

Globalisation needs no defence - it needs to be questioned

The main point of the globalisation argument is that trade liberalisation drives economic growth and economic growth raises living standards. Its supporters say that on a wide range of measures - poverty, the age to which people live, health, education - more people have become richer at a faster pace in the past 60 years than ever before. However, globalisation's opponents would claim that this success has had its negative sides:

that the increases in prosperity have favoured the rich far more than the poor, that trade liberalisation has encouraged the growth of bad working conditions and child labour, that lifting the barriers to the free flow of international capital has increased financial instability, and so on.

Globalisation's enthusiasts are so good at cataloguing globalisation's benefits while ignoring its costs. And I am referring not just to the flight of jobs from developed countries to less developed ones or the environmental damage caused by the developing world's rapid industrialisation, but to globalisation's social and cultural effects.

What I would like to see, therefore, is an attempt to weigh up the costs and benefits of globalisation to decide whether it is making the world a better place or a worse one - not just economically but across a range of issues.