Mark E. Mendenhall and Günter K. Stahl

# The Rise and Demise of the "Euromanager": Lessons for the Development of Global Leaders

# 1. Introduction

"Euromanagers? They're a bit like dinosaurs, aren't they? Extinct." -- *Phillippe Alloing*

With the advent of the internal European market, many European executives began to broaden "their horizons and structures to develop and expand across a whole continent instead of a single country" (Taylor, 1991). As they did so, and as the year of 1992 drew closer, these same executives realised that they were lacking managers with the requisite experience and skills to carry out their new, Eurocentric strategic plans (cf. Bournois, 1992; Taylor, 1991).

In a survey of British and Irish international companies conducted by Scullion (1992), 80 percent of the firms felt that the main challenge they faced arising from the common European market was to secure an adequate supply of international managers. Over 70 percent of the firms reported that they anticipated shortages of international managers over the subsequent five-year period. There was a growing concern on the part of many firms that the pace of internationalisation would further outstrip the supply of managers and that they needed to upgrade management skills and competencies in their managerial cadres in order to compete effectively in Europe. Human resource executives in many other European countries articulated similar concerns as well (Derr/Oddou, 1993; Evans/Lank/Farquhar, 1989; Hamill, 1989; Price Waterhouse/Cranfield, 1991; Wunderer, 1992).

The type of managers needed to lead European companies into the brave, new world of the Single Market came to be known in the press as "Euromanagers", and in the early and mid-1990s the development of the "Euromanager" had become a clear priority for many European firms (Barham/Berthoin Antal, 1994; Bournois/Chauchat, 1990; Sparrow/Hil-trop, 1994; Stomberg, 1993; Wunderer, 1992).

Yet, most observers of the European business scene would agree with the statement that subtitles this chapter; namely, that the once heralded concept of the Euromanager is now defunct (Johnson, 1995; Wilderom/Glunk/Inzerilli, 1996). How and why did this happen?

# 2. Systemic barriers to the development of Euromanagers

## 2.1 Overview

An all-out effort was made to select, train, and develop "high-potential" managers into Euromanagers during the late 1980s and early 1990s, but the results were largely ineffective. Three barriers stalled the emergence of Euromanagers: nationalism, lack of expertise in HR staffs, and HR recruitment and developmental challenges.

## 2.2 Nationalism

Many scholars and observers of the business world at that time, and since then, noted that vast differences exist between European nations in terms of national culture, business norms, legal systems in regards to business, and even the meaning of the concept of "manager" (Bournois, 1992; Johnson, 1995). Thus, human resource strategy was developed based on the assumption that people could be trained to operate fluently in multiple national cultures. An ancillary assumption held that people could be trained in the competencies that companies and consultants deemed to characterise the "ideal Euromanager." A number of competency profiles of the ideal "Euromanager" have been proposed (Bournois, 1992; Bournois/Chauchat, 1990; Economist, 1992; Johnson, 1995; Klep, 1993; Sparrow/Hiltrop, 1994; Van Dyke, 1989); we summarise the competencies in Table 1.

These competencies were developed in large part without empirical research support, and represent a kind of "armchair theorising" about management development and the degree to which such developmental efforts could be successful. The degree to which such human beings existed, and the degree to which average managers could be trained to adopt these skills, and shed weaknesses that mitigated against the development of Euromanagerial competencies was not known, and still is in question. The failure of a large cadre of Euromanagers to emerge is likely a consequence of the cultural complexity inherent in the European context and the difficulty in facilitating transformation in managerial cadres.

| Euromanager Competencies | | |
|---|---|---|
| Solid education (MBA) | Capacity to understand different national cultures | Intercultural flexibility and adaptability |
| Interpersonal communication expertise | Negotiation expertise | European area project organisation skills |
| Ability to form a common vision in culturally diverse organisations | Ability to promote collaboration across borders | Ability to speak multiple European languages and fluency in English |
| Change agentry skills | Continual student of history, sociology, political science and other subjects that transcend borders | Open-mindedness |
| Creativity | Goal accomplishment orientation | Cognitive flexibility |
| Ready to be geographically mobile within Europe; willingness to change jobs and companies during career | Prior experience of working abroad | Broad perspective – "helicopter spirit"; ability to change functions |

Table 1: Summary of Euromanager competencies from the literature

Darker manifestations of the national differences were also reflected in ethnic prejudices against doing business with managers from other European countries. An example of such antagonism was reported by Klep who cited a Wall Street Journal Europe article where a Dutch chief executive stated that the reason his firm was not entering the German market was "because we in the company don't like Germans!" (Klep, 1993). While such prejudice likely did not get in the way of the desire of the vast majority of European companies to enter other European countries in order to pursue profits, such biases are a significant barrier to the development of Euromanagers.

A more subtle and less sanguine example of nationalistic bias was that of entrenched nationalism that pervaded the corporate cultures of many European-based firms in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Executive Boards were reluctant to promote non-nationals to the highest executive positions of their firms. In 1991, for example, Daniel Goeudevert, a highly touted French executive at Volkswagen, was denied becoming the CEO of that firm due to the fact that the company's shareholders reportedly believed that Volkswagen should have a German CEO (Economist, 1992). Thus, while executives were touting the need to develop and promote Euromanagers, their actions did not match their words. In too many European companies, a "glass ceiling" existed that allowed non-national managers to be promoted only "so-far" within the companies.

Another manifestation of deep-rooted nationalism in Europe during the 1980s and early 1990s was the lack of an accepted, official European language (Bournois, 1992). The lack of an official business language tended to erode the viability of the concept of the Euromanager. The vision of a Euromanager being able to speak multiple European languages seemed both desirable and necessary at that time, but the reality turned out to be that this expectation was impractical. Learning a foreign language well enough to manage and do business in that language takes years to develop, and to expect managers to learn multiple foreign languages was a barrier that put the brakes on the development of Euromanagers. Also, the very fact that such foreign language requirements were even deemed necessary reflected the lack of a true ethos of a pan-Europe mindset within executives and the population at large at that time. This lack of a pan-European official language underscored the existence of a deeper reality: for all practical purposes there was no "Europe."

## 2.3 Lack of HR expertise

As the key years of 1992-1993 drew closer, it became obvious to executives during the late 1980s and early 1990s that not only did they lack Euromanagers, but that their HR staffs were not equipped to develop Euromanagers either (Sparrow/Hiltrop, 1994; Taylor, 1991). It is difficult to train and develop Euromanagers if those responsible for developing and training them are inexperienced in terms of the skills and competencies that the trainees must adopt. Companies at that time took a variety of approaches in order to upgrade their HR staffs. One approach was to send their key human resource staff to external training programs, such as the Industrial Training Service, in order to learn important cross-cultural human resource competencies (e.g., how to design training programs that would be effective in multiple European locations). ITS ran two-year training programs for HR personnel to bring them up to speed on the cross-cultural differences that existed in the EC in various human resource functions (Taylor, 1991), and the training offered by ITS was rigorous and comprehensive. Unfortunately, few European human resource professionals were sent to such programs due to the financial and "time-away-from-work" costs associated with such programs.

## 2.4 Recruitment and development challenges

Many companies did not focus on "Euro-ising" their human resource staffs but rather attempted to "buy" Euromanagers rather than internally develop them. Companies such as Rhone-Poulenc and Henkel employed head-hunters to find managers across Europe that already possessed Euromanagerial skills and hire them (Economist, 1992). However, it turned out that true Euromanagers were few and far between. Various scholars reported that Euromanagers constituted a negligible percentage of the population of European managers in the early 1990s (Bournois, 1992; Economist, 1992; Klep, 1993) with Bournois reporting that they represented less than 1% of the subpopulation of managerial cadres in Europe at that time (Bournois, 1992).

This lack of Euro-talent was due to the fact that 1) managers in European companies lacked personalised contacts with other European managers outside of their own country, 2) there was a relatively low level of attention that had been paid to the development of international management skills in European companies from 1970-1992, and 3) European managers tended to spend their entire careers within the same company, and within the same function in that company (Bournois, 1992).

In order to develop internal pools of Euromanagers in their firms, human resource directors pursued graduates from more internationally oriented European business schools, such as INSEAD and IMD (Economist, 1992). However, classroom training could not make up for real-world pan-European business experience, and the reluctance of many firms to provide that experience to these new hires, due to the costs involved in expatriating them throughout Europe, stalled their development as Euromanagers.

Some companies attempted to "Euro-ise" their managers by increasing their span of control to business units outside the country in which they were stationed. These managers became, in effect, European "Road Warriors" who spent the majority of their time travelling throughout Europe on business. While providing cross-cultural experience within Europe, it also raised concerns. Ronny Vansteenkste, who was Seagram's director of European training and development at the time, noted "we need to stimulate mobility, to bring people together to run international projects, but travel is also the single biggest impediment I see. People are asking themselves whether it is worthwhile to spend so much time travelling and always being away from home." (Johnson, 1995, p.13). The question can also be raised as to whether such short-term travel provided enough cross-cultural immersion in a location for the manager to experience the subtleties of the business culture within which he/she operated.

## 2.5 Summary

Despite a clear understanding of where they wanted to take their companies, European executives were not able to develop the managerial talent necessary to carry out their strategic plans. The dynamics of this failure can best be represented by employing Kurt Lewin's force-field model of organisational change to illustrate the systemic dynamics of the problem. Lewin (1951) argued that any given change process is held in balance, or equilibrium, by the interaction of two sets of forces that oppose each other. One set of forces seeks to promote change (*driving forces*) and another set of forces attempts to maintain the status quo (*restraining forces*). Driving forces tend to promote change and maintain the momentum for the change to be considered and ultimately take place. Restraining forces promote resistance to the change, and if powerful enough, can ultimately cause the change to fail. When both driving forces and forces of restraint are more or less balanced, a change may occur, but not be the planned change that was hoped for; alternatively, in such cases of balanced forces a unique change may evolve that was unanticipated by individuals associated on either side of the conflict. The Lewinian model applied to the development of Euromanagers is illustrated in Figure 1.

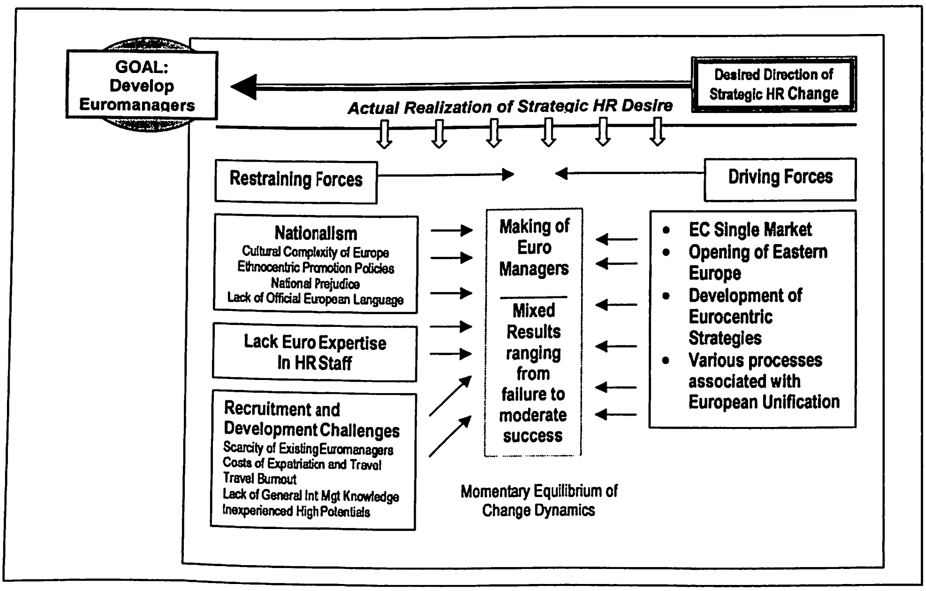


Figure 1: Force-field diagram of Euromanager development

## 2.6 Globalisation

A new force would arise in the decade of the 1990s, however, that would ultimately sweep away the Eurocentric perspective of many human resource professionals - globalisation. Globalisation is marked by significant increases in cross-border trade and investment, the emergence of global products and consumers, surging customer expectations in many countries, a massive increase in the usage of innovative information technology, and an unprecedented wave of cross-border co-operative ventures and mergers and acquisitions (Cullen, 1999; Yeung/Ready, 1995).

These powerful developments changed the ways of how multinational corporations (MNCs) around the world are led and managed themselves, and increased the need for business strategies that enable firms to deal with the increasing complexity and dynamics of the global business environment. Globalisation, in effect, engulfed - and to a large degree - rendered the Eurocentric strategic approach of many large European companies obsolete. The view of moving from dominance in a national market to dominance on a continent extended itself to that of having to be dominant in a global context.

Consider the example of Lufthansa, one of the world's biggest airlines. In a study of 42 European companies conducted at the end of the 1980s (Bournois/Chauchat, 1990), Lufthansa, on the basis of interviews with top executives, was assigned to a small group of European "Supranationals" that were actively preparing for the internal European market. These companies occupied strong national positions at that time but wanted to excel on a European basis, "...with the Single Market as their prime strategic focus" (Bournois/Chauchat, 1990, p. 17). With regard to managerial development, these companies pursued a clear Eurocentric strategy and made considerable efforts to train their managers to develop a European spirit and to be able to successfully manage in a European context. According to this study, at the end of the 1980s none of these companies had a global orientation, and none considered it a strategic goal to improve its competitive position world-wide.

Figure 2 shows some of the internal and external developments that Lufthansa underwent during the advent of globalisation in the 1990s. The results of this evolutionary analysis indicate that Lufthansa experienced a fundamental strategic change during the last decade and evolved from its worst-ever economic crisis in the early 1990s into an industry leader and global player toward the end of the 1990s. The example of Lufthansa illustrates that a Eurocentric approach to management development can in fact be a risky strategy because it generates the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to operate effectively in a European context, but not necessarily in markets outside of Europe.

While a Eurocentric management development strategy might have been – and may still be – reasonable for some European firms, it is our contention that such an approach in the present constitutes an increasingly risky strategy for MNCs. In global industries, such as consumer electronics, automotive, and telecommunication (Bartlett/Ghoshal, 1989; Macharzina/Wolf, 1996), firms are running the risk of creating a "strategic misfit" (Scholz, 1995) between their overall business strategy and the human resources management strategy by pursuing a Eurocentric approach to management development. A Eurocentric management development strategy appears to be particularly risky for companies that seek rapid globalisation through strategic alliances and acquisitions across European borders, as this has been the pattern for many European firms throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Bartlett/Ghoshal, 1989; Hendry, 1994; Sparrow/Hiltrop, 1994).

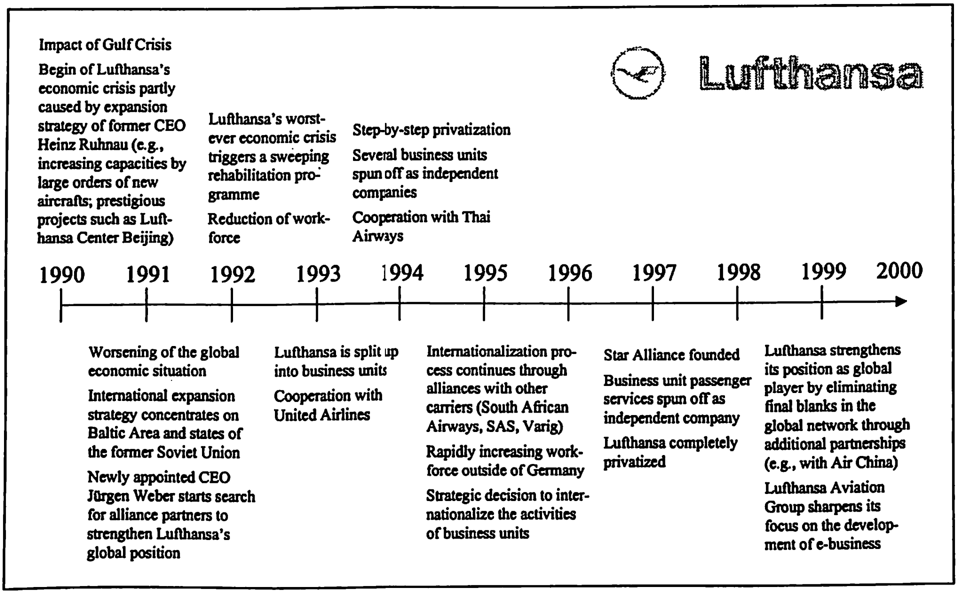


Figure 2: Evolution of Lufthansa's Eurocentric strategic focus to a global strategic focus

Thus, for many European companies the European arena quickly became a subset of the global arena, and the idea of focusing on Euro-strategies and developing Euromanagers became archaic overnight. The concept of the global leader or manager has now replaced that of the Euromanager in the minds of European human resource professionals and company executives as the necessary ideal to reach in order to be successful in the global business environment.

# 3. From Euromanagers to global leaders

It has been argued that the effectiveness of global business strategies will come only as a result of the international savvy and experience of the firm's key decision makers (Adler/Bartholomew, 1992; Gregersen/Morrison/Black, 1998; Stroh/Caligiuri, 1998). Black, Gregersen, Mendenhall, and Stroh (1999, pp. 1-2) summarised this view when they wrote:

The strategy of a company is a function of its strategy makers. For example, whether those strategists recognise or miss global threats or opportunities is a function of their experience and perspective. How they structure an organisation for global reach and results depends on how they see the world of organisations, markets, competitors... around them.

More and more companies realise that they need both managers who can physically operate across national boundaries and managers who, although they may not work abroad for extended periods of time, in their minds can also travel across boundaries by understanding the global implications of their work (Barham/Berthoin Antal, 1994). This is true not only for top executives, but also for middle managers and other qualified professionals (Auterio/Tesio, 1990; Regan, 1994). Given the current and future importance of international markets to European firms, the challenge is to develop such a globally minded cadre of managers and professionals.

*Global leadership competencies*

What skills, attitudes and personality characteristics enable executives to operate effectively in today's rapidly changing global business world? Social scientists began investigating global leadership competencies in the early 1990s, thus as yet, a thorough knowledge regarding the extent and nature of the competencies of global leadership has not yet been delineated in the field. While a comprehensive knowledge does not yet exist, much has been discovered about global leadership competencies. Based upon a review of the literature (Mendenhall, 2001) the competencies of global leadership are listed below (see Table 2).

| Global Leadership Competencies | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Curiosity Inquisitive-ness | Learning oriented | Integrity Maturity | Hardiness Courage | Results/ Goal orientation |
| Global mindset | Open-mindedness | Cognitive complexity | Managing uncertainty | Environmental sensemaking |
| Global busi-ness savvy | Global organisational savvy | Vision change Agentry | Cross-cultural communica-tion skills | Ability to emotionally connect |
| Motivation skills Empowering | Conflict management skills | Negotiation expertise | High task and relationship orientation | Global networking skills |
| Team building skills | Cosmo-politanism | Managing lo-cal vs. global paradoxes | Improvisation/ Thinking agility | Courage Risk-orientation |

Table 2: Summary of global leadership competencies from the literature

A comparison of the competencies that were listed for Euromanagers and those for global leaders reveals that the two constructs significantly overlap in terms of their conceptual underpinnings. On the surface the only variable that differentiates the two is the foreign language expectation: Euromanagers were expected to be fluent in multiple languages while no such expectation was held for global leaders.

It might be tempting to conclude from these apparent similarities that there is essentially no difference between Euromangers and global leaders. However, a possible important distinction between the two sets of competencies is the context in which each of these competencies must be applied. Is there something qualitatively different about the global context from the European context that would differentiate how these competencies would be successfully deployed? In other words, perhaps these competencies are the same for both managerial constructs (Euromanagers and Global Leaders) but that they differ in degree rather than kind.

Differences in degree can imply a qualitative difference between similar constructs; a "regional mindset" would imply that the person thinks within certain regional (and other) boundaries, and pursues business opportunities only on a regional scale, whereas a person with a "global mindset" is cosmopolitan, requires more in depth cross-cultural and cognitive skills, pursues business opportunities on a global scale, etc. Thus, because a global leader must be able to manage and operate and travel in Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and South American business contexts rather than just the European context, it may be that the competencies must be understood differently and deployed differently by global leaders.

Because Euromanagers were expected to work within only the European context, the expectation that they would become "culture-specific specialists" was a basic assumption of the Euromanagement development programs of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Euromanager was expected to be a foreign language specialist, as well as a nation-specialist in terms of business practices in a regional context. In the case of the global leader, the assumption differs. It is assumed that it is impossible to become a language and national specialist; rather, the global leader is expected to be able to deploy general cross-cultural business skills wherever she/he operates. The global leader is thus a true "global generalist," while the Euromanager was expected to be more of a "national specialist" - yet with a European perspective (Bournois/Chauchat, 1990).

In order to become a global leader, it is likely important that one first becomes a "national specialist" in at least one foreign country. Adjusting to a new social and work culture provides an in depth understanding of micro cross-cultural processes. It also forces the expatriate to construct a working model in their minds of how the host-national business system operates. In a way, the expatriate develops an entirely new framework of how the host-national culture works in addition to their framework of how their own culture operates. Without this core, fundamental insight - and an understanding of the complexities involved within that insight - it is likely impossible that a manager can operate in a global business context successfully. There is also increasing evidence that the expatriate experience actually produces the competencies listed in Tables 1 and

2 (Mendenhall, 2001). Thus, before one can become a global leader one must first become a national specialist.

A global leader must generalise his/her insights about cross-cultural management and business from one setting to other settings across the globe. Of course, the specific practices would not generalise, but core principles would generalise at different levels and dimensions. Take, for example, a manager who became an expert on Japanese business practices because of an expatriate assignment in Tokyo. Upon promotion to a regional manager assignment in Europe, this same manager would obviously not be an expert in the various cultures and business practices that exist across Europe. This is the same condition the manager found him/herself upon arrival in Japan. The manager knows, from experience, that in order to navigate the Japanese business culture, support from the Japanese employees and peers was essential. The manager also knows that gaining support is done differently around the world. The first thing that the manager does is study how one goes about gaining support and building a team in the European context.

Thus, by leveraging the competencies of global leadership, this person will be able to develop throughout Europe, over time, a network of associates, both within and outside the company, that would constitute a global management network. Each of the network's associates would represent the different nations and business cultures that exist within the company, and each associate would be knowledgeable about a single country's management norms and market. By working at a macro-management team level, and being conscious of general cross-cultural issues and how they influence the company's businesses, the manager can effectively go forward and manage units across countries in which he/she is not a national specialist.

Global leaders are thus the next step up in a conceptual hierarchy from national or even regional specialists. They are able to deploy the same competencies that national specialists possess, but at a more macro, strategic level of cross-cultural business dynamics. Global leaders organise national specialists, and train others to be national specialists in order to oversee global operations. Global leaders also simultaneously instil in the national specialists that they oversee a more macro, more global perspective so that they can step up to the next level of global leadership.

# 4. Concluding remarks: back to reality

Just as there were few actual Euromanagers in the late 1980s and early 1990s, so in 2002 there are very few actual global leaders. Most executives who are operating in regional or global contexts do not possess the skills necessary to be truly successful in those contexts. They are, in effect, domestically successful managers operating in contexts where their domestic skills do not apply.

Interestingly, similar barriers to those of the development of Euromanager currently exist for global leaders. In fact, if one were to create a Figure illustrating the restraining forces for the development of global leaders, it would essentially be the same as the restraining forces listed in Figure 1. The only change would be that instead of the term "Euro," the word "Global" would be inserted instead.

Thus, though the concept of the Euromanager has been superseded by the need for global versus regiocentric managerial skills, companies today must learn from the experiences of European companies in their attempts to develop Euromanagers. The failure to create a cadre of Euromanagers presages the current failure of most companies in not being able to develop global leaders. The knowledge and strategies of how to develop global leaders, though not final and comprehensive in scope, is nevertheless fairly well developed in the literature (for a review see: Mendenhall/Kühlmann/Stahl, 2001). Unless companies can define the restraining forces that oppose the development of global leaders, the concept of "global leader" may also become defunct in the minds of business executives. However, while it can be argued that the idea of the Euromanager became defunct out of the natural evolution towards a truly global business arena versus a bounded pan-European business arena, and due to the fact that it was overly optimistic to expect that a person could quickly be trained to become a national specialist in a large number of European business cultures, the concept of the global leader will not become superseded quite so easily. Globalisation has seen to that. Thus, the need for global leaders is here to stay, and declaring it defunct due to the inability to develop global leaders will not abrogate the reality that global leaders are absolutely necessary in a truly global business environment.

Unfortunately, there is no general equation that can be applied to companies that will allow them to magically defang the restraining forces against global leadership development. The valence, source, and social dynamics of the restraining forces are unique to each company. Executives ignore this systemic aspect of their operations at their peril.

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