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[Introduction to] Global Strategy: Global Dimensions of Strategy

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Global Strategy

GLOBAL DIMENSIONS
OF STRATEGY

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PREFACE

This book has been in preparation for several years, partly for personal and career issues and partly because the environment of international strategy has been changing so rapidly that freezing a book for publication seemed ever untimely. However, the purpose for which it was originally conceived still seemed relevant in the Autumn of 2008, so I finally pushed it through to completion, even in the midst of perhaps the greatest upheaval in the international economy in 60 years. This purpose is and was to make international strategic issues more immediate and accessible for those studying business strategy, even as the importance of the topic has become ever more apparent. When this project began, there was no international strategic management textbook. In the past few years, several have emerged, but each has been aimed at a different market niche and has used a different approach. This book, too, is intended to bring the topic to a specific audience.

I was teaching both business strategy and international strategy at the time that this book was conceived, mostly to Executive MBA students. I observed several characteristics of this market that gave this book its form. First, the circumscribed schedules of Executive MBA programs seldom leave room for two classes on a topic, and the marginal value of an international strategy course in addition to a business strategy class seemed to be less than what was needed to justify an international elective. Second, EMBA and executive courses seemed to be moving toward short formats, either intensive weeks or half-term classes, particularly for electives. Third, the

conditions under which international strategy was being employed were constantly changing and strategic responses were evolving rapidly, so that a course taught from an established text seemed by necessity to be always out of date. At the same time, some underlying issues and dimensions of strategy and strategy-making seemed to be holding up well under trying conditions. In my own teaching, my solution was to use sets of journal articles and cases, backed up by materials from the current news, to teach a strategic management course set in the international environment. However, I found this to be a disjointed and expensive approach, as many articles were long and costly, but often provided only background material or a few key points set in a longer, but not necessarily relevant, article. This led to student resentments over high book fees and lack of direct application of these materials. Cases became outdated or irrelevant, and telling students to "ignore the context" or to imagine that they were in an environment without the internet was not a viable solution.

As a result, I concluded that a relatively short, relatively inexpensive text, focused on the core issues of strategic management and international strategy and presented in the more-or-less standard "strategy process" format was needed. This book is my answer to that concern. It is not long as these things go. It does not contain the many features that bring in costly external materials such as cases or that are meant to provide immediate relevance, but which add to publishing costs and which require constant updating. It also covers the basics of strategic management as well as the important aspects of strategy making and execution in the international context. By keeping both financial and time investments in the core concerns low, this text allows the instructor to supplement the course with journal articles offering the latest really cool but untested ideas, with cases of his or her own choosing and with articles from daily and weekly news outlets or from the web, all without putting counterproductive pressures on the students. Its format allows it to be used either in an elective on international strategy or in a short core course on strategic management that keeps the international aspects in focus throughout. It is short enough to be used in a concentrated executive course and complete enough to be the basis for a term-length course with added materials. At least, these are ways in which I will use it - and I hope that others will find both the approach and the text itself to offer a valuable foundation for an evolving course covering a dynamic set of issues.