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Book Symposia

Thomas L. Freidman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999).

John Gray, *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (New York: The New Press, 1998).

Deirdre McCloskey*

If John Gray's recent book *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (1998) is the best case to be made against globalization, then the prosecution is in trouble. It's a fair test I think. The book is well written. Gray, a British political philosopher gone journalistic, is never clotted or obscure. The argument is always at least intelligent. Gray is no dope. He offers the best brief for an exceptionally bad case.

What makes the book tiresome, what makes one want to skip whole chapters, and read topic sentences, six a page, is its relentless editorializing. The standard of proof never rises above that required in the average *Economist* editorial. Historical nonsense, economic *non sequitur*, political special pleading crowd the page. As in the *Economist*, a salient fact or canny judgment occasionally intrudes. But imagine a decade's worth of editorials slapped between covers. The level of passion required is too great for any but the most self-satisfied ideologue happening to agree precisely with Gray. As Strunk and White put it in their classic little book on writing, "To offer gratuitous opinions is to imply that the demand for them is brisk." If you hate globalization, hate free markets, hate Milton Friedman, hate the United States, hate the Enlightenment [*sic*], then you

* Visiting Professor of Humanities, University of Illinois at Chicago; Professor of Economics and History, University of Iowa. Author of *The Rhetoric of Economics* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); *Knowledge and Persuasion in Economics* (Cambridge University Press, 1994); *If You're So Smart: The Narrative of Economic Expertise* (University of Chicago Press, 1990); and, most recently, *Crossing: A Memoir* (University of Chicago Press, 1999).

Gray's opinions, and wish to buy them in Britain in the spring of 1998, the book is Postscript commending itself for prescient market passion Gray is not to be under-stand the contrary, he is something older, a conservative intent on "protection." Tradition is our best guide. Thus Gray writes: "The former Soviet Union embodied Utopia," rival to the "Washington consensus" (the drink and cocaine, one might say). Gray advocates "indigenous types of capitalism" any western [and especially American] European conservative tradition since the shift to freedom in the modern sense of the end of the modern family, for example, in the right to work and to divorce. Almost every move from indissoluble marriage to the Japanese (artels) gets an approving nod. One is disappointed not to go all the way and praise the burning

of this heavenly city. In making a good society, security and the control of economic risk" is a consideration. Can we achieve security and not have achieved it since the 18th century, the end of the market, leaving us with a diverse set of activities? No, no, no: anything but the end of a mind of the numerous former East European Communist. "The natural counterpart of security is a politics of insecurity." In the name of security, Gray ends monopolistic retailing in Japan, and democratic governments in China, looks at the Mexico of old as "an exceptionally free country," and has a good word to say for the fruits which contest the belief that modernization means further westernization.

What reaction coming from? From the profound insecurity that has characterized Western intellectuals all of a piece—Dickens in *Hard Times* writes with alarm, Sinclair Lewis in *Babbalanza* the European bourgeoisie, and our John Gray appeals to the English, all of them outraged by the novelty, the sheer, horrible instability of it all.

Gray's main man is the Hungarian-American journalist and economic historian Karl Polanyi (1886-1964), who bulks larger in the book than the scant four citations in the index would lead one to expect. Gray is Polanyi Redux.¹ His argument is identical to Polanyi's in *The Great Transformation* (1944). Free-market capitalism is said above all to be unnatural, peculiar to modern England (Gray extends this to the "Anglo-Saxon" countries). For page after page Gray retails Polanyi's historical howlers unimproved, such as that Parliamentary enclosure created large estates and proletarianized the workers in the countryside (on the contrary, both large estates and proletarian farm workers were fully formed a century before the enclosures; M.M. Poston long ago showed that in the 13th and 14th centuries half the population of the countryside subsisted mainly on wage work, not serf land) or that the New Poor Law created the labor market (on the contrary, labor was marketed in early medieval times). "Mid-nineteenth century England," writes Gray in words redolent of his anti-capitalist master, "was the subject of a far-reaching experiment in social engineering . . . to free economic life from social and political control . . . by breaking up the more socially rooted markets." "Social rooting" is connected in Gray's mind to diversity of culture. Nowadays, Gray laments, the World Trade Organization, the IMF, and the OECD are intent on McDonaldizing the world. Gray's is a global anxiety about invisible hands, and especially the American hand. Karl Polanyi meets George Soros.

"Democracy and the free market are rivals, not allies," *contra* Milton Friedman, because people want Protection. The "protective" role is "the *raison d'être* of governments everywhere." I'm from the government and I'm here to protect you. Like Polanyi, Gray notes the core political tension of laissez faire: "the swift waxing and waning of industries and livelihoods," he argues, "triggers political countermovements that challenge the very ground rules" that produced them in the first place. (The countermovement, by the way, is what Polanyi meant by "the great transformation"; Gray commits the usual error of thinking that the industrial revolution itself is what Polanyi meant by the phrase). It is, as Gray notes, Schumpeter's point, and Daniel Bell's, this ideological contradiction within capitalism: "Capitalism," wrote Schumpeter in justification of his passivity in the face of socialism's triumph c. 1945, "creates . . . a mentality and

1. See Santhi Heejebu and Deirdre McCloskey, *The Reproving of Karl Polanyi* (forthcoming).

a style of life incompatible with its own fundamental . . . institutions."²

Gray has notably benign view of regulation. In his imagined Well Regulated Economy of Ye Olden Times, "the markets were regulated so that their workings were less inimicable to social stability": thus the social stability of preventing free movement of labor that Adam Smith railed against; or the social stability of blockaded entry to retailing which clogs the economies of Europe and Japan. Gray is an extreme Keynesian, a new mercantilist, a Patrick Buchanan of the lamp. To fend off "a late modern anarchy" (his view of free markets) he looks forward to "global regulation" (in the end this vague promise has dissolved into mere bitter preaching against American hegemony, for Gray has no world government in mind). "The reality of the late twentieth-century world market is that it is ungovernable by either sovereign states or multinational corporations." Then how is "global regulation" going to be possible? We are never told. What Gray relies on is a collapse—under his own prodding, one supposes—of the Washington consensus (namely, that the American way should become the world's way, a vision he correctly identifies with Wilsonian idealism and the United-Fruit imperialism).

What is strange is that he nowhere acknowledges what Adam Smith taught in his book inventing political economy, that "protection" and "regulation" normally mean subsidies for a few politically agile merchants. He defends the Japanese corner store as the glue of urban life, but fails to note that it constitutes a government-protected monopoly for the owner. He wants protection but does not specify how we are to be protected from the protectors. *Quis custodiet custodiem?* Louis Brandeis' Supreme Court brief in *Muller v. Oregon* (1908) "showed" statistically that women could not possibly work more than 10 hours a day, and swayed the court to revise the doctrine of *Lochner v. New York* (1905) that the market should judge. Brandeis and other Progressives "protected" women. Thanks very much, guys. But the law's protection then made supervisory positions for women impossible for decades after, and kept women in unskilled jobs long past what the market wished. Most people think that American workers have benefited from protection. Did we get the 40-hour week because richer workers demanded more leisure hours, trading off pay for hours? No, the conservative

2. JOSEPH SCHUMPETER, CAPITALISM, SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY 55 (1943); see Daniel Bell, THE CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS OF CAPITALISM (1976).

progressives say. We got it because and Walter Reuther. Do people have nological change has made them vast great grandparents? No. We got it b ing codes introduced in the early 20th standard of living in rich countries about electricity and plastics and m corporate organization and technical from the government enforcing a high

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3. KARL POLANYI, THE GREAT TRANSFORMATI

4. See JOHN MUELLER, CAPITALISM, DEMOC GOOD GROCERY (1999). See also D.N. McCloskey, Scholar 177-191 (Spring 1994).

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progressives say. We got it because of the eight-hour movement and Walter Reuther. Do people have good housing because technological change has made them vastly richer than their great-great grandparents? No. We got it because of zoning and building codes introduced in the early 20th century. Does the modern standard of living in rich countries come from being smarter about electricity and plastics and machine tools and steel and corporate organization and technical education? No. It comes from the government enforcing a higher standard.

Gray thinks what anti-marketeers have thought these two centuries past, that technological advance does not depend on free markets. So we can protect local tradition and have our technological cake, too. "Technology-driven modernization of the world's economic life will go ahead regardless of the fate of a worldwide free market." On the same grounds Soviet Communism insisted that technology could detach from the free-market environment which spawned it. In Marxist theory and in John Gray the fruits of the bourgeoisie can be plucked with no loss to the tree. One doubts it.

The notion of "social markets" touted in Gray is based again on Polanyi: under *laissez faire*, Polanyi claimed, "instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system."³ The claim is mistaken. Markets *everywhere* depend on society. Free-market capitalism is no exception. Contrary to the Adam Smith tie ideologues on the one side and Gray and his anti-capitalist friends on the other, markets are nothing like amoral. They work through structures of ethical integrity.⁴

"America is no longer a bourgeois society," Gray writes. "It has become a divided society, in which an anxious majority is wedged between an underclass that has no hope and an overclass that denies any civic obligations. In the United States today the political economy of the free market and the moral economy of bourgeois civilization have diverged—in all likelihood permanently." What is true in this is that the ideology of Country Club Republicanism ("Hey, I've got mine") has got mixed up in people's minds with the ethical requirements of a market society. The men in the Adam Smith ties have not read a page of Adam Smith, and so believe that we can get along with

3. KARL POLANYI, *THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION* 12 (1944).

4. See JOHN MUELLER, *CAPITALISM, DEMOCRACY, AND RALPH'S PRETTY GOOD GROCERY* (1999). See also D.N. McCloskey, *Bourgeois Virtue* 63 *Amer. Scholar* 177-191 (Spring 1994).

lief to Thomas Friedman's *The Lexus and
 standing Globalization* (1999). Friedman
New York Times, with stints in the Holy
 signed to cover just what he's reporting in
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 at we get in Gray, Friedman tells us facts
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The result is the “Fast World,” a creation of electronics (which Gray by contrast characteristically ignores), “super empowering” individuals and markets (that is collections of individuals). Friedman notes repeatedly that it is not really corporations that govern the world, and less and less is it governments: it is individual investors, wise or foolish. The outcome is similar to that in the late 19th century, though immensely quickened. In 1900 people could move without passports and invest wherever they pleased. The internet has made people virtually as mobile, and more: computer programming is now done in India. “Joining the global economy and plugging into the Electronic Herd is the equivalent of taking your country

public . . . [The 'stockholders'] vote every hour, every day through their mutual funds." Friedman argues what seems more and more to be correct, that few governments can stand up to such pressure. It's not revolution, it's "globulation," revolution from beyond. Thus: "China's going to have freedom of the press. Globulation will drive it. Oh, China's leaders don't know it yet, but they are being pushed straight in that direction."

The leading image in the book is of "falling walls," "the demise of this walled-off world," the Berlin Wall being merely the most literal. Equally important to his story as the end of the Cold War is the breaking of the "walls" of capital controls and informational monopolies (one thinks of the doomed government monopolies of communication, as in Belarus or China, evadable with a cheap uplink to satellites or an internet connection by telephone). The "three democratizations" (of finance, of technology, and of information) have created a "Golden Straitjacket," that is, a suit of clothes for modern global capitalism, one size fits all. As Lee Hong Koo, former prime minister of Korea, put it, "The big decisions today are whether you have a democracy or not and whether you have an open economy or not . . . But once you've made those big choices, politics becomes just political engineering to implement decisions in the narrow space allowed you within this system." "The Cold War," writes Friedman, "had the Mao suit, the Nehru jacket, the Russian fur. Globalization has only the Golden Straitjacket." You can complain about it, in the style of John Gray, "but if you think that you can resist . . . without paying an increasingly steep price, or without building an increasingly high wall, you are deluding yourself."

"To begin with," Friedman says when he comes to policy, "we need to proceed slowly and humbly." A refreshing attitude. "As for those who have proposed that we put a little 'sand in the gears' of this global economy to slow it down a bit, my response would be that I don't think it is ever very wise to put sand in the gears of a machine when you barely know where the gears are," and quotes Alan Greenspan as telling him in 1998 that he, Greenspan, had "learned more about how this new international system works in the last twelve months than in the previous twenty years." If forced to policy Friedman would call himself an "Integrationist Social Safety Netter," that is, in favor of world market integration (as Dick Gephardt and Ross Perot are not) but also in favor of using the government (that capable and honest and transparent institution) to help the victims, using the gains

from integration (as Newt Gingrich and McCloskey, are not).

Protectionism comes in a lot of guises. Nowadays is what the Pope said a vanguard. Globalization is a threat to worker welfare, witness Gray—often tied to that old mentalism. What's supposed to be better? American wages in Thailand or Indonesia? How low the American EPA's rules in Indonesia? United-Autoworkers-style labor relations? I excuse *me*, but modern economic growth has been done more for workers and the environment than government inspectors, regulators, and accountants. We Americans are rich not because of trust or the Occupational Health and Safety Act, because on the whole we have let capitalism do what we were externally a protectionist court. The loss of foreign trade in national expenditures is a small market we allowed little "protectionism."

The same enrichment will be the result in the next fifty years. In fact it has been the case since the Harvard economist Jeffrey Williamson have argued. The big rise in global income since 1800—yes, *global* income—despite a few fluctuations (so much for Malthus) is not attributable to any of its forms, domestic or international trade. Hurrah for economic orthodoxy.

Even in the short run a policy of liberalization in Thailand or Indonesia or Mexico is not a bad thing. Pope and John Gray and Barry Commoner would like to believe. Nike pays top Thai wages, International Labor the environment at the express invitation of the G.M. accepts local working conditions in order to give workers a better deal than the one they would have had? But the main point is that in the process Indonesians and Mexicans are brought up to a level with incomes per head that permit adequate families, expanded education, and all the other human scope that modern economic growth has brought to South Korea. It's hardly "exploitation," but it is a palpable viewing with alarm. I know it's a terrible thing to see the stockholders earn profits in exchange for the nasty profits the who

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Protectionism comes in a lot of forms. The most popular nowadays is what the Pope said a while ago in St. Louis, that globalization is a threat to worker welfare. You hear it a lot—witness Gray—often tied to that Son of Socialism, environmentalism. What's supposed to be bad is that Nike doesn't pay American wages in Thailand or International Paper doesn't follow the American EPA's rules in Indonesia or G.M. doesn't have United-Autoworkers-style labor relations in Mexico. Well, excuse *me*, but modern economic growth in its global form has done more for workers and the environment than any army of government inspectors, regulators, customs officers, or IRS accountants. We Americans are rich not because of unions or anti-trust or the Occupational Health and Safety Administration but because on the whole we have let capitalism work. Until 1945 we were externally a protectionist country, but with a tiny share of foreign trade in national expenditure. In our enormous internal market we allowed little "protection."

The same enrichment will be the story of the globe in the next fifty years. In fact it has been the story now for 200 years, as the Harvard economist Jeffrey Williamson and his associates have argued. The big rise in global income per head since 1800—yes, *global* income—despite a fivefold increase in population (so much for Malthus) is not attributable to protection in any of its forms, domestic or international. Hurrah for free trade. Hurrah for economic orthodoxy. Hurrah for the Lexus.

Even in the short run a policy of letting capitalism work in Thailand or Indonesia or Mexico is not so obviously evil as the Pope and John Gray and Barry Commoner would have you believe. Nike pays top Thai wages, International Paper assaults the environment at the express invitation of the Indonesian, and G.M. accepts local working conditions in order to give Mexican workers a better deal than the one they have now. What's the beef? But the main point is that in the long run the Thais and Indonesians and Mexicans are brought into a world economy with incomes per head that permit adequate nutrition, small families, expanded education, and all the other increases in human scope that modern economic growth has brought to, say, South Korea. It's hardly "exploitation," hardly grounds for papal viewing with alarm. I know it's a terrible thing that in the meantime the stockholders earn profits. But there you have it: in exchange for the nasty profits the whole world becomes rich.

The capitalist deal is: Let me make profits and I'll make you rich.

Globalization encourages the capitalist engine of growth. If people understood how generous the engine has been they would have less enthusiasm for protectionism or socialism or environmentalist or economic nationalism in any of their varied forms. Most educated people believe that the gains to income from capitalism's triumph have been modest, that the poor have been left behind, that the Third World (should we start calling it the Second?) has been immiserized in aid of the enrichment of the First, that population growth *must* be controlled, that diminishing returns on the whole has been the main force in world economic history since 1800. All these notions are factually erroneous. But you will find all of them in the mind of the average professor of political philosophy.

Angus Maddison is an economic historian born in Britain, who just left a professorship in northern Holland, who lives in Southern France, and whose main work has been sponsored by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris. His astonishing compilation of national income statistics worldwide, *Monitoring the World Economy, 1820-1992* (1995) gives a way of measuring the generosity of the capitalist engine. The central fact is well illustrated by the United States. From 1820 to 1994 the real per capita income of the United States increased by. . .

Well, go ahead, take a guess. What would you say? What is the rough magnitude of modern economic growth, 1820-1994, from Monroe to Clinton? What are we really talking about when we claim that globalization offers the world's a poor a chance to be better off? Take a guess, testing how close you come to the educated person's misunderstanding of the capitalist engine.

Fifty percent? A hundred percent, a doubling since the days of the Federalists? All right, 200 percent, a tripling?

No. *Sixteen hundred* percent. An increase by a factor of 17. In 1820 the average American, slave and free, produced \$1290, expressed in 1900 dollars, a little below the present average for Africa. In 1995 she earned . . . \$22,500. You can say all you wish about the sick hurry of modern life, and how we can't see the sunset in Los Angeles (in fact the environment has markedly *improved* in the past century: air is cleaner; more people can get to the countryside). But the factor of 17 represents an enormous freeing of people from drudgery and fear and, yes, insecurity.

Maddison's tables can be arranged this way:

From 1820-1992 *The World Economy: A Long-Run Perspective*
From a Bangladeshi Living to

Year	World GDP/capita In 1990 \$s (p. 228)	Comparable country now (pp. 194-5)
1820	\$650	Bangladesh
1870	900	(below Africa)
1913	1500	Pakistan
1950	2100	Philippines
1992	5100	Mexico

Source: A. Maddison, *Monitoring the World Economy*

That's a very good thing, to go from the level of hope. Notice the acceleration (higher in the past ten years)—except for deglobalization, of protection, of foreign notions of economic nationalism now receding of the wars that come from the mercantile the East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, tree instead of the Lexus.

As the first industrial nation and the Britain went from \$1800 in 1820 to doubling in the face of exploding population the half century in which the Europe against free markets. British income per others until the New Worlds exceeded it the US in 1905, Australia in 1906: late back into protectionist comfort). The catch up until after World War II—all the complaining that Britain was "failing" Britain wobbles upward with the other countries in a band plus or minus a few the average—excepting the big, rich nations consensus on external and internal free trade 30 percent above the rest. So much for economic the "Anglo-Saxon" leaders of industrialization.

Japan in 1870 was roughly at the present level of income per head, the same as Brazil it had attained the level of US income per (and was double Brazil's). In 1994 it income 10 years before (four times convergence through imitation, saving, etc.

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*From 1820-1992 The World Has Moved
From a Bangladeshi Living to a Mexican One*

Year	World GDP/capita In 1990 \$s (p. 228)	Comparable country now (pp. 194-206)	World population in billions of people (p. 226)
1820	\$650	Bangladesh	1.1 billion
1870	900	(below Africa)	1.3
1913	1500	Pakistan	1.8
1950	2100	Philippines	2.5
1992	5100	Mexico	5.4

Source: A. Maddison, *Monitoring the World Economy, 1820-1992* (1995).

That's a very good thing, to go from the level of desperation to the level of hope. Notice the acceleration (which has ramped up higher in the past ten years)—except for 1913-1950, that era of deglobalization, of protection, of foreign policy governed by notions of economic nationalism now recommended by Gray, and of the wars that come from the mercantilism of *Lebensraum* and the East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, the politics of the olive tree instead of the Lexus.

As the first industrial nation and the champion of free trade Britain went from \$1800 in 1820 to \$3300 in 1870, nearly doubling in the face of exploding population—during precisely the half century in which the European avant garde turned against free markets. British income per head was above all others until the New Worlds exceeded it (New Zealand in 1903, the US in 1905, Australia in 1906: later the Antipodes slipped back into protectionist comfort). The rest of Europe did not catch up until after World War II—all the while the avant garde complaining that Britain was “failing” economically. Now Britain wobbles upward with the other advanced industrial countries in a band plus or minus a few percentage points from the average—excepting the big, rich nation of the Washington consensus on external and internal free trade, which persists at 30 percent above the rest. So much for economic “failure” among the “Anglo-Saxon” leaders of industrialization.

Japan in 1870 was roughly at the present-day Bangladeshi level of income per head, the same as Brazil's in 1870. By 1930 it had attained the level of US income per head 60 years before (and was double Brazil's). In 1994 it had attained the US income 10 years before (four times Brazil's). It was a convergence through imitation, saving, education, work. Which

then its former colony South Korea repeated. Korea's income in 1952 was a desperate \$860 in 1990 prices. Now it is \$10,000.

If we can hold off the protectionism of Gray and company the whole world can be rich. Recently some economists have become fascinated by a sandbox game called models of "endogenous growth." The idea is that countries are like trees, growing from within, constrained by their pasts. It's an old idea, a descendant of the stage theories that have entranced European intellectuals since the 18th century. By contrast, economic historians have long realized that a country-by-country analysis of growth is wrong and that the stages of economic growth make no sense. The reason stages make no sense is that the "trees" can borrow mature foliage from each other: they do not have to grow their own. If India can restrain its Gandhian impulse to throttle the market it can adopt American ways of retailing and Japanese ways of manufacturing and German ways of chemical brewing and enter the modern world of human scope. India does *not* need to repeat the stages through which Britain and France have traveled. Countries are *not* "like trees" or "like people growing up."

There is no racial or cultural reason why India cannot in five or ten decades have an American standard of living. And there are a billion reasons why it should, and can, if it will don the Golden Straitjacket. John Gray's protectionist vision is pessimistic, foreseeing a world in which political elites have chosen an Indian Way or an African Way and left their populations impoverished. Thomas Friedman's vision by contrast is optimistic, as is mine. He and I see the 21st century as a grand alternative to the Century of Protection (and Slaughter) just concluded. We see people voting with their feet to escape from some village elder's idea of how to live, or some London School of Economics graduate's idea of protecting Indian folkways. We think it unlikely that governments can stop globalization. For which great thanks onto the Lord.

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Globalization has replaced the Cold War as the unifying theme of our era. Absent another great war or some type of eco-

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nomie catastrophe, it has the potential to bring about the end of the world and even the next millennium. Not surprisingly, one can read the news without finding a political pundit commenting on this trend.

For those seeking an introduction to the subject, the books by Thomas L. Friedman offer divergent interpretations and fascinating insights. Friedman is a *New York Times* foreign affairs correspondent and a free-market globalist. For him globalization is the spread of free-market capitalism to virtually every corner of the globe. The rules of the new system, he says, are deregulation, and privatization. He views the consequences of globalization as "the spread of the Big Macs to iMacs to Mickey Mouse—on a global scale." Friedman generally adheres to the position that globalization is our "main hope for salvation."

Integrated global financial markets—disciplining nations and bringing a revolution to the world—something Friedman calls "globalization." Friedman values "stability, predictability, transparency, and the free transfer and protect private property from confiscation." To achieve those objectives, Friedman argues that developing countries become more transparent. In accepting the constraints of the "golden straitjacket"—Friedman says nations must accept the discipline for war-making. Using the spread of McDonald's as a proxy for the power of globalization, he says that both India and China had McDonald's had fought each other since each got McDonald's." Of course, Friedman quickly demolished that theory, but Friedman's argument is an attempt to prove the strength of his rule.

In British historian John Gray's account, globalization is a powerful antidote to Friedman's bullishness. Gray argues that the "Washington consensus" that the world must embrace a global free market and democratic capitalism is a myth. He thinks that the spread of economic globalization will undermine the global laissez-faire regime. Without

Press, 1979); *Opening America's Market: U.S. Foreign Trade Policy* (University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and with Richard Brinkman, *U.S. Trade Policy: History, Theory, and Practice* (Sharpe, 1990). His book *Revisiting U.S. Trade Policy: A New Agenda* will be published by the Ohio University Press in spring 2000. He will be President of the International Trade and Finance Association in 2001.