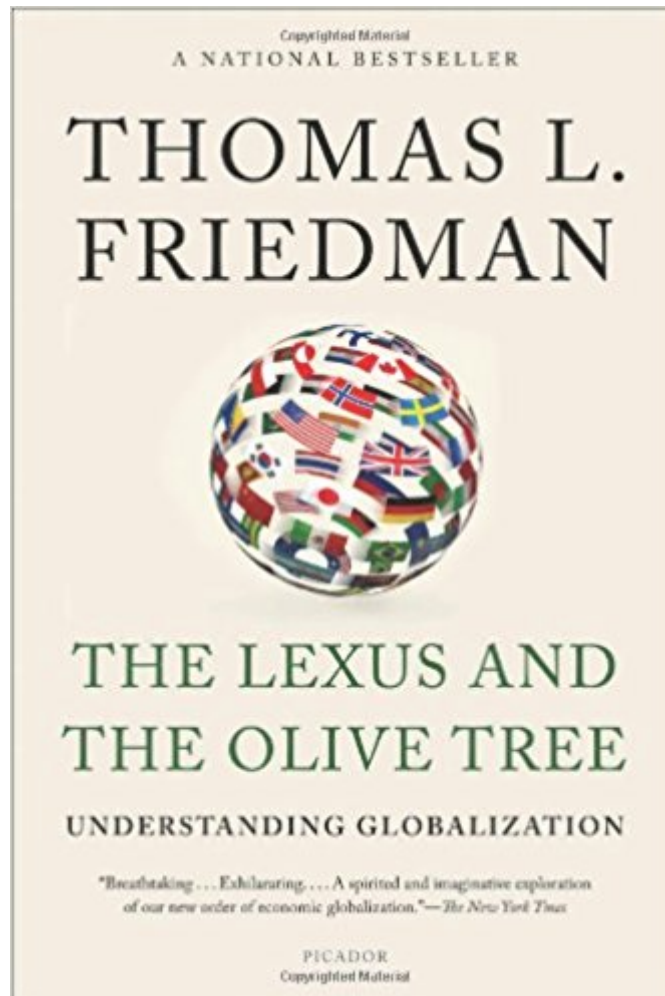




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# The Lexus And The Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization



## Synopsis

"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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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 --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

While this was required reading for a required college course, and I have ZERO interest in the

subject matter of this book, (sorry!) I really enjoyed reading it. My mind and world-view was greatly expanded. What could be dry material is entertaining and well written. I'm glad they "MADE" me read this. I have referred back even after that class was over.

When this book first came out in 1999, I was fortunate to go to a local bookstore and see Friedman give a talk about his book. He talked in general terms and not just about his book, and the large crowd was enthralled. I had arrived early and so did he and I actually chatted with him for a few minutes. I was impressed his politeness and he seemed humble considering that he was already a celebrity, having appeared on numerous talk shows. In hindsight now there is plenty that Friedman got wrong. But I don't see Friedman as an academic at all. I think he's very plugged into how people think and he expresses that and educates us mainly about ourselves. This makes sense when one considers his background as a correspondent and reporter. He has always excelled at communication. Wikipedia reports that he now commands fifty thousand per speaking engagement. He's come a long way since publishing this book. He's just so darn likeable in person that one naturally feels glad for his success (in my opinion). At the time of *The Lexus and The Olive Tree*, globalization as a topic was relatively new and as it's such a magnificently large topic, nobody could really understand it. Therefore, I can't find fault with it but I don't know if I'd recommend it now. Better to read Friedman's articles, as he's still a prolific contemporary writer.

This book is just amazing. Had to buy it for my Global Business MBA class and really enjoyed it. Surely outdated, but follows its concept. It will definitely be a good read in about 20 years!

Amazing book! After reading it you start to question if it was actually written at the end of the 1990s. It is impressive to see how clearly Thomas Friedman does what he also calls Information Arbitrage in pulling episodes and events from disparate parts of the world and in a wide variety of topics into one cohesive world view: globalization. The framework he proposes for globalization is the simplest and most useful I've ever read about and it sure made me understand much more of our world. A wonderful work of research, analysis and specially of writing went into this book. Funny thing: the book is super current even though it never mentions Google (because it was just a tiny company at the time). I'm already reading *"The World is Flat"* by the same author. It's a great read

This book is clearly a product of the 1990s - optimistically thinking that capitalism and American-led globalization will solve all our problems. Written just 8 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union,

he was obviously influenced by Francis Fukuyama's "End of History". The Great Recession had proven the techno-Utopian ideas in the book wrong, and Karl Marx is far from irrelevant to my generation the Millennials, to whom globalization offers a very bleak future. Still, I think it's an important book to read to understand where neoliberals are coming from. Friedman is pretty compassionate for one of their kind.

In my view, Thomas Friedman has the world's best understanding of the inter-relationships between and among economics, globalization, technology, culture and history. He also has the ability to communicate his understanding of these forces and how they affect nations and sectarian groups as well as individuals. His understanding of the Middle East is especially strong and impressive. Although I thoroughly enjoyed reading *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, and I felt that it really educated me on some very important subjects, the second half of the book was somewhat depressing to me; it seemed to indicate that globalization was taking the world into a constantly changing Darwinistic state of "survival of the fittest, a state that would hurt many nations and people.

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