

Building A “Global Trading Empire”: The Merger of NAFTA and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)?

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Global Research, June 26, 2012

beyourownleader.blogspot.com 26 June
2012

Region: [Asia](#), [Canada](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#)

Both Canada and Mexico have been invited to join the U.S., along with other countries already engaged in negotiations which will deepen trade and economic ties within the Asia-Pacific region. Such a deal would surpass NAFTA in size and scope. The U.S. led talks which have been criticized for their secretive nature, could be used to update aspects of existing trade pacts among member nations. This would provide the perfect opportunity for a backdoor renegotiation of NAFTA without officially having to open it back up.

After expressing interest in joining trade talks back in November 2011, NAFTA partners have been invited to join the U.S. backed [Trans-Pacific Partnership](#) (TPP) which also includes Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk welcomed both [Mexico](#) and [Canada](#) into the TPP fold. He noted that, “Mexico has assured the United States that it is prepared to conclude a high-standard agreement that will include issues that were not covered in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).” He added, “Inviting Canada to join the TPP negotiations presents a unique opportunity for the United States to build upon this already dynamic trading relationship. Through TPP, we are bringing the relationship with our largest trading partner into the 21st century.” A [joint statement](#) by the U.S. and Canada acknowledged that, “The TPP presents an opportunity to conclude a high standard agreement that will build on the commitments of NAFTA.”

The [Council of Canadians](#) which continues to be a vocal opponent of NAFTA and other trade deals that follow the same flawed template, are strongly against Canada’s entry into the TPP. Its national chairperson, Maude Barlow warned that this, “could force Canada to change its drug policies, its copyright policies, its environmental and public health rules – all without going through the normal parliamentary process.” The organization cautioned how, “TPP negotiations could mean up-front concessions in a number of areas, including intellectual property rights, where the U.S. is making considerable demands on TPP member countries that will undermine access to essential medicines so that its multinational drug firms can increase profits.” They also emphasized that, “Supply management, which guarantees fair wages and stable prices for farmers in non-exporting sectors, is too valuable to Canada to sacrifice on a negotiating table.” Others have pointed out that it is important as a buy-local program, as well as key to Canada’s food security and food sovereignty. The Council of Canadians maintains that, “the TPP is by and large a NAFTA renegotiation but on U.S. President Obama’s terms.”

Not surprisingly, the [Canadian Council of Chief Executives](#), an organization that lobbies the

government on behalf of the country's largest corporations, welcomed the announcement that Canada has been invited to join the TPP talks. Its President and CEO John Manley stated that, "By signing on to the TPP, the federal government has taken an historic leap toward securing Canada's long-term strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region." The U.S. Chamber of Commerce have also [applauded](#) Canada and Mexico's entry into the TPP. Its President and CEO Thomas Donohue argued that, "negotiating the TPP together is an excellent strategic decision for North America." Back in January, the [Council of the Americas](#) explained how, "it makes little sense for the United States to enter into potentially significant trade arrangements with countries in the Pacific region without our NAFTA partners." They view the TPP as a "promising vehicle to support the updating of our bilateral and trilateral trading relationships within North America to the high standards of twenty-first century free-trade agreements."

In his article, [Will invitation to join TPP talks lead to NAFTA 2.0?](#), Peter Clark one of Canada's leading international trade strategists concluded that, "A successful TPP would allow NAFTA to essentially be re-opened without the optics of it actually being re-opened." He went on to say, "The business leaders in all three NAFTA countries, as strong supporters of TPP invitations to Canada and Mexico, understand that after nearly 20 years, modernization of NAFTA is needed. For rules of origin, supply chain management and manufacturing integration." Clark stressed that, "All Canadians should be clear about this - TPP is the negotiation of NAFTA 2.0 and it could have major implications for Canada-USA trade relations." Meanwhile, both countries are implementing the [Beyond the Border Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness Action Plan](#) which has been described as the most significant steps forward in U.S.-Canada cooperation since NAFTA. [Christopher Sands](#) of the Hudson Institute observed how, "The TPP negotiating agenda is at once similar to the bilateral agenda that Canada and the United States are pursuing, and also more ambitious and multilateral."

In May, the TPP held its [twelfth round of negotiations](#) with the next set of talks scheduled to take place in San Diego, California from July 2-10. So far, there has been a real lack of transparency, but what is clear is that the TPP seeks to go beyond other trade agreements. According to a [leaked text by Public Citizen](#), it would expand on the investor privileges found in NAFTA, granting corporations more power and further threatening the sovereign rights of member nations. In the meantime, the U.S. continues to spearhead TPP negotiations as a way of countering growing Chinese influence. The door is open for other countries to join which is why it is considered to be a stepping stone to a larger free trade area of the Asia-Pacific and an important part of the international corporate globalization agenda.

Trade deals such as NAFTA and now the TPP are being used to smuggle through a new set of transnational corporate rights, trapping nations in a web of treaties that further trump their own laws. All too often, these agreements fail to deliver on the promise of prosperity and only serve to accelerate the path towards economic enslavement. Globalization has meant sacrificing self-sufficiency and sovereignty for foreign dependency which is a sure path to world government.

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