



The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization

By Thomas L. Friedman



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"A brilliant guide for the here and now."---*The New York Times Book Review*

In this vivid portrait of the new business world, Thomas L. Friedman shows how technology, capital, and information are transforming the global marketplace, leveling old geographic and geopolitical boundaries. With bold reporting and acute analysis, Friedman dramatizes the conflict between globalizing forces and local cultures, and he shows why a balance between progress and the preservation of ancient traditions will ensure a better future for all. *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* is an indispensable look at power and big change in the age of globalization.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

One day in 1992, Thomas Friedman toured a Lexus factory in Japan and marveled at the robots that put the luxury cars together. That evening, as he ate sushi on a Japanese bullet train, he read a story about yet another Middle East squabble between Palestinians and Israelis. And it hit him: Half the world was lusting after those Lexuses, or at least the brilliant technology that made them possible, and the other half was fighting over who owned which olive tree.

Friedman, the well-traveled *New York Times* foreign-affairs columnist, peppers *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* with stories that illustrate his central theme: that globalization--the Lexus--is the central organizing principle of the post-cold war world, even though many individuals and nations resist by holding onto what has traditionally mattered to them--the olive tree.

Problem is, few of us understand what exactly globalization means. As Friedman sees it, the concept, at first glance, is all about American hegemony, about Disneyfication of all corners of the earth. But the reality, thank goodness, is far more complex than that, involving international relations, global markets, and the rise of the power of individuals (Bill Gates, Osama Bin Laden) relative to the power of nations.

No one knows how all this will shake out, but *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* is as good an overview of this sometimes brave, sometimes fearful new world as you'll find. --Lou Schuler

From Kirkus Reviews

A brilliant guidebook to the new world of "globalization" by Pulitzer-winning New York Times columnist Friedman (From Beirut to Jerusalem, 1988). Like El Nio, globalization is blamed for anything and everything, but few understand just what it really is. In simplest terms, Friedman defines globalization as the world integration of finance markets, nation states, and technologies within a free-market capitalism on a scale never before experienced. Driving it all is what he calls the Electronic Herd, the faceless buyers and sellers of stocks, bonds, and currencies, and multinational corporations investing wherever and whenever the best opportunity presents itself. It is a pitiless system richly rewarding winners, harshly punishing losers but contradictory as well. For nations and individuals willing to take the risk, globalization offers untold opportunity, yet in the process, as the Electronic Herd scavenges the world like locusts in the search for profit, globalization threatens to destroy both cultural heterogeneity and environmental diversity. The human drive for enrichment (the Lexus) confronts the human need for identity and community (the olive tree). The success of globalization, Friedman contends, depends on how well these goals can be satisfied at one and the same time. He believes they can be, but dangers abound. If nation states sacrifice too much of their identity to the dictates of the Electronic Herd, a backlash, a nihilistic rejection of globalization, can occur. If nation states ignore these dictates, they face impoverishment; there simply is no other game in town. Friedman's discussion is wonderfully accessible, clarifying the complex with enlightening stories that simplify but are never simplistic. There are flaws, to be sure. He is perhaps overly optimistic on the ability of the market forces of globalization to correct their own excesses, such as environmental degradation. Overall, though, he avoids the Panglossian overtones that mar so much of the literature on globalization. Artful and opinionated, complex and cantankerous; simply the best book yet written on globalization. (First printing 100,000) (Author tour) -- Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Review

“Required reading...No one gives a better explanation of [globalization] than New York Times correspondent Thomas L. Friedman....Impressive.” *?The Christian Science Monitor*

“Important...Friedman writes in straightforward language that should make globalization's complexities comprehensible. There's a great deal of wisdom in this book.” *?USA Today*

“Friedman gets the economics right. His book is a wellspring of economic common sense that will inoculate its readers against the ‘globaloney’ so prevalent in popular discussions of the subject.” *?Foreign Affairs*

“Friedman convincingly argues that what creates wealth has suddenly changed....The Lexus and the Olive Tree makes alarmingly good sense; it educates and provokes.” *?The Baltimore Sun*

“A lively mix of anecdote and analysis...full of solid reporting...Friedman is eager, provocative, [and] often entertaining....Insightful.” *?The Boston Globe*

“There is hardly a page in The Lexus and the Olive Tree without an underlineable passage....Friedman has used his remarkable vantage point to provide a readable overview that no academic or narrow-beat reporter could have given us....A genuinely important book.” *?Salon*

Users Review

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