

Flat world



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In view of Thomas Friedman's work "It's a flat world, after all", the entire planet is turning into a global village due to a rapid growth of information technology. There are 10 major contributors, which were also named "flateners" by Friedman, that made the playing field level. Undoubtedly, current sophistication in technology has provided us great access to internet, a virtual platform where people are capable of communicating, sharing knowledge, or performing online activities.

Globalization appears to have collapsed the concerns of space and time by outsourcing cheap labor from another continent to undertake the same task but with equal or better performance. To some extent, Friedman has brought about an assumption of "flat world". However, such hypotheses have been debated by a number of scholars. This essay will focus on the weaknesses existing in this article. As a matter of fact, the "flat world" theory is based upon a viewpoint from developed countries. In this regard, it would be too subjective to be applicable in every corner of the world.

First of all, the article misinterprets the concept between flatness and fairness. Telecommunication, one of the typical drivers of globalization, has improved proximity by connecting individuals from different places thus a video conference can be hosted. In a long term, Friedman believed such facility will be widespread so that the playing field is being leveled attributed to knowledge sharing. Yet, Leamer (2007, p97) argued, in the last 30 years, the worldwide competition has never been leveled even though internet has a wide array of knowledge.

From 1980 to 2000, the challenge from the third world, such as China and India, caused no threat to Americans' leading position. The inequality in

global income distribution has implied a non-existence of fairness in playing field. Leamer elaborated the logic of “ playing field” is centered on “ fairness”. Compared to the developing nations, the US has been leading over decades. This field is naturally spiky rather flat. The “ Flat world” foreseen by Friedman is a downward vision, but considering the social status of developing countries, we cannot all be winners. As a result of globalization, inequality was created among communities.

Merely some places (US and EU) enjoy economic prosperity, whereas others fall into valleys. Secondly, as opposed to the belief of “ investment knows no boundaries”, the statistics indicated the globalization’s future would be less optimistic than Friedman expected. Ghernawat (2007, p58) raised a “ 10% presumption” in a report that focuses on capital investment around the globe. “ 10% presumption” is a research aimed to find out whether 10 per cent of all the capital being invested around the world is conducted by companies outside home countries. In fact, the findings overthrew the thesis of “ world integration”.

The total amount of the world’s capital formation generated from foreign direct investment (FDI) was not even close to 10%. In this matter, over 90% of capital earnings around the world are still from local investments. The reason behind this domestic-oriented investment was a strong sense of national defense. Refer to Friedman’s article; he applied his experience in Infosys as a notion to “ flat world”. Nevertheless, Indian is where US firm outsourced employees for the purpose of lower labor costs, along with political and geographic constraints imposed on these foreign programmers who are unable to be exempt from origin of employers’ country.

Thirdly, the event of Berlin Wall's collapse symbolizes the falling of barriers around the world hence globalization starts evolving and developing in a state of barrier-free. Wyner (2007) concluded many barriers have gone down after 1989, but globalization has led to more barriers and prevent the world from flatness. In particular, there are significant differences remain among marketplaces located in various parts of this planet. No universal structure can be adopted in every country, in order to enter a new market, investing company has to bear the barrier of local regulation thereby mitigate the loss from non-compliance.

Aside from legislation, cultural shock constitutes another obstacle. In the early 1990s, the motor giant Ford had received welcoming comments with respect of a new model. However, the sale in Mexico was extremely poor compared to other places. After a thorough investigation, the report identified the brand of this model implied " doesn't go" in Mexican. Cultural contradictions are also portrayed in multi-national corporations where accommodate employees from various backgrounds. What challenges " Flat World" is how to reconcile the differences so as to make individuals collaborate as a whole.

Lastly, Friedman pointed the developing countries got a free ride in the case of the digital railroads. It is a genuine fact that the third world does absorb a great deal of knowledge under the effect of globalization. However, digesting new knowledge does not happen overnight, but a time-consuming process. While people are learning the new things, the leading countries are not waiting for the rest to catch up. Instead, they are reshaping and refining themselves by implementing fresh information.

From a perspective of the third world, globalization has stretched the gap between two levels. A fair playing field is never feasible. In Prusak's (2006) opinion, "flat world" concept discussed by Friedman is based on the convergence of technology, establishing a virtual world with unrestricted access to information. Knowledge and information are not the same patterns that can be placed at the same level. The understanding of knowledge is information assimilation that involves experiment and experience. The learning process cannot be accelerated via information technology.

The article "It's a Flat World After All" has recognized globalization as the driver to the widespread of information in terms of advanced technology. However, Thomas Friedman had come across a few misconceptions when attempted to elaborate the world would be flat attributed to globalization. According to the previous discussions, the flatness may not be achieved because of the barriers that cause irreconcilable variances across nations. The globe is round. "Flat world" is lack of convincing power if it is solely based upon a perspective from developed country. Overall, the world will remain spiky.