

EAST VALLEY Tribune

Facts refute equating of globalization with exploitation

BY ANTHONY BRADLEY

An anti-globalization group called “Anti-Marketing” defines globalization as “the process of exploiting economically weak countries by connecting the economies of the world, forcing dependence on (and ultimately servitude to) the western capitalist machine.” While this formulation may sound extreme, the same basic, perverted understanding of globalization has poisoned the minds of many.

In a world of scarcity, the most advanced societies have the most internationally connected economies. This has always been true. In ancient northern African nations, the Greco-Roman world, and later in the Netherlands, Britain, Spain, and the United States, nations that traded widely were nations that prospered.

Trading societies also tend to be open societies. The Scriptures expose the proclivity of people in any system to be “lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive...” (2 Tim 3: 2-3). But the assumption that societies in isolation from the world promote human dignity and increase human freedom better than internationally connected ones is historically fallacious. Isolationist nations lag behind the rest of the world in terms of both human freedom and standards of living. It is no accident that the developed nations of the West offer more freedom and protection for women and non-elite citizens. Connecting weak economies to stronger ones, overall, is mutually beneficial and empowers developing countries toward true independence for its citizenry.

This is exactly what happened when Japan connected its economy to the rest of the world. Japan’s

isolation from the West rendered it technologically and economically weedy. After opening trade with the West in 1854, Japanese leaders and scholars of the Meiji era studied the United States and its key formative figures like Abraham Lincoln and Benjamin Franklin. In the span of three generations, Japan went from an isolated, agrarian economy, to the second largest economy in the world—on an island with relatively few natural resources.

Within the context of global trade, Japanese innovators took Western products and made them their own—actually improving them to sell back to the world cheaper and better than originally produced. By 1958, just over a hundred years after opening trade with the West, America’s first Nissan dealership opened for business in San Diego, offering the \$1,695 PL210 four-door Datsun sedan. It sold only 83 vehicles. At the time, analysts believed that Japanese automobiles would never be a major player in the U.S. market.

By the late 1980s, Japanese cars accounted for more than 30 percent of the U.S. market. The island nation continues to lead the world in technological advancement in electronics, robotics, and transportation. Japan became the second largest economy in the world by connecting its economy with the rest of the world.

The irony of the anti-globalization movement is that the protesters themselves are the beneficiaries of globalization and rely on it to bite the hand that feeds them. Western protesters have the freedom and wealth to use Nokia cell phones and keep time on Seiko digital watches as they drive bumper-sticker laden Subaru Legacies to protests, where they use Canon digital cameras (or Nikon

35mm cameras with Fuji film) to snap photos that will be viewed on the Internet or on the news by millions watching televisions made by Sony or Toshiba.

In fact, much of the anti-globalization angst is nothing but old school paternalism cloaked in concern for other cultures. The protesters presume that only Westerners have the fortitude to request, receive, and handle imported products. Here’s their logic: A Guatemalan franchise like Pollo Campero Fried Chicken is good for Los Angeles, but GAP clothes and Coca-Cola are destruction for other countries. Saabs, Volkswagens, Volvos and other foreign products can only benefit those sophisticated enough to purchase in a way that won’t undermine fragile native cultures. North Americans and Europeans can comfortably surround themselves with imported accoutrements, but the benighted developing world should remain shackled to the enslavement of Western foreign aid programs.

It is true that filth and evil are sometimes exported in the process of connecting economies, a fact that highlights the need for a sound moral culture without which political and economic structures function ineffectively and harmfully. This is where the focus of globalization worry should be. Meanwhile, the misguided complain about MTV throughout the world but say nothing about Reggaeton, the latest Latin music craze, polluting the airwaves all over the United States and Latin America. The real enemy is not connecting economies of prosperity but connecting economies of evil.

Anthony B. Bradley is a research fellow at the Acton Institute (www.acton.org) in Grand Rapids, Mich.