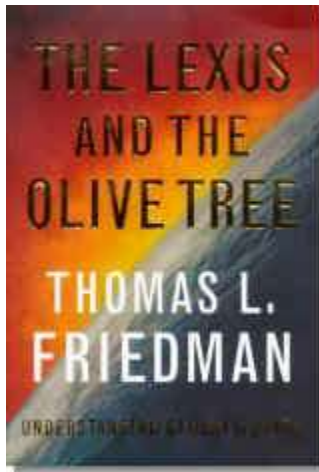


The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization

by Thomas L. Friedman
New York: Anchor Books, 1st ed., April 2000

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Thomas Friedman is the foreign affairs columnist for the New York Times. He has won two Pulitzer Prizes for his reporting and the National Book Award in 1988 for his *From Beirut to Jerusalem*. *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* was originally published in 1999 by Farrar, Straus Giroux, but Friedman updated this edition, so it contains events from 2000.

Some people think globalization is only about markets. And as protesters at the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle demonstrated, some people seem to think that joining the new world order is a choice, that globalization can be reversed. As Friedman says: "...I feel about globalization a lot like I feel about the dawn. Generally speaking, I think it's a good thing that the sun comes up every morning.... But even if I didn't much care for the dawn there isn't much I could do about it (pp. xxi-xxii)."

Friedman divides his book into four parts: defining and describing the new international system of globalization and how it works; describing how to survive and prosper in the system; examining the backlash; suggesting how to reconcile the Lexus and the olive tree. In it he defines and explains globalization, in part, as an international system that replaced the Cold War system with which he compares and contrasts it: "...it is the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before...(p. 9)." Many writers analyze the world from only their special dimension; he commented that most academics, in particular, are too narrowly focused to be able to see the whole picture and its implications. He uses stories to explain the six (so far) dimensions of globalization and their interrelationships: financial markets, national security, culture, politics, technology, and environmentalism. Along the way, Friedman invents some colorful labels and theories to explain globalization and how to respond: The Electronic Herd; The Golden Straitjacket; the Five Gas Stations Theory of the World; The Golden Arches Theory of Conflict Prevention.

Whence the title? The Lexus represents sustenance, progress, modernization. The olive tree represents our roots, our identities. Successful participation in the new system requires adherence to a new set of competitive rules, the Golden Straitjacket. Decision making and power have become decentralized because of the unprecedented availability of finance, technology, and above all, information. Globalization is free market economics, innovation, and change at light speed and on steroids, and it is not kind to countries or individuals that are not competitive.

Because it is unforgiving and because of the inherent conflict between the Lexus and the olive tree, there are backlashes. Friedman examines some of these and some of the ways that we can obtain balance between nation-states, between nation-states and global markets, and between individuals and nation-states; between globalization and humanity.

Biographical Sketch

Anita B. Williams (<http://www.hsu.edu/faculty/williaa>), Professor of Marketing, received her B.A. degree in history from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Her M.B.A. and Ph.D. in business administration are from the University of Arkansas. In addition to her teaching duties, she is coordinates Henderson's British Studies program and sponsors ICOMA, the International Club of Martial Arts, and the Marketing Society. She is also an active member of Arkadelphia Little Theatre.

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