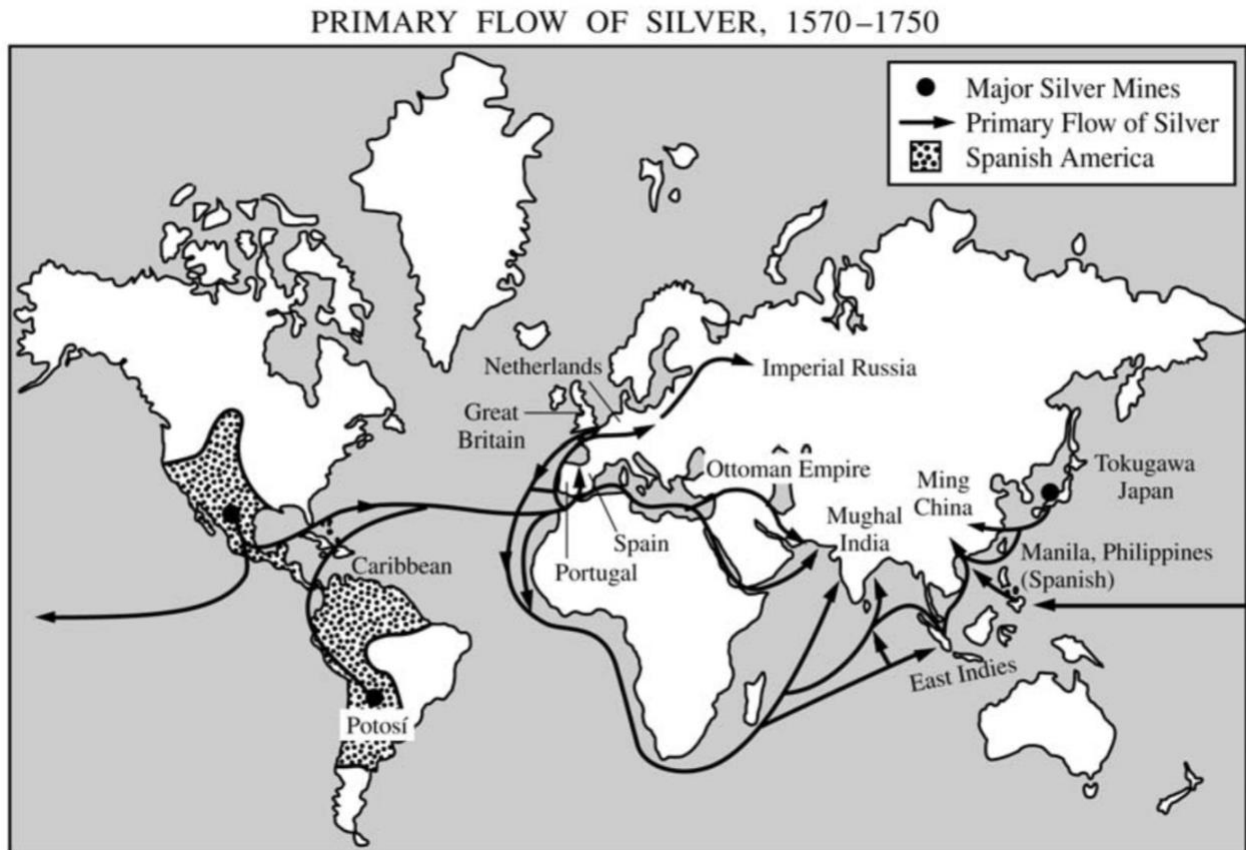


## DBQ: Global Trade of Silver – Detailed Outline

**Directions:** The following question is based on the accompanying documents 1 – 7. The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise. The question is designed to test your ability to work with and understand historical documents.

**Analyze the social and economic effects of the global flow of silver from the mid-sixteenth century to the early eighteenth century.**

### Document 1



### Document 2

Source: Tomás de Mercado, Spanish scholar, *Manual of Deals and Contracts*, Seville, 1571.

High prices ruined Spain as the prices attracted Asian commodities and the silver currency flowed out to pay for them. The streets of Manila in the Spanish territory of the Philippines could be paved with granite cobblestones brought from China as ballast\* in Chinese ships coming to get silver for China.

\*A heavy substance used to improve the stability of a ship.

### Document 3

Source: Wang Xijue, Ming dynasty court official, report to the emperor, 1593.

The venerable elders of my home district explain that the reason grain is cheap despite poor harvests in recent years is due entirely to the scarcity of silver coin. The national government requires silver for taxes but disburses little silver in its expenditures. As the price of grain falls, tillers of the soil receive lower returns on their labors, and thus less land is put into cultivation.

### Document 4

Source: Ralph Fitch, British merchant, an account of his travels to the East Indies, published in 1599.

When the Portuguese go from Macao, the most southern port city in China, to Japan, they carry much white silk, gold, perfume, and porcelain and they bring from Japan nothing but silver. They have a great ship that goes to Japan every year, and brings back more than 600,000 coins' worth of Japanese silver. The Portuguese use this Japanese silver to their great advantage in China. The Portuguese bring from China gold, perfume, silk, copper, porcelain, and many other luxury goods.

### Document 5

Source: Xu Dunqiu Ming, writer, in his essay in *The Changing Times*, about the commercial city of Hangzhou, 1610.

In the past, the dye shops would allow customers to have several dozen pieces of cloth dyed before settling accounts and charging the customers. Moreover, customers could pay for dyeing the cloth with rice, wheat, soybeans, chickens, or other fowl. Now, when you have your cloth dyed you receive a bill, which must be paid with silver obtained from a moneylender.

## Document 6

Source: Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa, a Spanish priest, *Compendium and Description of the West Indies*, 1620's.

The ore at Potosí silver mine is very rich black flint, and the excavation so extensive that more than 3,000 Indians worked away hard with picks and hammers, breaking up that flint ore; and when they have filled their little sacks, the poor fellows, loaded down with ore, climb up those ladders or rigging, some like masts and others like cables, and so trying and distressing that even an empty-handed man can hardly get up them.

So huge is the wealth that has been taken out of this range since the year 1545, when it was discovered, up to the present year of 1628, that merely from the registered mines, according to most of the accounts in the Spanish royal records, 326,000,000 silver coins have been taken out.

This does not count the great amount of silver taken secretly from these mines to Spain, paying no 20 percent tax or registry fee, and to other countries outside Spain, including the Philippines and China.

## Document 7

Source: He Qiaoyuan, Ming dynasty court official, report to the emperor on the possibility of repealing the 1626 ban on foreign trade, 1630.

The Spanish have silver mountains, which they mint into silver coins. When Chinese merchants trade in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean, they trade the goods we produce for the goods of others. But when they go to Luzon (Philippines) they only return with silver coins. Chinese silk yarn worth 100 bars of silver can be sold in the Philippines at a price of 200 to 300 bars of silver there. Moreover, porcelain from the official pottery works as well as sugar and fruit from my native province, are currently desired by the foreigners.