



## **Falling Off the Edge: Globalization, World Peace and Other Lies. Alex Perry**

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Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, international corporations and governments have embraced the idea of a global village: a shrinking booming world in which everyone benefits. What if that's not the case? Alex Perry travels from the South China Sea to the highlands of Afghanistan to the Sahara to see globalisation at the sharp end.

## **Falling Off the Edge: Globalization, World Peace and Other Lies. Alex Perry Details**

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Author : Alex Perry

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## **From Reader Review Falling Off the Edge: Globalization, World Peace and Other Lies. Alex Perry for online ebook**

### **Simon Wood says**

#### **SHALLOW AND CALLOW**

Alex Perry's Falling of the Edge was a speculative buy. I assumed from the spiel on the back of the book that it would be a collection of interesting reportage on the Developing World in the context of Globalization. Instead, Perry delivers mediocre reportage at a rattling pace and some crude, banal analysis.

The range of areas covered is fairly large- South Africa, Somalia, Afghanistan, China, India, Nepal. The pieces on the vast new mega-city on Chinas coast near Hong-Kong, South Africa and Bombay are moderately interesting. There is an awareness of the other side of the Indian and Chinese economic miracles. Its not particularly deep but at least it's there.

Other parts, such as the massacre of prisoners near Mazar-i-Sharif (where Perry later admits he "fell in love with war"?) or the account of a U.S. attack on Karbala in 2003 begin to seriously irritate. Outside Mazar-i-Sharif an idiotic-CIA interrogation (in Russian and English!) of several hundred maltreated Taliban prisoners triggers an insurrection in which one of the CIA men is killed. Perry describes the ensuing slaughter of 300 prisoners - "I saw American and British commandos and barefoot Afghani soldiers courageously and skilfully slaughter 300 of their enemies in the single bloodiest battle of the Afghan war." Must be terribly courageous to point a laser targeting device while 500lb and 2000lb bombs rain from the skies? The incident in Karbala is little better, U.S. troops shoot everything that moves. In one case shooting an old man who is attending to a wounded Iraqi fighter, in another shooting two 8 or 9 year old boys for nothing more than picking up a RPG round lying outside their house. Unlike others violence, say Maoists in Nepal or Naxalites in India, all this passes without much comment. The same for a U.S. soldier who comments after the fighting in which dozens of civilians must have been killed along the lines of - they had no business being here? Well, after all it is only their homes and nearby streets they were in. Where exactly should they have been?

Much of the rest of the writing is little better, there is a shallowness to the quality of the reportage, and the analysis at times is weak. In the end chapter- "Is War Good?" Perry eschews weak analysis for a callous wackiness. He appears to celebrate war and violence as some sort of Darwinian struggle and essentially human if not humane activity? - the observant reader will notice echoes of Hitler; draws a parallel between U.S. a hundred years ago and India now that frankly doesn't hold much water; pontificates on how beautiful your average war zone is for reasons that are not entirely clear to this reader at any rate, before ending with a few hollow platitudes from the Dali-Lama.

There are much better books available in terms of reportage and analysis than this shallow, callous, illogical book that is best left on the shelf.

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### **Zeena Price says**

This book's investigative journalistic style, unlike so many other dry and overly theoretical polemics on globalization, made it for me. It's written by a highly acclaimed reporter for Time magazine, who, through his tales of encounters with disenchanted chinese factory workers, somali pirates and Indian I.T. workers

amongst many other characters, gives the pitfalls of globalization a very human and tragic face. It's genius lies in its ability to inspire empathy for even the most vicious acts, in the recognition that many such acts are driven by desperation, not choice. By tackling controversial issues and actually going all over the world to unroot the truths behind them, this comes across as an extraordinarily brave undertaking. Highly recommended.

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### **David Civil says**

An interesting blur of various first-hand examples of inequality from across the globe. Doesn't really tease out any important conclusions about globalisation although Perry makes this clear in the epilogue that this isn't really the objective of the book. He is certainly correct in saying that it's a 'reporters book' and I wouldn't recommend this book as an introduction or to gain any significant insights, it provides an interesting source of examples ranging from Nepal to America.

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### **Matt says**

This book isn't brand new, but it is still really relevant and you can see a number of the headlines today as a continuation of the themes Perry touches on in "Falling off the Edge" from piracy off Somalia's coast to civil unrest in China and the Niger delta. It's also pretty wild to think about the implications about the implosion of a number of newspapers and print media and the connections with us actually knowing a bit about the world we live in.

I highly, highly recommend this book.

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### **Steve Miller says**

This book comes across as a hodgepodge collection of personal recollections. If that was the limit of the author's ambition, and if this book didn't purport to convey anything insightful, it wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing. The problem is that the author's understanding of globalisation has almost no basis in academic or empirical rigour, and instead is based on vague sentiments about the immoral capitalist agenda, social inequality, and so on. The 'globalisation' theme is bluntly threaded through in order to try and create some kind of narrative coherence, but this effort is so transparent - and the conceptual view of globalisation so ill-defined - that any intended message comes across as flimsy and ultimately meaningless. The fact that this book is written in slightly sensationalist journalism-style language does nothing to help.

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### **Hasan says**

If there was a book which really made me sit up and think about the world we are living in then Falling Off the Edge: Globalization, World Peace and Other Lies by Alex Perry probably is up there.

Perry paints a grim yet honest picture of globalisation mainly from a developing world perspective ranging from the dissenting workers in China's new cities to the Maoists of Nepal and Naxalites of India hoping

change will come through the barrel of a gun not just in Kathmandu and Delhi but also in New York and London. Perry highlights globalisation is not trickling down to the poor of the world and there is no real hope for success or a distribution of wealth if we continue this trend. Perry paints a real human story as he speaks to villagers in Sri Lanka, factory workers in China, tribal workers from Kenya to MEND fighters in the Niger delta who are not the beneficiaries of globalisation.

He gave extra emphasis to China and India, two countries which are in line to be the next big two in terms of economic and social success. However Perry articulates the pitfalls of their success as there are more victims rather than winners. He shows an elite who have gained so much from the free market, yet at the same time India has 40 million more destitute workers in 2006 than it had in 1993, while the city of Shenzhen has factories where staff just earn \$56 a month.

Perry allowed the subjects he was writing on the chance to present their version of events, his encounters with Somali pirates and Indian I.T. workers. Perry doesn't condone violence as he meets fighters who some may refer as "liberators" while others may say they are "terrorists," Perry shows their stories as an economic struggle which is hidden under the guise of politics or religion. He shows how these people have witnessed an erosion of their natural resources which are pillaged or sold to fund the economic success which in turn fuels their anger and make them take back by force. For every economic winner of globalisation project, there are more losers who are born into poverty and a rut which they cannot get out of. Perry constantly shows that there is a huge proportion of the planet is falling off the edge as globalisation has not trickled down the realms of success.

For myself the book has cemented the perspective that the system we are living in is in crisis. Perry's book was written five years ago but now as we see in the West are now falling short of the Globalisation dream. British voters decided to support BREXIT, many say it was due to fear and blaming the EU, yet there were many working class have been left at the wayside due to forty years of de-regulation and inequality. We are also seeing in the USA the Trump factor which could even win the Presidency, again we see a revolution of regression as many working class communities are falling foul of the globalisation project.

I thoroughly enjoyed his honesty and fair portrayal of Indian industrialist, Ratan Tata who understands the importance of giving back and providing the common good. Tata, who lives a frugal life, comes across as a kind of billionaire with a conscience who has set up foundations honouring his own workers, he told Perry "how much profitable if you target the very bottom of the income pyramid - a lot of people with a little rather than a few with a lot?" His aim was through his investment and somewhat filling the void of the State he wants to make the poor into consumers.

The epilogue, written in 2010 shows that the financial crash of 2008 has added fuel to the fire of resentment against globalisation. We are living in a prosperous times and myself who works in Qatar can see the wealth with the few while so many who are building and sustaining a city sadly may make enough to send money home for their families, but it comes at a price.

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## Disa says

Award-winning Time correspondent Alex Perry provides a sobering view of the capitalist party line. I found this book to be very educational, if pessimistic. It is important to understand, however unpleasant, that

television and the information revolution has not only brought nations closer. Disappointment is a more powerful instigator of violence than merely being poor. The system, in flaunting the economic winners in the race to pillage resources, drives the resentment that fuels communist guerrillas and terrorists. I feel that the dark side of out prosperity should be revealed by journalists like Perry, so that we can start thinking about whether the price is really worth it.

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### **Paul McMeekin says**

A fascinating insight into how globalisation affects conflict around the world. Refreshingly it doesn't have a political agenda, whether it be left or right wing, underscoring it like many recent books of this ilk. It's a pragmatic and honest account by a journalist who has lived and worked in the majority of the places he talks about, and for this very reason it grabs your interest and really makes you think about what is going on around the world. What's more, Alex Perry is a fantastic writer, which along with the engrossing content of the book, left me wishing that the book was twice as long.

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### **Mark says**

This was probably the strangest book on anti-capitalism I've read. The author is a foreign correspondent for Time magazine and has been to many war zones and poverty stricken areas around the world. As a result what we have is a loosely connected series of stories focusing primarily on human interest elements from a writer who has clearly spent most of his life believing in globalisation until the job he took on forced him to see the other side of the coin. There are some good points made and some moving stories of individuals within the areas mentioned from Sri Lanka to South Africa and India to Shenzhen in China. The writer gets to his most moving language when talking about global media representation of poverty and war, an area I think he would be wise to move in to. The problems with this book are that it is from the point of view of someone who gives us the list of problems with no cogent solutions, or even suggestions of solutions outside of his quite amazing conclusion that War is Good. He claims to have "fallen in love with war" during his recent reporting of US incursions in to Iraq and Afghanistan and believes that progress and war have a mutually exclusive relationship. Aside from this he also suggests the current capitalist system is bankrupt and then tells us the left have no answers either, whether communist Maoists, or basic humanitarians. It is a book filled with an overwhelming sense of confusion, which is increasingly about the author and his experiences as opposed to the tragic people involved. The information is there, the author seems to have been able to amass the facts without putting them together in the correct order. As a result he aims to provide a window to more egalitarian future and succeeds only in presenting one of perpetual war, misery and "progress" through the two former ingredients. It's like telling us to make a chocolate cake by mixing wood and a fountain pen. A huge disappointment from someone who is read widely by the American market and could have presented a much less personal account of inequality with a much greater impact.

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### **Anne-Marie Hodge says**

There is a lot of interesting information and insight in this book, but the organization is pretty terrible, and sometimes the narrative devolves into pages of just statistics estimates. All of that information has its place, but perhaps the author's background as a newspaper journalist made it challenging for him to weave a book-length narrative together in a way that flows better? Like I said, interesting thesis and insights, but it can be a

slog at times.

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### **Terry Clague says**

The author demonstrates an impressively fearless desire to get to the heart of the story and his chapters detailing specific cases across the developing world are insightful and make for good-reading. The introductory and concluding chapters don't add much in their discussion of the much-discussed term "globalization". Seemed like an apt desperate purchase - from an airport in a developing country before a night flight home - and served its purpose well.

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### **Mark Rossiter says**

A book by Alex Perry, foreign correspondent with Time Magazine, published in 2008. It's an account (sometimes self-promoting, but then considering the extremes to which he has gone in the service of his trade, it's not hard to forgive him that) of his experiences, mingled with his reflections on globalization, in which his central thesis is that, since globalization is stacked in favor of the rich and is fundamentally an exercise in making them more so by whatever means, this means that on a global scale most people are impoverished, and it's no wonder that they fight back. Thus (writing before the Arab Spring or the Occupy movement) he connects Islamic terrorists, Nepal's Maoists, Indian Naxalites, rebelling Chinese workers, Indonesian pirates and black South African racists into one disparate set of reactions unified by their motive – to strike back at perceived oppressors – and treated not in terms of moral judgement but simply as an inevitable phenomenon arising in response to gross unfairness and material inequality. It's a good argument, though he may be pushing it a bit far in the final chapter when he characterizes war as an inevitable component of, and indeed catalyst for, progress (assuming progress is what is happening, a proposition he has cast doubt on as far back as his introduction, where he sympathetically describes a stone-age tribesman from the Andaman Islands who chose to go back into the jungle rather than accept the life of modernity that was being offered him). It's the argument from human nature: like the poor, the greedy and the rapacious will always be with us, and so will those who fight back against them, asymmetrically. Who knows, maybe it's true, and the best we can hope for if we are not among the greedy and rapacious is to be lucky enough to live a life of relative peace, good health, freedom, prosperity and opportunity, rather than being among the grinding poor.

After all this, the last line of the book quotes the Dalai Lama: "The future? Not bad." Is this where religion makes the difference?

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### **Hazel says**

Fascinating. Perry spends the whole book depressing you with stories showing how globalization is playing havoc with the poor, powerless unhealthy and uneducated people of the world and then in the last chapter makes a case for how we need war, violence and chaos in order to lurch forward to the next level of prosperity, innovation and general well-being.

His writing is very much that of a newspaper correspondent and he makes a case for the value of his profession as the eyes and ears and feet on the ground to inform the rest of us what is really happening out there in the scary places we can't all visit.

There is a wealth of information here on individual situations in Nepal, China, Darfur, Somalia and India so that anyone can learn something. I had met a Tibetan-Buddhist nun from Nepal the previous day in Phoenix and his chapters on Nepal filled in a lot of background that her poor English had not been able to communicate.

I loved his chapter on India and his even-handedness over the wealth divide there. I have rarely seen it spelled out so clearly about the rich elite and poor majority and put in to perspective so simply. The elite is so tiny but the whole citizenry so huge that the elite is still the size of a small European country's entire population.

I highly recommend the book for its clear writing, information and interesting conclusions.

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### **Nils says**

A travelogue through some of the politically ugliest places on the planet in the middle-aughts, narrated from the point of view of an uncritical American-style liberalism, which assumes the U.S. way of (organizing) life is what all people not only ought to have, but ought to want. Catch-up is the name of the game: India's present is represented as somehow similar to the United States "one hundred years ago." Asia-focused, Perry is China optimistic (though with rough edges), India pessimistic.

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### **Chris says**

Interesting stuff: often disturbing reminder that here in the West we really don't know very much about the developing world - regions that make up about two thirds of humanity. Crucial read for understanding the limitations of media reporting, the economics that incentivise extremism and the dark underbelly of the hyper-commercialised world we live in. It's a little dated now, but it still holds up.

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