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The Distribution of Globalized Power

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Rachel is in her sophomore year at Wright State. She is majoring in English Literature and French Language. Books have been her passion ever since Harry Potter stole her heart eight years ago. After graduation, she hopes to enroll in graduate school and write a novel, or run off to Miami and start a juice bar—time will tell.

Rachel notes:

As I wrote this paper, I hoped to create something thoughtful and interesting. I wanted my essay to reflect the fascination I had felt upon learning of the complexities of the globalized world we live in. I hope that those of you who read my paper find the same interest in the world of global power and politics that I did.

Dr. Jeong notes:

Ms. Canter induces from Thomas Friedman's *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* the discrepancy between the rhetoric of globalization as the process of building a harmonious multicultural global society and the political economy of globalization as the process of integrating national economies into a hierarchical global chain of command. To resolve the discrepancy, she presents an alternative worldview for a multipolar global society through culturally sensitive regional integration.

In his book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Thomas Friedman discusses a multitude of issues and benefits that have sprung from globalization. He addresses the proliferation of technology and how it has brought free information to people that previously lived in isolation; he additionally discusses how technology and the end of the Cold War have opened new investment options for average people. But in the midst of his argument for globalization and the democratizations it has brought, Friedman seems to take a step backward. He claims that the United States is the only superpower nation, and is therefore responsible for regulating the globalization system (Friedman 2000, p. 463). However, this superpower hierarchy seems to be antithetical to the very concept of globalization.

Friedman establishes his claim through citing the collapse of the Cold War system, saying that capitalism has triumphed (Friedman 2000, 104). The U.S. is a very successful capitalist nation that allows the market to regulate and grow its economy (Friedman 2000, 104-106). There is additionally the compelling argument of the very principles America is founded on; this is the information age, the world without walls, and the U.S. has been advocating for maximum personal liberties since its founding (Friedman 2000, Chapter 4). Thus, America is in an ideal position to succeed in the globalization era. But Friedman goes a step further and asserts that the power that comes from American success in globalization ought to be used to invest in global coalitions such as the IMF, NATO, and the UN; not only do these alliances benefit developing countries, but they also amplify American power, making America the superpower that monitors the rest of the world (Friedman 2000, 466). This worldview is a rather rigid one; it states that there must be an overarching global power that in some capacity guides all of the lesser powers (Friedman 2000, 463).

But, a hierarchical structure hardly seems in line with the sentiment of globalization. The world is open; technology allows people in all sorts of places to understand how the others live (Friedman 2000, 67-69). This understanding contributes to the evolution of diverse cultures; people have the power to collaborate through technology in order to change their society for the better (Friedman 2000, 209). The walls are breaking down and the geo-political status of the world ought to reflect that. The age of globalization requires a more fluid view of international power than Friedman is offering. World diversity should be celebrated in a way that doesn't have one specific nation as the leader of the rest. Friedman actually makes a strong case for

the value of openness and diversity when he cites the American Immigrant experience (Friedman 2000, 228). This sentiment of embracing the varied qualities that distinct individuals have to offer should be applied to the globalization system in a way that reflects the complexity of the era rather than oversimplifying it to a superpower structure.

The U.S. is certainly a powerful nation. But other nations have creativity and passions that add to global society. If we smother them with a worldview centered on the virtues of the U.S., then we will certainly impede global progress through (ignorantly) assuming their weakness. There is a great amount of power swelling from Asia and the Middle East. This power includes the rising Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). This project is led by the Chinese with members from developed and developing, eastern and western, nations. Its goal is to foster growth and development in Asia. This kind of economic power mirrors that of the IMF, headed by the United States, showing that China has become a strong shaping force in the world. Additionally, there are nuclear programs in Pakistan, Iran, Russia, etc. This is a signifier of the military strength in those nations; if they wanted to start a nuclear war they could. And although it seems generally agreed upon that a nuclear war is the last thing the world needs, it is still significant that there are multiple nations that have nuclear programs. Nuclear arms are a way of showing strength, and the nations that possess these arms should not be underestimated as secondary powers, abiding under the shadow of the sole superpower.

The world has changed very rapidly in the past twenty years. This is one thing that Friedman articulated very adamantly in his book, and it seems rather indisputable. However, with such a changed world, with such an interconnected world, it is indispensable to treat it so. There cannot be only one superpower because there is too much power spread throughout the world to really justify the idea that there could be an overarching force that guides the rest of the world. Thus, we must look at the globalized distribution of power as the more loosely defined dispersal of influence that it is. We must see the strengths of a diversity of nations and take them into consideration as we assess the state of the world.

Works Cited

Friedman, Thomas. 2000. *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (1999). Picador USA