

The Trans-Pacific Partnership and “Police Militarization”: The Coming Calamity, The Coming Resistance

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Currently, the world is facing a major political, social and economical crisis.

While we may be paying attention to important stories such as the Islamic State's movements in Iraq and the ongoing fighting in the Gaza Strip which are extremely important, there are dealings being made behind closed doors of which we know virtually nothing about. There are major international trade deals in the works and the government seems to be getting prepared for the fallout.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) has its roots in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) organization. In 1994, APEC stated in its Bogor Declaration that:

With respect to our objective of enhancing trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific, we agree to adopt the long-term goal of free and open trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific. This goal will be pursued promptly by further reducing barriers to trade and investment and by promoting the free flow of goods, services and capital among our economies.

[...]

We further agree to announce our commitment to complete the achievement of our goal of free and open trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific no later than the year 2020.[1] (emphasis added)

Furthermore, in the free trade agreement between the US and Singapore both leaders made a statement in 2000 in which they stated that both countries “are committed to APEC’s Bogor Goals of free and open trade and investment by 2010 for industrialized economies and 2020 for developing economies.”[2] Thus we can see that some sort of trade deal has been sought after for quite some time and logically, it would be much easier to have a regional trade deal between APEC nations rather than individual trade deals among the many countries in the region.

The TPP itself, originally had nothing to do with the United States, rather it was a trade deal between Chile, New Zealand and Singapore and Brunei which was signed in 2005. The US became involved three years later and officially joined the TPP in 2009.[3] However, this

leads to the question: If the trade deal was originally between four Asia Pacific nations, why did the US feel the need to become involved?

According to Deborah Elms, head of the Temasek Foundation Centre for Trade & Negotiations, the US became involved for three reasons:

- 1) A trade agreement between the European Union and South Korea bolstered the argument for greater US economic intervention in the region.
- 2) Alternative trade configurations were starting to be discussed such as ASEAN plus China, Japan and Korea. If these were to become a reality, the US would end up being sidelined from Asian markets.
- 3) "The TPP gave the United States a seat at the economic table in Asia in a way that these alternatives did not. It represented a better platform for meaningful engagement than the only remaining configuration—somehow coaxing APEC to do more." [4]

The last point is further backed up when one looks at the US President's 2008 Annual Report on the Trade Agreements Program, which read that "US participation in the TPP could position US businesses better to compete in the Asia-Pacific region, which is seeing the proliferation of preferential trade agreements among US competitors and the development of several competing regional economic integration initiatives that exclude the United States." [5]

However, there is also much more to the story than just not wanting to be locked out from Asian markets. US geopolitical interests are also involved as well. The aforementioned annual report also stated that

"Apart from economic considerations, there are also geopolitical concerns, particularly with regard to the growing power and influence of China, something which became clearer with the Obama administration's policy announcement of a military and diplomatic 'pivot' or 'rebalance' towards Asia" and a US Congress research paper noted that the TPP would have regional effects for the US, especially when one factors in that "the region has served as an anchor of US strategic relationships, first in the containment of communism and more recently as a counterweight to the rise of China." [6] (emphasis added)

Jane Kelsey, a professor of law at the University of Auckland, argued that the TPP had "very little to do with commercial gain and everything to do with revival of US geopolitical and strategic influence in the Asian region to counter the ascent of China" and that the US wanted to "isolate and subordinate China in part through constructing a region-wide legal regime that serves the interests of, and is enforceable by, the US and its corporations – and in the TPPA context, what the US wants is ultimately what counts." [7] Many in China seem believe that the TPP indeed is meant to harm China, with it being reported that "official media have suspected that the deal has more insidious goals than simply forging a trade alliance, accusing the US of corralling Pacific nations against Beijing's interests." [8]

While many praise the Trans-Pacific Partnership as free trade, one must be wary not only due to the geopolitical aspects, but also due to it being so secret that "often times, members of Congress and Parliament are denied access to them, even though the

agreement will set out legal obligations that these elected officials will be expected to meet.”[9] However, the TPP is not the only secretive trade deal currently being discussed. There is also the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

A transatlantic partnership between the US and Europe has been in the works for quite some time. In 1995, the US mission to the European Union stated that it wanted to “create a New Transatlantic Marketplace by progressively reducing or eliminating barriers that hinder the flow of goods, services and capital” and that the US and EU would “carry out a joint study on ways of facilitating trade in goods and services and further reducing or eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers.”[10]

The idea of focusing on Europe economically was pushed by those who thought that, due to the Cold War being over, the US should shift away from examining Europe through a military lens. Robin Gaster and Alan Tonelson wrote in *The Atlantic* that the military-view of Europe “completely misreads the nature of America’s post-Cold War interests in Europe, and has resulted in a deepening transatlantic rift on both the security and the economic front” and that “the United States and Europe urgently need to develop a NATO-like forum for handling economic issues.”[11] While this argument isn’t for a US-EU free trade agreement, it still signals that to some, there needed to be a shift in the US relationship with Europe.

However, that quickly changed as some began to argue for a deeper economic integration between the transatlantic partners. In 1997, Ellen L. Frost, a then-senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, proposed to the House Subcommittee on Trade (part of the House Ways and Means Committee) the creation of a North Atlantic Economic Community which would be “a framework combining APEC-like trade and business initiatives with a NATO-like strategic, political-economic orientation” and would “establish a deadline for free and open Transatlantic trade and investment (say, 2010) on a Most Favored Nation Basis.” She argued that the Community “should span not only trade and investment but also macroeconomic coordination, monetary policy, exchange rates, and other financial aspects of the transatlantic relationship, as well as trade and investment.”[12]

The very next year, in May 1998, Bill Clinton and Tony Blair announced in a press conference that “we have launched a major new transatlantic trade initiative, the Transatlantic Economic Partnership, which will further add momentum to the process of developing what is already the most important bilateral trade relationship in the world. We’ve also agreed to work ever more closely together to promote multilateral trade liberalization.”[13]

The push for a transatlantic economic partnership has continued into the present day, both by individuals and organizations. In 2006, an article was penned in *Der Spiegel* which argued that “The role NATO played in an age of military threat could be played by a trans-Atlantic free-trade zone in today’s age of economic confrontation” and that such a partnership would “help reduce the slope of Asia’s ascent and prevent our flight paths from crossing too frequently.”[14]

In 2012, “Business Europe released a report to contribute to the EU-US High Level Working Group entitled, *Jobs and Growth: Through a Transatlantic Economic and Trade Partnership*, in which it was recommended to eliminate tariffs and barriers, to trade in services, ensure

access and protection for investments, 'opening markets,' to establish 'global standards' for intellectual property rights, and to build on the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC) for regulatory cooperation." [15]

While both of these 'free trade' partnerships are quite worrisome, there is still the Trade in Services agreement which has recently come to light.

Trade in Services Agreement

The TiSA is so new and so secretive that barely any information can be found about it. Public Services International, a global trade union federation, issued a report in April 2014 discussing the origins of TiSA, stating

The TISA appears to have been the brainchild of the U.S. Coalition of Service Industries (CSI), specifically its past president Robert Vastine. After his appointment as CSI President in 1996, Vastine became actively involved in services negotiations. The CSI initially endorsed the Doha Round and seemed to be optimistic in the early stages of negotiations, but when the target deadline passed in 2005, the CSI became increasingly frustrated. Vastine personally lobbied developing countries for concessions in 2005 and continued to try and salvage an agreement until at least 2009.

By 2010, however, it was clear that the WTO services negotiations were stalled. In mid-2011, Vastine declared that the Doha Round "holds no promise" and recommended that it be abandoned. Vastine was also one of the first to suggest, as early as 2009, that plurilateral negotiations on services should be conducted outside the framework of the WTO. Working through the Global Services Coalition (GSC), a multinational services lobby group, the CSI then garnered the support of other corporate lobbyists for the TISA initiative. The TISA is a political project for this corporate lobby group. [16]

Some of the actual effects TiSA would have were released in June 2014 by Wikileaks. In the leak, it explained that TiSA would have horrendous effects on public services. TiSA would "lock in the privatizations of services-even in cases where private service delivery has failed-meaning governments can never return water, energy, health, education or other services to public hands," "restrict a government's right to regulate stronger standards in the public's interest," "restrict a government's ability to regulate key sectors including financial, energy, telecommunications and cross-border data flows," and "limit the ability of governments to regulate the financial services industry at exactly the time when the global economy is still recovering from a crisis caused by financial deregulation." [17] (emphasis added) This trade agreement not only has the power to allow corporations free rein and to truly be unrestricted in doing whatever they please, but also to put the public in massive danger via permanently privatizing public goods.

However, this brings up the questions of what exactly is the Coalition of Services Industries, what involvement do they have with TiSA, and who is Robert Vastine?

According to its website, the Coalition of Services Industries is an organization representing the interests of the US service economy and aims at "expanding the multilateral trading environment to include more countries and more services, enhancing bilateral services trading relationships, and ensuring competitive services trade in the global marketplace." [18] Among its board of directors are people such as Zubaid Ahmad, the Vice Chairman of Institutional Clients Group and Member of Senior Strategic Advisory Group of

Institutional Clients at Citigroup and Jake Jennings, Executive Director of International External Affairs at AT&T. It represents companies ranging from Walmart to JP Morgan Chase and Citigroup to Google, Verizon, and AIG. In many ways it represents a variety of interests, virtually all of whom benefit from worker subjugation and/or economic deregulation.

The Coalition of Services Industries is part of the TiSA Business Coalition (aka Team TiSA) which is “dedicated to promoting and advocating for an ambitious agreement which eliminates barriers to global services trade, to the benefit of services providers, manufacturers and farmers, and consumers globally.”[19]

Now, with regards to Robert Vastine, in 2012 he retired from the presidency of the Coalition of Services group and is currently a senior industry fellow at the Center for Business and Public Policy at the McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University.[20] He is quite known for having stated in 2011 at the Doha Round, a round of negotiations among the members of the World Trade Organization with the aims of achieving “major reform of the international trading system through the introduction of lower trade barriers and revised trade rules,”[21] that the talks were a waste of time and “hold no promise.”[22] However, he already had problems with the Doha Round talks as he stated in 2005 in the Global Economy Journal that “High expectations for substantial reductions in barriers to services trade emerged from the 1997 negotiations, but thus far remain unfulfilled” and that “a Doha Round that does not contain substantial benefits for services is a Round that will have failed.”[23] Thus, it is no wonder that he is a supporter of TiSA.

The effects of these trade agreements will be horrendous for millions of people around the world, but especially the poor and working-class, much of whom are more vulnerable to these agreements as few have the money needed to learn new skills and adapt to the changing economy. For them and many in what remains of the middle class, if these trade agreements become a reality, it will result in a global race to the bottom in which, among them, there are no winners.

All of these trade agreements, however, are being done all the while the police are becoming increasingly militarized and the Pentagon is preparing for a mass breakdown in society.

Police Militarization

We have recently been seeing an increase in coverage of the militarization of the police and a number of stories reveal this. It was reported in July 2014 that the Albuquerque police purchased 350 AR-15 rifles[24] and the American Civil Liberties Union released a report in which they found that the police are often being used incorrectly and actually creating violence as “SWAT teams today are overwhelmingly used to investigate people who are still only suspected of committing nonviolent consensual crimes. And because these raids often involve forced entry into homes, often at night, they’re actually creating violence and confrontation where there was none before.”[25]

Police are also acquiring military-grade weaponry. A New York Times article written in June 2014 noted that “the former tools of combat — M-16 rifles, grenade launchers, silencers and more — are ending up in local police departments, often with little public notice” and that “During the Obama administration, according to Pentagon data, police departments have received tens of thousands of machine guns; nearly 200,000 ammunition magazines;

thousands of pieces of camouflage and night-vision equipment; and hundreds of silencers, armored cars and aircraft.”[26] The situation also has the potential to get increasingly strange as it was reported that a drone which can shoot pepper spray bullets at protesters had been developed by a company in South Africa.[27] Unfortunately, however, police militarization isn’t anything new.

A study was conducted in 1998 which “found a sharp rise in the number of police paramilitary units [PPUs], a rapid expansion in their activities, the normalization of paramilitary units into mainstream police work, and a close ideological and material connection between PPUs and the U.S. armed forces. These findings provide compelling evidence of a national trend toward the militarization of U.S. civilian police forces and, in turn, the militarization of corresponding social problems handled by the police.”[28] The study found that this increased militarization would lead to three problems:

1. It would reinforce “the cynical view that the most expedient route to solving social problems is through military-style force, weaponry, and technology.”[29]
2. The militarist-feel could potentially infect the police on an institutional level, noting that many police departments have specific paramilitary units to deal with patrolling, drugs, and suppressing gangs.
3. Most PPUs don’t solely react to already existing emergencies which require their level of skill, but also “proactively seek out and even manufacture highly dangerous situations” and these “units target what the police define as high crime or disorderly areas, which most often are poor neighborhoods.”[30]

Furthermore, police militarization in many ways doesn’t make sense as we have seen a decrease in the amount of crime, but it does make sense when we acknowledge the fact that most of the victims of police militarization are the poor.

According to the 2003 Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) annual crime report, violent crime in America has declined by 3 percent since 2002, and declined some 25 percent since 1994. Aggravated assaults, which make up two-thirds of all reported violent crimes, reportedly declined for the tenth consecutive year. The 2003 annual crime report also revealed that property crimes had declined 14 percent since 1994.

Similar findings of a historic decline in the violent crime rate in America over the past decade were also reported in other government studies. One such study that provided supporting evidence of this declining violent crime rate was the United States Justice Department’s annual survey of crime victims, released in September 2004. This report revealed that the nation’s violent crime rate was at its lowest point since their study of crime victims began, in 1973. However, even with this reported decline in violent crime there still remained throughout suburban communities a perceived threat of being victimized by violent acts of crime, perpetrated by the urban underclass.[31]

We can further see that there is a war on the underclass in the form of police militarization as a study in 1997 found that SWAT teams “were characterized by the deployment of military special operation weapons, such as Heckler and Koch MP5 submachine guns, diversionary devices, and the wearing of tactical body armor and camouflage uniforms” and that often those resources were used “in daily and routine policing activities against the urban underclass.” One can even go so far as to say that “the use of special weapons, military tactics, and the wearing of combat style uniforms in the course of routine urban policing by street-level law enforcement officers would suggest that they are engaged in an

actual urban war with the enemy being the urban underclass.”[32]

This increased cooperation between the police and military should have us wonder: What exactly is the Pentagon up to?

The Pentagon

The Pentagon is actively preparing for civil unrest and a breakdown of society. The organization currently has a research program which “is funding universities to model the dynamics, risks and tipping points for large-scale civil unrest across the world, under the supervision of various US military agencies” and earlier this year awarded a project to the University of Washington which “seeks to uncover the conditions under which political movements aimed at large-scale political and economic change originate,’ along with their ‘characteristics and consequences.”[33] However, like with police militarization, this has been going on for a while.

In 2008, it was noted that “A U.S. Army War College report [warned that] an economic crisis in the United States could lead to massive civil unrest and the need to call on the military to restore order.”[34] The use of the military to quell civil unrest was also discussed in Directive No. 3025.18, the Defense Support of Civil Authorities.

The directive was rather interesting in that it stated that “Federal military forces shall not be used to quell civil disturbances unless specifically authorized by the president in accordance with applicable law or permitted under emergency authority,” however, later the document reads that federal military commanders are able,

“in extraordinary emergency circumstances where prior authorization by the president is impossible and duly constituted local authorities are unable to control the situation, to engage temporarily in activities that are necessary to quell large-scale, unexpected civil disturbances,”[35] under two conditions. The two conditions are when the military has “to prevent significant loss of life or wanton destruction of property and are necessary to restore governmental function and public order” and “when federal, state and local authorities are unable or decline to provide adequate protection for federal property or federal governmental functions.”[36] This is quite vague in the sense of who defines what “significant loss of life” or “wanton destruction of property” is? What exactly does “adequate protection” for federal property and/or governmental functions mean?

Unfortunately, this isn’t just occurring in the US, but also in Europe as well. It was reported in July 2014 that “European governments are working together to prepare to militarily suppress social unrest. This effort—involving legal, technical, as well as military plans—is in an advanced stage of development, according to a report by Aureliana Sorrento that aired on June 20 on Germany’s Deutschlandfunk radio station.”[37] Just like the US, the Europeans also utilize vague language, saying that a disaster “is defined as ‘any situation that has harmful repercussions on human beings, the environment or wealth assets.’”[38]

However, among all of this preparation and secrecy, there is mounting resistance to these trade deals. In December 2013, 30 protests were held across the US and Mexico, with people voicing their opposition against the Trans-Pacific Partnership.[39] The World Development Movement, a UK-based group fighting poverty and inequality, noted that “Campaign groups and trade unions announced plans for Europe-wide protests on 11 October against the deal, known as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

(TTIP). Campaigners also launched a ‘Citizens’ Initiative’ petition to the European Commission with the aim of gathering one million signatures against the deal.”[40]

We are beginning to resist against the secretive trade deals and police militarization, but we must go further. We have to also reject the governments, no matter how large are small their facilitation or complicity may be, as they are being used as tools in a corporate agenda meant to oppress us even further. The calamity may soon be coming, the question is, will you resist?

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