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# **Table of Contents**

<b>1.0</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>THE DEFINITION OF GLOBALIZATION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
2.1	GLOBALIZATION FROM ABOVE AND BELOW .....	2
2.2	REQUISITES OF GLOBALIZATION .....	3
<b>3.0</b>	<b>THE PHENOMENA OF GLOBALIZATION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>COMMON ISSUES AND PROBLEMS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
4.1	ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION .....	6
4.2	NATIONAL GOVERNANCE.....	6
4.3	TRADE .....	7
4.4	ENVIRONMENT .....	7
4.5	TECHNOLOGY .....	8
4.6	CULTURE.....	9
4.7	WEALTH GAP.....	10
<b>5.0</b>	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>13</b>

## 1.0 Introduction

“With the passage of time, nations, hitherto living in isolation, draw near to one another”

(Turgot 1750)

During the past few decades human consciousness of the growing interconnectedness of people and societies has grown. Global environmental issues and the threat of nuclear war have reinforced our awareness of a common human fate. The more extensive people’s dependence on each other comes the more it will be in their common interest to reduce the threats and risks opposed to human kind.

The purpose of this essay is to explore globalization, its effects and characteristics as well as relate it to the many common issues that human kind faces.

## 2.0 The definition of Globalization

The word globalize is defined as: to extend to other or all parts of the globe; make worldwide.

By integrating this word into a larger scope of view, globalization can be defined as the process whereby the world’s people are becoming increasingly interconnected in all facts of their lives – cultural, economical, political, technological and environmental.<sup>1</sup> It can be thought of as a process in which economic markets, technologies and communication patterns exhibit more “global” characteristics and less local ones. It can also be defined as (McGrew 1992):

“Globalization is the multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcend the nation-state (and by implication the societies) which make up the modern world system. It defines a process through which events, decisions, and activities in one part of the world can come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe.”

The concept of a “global village” is also connected to globalization. The global village can be seen as a concept of humanity itself discovered as one world, an inseparable community, a common home linked to a common destiny. This implies that our actions on a global scale will effect every aspect of life in our society. That is, the consequences of an actor’s operations on the other side of the globe will most certainly be felt by other actors throughout the global community.

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<sup>1</sup> Lodge “Managing Globalization.” Pfeiffer, 1995 p.1

The process of globalization can be said to be both technological and human. Technologically, new systems of global communications and information enable actors, such as non-governmental organizations and multinational corporations, to function with each other. On the human side, globalization is being pulled by consumer desires and pushed by corporate managers both with a variety of goals such as serving their shareholders, gaining wealth and power as well as exercising their skills and talents.

Globalization can be understood in different terms referring to the emergence of new dimensions of social relations. In *institutional* terms the process of globalization has emerged through the growth of multinational corporations, popular associations and regulatory agencies. *Ecologically* globalization has taken place in the form of planetary climate change, atmospheric ozone depletion, worldwide epidemics and the decline of Earth's biodiversity. *Economically* globalization has realized itself in the twenty-four hour global financial markets, whole-world production lines, a global marketplace and multiple global consumption items. *Normatively*, globalization has occurred through the expansion of worldwide standards (e.g. declaration of human rights, common scales of measurement etc.). *Psychologically* globalization has developed with a growing consciousness of the world as a single place which has been reinforced with everyday experiences of music, food and culture.

On the whole globalization is the driving force in furthering the development of humanity towards a single society.

### **2.1 Globalization from above and below**

Certain academics have distinguished two different levels of globalization which they have labeled as globalization-from-below and globalization-from-above. These different aspects are based on different views of the driving forces and goals behind globalization.

According to globalization-from-above resources from the natural world and from local communities are extracted in order to increase the wealth and power of the wealthy and powerful.<sup>2</sup> This is also known as the "new world order" based on the leading states and transnational business and political elites. In accordance with this view power is transferred from natural resources to human domination, from communities to the individually privileged and from local societies to globally transnational powers. This form of globalization is often criticized for its one-sided view of humanity and for emphasizing capitalism. The disparity between rich and poor is conveyed in the sentence that "the world is a homogenizing supermarket for those with purchasing power while those who are without it are excluded suppressed."<sup>3</sup> Globalization-from-above is also blamed for destroying communities and environments in the name of corporate profits for multinational enterprises.

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<sup>2</sup> Brecher, Childs, Cutler "Global Visions." South End Press, 1993 p.11

<sup>3</sup> Richard Falk. Brecher, Childs, Cutler "Global Visions." South End Press, 1993 p.13

Globalization-from-below is described as an array of transnational social forces animated by environmental concerns, human rights, hostility to patriarchy, and a vision of human community based on the unity of diverse cultures seeking end to poverty and collective violence.<sup>4</sup> On the contrary to globalization from above this perception aims to restore power to individuals and communities; to democratize local, national and transnational political institutions; and to enhance the control of individual people to the resources they need. Globalization-from-below points towards a “global civil ethic and society”, in which participation on the global level is shared by social and cultural practices rather than just the state. Examples are activist movements by grassroots individuals bringing forth the subjects of human rights, environmental issues and women’s rights through e.g. Amnesty International and Greenpeace.

As these two different views point out, globalization is a complex phenomena where various driving forces and levels of behavior can be identified. It is difficult to recognize to which extent either of these viewpoints describes the correct process of globalization and its objectives. It is rather a blend of both aspects.

## ***2.2 Requisites of Globalization***

In order to compete successfully in the global market place and participate in the globalization process a nation must have certain characteristics. A nation's standards of living as well as its economical independence depend upon its capacity to compete successfully in the world economy. Globalization is forcing convergence around these factors. Certain determinants and characteristics of economic development, which enhance globalization, can be identified. These are technological advancement and innovation, education, a market economy, property rights, political system, geography and government relations.

The level of technological advancement in a nation is an important factor facilitating globalization. Information systems, televisions, faxes, fiber optics and communication networks are all important drivers of development. As technology becomes more advanced it is essential to have a well educated work force to manage it and at the same time an educated workforce is also more productive. This is an essential requisite for competing in global markets. It has been argued that the economic freedom associated with a market economy creates greater incentives for innovation. Thus a market economy has been seen as an inducing factor. Property rights and the political system are closely tied to the concept of a market economy. Strong legal protection of property rights induce entrepreneurial activity and a democratic political system often provides a stabile ground for economic growth. Labor and government relations and legal systems are a part of managing the productivity capabilities of a country. Finally favorable geography offers certain societies an advantage in natural resources and strategic location.

Together the factors mentioned above play a joint role in advancing a nation's capacity to participate in the globalization process as well as enhance its current capabilities.

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<sup>4</sup> Brecher, Childs, Cutler “Global Visions.” South End Press, 1993 p.9

### 3.0 The phenomena of globalization

Two macro factors seem to underlie the trend toward greater globalization. The first is increased world trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) driven by the deregulation of markets and trade laws. The second factor is technological change, particularly developments in communications, information processes and transportation technologies. Factors contributing to these changes are:

- Expanded commercial opportunities and intensified global competition
- Development in communications and technology
- Liberalized trade laws
- Reduced transportation and communication costs
- Advocacy of free trade by industrial countries
- A shift among developing countries from inward-looking, protectionist strategies to the promotion of exports and open economies
- The growth of multinational corporations with widely dispersed administration, manufacturing and distribution
- The end of the East-West conflict

These factors have largely contributed to the growth of trade and can also generally be seen as the basic elements behind the globalization process.

During the 1920s and 30s many nation-states of the world erected formidable barriers to international trade which commonly took the form of high tariffs on imports or manufactured goods. This is seen as a major contributing factor to the great depression of the 1930s. Thus after the Second World War the industrial nations committed themselves to removing trade barriers. Under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations have taken part among member nations to lower trade barriers and free the flow of goods and services since the end of World War II. Negotiations have furthered the deregulation of markets and a recent result was the establishing of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to monitor and regulate global trade.

Investment and trade have been accompanied by a larger cross-cultural exchange of values and life-styles as people interact increasingly across national boundaries. The world is becoming an ever more homogenized entity of values, goods and consumer desires. This is furthered by the development of technology and communications enabling people to cross distances and space from within their national borders. According to the OECD council<sup>5</sup>

"Globalization is both a cause and a consequence of the information revolution. It is driven by dramatic improvements of electronic communications networks, such as the Internet. These communication technologies are helping to overcome the barriers of physical distance. Communities of various types now function

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<sup>5</sup> OECD "Economic Globalization and The Environment." OECD, 1997

across national borders. Even the framework of social policies affecting individual citizens is becoming more sensitive to international influences, including the global news media."

Supraterritorial phenomena such as Eurocurrencies, communication satellites, cyberspace, global factories, fiberoptic cables, G7 summits, global newspapers, mobile phones, remote sensing and ozone holes are all new to the past few decades and serve as key examples of concrete changes in our society enhancing the reality of a more global community.

Financial markets are one of the most intervened and global markets that currently exist. A global market place has emerged where the transfer of capital and ownership of products takes place in microseconds across continents. The rate of technological change is a basic element of globalization. As new technology is diffused into the economy it will expand production possibilities and opportunities for economic growth furthering the globalization process. Global corporations are the main vehicles in this movement.

Foreign direct investment has grown dramatically during the past decade. It is seen as an important requisite especially for developing countries enabling them to secure their economies and increase the standards of living. Foreign investments create jobs, which support economic growth and global competitiveness even though there often is a fear of losing control over domestic resources.

On the whole as opportunities, communication patterns and market structures change people come more interwoven and involved in the global community even without directly being aware of this. A financial, economical or natural occurrence in one part of the world will most certainly effect all areas of our global community as international actors are all linked to each other's actions.

#### **4.0 Common issues and problems**

Globalization is effecting our society in various ways. Globalization contributes to changes in:

- Economic markets, production, consumption and investments
- National governance
- Trade
- Environment
- Technology
- Culture
- The wealth gap

These issues are often interrelated to each other and together change the global environment. However, changes forced by these factors do not come easily. Conflicts in the form of wealth gaps, unequal opportunities, unequal distribution of wealth,

environmental hazards and cultural conflicts are apparent. These issues and possible solutions are discussed in the following sections.

#### **4.1 Economic globalization**

Economic globalization is defined as a process in which the structures of economic markets, technologies and communication patterns become progressively more international over time.<sup>6</sup> Globalization contributes to the expansion of economic output (scale effect); generates shifts in the composition and location of production and consumption (structural effect); creates different technology paths (technological effect); and produces new product mixes to be consumed (product effects).

The advantages of globalization in economic terms can be seen as an increased volume of world output, productivity, incomes and employment. The law of comparative advantage also plays an important role in promoting free trade and globalization. It maintains that trade is a tool for growth and countries will specialize in producing goods that they manufacture most efficiently (i.e. with lowest opportunity cost). This improves a state's economic position in the form of increased production and trade, efficient division of labor and investment. As a country's economic capability increases so does its influence over international affairs. Economical interdependence between countries should thereby also decrease the probability of serious international confrontations.

The main disadvantages of economic globalization are seen in social equity terms. Altered distribution of world output, incomes and employment often create frictions between the developed industrialized countries and third world countries.

#### **4.2 National governance**

Globalization will reduce the ability of national governments to act individually. Individual governments will have less impact on global issues and there will be an increased pressure on governments not to peril their competitive positions by taking unilateral or conflicting actions. Countries become more interdependent and integrated to each other through trade, markets and other social factors intensifying the pressure for economic and political policy convergence of different countries.

The advantage can be seen as a more unified global scene, where actors will be likely to take into consideration other nations, leading to a decreased probability of global conflict. A disadvantage is the increased pressure of homogenization of markets, products, culture and life-style, which often overstep local national policy and goals. This is often the case of environmental standards where national governance has to yield to the international competitive market pressure.

A solution can be maintaining certain forms of local government interventions that can be utilized depending on particular circumstances. Also developing a global level of

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<sup>6</sup> OECD "Economic Globalization and The Environment." OECD, 1997 p.7

cooperation, including global organizations, will help to solve conflict matters. Local externalities should be addressed locally and global ones addressed on a global level.

### **4.3 Trade**

Globalization of trade according to the comparative trade theory will generally have positive effects by improving the allocation of resources, promoting economic growth and increasing welfare. The theory suggests that a country should specialize in producing goods that it can produce most efficiently thus allocating resources productively and enabling all countries to gain through increased productivity and trade. Trade increases the opportunities offered to consumers in the form of a broader range of products and employment prospects. The globalization of markets refers to the merging of historically distinct and separate national markets into one huge global marketplace through international trade between nation-states.

Trade can, in the absence of effective policies, contribute to environmental problems and trade disputes as governments intervene by the sophisticated and judicious uses of subsidies to protect the domestic economy. A solution here is again a wider, more global scale of cooperation through international agencies.

### **4.4 Environment**

The earth is a common ground that all living species share together and thus it is no surprise that environmental concerns have been at the forefront of globalization issues. Mankind's awareness of the importance of earth's life support system – the air we breath, the water we drink, the earth upon which we depend for food and the ozone layer that protects us – has increased as more information is gathered on the harmful effects of environmental degradation. In contributing to economic growth globalization will also affect the environment in many ways. Atmospheric pollution; climate change; increased waste disposal; deforestation; desertification; water degradation and depletion; and species and gene pool extinction are all contributed in part to globalization even though it must be understood that globalization is only one of the determinants driving these changes. It is difficult to precisely measure in what proportion global change contributes to the environmental changes experienced during the past decades.

There is considerable uncertainty about the long-term ability of the environment to withstand the pressures of even the current scale of economic activity, let alone the scale that might exist after the world economy has become more globalised. This will place new stresses on environmental resources and new measures of environmental policy must be put into place. Often increased national production of a country and the world is prioritized on the expense of the environment as in Brazil where for 20 years annual rates of GNP growth were high. This growth however was accompanied by the substantial deterioration of its environment, especially the Amazon forest.

*Sustainable development* is a broader goal implying a level of economical progress sustained to the capacity of our environmental sources and surroundings. Also defined as

“economic development that meets the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.<sup>7</sup> Instead of exhausting our natural resources at a faster rate than the environment can replenish itself consideration should be given to a more sustainable and viable rate of long-run development. Important in this process is adopting a longer-term view on the impact of national development policies.

A recent issue demonstrating the global characteristics of environmental hazards is the negotiation taking place to eliminate 12 of the most dangerous man-made pollutants called the “dirty dozen”. Negotiators want to develop an international agreement to eliminate the use of these chemicals that include DDT, PCBs and dioxins. Even though these toxic compounds have been banned or severely restricted in most developed countries they are still used in many Third World countries, as insecticides, where they evaporate into air currents eventually to be dumped as precipitation in the northern latitudes. These substances can consequently be found in the food chains of inhabitants thousand of kilometers away from the sources of the chemicals, which clearly exemplifies the global effects of environmental pollutants. A global agreement to phase out the chemicals would be a major public-health advance as well as a dramatic breakthrough in environmental protection.<sup>8</sup>

Technological change represents an important opportunity for reducing the negative environmental effects of the globalization process. New technology can come along with substitutes that will go a long way in achieving sustainable development. The role of the nation state in the creating and implementing environmental policies to meet new standards will also need to evolve. Governments will have to develop the awareness and political will to globally adopt sustainable development policies that have an economic cost as well as an environmental benefit. Developing countries will also have to be supported as they have a tendency to improve their economical instabilities without proper concern towards the environment, as is the case with cash-crop agriculture and tourism. The Rio Earth Summit was a first step towards meeting these challenges but more concrete steps on a global basis will have to be taken to protect our habitat.

#### **4.5 Technology**

Technology is a key determinant in the globalization process. It is a major factor in determining a country’s level of production, labor productivity and standard of living. It is also a major factor facilitating the emergence the “global village” through the development of transportation and communication technologies.

Since the end of World War II we have seen major advances in communications, information processing and transportation technology, most recently, the emergence of Internet and the World Wide Web. Telecommunications is creating a global audience and transport is creating a global village. One of the most important innovations has been the development of the microprocessor, which has enabled the explosive growth of

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<sup>7</sup> World Commission of Environment and Development, 1987

<sup>8</sup> The Gazette “Dirty Dozen poisons hit Canada hardest”. Montreal, March 20<sup>th</sup> 2000

information processing capabilities. The microprocessor also underlies many advances in telecommunications such as satellites, optical fibers, wireless technologies and now the Internet. All of these innovations help reduce physical and perceptual distances among people throughout our global society. Transportation has developed with the introduction of jet aircraft and shipment procedure advances. This has further enhanced productivity and global trade. The ability to travel quickly to any point on the globe and to know what is happening half a world away have changed the way people conceive their surroundings.

Technology can also be a restraint for societies and nations that do not possess the required infrastructure, educated workforce or economical resources to keep abreast with development. This can have adverse effects on countries competitiveness as well as increasing the wealth gap between the rich and privileged and the poor who lack basic development opportunities.

#### **4.6 Culture**

Culture is a system of values and norms that are shared among a group of people and that when taken together constitute a design for living.<sup>9</sup> Convergence between different cultures has often meant conflict. There are various determinants of culture such as religion, social structure, language, education, law and economic and political philosophy. All these determinants influence each other in creating a distinctive cultural pattern of behavior and are all influenced by the globalization process.

Consumerism and the exportation of the entertainment industry have spread mostly Western values and ideals throughout the world effecting social structures and traditional values of cultures. Through today's mass media society embraces consumerism and human productivity. Convergence around consumer desires worries societies possessing more traditional values. For them globalization through market forces can be a menace that engulfs virtue.

Economic advancement and globalization are two main forces bringing about cultural change. As an example it has been shown that economic progress is often accompanied by a shift in values towards individualism as opposed to collectivism. Greater economic freedom leads to a decreased dependency of the collective and increased opportunities for expressing individualism. Increased urbanization and improvements in quality of education are both functions of economic progress and globalization. Increases in trade, communications and transport technology all create conditions for the merging of cultures.

Cross-cultural convergence is not always a positive trend. It can lead to a declining emphasis on traditional values associated with poor rural societies. Conditions for less cultural variation are created that spark countertrends such as Islamic Fundamentalism and separatist movements (for example the separatist movement in Quebec Canada). These countertrends are a reaction to the pressures for cultural convergence. Some

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<sup>9</sup> J.Z. Namenwirth, R.B. Weber "Dynamics of Culture". Boston, 1987

societies strive to reemphasize their cultural roots and uniqueness in the midst of these trends for global convergence.

#### **4.7 Wealth gap**

Globalization has clearly enriched the rich in the industrial worlds of Asia, Europe and North America while at the same time depriving the poor. This has continued to increase the so called wealth gap that exists between the poor and rich. It is estimated that 20 percent of the world's population possesses 80 percent of world's resources while the remaining 80 percent of the population struggle over 20 percent of the leftover resources. This is often illustrated as the North-South conflict where the wealthy nations of the Northern Hemisphere oppose the poorer nations of the south. According to the structuralism trade school<sup>10</sup> international trade perpetuates the South's backwardness and dependence on the West. Markets tend to favor the "have" states more than "have not" states as only a small sector, such as the export sector, of developing countries takes money away from less developed sectors thereby rendering the underdeveloped areas even more backward.

Supporters of globalization argue that globalization stimulates economic growth, raises the incomes of consumers and helps create jobs in all countries that choose to participate in the global trading system. As less developed countries experience economic growth they will be more capable of enacting tougher environmental and labor regulations as well as investing in their society's welfare through education and health care. According to this view the total benefits of globalization far outweigh the unavoidable costs of development.

Critics of globalization point out mainly two causes for the increased poverty of the Third World. Number one is the outflow of funds from the poor nations to the rich during the 1970s and 80s as they were required to service bank loans and import resources at increasing costs from industrialized countries. Many countries experiencing difficulties where granted loans by international financiers, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but consequently were required to adopt painful policy changes in exchange for foreign aid. Increasing amounts of debt doubled by the economies poor performances further worsened their situations. A second cause of deterioration was the nationalistic response of industrialized nations towards trade with the south. In spite of a trend towards "free trade" the north adopted protectionist trade methods and new trade barriers in fear of competition from cost lean production in the south during the 1980s. As some Developing Nations had adopted IMF and World Bank policy recommendations to switch to export driven industries they were then even more reliant on external partners of trade. Even though many trade restrictions have been abolished by the WTO in the later period of the 90s, Developing Nations are still heavily reliant on trade and debt to the industrialized world. This can also be seen as economic imperialism or neocolonialism from the part of the Western World.

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<sup>10</sup> Papp S. Daniel "Contemporary International Relations." Collier Macmillan, 1997 p. 382

Many suggestions have been made to correct the slide towards an ever increasing gap between the world's poor and rich. A formal coalition of Developing World states known as the Group of 77 has remained a center for the Developing World to make its concerns heard mainly through the United Nations. In a recent summit (April 2000) of the G77 countries, resolutions called for a renewal of the world financial system to give developing countries more say in economic and trade policies, for forgiveness of foreign debts and a sharp increase in foreign aid as well as measures to ensure developing countries receive new technology.<sup>11</sup> As 50 percent of the world's population exist on 6 percent of world income the Third World countries call for a New Global Human Order aimed at reversing the disparities between rich and poor, with countries of the South given the right to participate on an equal footing in decisions which effect them.

It remains to be seen how these fundamental conflicts will be resolved in the future between participants in our new global village.

## 5.0 Conclusion

In the debate about globalization in rich and poor countries alike there lies a shared sense of common respect towards the achievements of human kind during the past decades. Advances in technology and trade have brought numerous opportunities and advantages to the global society such as wireless telecommunications and internet, efficient microprocessors, increased variety of products and employment opportunities, transportation developments and increased world productivity. Many people have enjoyed the benefits of this development and living standards especially in industrialized countries have continued to rise. Globalization has created a sense interconnectedness among peoples to a shared global village. It has changed the way we think and the way we perceive our surroundings.

Despite obvious benefits of globalization there remains a concerning amount of instability and conflicts in the form of wealth gaps, unequal opportunities, unequal distribution of wealth, environmental hazards and cultural conflicts. The complexity of human development in the new economic order is evident. From a village-eye view where life is harshest nothing could be more irrelevant than global theories or comparative trade advantages. Often it is the national governments that have to rise to provide their citizens with the basic needs for survival and to enable this the world has to improve the way it governs itself. Non-governmental organizations and national governments may need to assure that their policies work for all levels of society and are adhered to by the poor stricken countries. As a consequence, the issue currently being addressed is the issue of governance. How does the international community cope with global challenges and how does the individual nation play their part by serving their peoples and ensuring the equal distribution of foreign aid ?

Many forces for change are at work in the international system and given the uncertain nature of change it is difficult to predict the future. Despite the communication and

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<sup>11</sup> The Gazette "Third World leaders call for sharing of Wealth." Montreal, April 13<sup>th</sup> 2000

information technologies that allow us to know more and more about the world we live in, the shape of the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is increasingly unknown. Humanity faces a wide array of challenges such as population growth, food production, environmental degradation, health and energy scarcity to mention a few. Our current system with numerous competing institutional and international actors raises doubts of establishing common solutions. To stabilize and regulate a global economy we need a global system of decision-making. A global society is needed to support our global economy. The possibility of a global government seems remote but may be a feasible solution in the far future in taking action to confront the multiplicity of issues we face. However, as long as humankind continues to strive to overcome today's challenges and social injustices globalization will be a tool in reaching our goal of understanding and a prosperous shared destiny.

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