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*THE GLOBALIZED WORLD IN
THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY*

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Friedman

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Thomas L. Friedman has won the Pulitzer Prize three times for his work at *The New York Times*, where he serves as the foreign affairs columnist. He is the author of three previous books, all of them bestsellers: *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, winner of the National Book Award for nonfiction; *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*; and *Longitudes and Attitudes: Exploring the World After September 11*. In 2005 *The World Is Flat* was given the first Financial Times and Goldman Sachs Business Book of the Year Award, and Friedman was named one of America's Best Leaders by *U.S. News & World Report*. He lives in Bethesda, Maryland, with his family.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thomas L. Friedman is one of the world's most respected and influential journalists, renowned for his expertise on international affairs and economic issues. Educated in Boston, Jerusalem, Cairo and Oxford, he joined *The New York Times* as a reporter in 1981. Since then he has won the Pulitzer Prize three times for his work there and has travelled all over the globe. Friedman is also the author of the international bestselling books *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (the winner of the US National Book Award, now used as a basic textbook on the Middle East in many schools and universities), *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, his first acclaimed book on globalization, and *Longitudes and Attitudes*, a collection of reportage and reflections following 11 September 2001. He lives in Bethesda, Maryland, with his family.



THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

THE WORLD
IS FLAT

*The Globalized World in
the Twenty-First Century*

UPDATED AND EXPANDED



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*To Matt and Kay
and to Ron*



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Introduction to the Paperback Edition

Why go through all the trouble of writing a second expanded and updated version of *The World Is Flat* only a year after the first expanded version was published and a mere two years after the original? I can offer a very brief answer: because I could and because I had to. Precisely because of the powerful technological forces detailed in this book, the publishing industry has sped up and it is now possible to revamp a whole book relatively easily. That is what I mean when I say I could. The reason I must do it is fourfold. First, the forces flattening the world didn't stop when the first edition of this book was published in April 2005, and I wanted to keep tracking them and weaving them into my overall thesis. Second, I wanted to answer one of the questions I was asked most often by parents while I was traveling around the country to speak about the book: "Okay, Mr. Friedman, thank you for telling us that the world is flat—now what do I tell my kids?" In the 2.0 edition, I added a lot more material on the subject of what is the "right" education to access the new middle-class jobs, and I have added still more in this 3.0 edition. Third, I found many of the comments from readers and reviewers both thoughtful and useful, and I wanted to absorb some of the best of them into the book. And finally, in this 3.0 edition, I have added two new chapters to deal with themes related to the flat world that were not apparent to me before but now seem extremely important. One deals with how to be a political activist and social entrepreneur in a flat world. The other deals with a more troubling phenomenon—how we manage our reputations in a world



where we are all becoming publishers and therefore all becoming public figures.

This book has triggered a cottage industry of articles with variations on the title “The World Is Not Flat.” I have two reactions to these: (1) No kidding. (2) Whenever you opt for a big metaphor like “The World Is Flat,” you trade a certain degree of academic precision for a much larger degree of explanatory power. Of course the world is not flat. But it isn’t round anymore, either. I have found that using the simple notion of flatness to describe how more people can plug, play, compete, connect, and collaborate with more equal power than ever before—which is what is happening in the world—really helps people who are trying to understand the essential impact of all the technological changes coming together today. Not only do I make no apologies for it, I think that with every passing year, it becomes more true and more useful in explaining in a simple way what is happening. My use of the word “flat” doesn’t mean equal (as in “equal incomes”) and never did. It means equalizing, because the flattening forces are empowering more and more individuals today to reach farther, faster, deeper, and cheaper than ever before, and that is equalizing power—and equalizing opportunity, by giving so many more people the tools and ability to connect, compete, and collaborate. In my view, this flattening of the playing field is the most important thing happening in the world today, and those who get caught up in measuring globalization purely by trade statistics—or as a purely economic phenomenon instead of one that affects everything from individual empowerment to culture to how hierarchical institutions operate—are missing the impact of this change.

At some point I will stop writing this book. But for now, I am just enjoying the chance to keep sharing what I am learning—and am thankful that the flattening of the world makes doing so easier than ever.

Thomas L. Friedman
Washington, D.C.
April 2007

How the World Became Flat





While I Was Sleeping

Your Highnesses, as Catholic Christians, and princes who love and promote the holy Christian faith, and are enemies of the doctrine of Mahomet, and of all idolatry and heresy, determined to send me, Christopher Columbus, to the above-mentioned countries of India, to see the said princes, people, and territories, and to learn their disposition and the proper method of converting them to our holy faith; and furthermore directed that I should not proceed by land to the East, as is customary, but by a Westerly route, in which direction we have hitherto no certain evidence that anyone has gone.

—Entry from the journal of Christopher Columbus on his voyage of 1492

No one ever gave me directions like this on a golf course before: “Aim at either Microsoft or IBM.” I was standing on the first tee at the KGA Golf Club in downtown Bangalore, in southern India, when my playing partner pointed at two shiny glass-and-steel buildings off in the distance, just behind the first green. The Goldman Sachs building wasn’t done yet; otherwise he could have pointed that out as well and made it a threesome. HP and Texas Instruments had their offices on the back nine, along the tenth hole. That wasn’t all. The tee markers were from Epson, the printer company, and one of our caddies was wearing a hat from 3M. Outside, some of the traffic signs were also sponsored by Texas Instruments, and the Pizza Hut billboard on the way over showed a steaming pizza, under the headline “Gigabites of Taste!”



No, this definitely wasn't Kansas. It didn't even seem like India. Was this the New World, the Old World, or the Next World?

I had come to Bangalore, India's Silicon Valley, on my own Columbus-like journey of exploration. Columbus sailed with the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa María* in an effort to discover a shorter, more direct route to India by heading west, across the Atlantic, on what he presumed to be an open sea route to the East Indies—rather than going south and east around Africa, as Portuguese explorers of his day were trying to do. India and the magical Spice Islands of the East were famed at the time for their gold, pearls, gems, and silk—a source of untold riches. Finding this shortcut by sea to India, at a time when the Muslim powers of the day had blocked the overland routes from Europe, was a way for both Columbus and the Spanish monarchy to become wealthy and powerful. When Columbus set sail, he apparently assumed the earth was round, which was why he was convinced that he could get to India by going west. He miscalculated the distance, though. He thought the earth was a smaller sphere than it is. He also did not anticipate running into a landmass before he reached the East Indies. Nevertheless, he called the aboriginal peoples he encountered in the new world “Indians.” Returning home, though, Columbus was able to tell his patrons, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, that although he never did find India, he could confirm that the world was indeed round.

I set out for India by going due east, via Frankfurt. I had Lufthansa business class. I knew exactly which direction I was going thanks to the GPS map displayed on the screen that popped out of the armrest of my airline seat. I landed safely and on schedule. I too encountered people called Indians. I too was searching for India's riches. Columbus was searching for hardware—precious metals, silk, and spices—the sources of wealth in his day. I was searching for software, brainpower, complex algorithms, knowledge workers, call centers, transmission protocols, breakthroughs in optical engineering—the sources of wealth in our day.

Columbus was happy to make the Indians he met his slaves, a pool of free manual labor. I just wanted to understand why the Indians I met were taking our work, why they had become such an important pool for the outsourcing of service and information technology work from



America and other industrialized countries. Columbus had more than one hundred men on his three ships; I had a small crew from the Discovery Times channel that fit comfortably into two banged-up vans, with Indian drivers who drove barefoot. When I set sail, so to speak, I too assumed that the world was round, but what I encountered in the real India profoundly shook my faith in that notion. Columbus accidentally ran into America but thought he had discovered part of India. I actually found India and thought many of the people I met there were Americans. Some had actually taken American names, and others were doing great imitations of American accents at call centers and American business techniques at software labs.

Columbus reported to his king and queen that the world was round, and he went down in history as the man who first made this discovery. I returned home and shared my discovery only with my wife, and only in a whisper.

“Honey,” I confided, “I think the world is flat.”

How did I come to this conclusion? I guess you could say it all started in Nandan Nilekani’s conference room at Infosys Technologies Limited. Infosys is one of the jewels of the Indian information technology world, and Nilekani, the company’s CEO, is one of the most thoughtful and respected captains of Indian industry. I drove with the Discovery Times crew out to the Infosys campus, about forty minutes from the heart of Bangalore, to tour the facility and interview Nilekani. The Infosys campus is reached by a pockmarked road, with sacred cows, horse-drawn carts, and motorized rickshaws all jostling alongside our vans. Once you enter the gates of Infosys, though, you are in a different world. A massive resort-size swimming pool nestles amid boulders and manicured lawns, adjacent to a huge putting green. There are multiple restaurants and a fabulous health club. Glass-and-steel buildings seem to sprout up like weeds each week. In some of those buildings, Infosys employees are writing specific software programs for American or European companies; in others, they are running the back rooms of major American- and European-based multinationals—everything from computer maintenance to specific research projects to



answering customer calls routed there from all over the world. Security is tight, cameras monitor the doors, and if you are working for American Express, you cannot get into the building that is managing services and research for General Electric. Young Indian engineers, men and women, walk briskly from building to building, dangling ID badges. One looked like he could do my taxes. Another looked like she could take my computer apart. And a third looked like she designed it!

After sitting for an interview, Nilekani gave our TV crew a tour of Infosys's global conferencing center—ground zero of the Indian outsourcing industry. It was a cavernous wood-paneled room that looked like a tiered classroom from an Ivy League law school. On one end was a massive wall-size screen and overhead there were cameras in the ceiling for teleconferencing. “So this is our conference room, probably the largest screen in Asia—this is forty digital screens [put together],” Nilekani explained proudly, pointing to the biggest flat-screen TV I had ever seen. Infosys, he said, can hold a virtual meeting of the key players from its entire global supply chain for any project at any time on that supersize screen. So their American designers could be on the screen speaking with their Indian software writers and their Asian manufacturers all at once. “We could be sitting here, somebody from New York, London, Boston, San Francisco, all live. And maybe the implementation is in Singapore, so the Singapore person could also be live here . . . That's globalization,” said Nilekani. Above the screen there were eight clocks that pretty well summed up the Infosys workday: 24/7/365. The clocks were labeled US West, US East, GMT, India, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Australia.

“Outsourcing is just one dimension of a much more fundamental thing happening today in the world,” Nilekani explained. “What happened over the last [few] years is that there was a massive investment in technology, especially in the bubble era, when hundreds of millions of dollars were invested in putting broadband connectivity around the world, undersea cables, all those things.” At the same time, he added, computers became cheaper and dispersed all over the world, and there was an explosion of software—e-mail, search engines like Google, and proprietary software that can chop up any piece of work and send one



part to Boston, one part to Bangalore, and one part to Beijing, making it easy for anyone to do remote development. When all of these things suddenly came together around 2000, added Nilekani, they “created a platform where intellectual work, intellectual capital, could be delivered from anywhere. It could be disaggregated, delivered, distributed, produced, and put back together again—and this gave a whole new degree of freedom to the way we do work, especially work of an intellectual nature . . . And what you are seeing in Bangalore today is really the culmination of all these things coming together.”

We were sitting on the couch outside Nilekani’s office, waiting for the TV crew to set up its cameras. At one point, summing up the implications of all this, Nilekani uttered a phrase that rang in my ear. He said to me, “Tom, the playing field is being leveled.” He meant that countries like India are now able to compete for global knowledge work as never before—and that America had better get ready for this. America was going to be challenged, but, he insisted, the challenge would be good for America because we are always at our best when we are being challenged. As I left the Infosys campus that evening and bounced along the road back to Bangalore, I kept chewing on that phrase: “The playing field is being leveled.”

What Nandan is saying, I thought to myself, is that the playing field is being flattened . . . Flattened? Flattened? I rolled that word around in my head for a while and then, in the chemical way that these things happen, it just popped out: My God, he’s telling me the world is flat!

Here I was in Bangalore—more than five hundred years after Columbus sailed over the horizon, using the rudimentary navigational technologies of his day, and returned safely to prove definitively that the world was round—and one of India’s smartest engineers, trained at his country’s top technical institute and backed by the most modern technologies of his day, was essentially telling me that the world was *flat*—as flat as that screen on which he can host a meeting of his whole global supply chain. Even more interesting, he was citing this development as a good thing, as a new milestone in human progress and a great opportunity for India and the world—the fact that we had made our world flat!

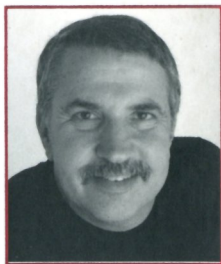
In the back of that van, I scribbled down four words in my notebook:



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‘Truly amazing ... an essential read for anyone interested to know where the next lightning-fast passage of travel over the surface of our ever-more-flattened earth is going to take us’

A. C. Grayling, *Independent on Sunday*



THE WORLD IS CHANGING. THE FUTURE IS FLAT ...

Thomas Friedman's international bestseller is the most up-to-date and exciting view yet of today's new era of globalization. In this further expanded edition, which now also includes two wholly new chapters, he draws on his travels to India, China and the Middle East, and on the explosion of technologies including blogging, online encyclopedias and podcasting, to show how knowledge and resources are connecting all over the planet as never before. This 'flattening' of the world, he argues, can be a force for good – for business, the environment and people everywhere.

‘Enthralling ... a terrifically stimulating book’

Warren Bass, *Washington Post*

‘It will make hundreds of thousands of readers understand a little better at least some of the forces in our world’

Martin Wolf, *Financial Times*

‘A lucid explanation of the forces that in the space of a mere twenty years have so dramatically shrunk the world’

Graham Stewart, *Spectator*

‘Perceptive, well researched and cogently argued ... leavened by the odd wry aside’

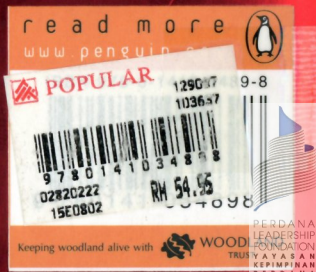
Martin Baker, *Sunday Telegraph*

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