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*We are not afraid to entrust the American people with unpleasant facts, foreign ideas, alien philosophies, and competitive values. For a nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people.<sup>1</sup>*

**~President John F. Kennedy**



## **The Wings of Freedom**

No longer are we living on the island of Robinson Crusoe. Global forces and processes have increasingly influenced the most personal aspects of our lives – from oil, food, clothes, cars, and movies to every other imaginable daily consumer item.

With the movement of people, ideas, capital, and other resources across national borders, the interactions among countries have increased. Thus, the movement of people has started to affect cultures, the exchange of ideas is influencing politics and media, the trading of goods and services has impacted econo-

mies, the transfer of money and investment is changing societies, and the improvement of transportation and information technologies has connected all communities together – faster and cheaper. In totality, the ever-increasing interactions among people, businesses, and governments in various countries through these movements have initiated a process called globalization.

Each of our livelihoods functions as a microcosmic reflection of how globalization works at the local community level. In these fast changing worldwide movements of people, ideas, and resources, we are also agents of globalization with freedom to resist, accept, or modify the unyielding global forces at national, community, and personal levels.

At the national level, for example, countries could restrict the import of “blood diamonds” from Sierra Leone and other conflict-ridden African countries. At the community level, leaders could adopt the micro-financing concept from the Nobel Prize winning Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and the Sarvodaya development model in Sri Lanka. At the personal level, one could boycott the gas-guzzling Humvees, the Venezuelan oil at Citgo gas stations, and the sweatshop products at Wal-Mart – and, at the same time one could support coffee farmers in Colombia and Ethiopia by being a “Fair Trade” conscious customer at Starbucks Café.

The way we – nations and communities – respond to an ever-changing interplay of global political, economic, social, religious, and cultural ethos at different localities is the unique process of “glocalization.”<sup>2</sup> Glocalization is essentially a hybrid of globalization and localization. Glocalization is likely to empower local communities through strategic linking of global resources to address local issues for positive social change and to balance changing cultural interests and community needs.

For example, Japan integrated the Mahayana Buddhist teachings with its indigenous Shinto traditions, a Japanization process of Buddhism, which arrived from India through China and Korea. The cow-worshipping and non-beef-eating Indians welcome McDonald’s – the world’s largest beef-based food chain – and enjoy Maharaja Mac with 100 percent lamb burger and McVeg-

gie, which come with lettuce, tomatoes, onion, cheese, mango pickles, and special Indian sauce on a sesame bun. In the midst of the subtle Hanization process, Communist China benefits from capitalism with so-called “Confucian characteristics,” a Chinese version to invoke the national Confucian heritage and to glocalize through the benefits of global economic forces.

In his book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Thomas Friedman, the Pulitzer Prize winning *New York Times* columnist, wrote:

I define healthy glocalization as the ability of a culture, when it encounters other strong cultures, to absorb influences that naturally fit into and can enrich that culture, to resist those things that are truly alien, and to compartmentalize those things that, while different, can nevertheless be enjoyed and celebrated as different.<sup>3</sup>

The entire process of glocalization is to assimilate certain aspects of globalization. Friedman observed that global forces acculturate local communities in a way that they can enhance and modernize their societies without overpowering them.

Nonetheless, glocalization occurs in relatively open societies where freedom is valued. Even in China, the Special Economic Zones have more freedom and liberal trade laws than the rest of China.<sup>4</sup> In fact, glocalization is a product of freedom. Without freedom, local communities or people could not rapidly respond to globalization in order to glocalize.<sup>5</sup>

For instance, the island nation of Sri Lanka became the first adaptor of globalization in South Asia with the introduction of open economic policies and trade liberalization in 1977. In an article, I offered the following characterization of the complicated and complex process of glocalization on the island that departed from the years of socialist regime:

Sri Lanka represents a mix of a first wave (agricultural), second wave (industrialized), and third wave (information) nation that is attempting to adapt into the rapidly changing global economy. Policy-elites, who live on the virtual realities of “informatized” world, worked with the industrialized framework of East Asia, yet the beneficiar-

ies of these policies are still living in the first wave of agricultural rural society, which is structurally rigid for cultural and socio-ethnic reasons for centuries.<sup>6</sup>

With greater economic and political freedom, Sri Lanka embraced a laissez-faire capitalistic approach to accelerate economic growth and to alleviate poverty that was a result of failed inward-looking, self-sufficiency-oriented economic policies of the pre-1977 socialist government. Within a few years of the implementation of open society policies, a resilient economy began to emerge, from which vantage point I explained the importance of glocalization this way:

The rapid globalization of world trade and open market policies is being painfully interfaced with local economy while creating a set of moral, human, social, and ecological externalities (implications). This interplay of global forces at local communities is called “glocalization,” not globalization.<sup>7</sup>

Classical economic philosophers like Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and John Stuart Mill had envisioned a laissez-faire economic system that promised us a greater freedom of consumer choice and economic efficiency that would benefit all. In the 20th Century, another British economist, John Maynard Keynes, in his 1920 book, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, characterized “the internationalization” of the social and economic life of a middle class Londoner prior to WWI:

The inhabitant of London could order by telephone, sipping his morning tea in bed, the various products of the whole earth, in such quantity as he might see fit, and reasonably expect their early delivery upon his doorstep. He could at the same moment and by the same means adventure his wealth in the natural resources and new enterprises of any quarter of the world, and share, without exertion or even trouble, in their prospective fruits and advantages.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the progress of telecommunications, Keynes witnessed a relatively free world where Londoners could travel

around the globe without restrictions. Keynes wrote of a Londoner:

He could secure forthwith, if he wished it, cheap and comfortable means of transit to any country or climate without passport or other formality . . . and could then proceed abroad to foreign quarters, without knowledge of their religion, language, or customs. . . . But, most important of all, he regarded this state of affairs as normal, certain, and permanent, except in the direction of further improvement.<sup>9</sup>

Representing a laissez-faire worldview, Keynes further elaborated about that middle class Londoner's world of freedom:

The projects and politics of militarism and imperialism, of racial and cultural rivalries, of monopolies, restrictions, and exclusion, which were to play the serpent to this paradise, were little more than the amusements of his daily newspaper.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, WWI, the Great Depression, and WWII had changed the halcyon era of globalization. Nevertheless, these forces did not stop the desire for human freedom even in the midst of the Cold War era.

Without a doubt, these economic philosophers could not visualize a global community with the World Wide Web (WWW) and the Internet economy that made time and distance significantly smaller than a century ago. With the information revolution and other technological advances, Keynes' idea of "internationalization" now accelerates faster in globalization, transforming local communities and islands like Sri Lanka, empowering individuals with consumer choice, and seeking greater freedom and equality with the Internet economy.

### **Voyage to Know Thyself**

During the 2004 spring voyage around the world with the Semester at Sea program at the University of Pittsburgh, I kept an open mind to examine and better understand the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of global forces in various coun-

tries in the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, and Asia (Figure 1.1).

Aboard the floating shipboard community on the high seas, I taught courses in development economics, international political economy, and economics of public policy. In countries and at ports of call, my students and I carried out a number of field research projects, primarily on global development issues, international human security, and American foreign relations. With these observations, we re-examined our old adage “think global, act local” and began to re-think the interactions between local and global, micro and macro.



**Figure 1.1:** *Universe Explorer* served as the “floating campus” for the voyage around the world.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> From a tribute to American poet Robert Frost, President Kennedy delivered the speech at Amherst College in Massachusetts on October 27, 1963.

<sup>2</sup> A group of Japanese economists first used the term “glocalization” (dochakuka in Japanese) in articles, which appeared in the *Harvard*

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*Business Review* in the late 1980s. Professor Roland Robertson at the University of Aberdeen (formerly with the University of Pittsburgh) ventured into areas of comparative sociology and realized that the use of the term *dochakuka* meant that the products of Japanese origin should be localized to indigenous taste and interests. Professor Robertson later produced a number of scholarly works to popularize the term: See “Globalisation or Glocalisation,” *Journal of International Communication*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1994, pp. 33-52. “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities*, (London: Sage, 1995). Today, the term “glocalization” is used in different languages: Spanish glocalización, German Glokalisierung, French glocalisation, Italian glocalizzazione, Portuguese glocalização, and Polish glocalizacja.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), p. 295.

<sup>4</sup> In 1978, when Deng Xiaoping became the leader, he ended collective farming and initiated a “responsibility system,” which gave farmers more freedom to choose what crops to grow and sell for profit. In the Special Economic Zones, there is greater economic freedom. The people of Hong Kong and Macau maintain their political and economic freedom after reverting to China.

<sup>5</sup> With the usage of the Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW), we are “Googalized” – or in a way “globalized” – in the digital world. In a matter of a few seconds, one can easily find personal information or establish a record of activities among most of the Internet users and others as well.

<sup>6</sup> See a case study of “glocalization” in Sri Lankan agriculture by Patrick Mendis, “Food Security, Subsidies, Energy, and the Environment: A Process of ‘Glocalization’ in Sri Lanka,” *Energy & Environment*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2001, p. 68.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>8</sup> John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1920), pp. 10-11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.