

Ten Ways Globalization Promotes Militarism

“Globalization denies food to the hungry – and hands them guns instead.”

Globalization is founded upon a conservative, free market-oriented world view that seeks to limit the economic impact of government actions.

The free trade agreements that codify globalization such as those negotiated between states or at the World Trade Organization place restrictions on government services and regulations that might inhibit corporate profits.

This unfortunately limits the positive roles governments play in society by providing non-profit social services, creating jobs and protecting the environment.

Ironically, while the free market ideology minimizes the role of government, it champions the state's role in providing national security. “Security exceptions” in trade agreements ensure that the free trade rules do not apply to government actions taken for national security – including maintaining and arming a powerful military establishment.

The special treatment of security roles of the state combined with the limits on its social and regulatory roles is a powerful mix that creates the conditions for war – and provides the mean to wage it.

1. Globalization creates a breeding ground for terrorism.

Globalization feeds resentment in poor countries as poverty increases, foreign products flood local markets displacing local producers, and human rights are abused by northern corporations exploiting low-paid labor.

The result is an audience of desperate people for religious extremists to exhort to take up arms or undertake acts of terrorism.

2. Globalization promotes the conditions for war.

Ethnic and religious differences mask the underlying economic causes of the more than 30 wars raging around the world today. Inequality, competition for dwindling resources, and environmental degradation are factors in the outbreak of armed conflict that are worsened by free trade.

Globalization undermines the ability of governments to regulate and mitigate the damaging effects of free market, resulting in the exacerbation of all of the economic causes of war.

3. Globalization promotes military spending over social spending.

Security exceptions in free trade agreements grant governments a free hand in military spending, but place limits on social spending. Thus, governments use military spending to achieve non-defence goals such as job creation, regional development, and

subsidization of local corporations through defence contracts.

Since the late 1990s, world military spending has been on the rise and is now nearly \$1 trillion a year, almost half by the United States alone.

4. Globalization militarizes the economy of industrialized countries.

Free trade is “de-industrializing” many northern countries as corporations move manufacturing to lower-wage southern countries. But northern countries are retaining their high-tech and advanced manufacturing industries – especially for the production of fighter planes, space systems, and advanced weapons.

Military spending and “Buy American” policies subsidize domestic production of high tech military products built by corporations such as Boeing, the world largest manufacturer of both commercial and military aircraft in addition to being the United States’ largest exporter.

5. Globalization militarizes the economic development of emerging countries.

Free trade agreements limit the ability of governments to stipulate that foreign investment and government purchases must benefit the local economy. However, security exceptions permit poorer southern governments to buy arms from foreign, northern-based corporations and demand that technology and manufacturing be transferred to help the local economy.

But military production is a poor development tool because it creates fewer jobs than investment in public works, and makes no long-term contribution to the economy (except from arms exports). Even more, the new local military industries become dependent upon military spending, draining resources away from social programs such as health and education.

6. Globalization limits the use of economic sanctions against corporations and repressive states.

Free trade agreements make it more difficult for governments to enact economic sanctions or trade restrictions against other states or corporations that are benefiting from armed conflict or repression.

Economic sanctions, used properly, can provide the international community an alternative to the threat of military force in order to lodge a protest or to apply external pressure on a state or corporation. Sanctions were crucial in applying pressure on South Africa to end apartheid.

7. Globalization requires military protection of corporate interests abroad.

Great empires of the past learned that their colonial holdings and trade routes needed to be protected by military power against local uprisings and competing empires. The September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States demonstrated that the global economy was vulnerable, and economic elites demanded governments provide military protection for the system.

Today, the Pentagon is realigning and expanding its vast international network of bases along the frontiers of the global economy, such as in central Asia. And in places like Colombia, U.S. troops and weapons are being deployed where uprisings threaten corporate investments.

8. Globalization requires police protection of corporate interests at home.

Popular movements opposed to globalization's harsh economic agenda have been emerging around the world, especially since the famous protests derailed the WTO in Seattle in 1999. Police forces have responded with increased repression and intolerance for political protests.

Armed with powerful new anti-terrorism laws such as the Patriot Act, security forces can use totalitarian-like measures to investigate and detain people whose only "crime" may be to advocate for a fair global economy that serves the interests of everyday people.

9. Globalization undermines citizen peace work.

Government and corporate interests can use trade agreements to limit the ability of citizens to lobby for government policies that promote peace. Legislative victories by citizens advocating economic sanctions or divestment campaigns against repressive states may be challenged and overturned by free trade regimes such as the WTO.

A successful citizen campaign encouraging local governments to not contract with corporations doing business in Burma/Myanmar was overturned by the U.S. federal government after it was threatened with a WTO challenge.

10. Globalization promotes corporate security over human security.

Globalization and free trade regimes align government interests with corporate interests, resulting in the state increasingly assuming the role of promoter and defender of corporate interests at home and abroad.

This focus on corporate interests comes at the expense of governments providing for the security of its citizens through social programs and public-interest legislation, and from states undertaking international actions to promote peace and security and achieve the greater public good, regardless of the impact on corporate profits.