



# The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy: An Economist Examines the Markets, Power, and Politics of World Trade

By Pietra Rivoli

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## Praise for *THE TRAVELS OF A T-SHIRT IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY*

"Engrossing . . . (Rivoli) goes wherever the T-shirt goes, and there are surprises around every corner . . . full of memorable characters and vivid scenes."

—*Time*

"An engaging and illuminating saga. . . . Rivoli follows her T-shirt along its route, but that is like saying that Melville follows his whale. . . . Her nuanced and fair-minded approach is all the more powerful for eschewing the pretense of ideological absolutism, and her telescopic look through a single industry has all the makings of an economics classic."

—*The New York Times*

"Rarely is a business book so well written that one would gladly stay up all night to finish it. Pietra Rivoli's *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy* is just such a page-turner."

—*CIO* magazine

"Succeeds admirably . . . T-shirts may not have changed the world, but their story is a useful account of how free trade and protectionism certainly have."

—*Financial Times*

"[A] fascinating exploration of the history, economics, and politics of world trade . . . *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy* is a thought-provoking yarn that exhibits the ugly, the bad, and the good of globalization, and points to the unintended positive consequences of the clash between proponents and opponents of free trade."

—*Star-Telegram* (Fort Worth)

"Part travelogue, part history, and part economics, *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy* is ALL storytelling, and in the grand style. A must-read."

—Peter J. Dougherty, Senior Economics Editor, Princeton University Press author of *Who's Afraid of Adam Smith?*

"A readable and evenhanded treatment of the complexities of free trade . . . As Rivoli repeatedly makes clear, there is absolutely nothing free about free trade except the slogan."

—*San Francisco Chronicle*

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

During a 1999 protest of the World Trade Organization, Rivoli, an economics professor at Georgetown, looked on as an activist seized the microphone and demanded, "Who made your T-shirt?" Rivoli determined to find out. She interviewed cotton farmers in Texas, factory workers in China, labor champions in the American South and used-clothing vendors in Tanzania. Problems, Rivoli concludes, arise not with the market, but with the suppression of the market. Subsidized farmers, and manufacturers and importers with tax breaks, she argues, succeed because they avoid the risks and competition of unprotected global trade, which in turn forces poorer countries to lower their prices to below subsistence levels in order to compete. Rivoli seems surprised by her own conclusions, and while some chapters lapse into academic prose and tedious descriptions of bureaucratic maneuvering, her writing is at its best when it considers the social dimensions of a global economy, as in chapters on the social networks of African used-clothing entrepreneurs.

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Review

"It brings history and economics in an enjoyable way..." (*Financial Times*, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2005)

"...a fine account of how the countervailing forces of the market and protectionism conflict in combining in a single product..." (*Financial Times*, 30 July 2005)

"Rarely is a business book so well written that one would gladly stay up all night to finish it..." (*CIO: Chief Information Officer Magazine*, June 15, 2005)

"Globalization is a hot-button topic that generates strong feelings along with images of boarded-up, independent businesses in America and exploitative sweatshops overseas. But what exactly is it? In *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy*, Georgetown University business professor Pietra Rivoli chronicles the round-the-world odyssey of a T-shirt, from Texas cotton-growers to an African used-clothing bazaar, to reveal how the planetary economy really works.

Along the way, we see how entrepreneurial U.S. farmers team with government-sponsored researchers--and take advantage of subsidies and trade barriers--to dominate world cotton production. Migrant workers from Chinese family farms tell why they regard low-wage jobs in Shanghai sewing factories as golden opportunities. And only in that African used-clothing bazaar do we encounter a truly free market where entrepreneurs--perhaps including some future tycoons of the 21st century--utterly rely on pure business skills and instinct. Whether you feel hurt or helped by globalization, you'll certainly understand it better after reading this fascinating account." (*Entrepreneur Magazine*, May 2005)

"...full of memorable characters and vivid scenes..." [and that] "Rivoli excels at making connections." (*Time Magazine*, March 28, 2005)

"T-shirts may not have changed the world; but this story is a useful account of how free trade and protection certainly have." (*Financial Times*)

"*The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy* is an excellent piece of work - a thorough, lucid and (best of all) honest examination of how politics and economics intertwine in the real world." (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*)

"Engrossing....(Rivoli) goes wherever the t-shirt goes and there are surprises around every corner...full of memorable characters and vivid scenes" (*TIME*)

"Her nuanced and fair-minded approach is all the more powerful for eschewing the pretense of ideological absolutism, and her telescopic look through a single industry has all the makings of an economics classic." (*New York Times*)

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"...a fascinating exploration of the history, economics and politics of world trade...*The Travels of a T-Shirt* is a thought-provoking yarn that exhibits the ugly, the bad and the good of globalization, and points to the unintended positive consequences of the clash between the proponents and opponents of free trade." (*Dallas-Fort Worth Star-Telegram*)

"...a readable and evenhanded treatment of the complexities of world trade... As Rivoli repeatedly makes clear, there is absolutely nothing free about free trade except the slogan." (*San Francisco Chronicle*)

## Review

"Part travelogue, part history, and part economics, *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy* is ALL storytelling, and in the grand style. Globalization critics who read this book will understand why it is impossible to lift countries out of poverty without the power of free markets, while policymakers will learn the equally bracing lesson that economic progress for the wealthiest of nations means nothing without the democratic political institutions that uplift the poorest of nations. A must-read."

**—Peter J. Dougherty, Senior Economics Editor, Princeton University Press, author of *Who's Afraid of Adam Smith?***

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