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American Factory Documentary Analysis



While the documentary sheds light on a wide array of topics pertaining to the class material, three specific points of particular importance stand out. First, the documentary is a testament to the extent at which business is globalized in the modern day; however, it draws specific attention to foreign direct investment in the United States. As the textbook established in Chapter 1, the demographics of foreign direct investment in the United States has been steadily changing. The company featured in the documentary, Fuyao Glass, is a Chinese owned business that expanded its operations into Dayton, Ohio. This highlights the data represented by Figure 1.2 in the textbook that shows that Chinese foreign direct investment into the United States has more than doubled from 2005 to 2019. Thus, the documentary provides an example of the aforementioned to illustrate that the businesses of other nations are increasingly expanding into the United States. Secondly, the documentary expands the focus on globalization by contrasting the positive and negative consequences that result from globalization. This ultimately addresses the globalization debate touched on in Chapter 1 of the textbook. It is clearly established immediately in the documentary that the Fuyao Glass factory created thousands of jobs in a community that struggled after General Motors left. The creation of jobs is one of the obvious positive results from globalization discussed in the textbook. That being said, the documentary also draws attention to some of the arguments against globalization. For example, many of the American employees felt targeted and exploited by wealthy managers in a different country when they were fired for participating in a labor union. This is not to say whether or not globalization is overall positive or negative but rather exemplifies that the debate surrounding globalization is ongoing. Finally, the documentary shows that cultural understanding when managing a company that operates in different countries is paramount to the company's success. Throughout the documentary, there are a number of disagreements between American and

Chinese employees as well as American and Chinese managers. The disagreements are largely rooted in different cultural attitudes towards the workplace. For example, a large point of contention between American and Chinese managers was the productivity concerns in the American factory. The Chinese managers felt that the American employees were lazy and lacked a willingness to work. Contrarily, the American managers were stunned to see the working conditions in the factory in China. Many of which were flatly illegal in the United States as well as the more authoritarian managerial approach would not be well received by the American employees. This demonstrates the idea extensively discussed at the end of Chapter 1 that operating in other countries is very complex and requires the ability to respect the cultural preferences of others.

The three takeaways detailed in the previous section are highly applicable to the individuals, companies, and countries currently playing a role in internationally conducted business. First and foremost, all involved need to have an understanding that the world is currently very interdependent. Foreign direct investment is now possible for more countries than ever before. This is a massive opportunity for countries looking to expand their industries and companies aiming to establish themselves in the global market. This fact is equally important to countries being expanded into and their companies that may face new competition. An understanding on an individual level is integral to ensuring globalization and foreign direct investment is accounted for in international business related decisions. A failure to accept globalization as the current reality of the world holds the ability to be a fatal mistake in a business. That being said, it is especially important for countries and companies to remain aware of the ongoing debate surrounding globalization. By understanding the various viewpoints held within this debate, a company and country can garner very important information. Countries

need to hold a generally positive global reputation when it comes to the expansion of their industries to remain in good standing. Companies need to know where their business will be well received and what communal concerns they need to address when expanding. To conclude, it is of utmost importance that all parties involved in international business have a thorough grasp on the cultural norms and preferences of other countries. International relations and international business go hand in hand. Countries are always conducting business and have to be hyper aware of how they will be perceived by other nations. Countries that do not respect the work related laws, norms, and customs of other countries can be met with trade barriers or embargos. Companies risk failure when expanding into other countries and expecting employees to adhere to their professional customs. Implementing policies and organizational decisions that do not account for cultural differences can quickly establish a company reputation of intolerance and hostility. On the individual level, small gestures such as greeting a coworker from another nation in their native language or respecting professional boundaries can go a very long way. Respect and cultural awareness has to occur on the individual level before it can occur on a bigger scale such as a large company or a nation as a whole.

