



BELLE WEI

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## Being a successful global citizen is important

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Regardless of whether you realize it, you are a global citizen. The only question is whether you are a successful global citizen.

You are a global citizen because you live in a place where what you do and what happens to you is strongly interconnected with what other people are doing elsewhere in the world. Take your job, for example. The type of job you get, how much you are paid and how long you are able to keep it are all a direct function of what the competition is doing elsewhere.

Forrester Research predicts that at least 3.3 million white-collar jobs and \$136 billion in wages will shift from the United States to low-cost countries by 2015.

It's happening to American employees constantly. Jobs are leaving the United States for Bulgaria, China, Costa Rica, Hungary, India, the Philippines, Russia, South Africa and Ireland. In India, a worker at a call center earns about \$2,700 each year, while a new graduate with a degree in Information Technology (IT) will make around \$5,000. In China, an IT professional earns about one-sixth of what a U.S. IT worker makes.

Economics is just one aspect of globalization. Geopolitics is another, as is environment. The three, of course, are all interrelated.

Consider for a moment geopolitics. Let's say that the terrorist threat, heaven forbid, begins to spiral out of control, and it becomes necessary to reinstitute some sort of compulsory military service. If you are of age, you could be drafted. What happens to you at this point could very much become a matter of life and death.

Turning to the environment, unless you belong to a small minority that is blissfully unaware of weather patterns and temperature changes, you've probably noticed some of the odd fluctuations we've been experiencing recently in this area, which may well be repercussions of global warming.

Global warming can be linked directly with geopolitical events (the Kyoto Treaty, for example), which in turn are often a direct consequence of economic developments. So it is that one thing is connected to another, in our highly interconnected world.

A successful global citizen is someone who can effectively navigate the turbulent waters of a world in flux, a person whose knowledge and skill sets are continuously upgraded and therefore up to the task.

Conversely, an unsuccessful global citizen does not manage to keep up, perhaps not recognizing the need to keep up.

The consequences of failure can be severe. Unemployment - or marginal employment - is one of the most obvious prices to be paid for failure.

This is why you should care. Your life and the quality of it are already and will be increasingly affected by your status as a global citizen.

Here are some ideas about what you can do to maximize your chances of becoming a successful global citizen:

- \* Skill sets. In the global supply chain of the high-tech sector, research and development at the high end are typically accomplished here, while manufacturing, along with low-end research and development, tends to be done in Taiwan, China and India. In order for technical professionals to have opportunities here, it is therefore essential for them to aggressively develop these high-end skills.

- \* Understanding other cultures. As jobs are created in Asia and other parts of the world, income levels will rise accordingly. This will lead to the development of markets for electronic products. We will be in a position to successfully participate in these new markets only if we understand local cultures and lifestyles.

- \* Civic involvement. The engine of economic growth and prosperity requires a peaceful context and sustainable environment in order to function at full throttle. What this calls

for, then, is a certain measure of civic involvement, in order to assure that the necessary environment for growth and prosperity exists. It is important that you stay knowledgeable about what's going on and take an active role in helping society stay on course.

To enjoy a high quality of life, with any degree of stability, you must be a successful global citizen. To be a successful global citizen, you must come to terms with the current dynamic of interconnectedness. Understanding the desires of the person on the street in Beijing or Bangalore is more than just an academic exercise. Your home mortgage may depend on it.

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Guest columnists appear Thursdays.

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