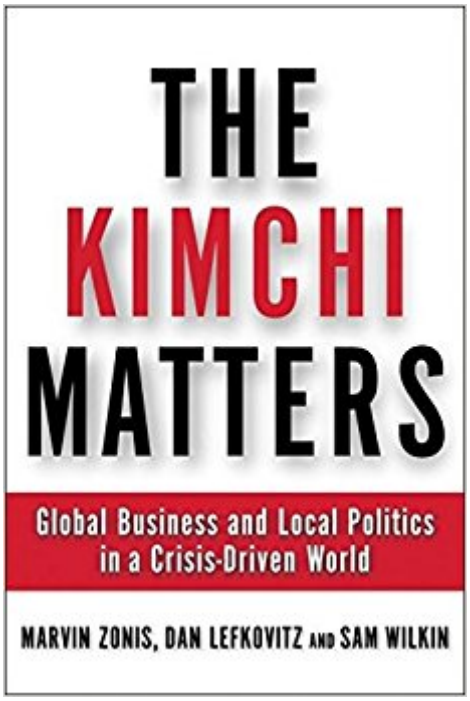
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The Kimchi Matters: Global Business And Local Politics In A Crisis-Driven World



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Synopsis

From renowned international business expert Marvin Zonis: a penetrating analysis that cuts through the fog of polemic and misperception surrounding globalization and returns our attention to the issues that should really matter to everyone concerned about international business, economics, and politics."Globalization is perhaps the defining international business and political story of the past two decades, so big, in fact, that many other stories were overlooked: why some countries succeed in achieving stability; why others fail; and why it matters. An ironic side-effect of globalization is that these relatively small, local -stories-the budget policies of Argentina, the corruption of Indonesia, the stability of Saudi Arabia, among many, many others-matter more than ever before. They are played out in distant countries, but with the click of a mouse or the boarding of a plane their effects are transmitted around the globe.For the uninitiated, kimchi is the unofficial Korean national dish: unassuming cabbage soaked in chilis, -garlic, and ginger until pungent, fiery, and blood-red in color. To be sure, kimchi has its charms; but for today, at least, it remains a very local dish. Today, almost everyone eats Big Macs (one hundred twenty-one countries at last count), which is unprecedented, amazing, revolutionary: in short, the "big story" of globalization. But one lesson of September 11 is that the small stories, of national politics, regional economics, and local struggles, cannot be overlooked. Everyone eats Big Macs; but the kimchi matters.This is a book about the kimchi."-From the IntroductionIn The Kimchi Matters, Zonis provides a useful anti-dote to other works that have done little more than simply explain the phenomenon of globalization and the processes that make the world more interconnected-trade, travel, technology, etc. Zonis demonstrates that nothing good will come of globalization and global business without sufficient attention paid to the unique situations in different countries.

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Customer Reviews

"All politics is local," former House Speaker Tip O'Neill once famously remarked, and the adage holds true for economics as well, even in the era of globalization. In a world where local markets are increasingly interconnected, events in one small country can easily snowball to have a worldwide impact. Using kimchi, the flavorful Korean pickle, as a metaphor for unique regional sociocultural conditions, this trio of political analysts (Zonis runs the risk consulting firm where Lefkowitz works, while Wilkin works on similar projects for other clients) reminds readers that while powerful corporations may be able to plant their flags around the world, they still need to deal with the locals. Factors like political corruption or ethnic conflicts can undermine a country's chances for prosperity, the analysts say, but they can be countered by strong leadership and stable institutions. In order to "do globalization better," business leaders need to recognize the importance of local political dynamics. Other than suggesting that there isn't a single approach that will work for all countries, the book doesn't offer much advice; what it does provide are dozens of textual snapshots of various regional hot spots, primarily from often overlooked corners of Asia, Africa and South America (where, unfortunately, the overused kimchi references quickly grow old). Readers with geopolitical experience may find the analysis redundant and superficial, while the financially inclined may want more concrete answers to their concerns, but the three authors do a reasonable job of providing the big picture on this complex issue.Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Kimchi--a dish consisting of cabbage leaves fermented in chili--is the centerpiece of Korean cuisine. Yet it has not been globalized like the Big Mac, probably because of its pungent smell. The authors use kimchi as a metaphor for the missing ingredient of globalization initiatives, the local political dynamics that are often overlooked when corporations decide to set up shop in foreign lands. Understanding kimchi is essential to the success of both international business and foreign policy in an age of globalization. The authors examine emerging markets around the globe and demonstrate how, in the past, sensitivity to (or ignorance of) kimchi has had an enormous impact on attempts to form business relationships between disparate cultures. This message couldn't come at a more critical time, with the Bush administration fully engaged in nation building in Iraq. As the authors

show, the assumption that other cultures want or need a particular form of government can have disastrous results. David SiegfriedCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved

The Kimchi Matters - what does that mean? The "Kimchi" is literally the spicy Korean food, and figuratively it stands for the local spice of a country or market. Marvin Zonis (scholar of strategy, technology, international business and leadership) teaches that rather than focusing exclusively on the big (a global brand strategy, or a global technology map) the local must understood.The book succeeds in what it sets out to do - explain the importance of understanding localization. Definitely worth the read.

In an ever more numeric approach to investments, the Kimichi factor is often overlooked. Read it and begin to develop a much needed gut feel on global matters and how non-numeric factors make a difference.

Having seen Marvin Zonis on television and in speeches many times over the years, I bought this book for many of my internationally-based colleagues at Christmas. I have since finished reading it myself and it was an excellent decision.This book is a precise, non-ideological, and often humorous, field guide to the political and economic dynamics of emerging market countries. Without understanding these dynamics, the authors argue, American businesses cannot hope to succeed in countries like China and India. From my own experiences in Turkey and elsewhere, I can confirm the truth of this.The authors present a smorgasbord of cases from countries around the world. They call these vital, often overlooked local conditions "kimchi," after a spicy pickled-cabbage dish popular in (and, for the most part, only in) Korea. "Today," they explain, "almost everyone eats Big Macs," evidence of the global-village side of globalization. "But kimchi matters more than ever before.:To illustrate how local obstacles can sideswipe international Goliaths, the authors offer Bill Gates’s initial foray into the Korean market. In 1998 Microsoft planned to invest $20 million in Hangul & Computer, and in exchange the South Korean software company would stop producing its Korean-language word-processing program, surrendering its near monopoly to Microsoft. But news of the deal brought a national backlash-fueled by antiforeign sentiment and national reverence for the Korean alphabet-and Hangul & Computer was forced to abandon the deal. "In short," the book explains, "Microsoft’s expansion strategy had inadvertently triggered a political opposition movement."Investors and policy makers can avoid such missteps, the authors argue, by asking not only whether a country is stable but also how its stability is produced.In the Philippines, for example,

President Ferdinand Marcos's 1969 reelection coincided with a bad monsoon season and a violent Communist guerrilla uprising. "Though none of this was really the president's fault," the authors note, opposition grew. Marcos reacted by faking assassination attempts and terror attacks and then declaring martial law, crushing dissent and granting himself sweeping authority. To maintain power, he built a regime of corruption and patronage, which inhibited legitimate business, angered the middle class, and strengthened the opposition. When rival politicians were killed, discontent mounted, and Marcos was forced from office, leaving foreign businesses with Philippine investments tangled in criminal misconduct allegations.But things might have turned out differently. Popular dissatisfaction of any source can be channeled in many ways, the writers argue, offering several examples. Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe managed national discontent by blaming his country's problems on South Africa and England. India, though plagued by poverty, has dozens of political parties and holds relatively free and fair elections. And Singapore, while curtailing free speech and civil rights, heads off discontent with economic growth and stability.Each of those governmental responses is intimately related to what Kimchi Matters terms "the ruling bargain." Submitting to authority, the authors argue, is onerous: taxes must be paid, laws obeyed, and other intrusions (in an extreme case, conscription into a national army) accepted. In exchange governments earn the public's support by promoting economic prosperity, physical security, and common defense. But each country formulates a unique bargain and justifies its authority-creating legitimacy-through different techniques. Autocratic nations rely on charismatic leaders to charm or terrorize the populace; democratic governments earn authority by representing the people; and in "developmental states" such as Singapore authority is earned by "delivering the goods-usually stability and prosperity."While a government's structure may dictate its success in abating popular discontent, in some cases that structure is so attenuated that the task is assumed solely by a country's leader. In Uganda policies depend almost entirely on the president, now Yoweri Museveni, who has reduced poverty and AIDS but also has banned political parties and activities. The authors stress, however, that "leadership is only part of the story." Some countries have strong enough institutions that they can essentially run themselves. During "Monicagate," for instance, crime fell, the economy grew, and "the American government continued to function effectively regardless of its rather distracted leadership." Governments that have developed a self-perpetuating, responsive system are the most stable, the most likely to avert potential crises, and the best equipped to generate prosperity.Even with a strong system, however, individual policies make or break stability, and political pressures can sometimes push policy makers in the wrong direction. When a leader faces reelection, for example, he or she often abandons policies that call for short-term sacrifices

but create long-term benefits in favor of ones that create short-term economic booms, though they may ultimately cause a crash. This pattern clearly has emerged in Mexico, which has seen economic turmoil every six years-the length of the election cycle-since 1976. Likewise, entrenched interests can hinder development. Brazil's constitution specifies rights for nearly every special-interest group, preserving privileges, such as government pension programs that cost tens of billions of dollars, at the expense of the larger good. Thus particular political circumstances can inadvertently reduce a nation's economic potential.The book concludes with a fascinating analysis of China. Once you read it, I guarantee you will rethink your strategy in that country.

As an American living in a third world country, I greatly appreciated this book.Utilizing poignant examples, the authors delve into what make a country and its systems successful or dysfunctional. Many factors are considered: politics, corruption, social change, stability, leadership, public unrest, bureaucracy, social institutions, government intervention, etc. And all is placed in the context of rapid globalization.Most notable is the revolutionary insight that, no matter what other factors are involved, a country will not grow prosperous in the absence of good institutions. The rules, both overt and non-visible, by which we play are very important.This book helped me to understand my own situation. It helped me to recognize the world's interconnectedness and the fragility of world economics. Despite America's shortcomings, it helped me to appreciate the moral fabric of America's institutions. And, finally, the book deepened my feeling that America bears great responsibilty in the world community, as a leader, a guide, and an example for others.Foreign policy-makers and international businessmen should pay careful attention to this book's lessons.

I was going to give this four stars, but up it to five owing to the biased review from Nigeria.I understand the Nigerian scholar's anger about colonialism -- but to say this book has "errors" is off the mark. The main "error" identified is that the book uses the term "tribes" to describe ethnic groups in Nigeria. The fact is, that's the term currently employed in most Western publications -- the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Economist. So it's not an error. I understand the Nigerian wants to change the world, and that's a great goal -- but I think rating down a book that explains colonialism's lingering effects, not just in Nigeria but in Pakistan, Brazil, etc. -- is the wrong approach. The Kimchi Matters probably says more about colonialism than any business book ever written.The reason it talks about colonialism is The Kimchi Matters takes you on a fascinating tour of the globe -- mostly emerging markets -- from China to India to Brazil to Russia and about twenty countries in between, explaining not just WHAT is going on but WHY.If you have spent your life

studying Nigeria, then yes, the section on Nigeria will seem like an introduction -- but you will get fascinating insight on the rest of the world. (The Nigerian scholar's comments actually apply only to one section of one chapter.) The book draws on everything from public choice theory to institutional economics to social psychology -- you'll learn a lot that's new.I was going to give it four stars, because in some sections The Kimchi Matters skips controversies and present things just too simply and elegantly. I know it has a lot of ground to cover. And the writing is readable and the stories well-told.But I'll give it five, and that's appropriate. As the Nigerian scholar admits, it is "a good book." I would say a very good book.

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