



# GLOBAL CONNECTION

VIEWS ON GLOBALIZATION, THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION, AND LEADERSHIP

## The Invisible March

If only we could get more people talking about the *positive* aspects of globalization.

Perhaps the problem is that such conversations are too short. How much is there to say, really? By stimulating investment, globalization accelerates economic growth and increases living standards worldwide. Simply put, there is no stronger set of antipoverty policies than those that support globalization—the ongoing integration of the world economy. And it seems clear, especially since September 11, that prosperity improves prospects for peace.

It's a powerfully important, but static, message—hardly news. There are no headlines and no photo ops. The benefits of globalization are diffuse; they help most, but there is little to notice from day to day. Over the course of an entire year—even a good year—living standards increase by only a few percent.

That is why globalization inspires little activism. It is the invisible march.

In early December, an advocacy group in Australia staged its own (nearly) invisible march. The global “Walk for Capitalism,” held in more than 100 cities around the world, attracted only about 60 people in New York and not too many more in other cities. Such a turnout hardly competes with the thousands of antiglobalization protesters who disrupted WTO events in Seattle and Prague.

The side effects of globalization are much more activating. They make great headlines because they create specific, short-term points of pain. For example, when a corporation moves a manufacturing facility from a developed nation to a developing one, severe, localized unemployment is sometimes the result.

Thus, politicians find themselves in a bind, forced to focus on short-term and local issues. Every U.S. president since World War II has supported globalization, for example, but none has found an easy way to sell the associated abstract and long-term policies to a skeptical public. Will it ever be easy to convince people facing unemployment to accept their uncertain future as part of a global economic restructuring that will eventually improve living standards worldwide? Rather than focusing on the positives, politicians tend to respond by spinning globalization as an inevitability (which, of course, it isn't) and therefore, a challenge that must simply be overcome. Hardly motivating.

**COMING SOON:** The center is pleased to announce that Julie Lang, who received her MBA from Tuck in 1993, will be joining the center's staff in February. Julie comes to us with deep industry experience, both as a product manager and as a consultant. In addition to contributing to research and managing the center's written communications, she will be the first point of contact for the center in its interactions with corporations. Welcome, Julie!

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CEOs, unlike politicians, are not subject to popular election. So they are in a better position to laud globalization's positives, at least within the walls of their own corporations, if not to the larger public. But they don't often take advantage of this opportunity. Ask CEOs what globalization means to them, and they most likely will identify globalization as: (1) a tremendous source for future growth, as we move our products and services into new markets, (2) a critical challenge, as we face stiffer competition, or (3) a crisis-level threat—one that all too often results in CEOs actually lobbying *against* trade liberalization.

Opportunity? Challenge? Threat? Shouldn't CEOs also view their developing-world investment activities as a contribution to the greater good?

CEOs are well aware that the general public does not readily trust them when it comes to such social issues as health, safety, and the environment. In these cases, the conflicts of interest are too obvious. But with globalization, trust is possible because the essence of globalization is win-win. Corporations invest in emerging economies and, yes, if successful, they profit. But at the same time, the developing economy grows and poverty is reduced.

And maybe there is a photo op, perhaps one with two panels. On the left, a laborer using basic implements in a field. On the right, the same person, three years later, in front of machinery, holding training manuals. The caption might read, "Our investment in equipment and training increased this worker's productivity by a factor of five. And we're doing this all over the developing world." More productivity. More prosperity. More peace. ■

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