What's at stake: What is the threat from surrounded China, compared to the US—compared to Japan, compared to S. Korea? The expansion of US domination from San Diego to Darwin and Diego Garcia, from Oakland/San Francisco to Okinawa, Seattle to Seoul, Tacoma to Taiwan and Tokyo, Bangor Tridents! to all, serve aggressive, encompassing, threatening US imperialism.

Contents # 17 at end

Contents US Westward Imperialism, Pacific, E. Asia, Indian Ocean Newsletter #18

These essays move from US military to economic expansion in the Pacific/E. Asia region: the US anti-China threat-fear machine, US harms in the region, US global military bases, TPP.

CHINA
Dick, FEWOCIOUS CHINA Plans Its First Military Outpost in Africa

Two Essays by Bruce Gagnon on US and China
- Resistance to New US Naval Base at Jeju Island
- US Attempts to Control Vietnam

Koohan Paik, US Military Destruction of Pacific Water and Land, Flora and Fauna

Two Books by David Vine on US Military Bases Throughout the World
- Base Nation, From the Conquest of 400 Native American Nations Via Forts to the Garrisoning of the Planet Via “Lily Pads”
- Island of Shame: Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean

Dick’s Commentary on Kirkus Review of Simon Winchester’s Pacific

Moberg: TPP, The Corporate-Friendly Trade Deal

Contact Arkansas’ Congressional and Presidential Warriors

US Repels the China Threat in Africa

China

“China Plans to Establish Military Outpost in Africa” by Jane Perlez and Chris Buckley, The New York Times in Arkansas Democrat-Gazette (Nov. 27, 2015). “China announced Thursday that it would establish its first overseas military outpost” in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa. China describes it as a fueling station, but whatever its function it goes beyond “its historical focus on protecting the nation’s borders.” According to the authors, President Xi Jinping is leading China’s navy “to live up to…the Communist Party’s ambitions to become a global maritime power.”

US

David Vine, Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World.
Chap. 16, “The Lily Pad Strategy.” In 2001 the US began its Camp Lemonnier base in Djibouti at an initial cost of $30 million and a Voice of America radio transmitter. “Within a few years, there were more than four thousand troops at the six-hundred acre base and hundreds of billions of dollars in construction and annual spending.” But US military presence in Africa really got going in 2007 when President George W. Bush established Africa Command (Africom) “to bring peace and security to the people of Africa.” Some 17 African countries demurred, seeing it as a continuation of Western colonialism. Never mind, “since late 2001, the military has spent around $30 billion or more on a growing military infrastructure,” and has stationed, “on any day, likely between seven thousand and eleven thousand U.S. troops.” “The military is now operating in at least forty-nine of the fifty-four African countries. It may be operating in every single one” (313)

Which nation is posturing, which is the threat? Which a nation of fear-and-war-mongers?

Dick Bennett

Peace Movement Must ‘Pivot’ into Asia-Pacific

http://www.peaceinourtimes.org/

By Bruce K. Gagnon  Fall 2015

Unexpectedly on Sept. 16 the first Navy Aegis destroyer (outritted with socalled “missile defense” systems aimed at China) pulled into the new Navy base in Gangjeong village on Jeju Island, South Korea. The base, which will port Pentagon aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines, and Aegis destroyers, is rumored to be heading toward an early December official opening. While I was in Gangjeong village in late August, the Navy was beginning to work on construction of a new front gate—in the process taking even more precious farming land from the small village. As the Aegis arrived at the new Jeju Navy base, activists slid kayaks off the rocks into the sea. (Their universal access to the public port is being increasingly blocked by the South Korean Coast Guard.) They paddled out toward what turned out to be five ships entering port on this occasion. Other activists stood along the rocks with signs and banners as they tried to defend the sacred memory of the beloved Gureombi coastline—now blasted and covered in concrete. The 500-year-old fishing and farming community is being torn apart to host the base. Just offshore, the UNESCO recognized endangered soft coral forests, which form some of the most spectacular temperate Octocoral forests on earth, are being destroyed, as dredging is under way to make it possible for U.S. warships to port there. The U.S. Navy handed base specifications to the Korean government some years ago. The villagers’ eight-year campaign against the base has resulted in 700 people being arrested and more than 50 jailed (one as long as 15 months, just for blocking cement trucks). On my last day on Jeju Island, I was taken to Jeju City to do a radio interview
about my experiences there. As my translator and I sat in the station lobby waiting to go on
the air, we heard a news broadcast that said the South Korean Navy was planning to file a
court action against Gangjeong villagers for $20 million on behalf of Samsung Corporation
(the lead Navy base construction contractor). The claim is that their eight-year nonviolent
protest in the village has “obstructed business operations” and resulted in delays and profit
loss. Upon hearing about this plan to demand $20 million from this small village (fewer than
2,000 citizens) I was told village elders cried out “The Navy is trying to kill our village!” When
the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space first got involved helping
to support…(continued http://www.peaceinourtimes.org/ )

The Asia Pivot, U.S. Militarism, and Agent Orange Relief

http://www.peaceinourtimes.org/ Fall 2015

In 1954 the fiercely independent Vietnamese crushed the U.S. backed French Colonial Army
at Dien Bien Phu and then in 1975, after some 15 years of brutal fighting and millions of
casualties, North Viet Nam and the National Liberation Front of South Viet Nam defeated the
U.S. military and its proxy South Vietnamese army But the U.S. battle for control of Viet
Nam still rages. U.S. plans for the Asia Pivot, which seeks to contain China and gain U.S.
military and economic control of Southeast Asia, faces a critical stumbling block in Viet Nam,
which is very aware of U.S. global ambitions to dominate and control. On March 11, 2015,
U.S. Army Pacific Commander Gen. Vincent Brooks demanded that Viet Nam stop allowing
Russian refueling jets to land in its Cam Ranh Bay military base. Brooks claimed Russia was
carrying out “provocative flights” and that it was “acting as a spoiler to our interests and the
interests of others.” The following day Viet Nam rejected the demand in no uncertain terms,
calling it “interference in the internal affairs of Viet Nam, a sovereign state that determines its
own policies for cooperating with its friends and partners.” Viet Nam continues to trade with
China, Russia, and the United States. And while Russia supplies most of Viet Nam’s military
hardware, the Vietnamese are not averse to obtaining sophisticated U.S. military technology
as well. At the same time, since Viet Nam has long been able to get whatever it needed from
its closest ally, Russia, it is doubtful that they will endanger that relationship by getting too
cozy with the United States. Viet Nam also has a relationship with China to weigh in the
balance, and there is concern among the Vietnamese about how China will react to U.S.-Viet
Nam military dealings. The Vietnamese have not forget...(continued at website above)

Pacific Environment Under Military Siege
In this age of ecological breakdown, pockets of wondrous biodiversity still survive in the vast Pacific Ocean. The Gulf of Alaska teems with a multitude of whale species; Southeast Asia’s “Coral Triangle” boasts 500 species of coral; the Great Barrier Reef of Australia, the Galapagos Islands, and the seven-mile deep Mariana Trench are still fairly intact. But these marvels may soon be wiped out by unchallenged trends in global militarism. **Widespread military exercises, defense-industry profiteering, and base-building (mostly by the U.S.) are wreaking irreversible destruction on coral reefs and other ecosystems, even without active war.**

Marine monuments and military range complexes It is true that, for decades, deleterious war games have taken place on military range complexes spanning from Asia’s east coast to the west coast of the Americas, and points in-between. However, the scale and capacity for destruction has never been as immense as it is now. It’s as if military activities have been suddenly “supersized.” The U.S. Navy estimates that over the next five years, naval exercises in the Gulf of Alaska will kill over 180,000 marine mammals.

But most galling is the new, fraudulent manner in which the U.S. has come to gain control of a whopping nine million square miles of the Pacific Ocean—an area double the size of all 50 states. Yet this chicanery goes entirely unmentioned in any media, let alone in Congress. So the American public remains oblivious.

The U.S. started claiming huge swaths of the Pacific about a decade ago, in anticipation of the threat of a rising China competing for finite resources and regional hegemony. The sweeping dominion of the U.S. took the form of “range complexes,” slated for military practice, and “marine monuments,” supposedly intended for environmental protection.

The first marine monument was designated in 2006, just before George W. Bush left office. He designated the Northwest Hawaiian Islands as the Papahanaumokuakea Marine National Monument. Environmentalists cheered this supposedly conservationist move. What they didn’t realize was that, in one fell swoop, without public participation or scrutiny, Bush had also paved the way for militarizing vast tracts of the Pacific.
While banning commercial enterprise, it turns out that a marine monument can easily morph into a military "range complex." This was the case with Papahanaumokuakea Marine Monument, which overlaps with the Northwest Hawaiian Islands Range Complex. Commercial and indigenous fishing are off-limits, but torpedoes, sonar, and all manner of detonations can blast with impunity. For example, the cyanide discharge from a single torpedo is in the range of 140-150 parts per billion. The Environmental Protection Agency's “allowable” limit on cyanide is one part per billion. The Pentagon insists that these war simulations are required to ensure military preparedness. But for the whales, turtles, dolphins, coral, sea sponges, snails, anemones, reef fish, sea urchins and thousands of other diverse and rare species, living in a range complex is no “simulation.” A similar scenario took place when the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument was expanded to include the Marshall Islands, infamous for its atomic-testing legacy. The new status has not stopped missiles and hypersonic aircraft from scattering shrapnel into the Marshalls' Kwajalein lagoon. Apparently, the real function of the “marine monument” designation is to introduce, without controversy, U.S. jurisdiction over the open seas.

Yet another example is deliciously wild Pagan isle, within the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument in the western Pacific. Pagan is a kind of “Noah’s Ark,” a miraculous habitat for precious populations of birds, snails, insects, plants and animals that are found only there and nowhere else in the world. And yet, now the Pentagon is proposing “full-spectrum” military exercises on Pagan. That would mean year-round amphibious attacks, bombing, torpedoes, underwater mines and other detonations from the air, from the sea, and from the ground, bombing the 18-square-mile island out of recognition. Nearby Tinian Island is also slated for live-fire training. So much for “marine monument” protection. The designation is a fraud.

Base-building and resistance

Base-building is another ecocidal activity on the rise. There are already over 400 official U.S. bases throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Meanwhile, clientstates, such as Japan and South Korea, have been enlisted to build installations that would effectively encircle China with missiles. New bases are also slated for Jeju Island, Korea; and in Japan's Ryuku chain—on Okinawa and Yonaguni, only 70 miles from Taiwan. Wherever there are bases, there is perpetual leaching of trichloroethylene and other toxic substances into soil and groundwater.

Islanders determined to protect their homes have not remained silent. On Okinawa, ferocious opposition has significantly delayed the two-decade-old plan to build a U.S. base at lovely Oura Bay. Sadly, the Japanese government has successfully installed dozens of 20-ton concrete blocks atop coral reefs there. However, Okinawa’s anti-base governor Takeshi Onaga has joined the activists on the ground to foil the project by any legal means available.
The equally dedicated islanders on Jeju in South Korea have not been so lucky. A South Korean navy base designed to port Lockheed-Martin Aegis missile destroyers is near completion at Gangjeong village, adjacent to a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The base construction has destroyed a unique rocky wetlands and also a rare coral ecosystem that was home to Korea’s last remaining dolphin pod.

Against the stars-and-stripes backdrop of expanding range complexes, marine monuments and basebuilding, other nations are also contributing to the demise of a healthy Pacific. The resource-rich sea that is framed by China, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Vietnam, has become the region’s most contentious territory of dispute. In fact, the Philippines is so distressed by China’s incursion into the area’s Spratly Islands that it has agreed to allow U.S. troops and ships to return to its former U.S. bases, from which they were passionately evicted in the 1990s. In 2015, over 11,000 American and Filipino troops participated in joint naval war games, double the number of soldiers from previous years.

For its part, China has built seven artificial-island bases, totaling 2,000 acres, smack dab in the middle of the Spratlys. The islands are built from dredged and crushed coral, upon some of the world’s most once-vibrant reefs, now certainly dead. China has also broken its anti-imperialist policy to never build bases on foreign soil, by constructing six installations circumscribing the Indian Ocean—in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Myanmar and Djibouti. Let the “base race” begin.

Ecocide, for games and profit

Such fever-pitch tensions are actually viewed by the Pentagon as a window of opportunity. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter recently completed a barnstorming tour of Asia to solidify alliances with nations, in addition to the Philippines, seeking U.S. muscle. This has resulted in an unprecedented onslaught of joint naval exercises for 2015.

Carter’s visit also inspired new war-games partnerships for Japan and the Philippines; and for India and Singapore. Meanwhile, the Philippines is trying to coax Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei to enter a four-way military pact. And for the first time in history, China and Russia are keeping pace by conducting joint military training this year, in the Sea of Japan, as well as the South China Sea. Conservative estimates project that all this turbo-charged saberrattling will result in a minimum loss of 10 percent of the world’s fish.

And then there is the granddaddy of joint naval exercises—RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific). Part
World Cup, part trade show, RIMPAC is the chance for 25,000 troops from 22 nations, 55 vessels, and more than 200 aircraft, to gather every four years in Hawaii. For two weeks, they drop bombs, shoot missiles, set explosions and sink aircraft carriers at the Papahanaumokuakea Marine Monument. And sell a missile or two.

Lockheed-Martin, traditionally a defense manufacturer, has shown its capitalist foresight by moving into the undersea-mining-technology sector. The idea is to profit by selling missiles and destroyers to nations fighting for mineral-rich territories, and then sell the mining technology to whichever nation prevails. Lockheed-Martin wins, both coming and going, while the creatures of the ocean perish either way. Our oceans, which are already suffering from over-fishing and gyres of plastic, supply up to 80% of our atmospheric oxygen. Our reefs, the essential foundation for all marine life, are already dying due to acidification. Yet war profiteers seem determined to bomb all life out of the Pacific. Such behavior is intolerable. Don’t they know there are no winners on a dead planet?

Koohan Paik is a journalist, media educator, and Campaign Director of the Asia-Pacific program at the International Forum on Globalization

New From The American Empire Project

"U.S. national security policy rests on the assertion that 'forward presence' contributes directly to global peace and security. In this powerful book, David Vine examines, dismantles, and disproves that claim. Base Nation offers a devastating critique, and no doubt Washington will try to ignore it. Citizens should refuse to let that happen."

-ANDREW J. BACEVICH

Base Nation
How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World
By David Vine

From Italy to the Indian Ocean, from Japan to Honduras, a far-reaching examination of the perils of American military bases overseas
American military bases encircle the globe. More than two decades after the end of the Cold War, the U.S. still stations its troops at nearly a thousand locations in foreign lands. These bases are usually taken for granted or overlooked entirely, a little-noticed part of the Pentagon's vast operations. But in an eye-opening account, Base Nation shows that the worldwide network of bases brings with it a panoply of ills—and actually makes the nation less safe in the long run.

See Newsletter #17 for more information about Base Nation


**U.S. MILITARY BASES ABROAD, 2015**

As of 2015, the United States controlled approximately 800 bases outside the fifty U.S. states and Washington, D.C. The sheer number of bases as well as the secrecy and lack of transparency of the overseas base network make any graphic depiction challenging. This map reflects the bases' relative number and positioning given the best available information.

*Island of Shame:*

**The Secret History of the U.S. Military Base on Diego Garcia**


With a new afterword by the author

http://press.princeton.edu/titles/9441.html

Reviews | Table of Contents
Introduction[PDF] pdf-icon

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*The author will donate all royalties from the sale of this book to the Chagossians.*

The American military base on the island of Diego Garcia is one of the most strategically important and secretive U.S. military installations outside the United States. Located near the remote center of the Indian Ocean and accessible only by military transport, the little-known base has been instrumental in American military operations from the Cold War to the war on terror and may house a top-secret CIA prison where terror suspects are interrogated and tortured. But Diego Garcia harbors another dirty secret, one that has been kept from most of the world—until now.
Island of Shame is the first major book to reveal the shocking truth of how the United States conspired with Britain to forcibly expel Diego Garcia's indigenous people--the Chagossians--and deport them to slums in Mauritius and the Seychelles, where most live in dire poverty to this day. Drawing on interviews with Washington insiders, military strategists, and exiled islanders, as well as hundreds of declassified documents, David Vine exposes the secret history of Diego Garcia. He chronicles the Chagossians' dramatic, unfolding story as they struggle to survive in exile and fight to return to their homeland. Tracing U.S. foreign policy from the Cold War to the war on terror, Vine shows how the United States has forged a new and pervasive kind of empire that is quietly dominating the planet with hundreds of overseas military bases.

Island of Shame is an unforgettable exposé of the human costs of empire and a must-read for anyone concerned about U.S. foreign policy and its consequences. The author will donate all royalties from the sale of this book to the Chagossians.

Reviews:

"[A] meticulously researched, coldly furious book that details precisely how London and Washington colluded in a scheme of population removal more redolent of the eighteenth or nineteenth century than the closing decades of the twentieth. . . . [O]ne likes to think that if Barack Obama were somehow to stumble across a copy of David Vine's fine book, he would instantly realize that a great injustice has been done--one that could easily be put right."--Jonathan Freedland, New York Review of Books

"This angry and angering book is well researched, compelling, and valuable to understanding and emerging US 'empire.'"--Choice

"For Vine imperialism, military prerogative and racism have all combined to deny a people a home simply because they were in the way. His succinct style and controlled outrage make for a damning indictment."--Phil Chamberlain, Tribune

"Island of Shame is not just a gut-wrenching account of how a tropical paradise of powder-white beaches and palm fronds was turned into a massive launch pad for America's military expansionist programme. A large chunk of the book is devoted to how the Chagossians came to build their complex but happy society in the islands and the resulting tragedy of their displacement. Above all, Vine is a top flight researcher. . . . We owe Vine a great debt for shining his light on this island of horrors."--Latha Jishnu, Business Standard

"David Vine's story of the Chagossians is an exemplary piece of both socially embedded reportage and investigative journalism, despite a tendency to indulge in the self-conscious idiom of academic ethnography and reflexive criticism of US 'imperialism.' At heart, however, he speaks truth to power. Power, though, is not listening."--Colin Murphy, Irish Times
More reviews

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Kirkus Review of Winchester "s Pacific and Dick's Commentary.

FINALIST: 2015 KIRKUS PRIZE

PACIFIC: Silicon Chips and Surfboards, Coral Reefs and Atom Bombs, Brutal Dictators, Fading Empires, and the Coming Collision of the World's Superpowers by Simon Winchester
KIRKUS REVIEW

The preternaturally curious writer about everything from the Oxford English Dictionary to volcanoes to the Atlantic Ocean (Atlantic: A Vast Ocean of a Million Stories, 2010, etc.) returns with a series of high-resolution literary snapshots of the Pacific Ocean.

Winchester, who now lives in Massachusetts, does not do the expected: there is no chapter about the geological history of the ocean, followed by a slow chronology. Instead, realizing the difficulty of his own task, the author focuses on 10 aspects of the ocean and its inhabitants— islanders, those on the shores—and uses them to illustrate some historical points. He issues dire warnings about the damage we’re doing to the natural world and about the geopolitical forces—especially the military rise of China—that threaten us all. Occasionally, Winchester makes what seem to be odd pairings (a chapter on both a volcano in the Philippines and the rise of China) and narrative choices (a chapter on the rise of Japan accelerated by manufacturing transistor radios), and he also looks at the international nightmare caused by the 1968 case of the USS Pueblo and North Korea. No matter what the putative subject of the chapter, though, we learn a lot about the ocean: its challenged wildlife, the swirling areas of plastic debris, the Pacific Plate, El Niño, and the Pacific’s vast dimensions. As we’ve come to expect from Winchester, there are plenty of delights. A chapter on surfing has guest appearances by both Jack London and the Beach Boys; and the author examines America’s egregious abuse of islanders during aboveground nuclear testing. Deep worries abound, as well: the dying coral reefs, climate change, and military posturing of the superpowers. The author ends with a hopeful but probably doomed wish for international fraternity.

Winchester’s passionate research—on sea and land—undergirds this superb analysis of a world wonder that we seem hellbent on damaging.


Dick’s commentary:

The book contains some solid topics, but as this review reveals without saying it directly (“odd pairings” an understatement), Winchester’s mind is topsy-turvy. And apparently he is not well-informed about some of his topics: how could he be if “preternaturally curious. . .
about everything” (though of course he omits numerous major topics)? Take China for instance, as you know from the preceding essays, and by all preceding newsletters on US Pacific/E. Asia expansion. What military rise of and threat from surrounded China, compared to the US—compared to Japan, compared to S. Korea? Kirkus Reviews, written by academic librarians, are famously mainstream and supposedly informed, but here US imperial assumptions apparently overwhelmed the reviewer. Perhaps other sections are more reliable. Even if so, the selection and placement disorder (spd) and the failure to report on the expansion of US domination from San Diego to Darwin and Diego Garcia and from Oakland to Okinawa (no mere “posturing”!) serve aggressive, threatening US nationalism.

What do you think are the criteria for becoming a finalist for the Kirkus Prize—“snapshots” of “plenty of delights”?

In my newsletters regarding US imperial depredations I am able to report on only a few of the multitude of revelations. Send me more. And I do not give equal time to mainstream rationalizers of US National Security State and Empire because the US already spends annually $600 billions for the Pentagon, hundreds of billions more for its invasions and interventions, and hundreds of billions more for nuclear weapons in the Energy Department, all of which the mainstream media generally support by their flag patriotism, selection, placement, and topsy-turvy.

A few references especially for the final sentence:

J. William Fulbright’s books, articles, and speeches, particularly The Pentagon Propaganda Machine.


Two book-length annotated bibliographies: Control of Information in the United States, Control of the Media in the United States.

THE CORPORATE-FRIENDLY TRADE DEAL

There is a lot at stake with the TPP agreement.

8 Terrible Things About the Trans-Pacific Partnership

It’s no wonder the Obama administration tried to keep this secret—the corporate-friendly trade agreement, decoded.

BY DAVID MOBERG

Like the WTO agreements or NAFTA, the TPP is an attempt to set the rules of the global economy to favor multinational corporations over everything else, trampling on democracy, national sovereignty and the public good.

In October, President Obama hailed the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) as “the most progressive trade deal in history.”

But progressive public-interest organizations say that the final text, the fruit of seven years of secretive trade talks between the United States and 11 other Pacific Rim countries, dashed even their low expectations. The deal not only continues most of the troubling features of trade agreements since NAFTA but also breaks worrisome new ground.

Like most recent international economic agreements, the TPP only glancingly resembles a classic trade deal, concerned mainly with tariffs and quotas. Rather, like the WTO agreements or NAFTA, it is an attempt to set the rules of the global economy to favor multinational corporations over everything else, trampling on democracy, national sovereignty and the public good. The more than 600 corporate lobbyists who had access to the draft texts used their insider status to shape the deal, while labor unions, environmentalists and others offered testimony from outside, with little impact.
Like most post-World War II trade deals, the TPP also has a strategic political goal: tying as many countries as possible to the United States as trade partners—often under terms unfavorable to the average American worker—in order to win political support against anyone seen as a rival to the American economic model. When Obama defends the TPP, he often casts it as a challenge to China’s growing role in defining the Asian economy.

In June, with the help of GOP leaders, Obama very narrowly won “fast-track” authority on the deal, restricting Congress to an up-or-down vote, with no amendments. He would no doubt like that vote soon. Repudiating the TPP could become a campaign talking point across party lines. Already, all three Democratic presidential candidates and most of the Republicans have come out in opposition to it.

But Congress has never rejected a trade agreement under fast-track authority, and some TPP opponents suspect that the administration gave a small group of Democrats a pass to vote no on fast track as long as they pledged to vote yes on the final agreement if needed. This is likely to be a close fight.

To inform that fight, we’ve asked experts to explain, in plain English, some of the deal’s most alarming implications.

**#1 IT GIVES 9,200 FOREIGN FIRMS THE RIGHT TO CIRCUMVENT OUR COURTS AND ATTACK THE LAWS WE RELY ON FOR A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT, SAFE FOOD AND DECENT JOBS.**

Foreign corporations would be empowered to drag the U.S. government in front of investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) tribunals composed of three private arbitrators. Many ISDS arbitrators are lawyers who rotate between suing governments for corporations and acting as the “judges.”

There is no limit on the amount of our tax dollars the government can be ordered to pay when foreign corporations successfully argue that their TPP rights have been undermined.
Compensation orders could include a corporation’s estimate of the future profits it would have earned in the absence of the public policy it is attacking. Even when governments win, under TPP rules they can be ordered to pay for the tribunals’ costs and legal fees, which average $8 million per case.

The TPP’s expansion of the ISDS system would come just as a surge in ISDS cases elevating corporate profits over the public interest has led other countries, such as South Africa and Indonesia, to begin revoking their ISDS-enforced treaties. Recent cases include Eli Lilly’s attack on Canada’s cost-saving medicine patent system, Philip Morris’ attack on Australia’s public health policies regulating tobacco, Chevron’s attack on an Ecuadorian court ruling that ordered payment for mass toxic contamination in the Amazon, and Vattenfall’s attack on Germany’s phase-out of nuclear power.

Almost all of the 50 past U.S. ISDS-enforced pacts are with developing nations with few investors here, allowing the United States largely to dodge ISDS tribunals and fines to date. But the TPP would extend ISDS powers to more than 9,200 U.S. subsidiaries of some 1,000 corporations in TPP nations, including the economic powerhouse of Japan.

The tribunals are unaccountable to any electorate. There is no outside appeal on their dictates. In effect, the TPP elevates these foreign firms to equal status with the entire U.S. government.

—Lori Wallach, Director, Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch

#2 ITS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS ARE MOSTLY TOOTHLESS, AND IT WOULD DIRECTLY ENCOURAGE FRACKING.

Our air, water and health are all at stake with the TPP, which is why so many environmental groups have expressed grave concern.

Most noticeable is that the roughly 6,000 pages of TPP text don’t even mention the words
“climate change,” much less attempt to address the fact that the TPP would increase climate-disrupting emissions. The deal takes a step back from the environmental protections of all U.S. free-trade agreements since 2007 by failing to require TPP countries to fulfill their obligations in a set of core international environmental treaties.

The TPP’s weak conservation rules won’t do enough to adequately protect marine life and wildlife from harmful practices such as shark finning or illegal logging. But fossil fuel corporations would be empowered to challenge our public health and climate safeguards in unaccountable ISDS tribunals. This corporate power grab has been used in past deals to challenge clean energy initiatives, bans or moratoriums on fracking, and more.

Speaking of fracking, we could see a whole lot more of this dirty and destructive practice in our backyards thanks to the TPP. The pact would require our Department of Energy to automatically approve all exports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to all TPP countries—including Japan, the world’s largest LNG importer. This means more fracking, air and water pollution, climate emissions and reliance on fossil fuels—when we should keep those fuels in the ground and fully embrace clean energy.

—Illana Solomon, Director, Sierra Club’s Responsible Trade Program

#3 WE’D LOSE MILLIONS OF MANUFACTURING JOBS.

Between 1997 and 2014, America lost more than 5 million manufacturing jobs. The vast majority, according to the Economic Policy Institute, vanished as a result of growing trade deficits with America’s free-trade and investment-deal partners. Some 850,000 jobs were lost to NAFTA after it took effect in 1994. China’s entry into the WTO in 2001 cost the United States a staggering 3.2 million manufacturing jobs over the next dozen years.

But the numbers on the TPP look even worse. The Wall Street Journal calculates that by 2025, the deal would increase the U.S. trade deficit in manufacturing, car assembly and car parts by $55.8 billion a year. At that rate, based on the U.S. Department of Commerce formula
for jobs created by exports, the TPP would cost another 323,000 American manufacturing workers their jobs. That’s almost a million jobs every three years.

And that is a conservative estimate, because the TPP negotiators failed to include enforceable methods to stop foreign labor abuses, including poverty wages and perilous working conditions. This facilitates a race to the bottom. Corporations move factories overseas because they can’t get away with paying Americans the $107 a month that is the wage floor in Vietnam.

Also, disastrously, the TPP would lower the minimum requirement for cars and auto parts to be considered produced by a U.S. trade partner. The proportion would fall from 62.5 percent under NAFTA to 45 percent under the TPP, which means more than half of a vehicle could be manufactured in China while auto companies would still benefit from zero U.S. tariffs.

For decades, regulations for free-trade agreements like the TPP have lined the pockets of the wealthy and emptied those of workers. This must stop.

—Leo Gerard, President, United Steelworkers

#4 IT DOES NOTHING TO FIX OUR ENORMOUS TRADE DEFICIT.

Our current trade deficit is close to $500 billion annually, or 3 percent of our GDP. This money is creating demand and employment in other countries, not the United States, and implies the loss of close to 3 million U.S. jobs a year.

This matters hugely in the context of an economy facing a shortfall in demand, or “secular stagnation.” In more normal times, the demand lost to the trade deficit could be replaced by more investment or consumption spending. But under secular stagnation, neither will fill that loss.
Yet the TPP fails to address the main reason for our large and persistent trade deficit: currency manipulation by other countries. Lowering one’s currency by 10 percent against the dollar has the same effect as imposing a 10 percent tariff on all imports and paying a 10 percent subsidy on exports. Raising the price of exports and lowering the price of imports makes U.S. goods and services less competitive internationally and domestically.

A number of countries, including TPP parties Japan, Malaysia and Vietnam, have engaged in this practice over the last two decades, driving up the U.S. trade deficit.

Ordinarily we would expect the value of a currency of a country running a large trade deficit to decline. That would make its goods and services more competitive internationally, bringing its trade closer to balance. However, the dollar has not fallen in response to the trade deficit because the central banks of China and other countries have purchased huge amounts of dollar-based assets, such as U.S. government bonds. By holding these assets, central banks prop up the value of the dollar, keeping the U.S. trade deficit large.

The Obama administration opted not to make currency management an issue in TPP negotiations. As a result, there is only a side agreement that provides no new authority to combat currency management beyond what exists in current law.

—Dean Baker, Co-director, Center for Economic and Policy Research

#5 IT WOULD MAKE MEDICINES MORE EXPENSIVE, AND COMPROMISE ACCESS FOR MANY PEOPLE IN THE PACIFIC RIM.

In all countries, people and health systems depend on low-cost generic medicines to make treatment affordable. Prices of patented drugs are rising every year. Absent generic competition, there is little reason for drug companies to bring drug prices down. The brand-name pharmaceutical industry business model relies on maximizing profits by selling at very high prices to the few rather than affordable prices to the many. Most countries, including our own, ration care.
The problem is especially grave in developing countries, and the TPP would make it worse. TPP rules would require countries to change their laws in order to expand drug companies’ monopoly powers, leading consumers and healthcare providers to pay higher prices on more drugs for longer—or go without needed treatment. TPP rules are not about providing basic patent protections, as White House messaging sometimes suggests. All TPP countries already have those rules.

Instead, TPP rules are lobbyist-driven bonuses for the industry. The rules include patent term extensions and patents on new uses of old medicines, and procedural requirements to give pharmaceutical companies greater opportunity to influence government drug coverage and reimbursement decisions. There are marketing exclusivity rules, which create pharmaceutical monopolies even when a product is off-patent. There is no compelling evidence that these rules will spur medical innovation or create jobs.

Some brave TPP negotiators fought the pharmaceutical industry and the U.S. Trade Representative for many years. If it were not for their efforts, the TPP would threaten even more lives. Nevertheless, if the deal is approved, the TPP’s final rules will lead to preventable suffering and death.

—Peter Maybarduk, Director, Public Citizen’s Global Access to Medicines Program

#6 IT WOULD COMPROMISE THE SAFETY OF OUR FOOD.

Most immediately, the TPP would open up a flood of seafood, dairy, fruit and vegetable imports to the United States at a time when import inspections are already severely underfunded. The United States currently inspects just 2 percent of food imports, and there is evidence that fish and seafood are already compromised: Consumer Reports found that 60 percent of seafood (91 percent of which is imported) tested was contaminated.

The TPP also gives companies new ways to challenge food safety processes and
inspections. It would create a “rapid response mechanism” that would allow foreign companies to challenge food safety decisions and would compel inspectors to make those new assessments quickly, creating new pressures on already hard-pressed inspectors with no new resources or even basic agreement on what food safety should look like.

The deal would also increase corporate control over agriculture. The TPP is modeled on past free-trade deals that have made wildly inaccurate promises about benefits for small farmers. Under NAFTA, when U.S. corn exports to Mexico increased dramatically, more than 2 million Mexican farmers were driven from their lands. But the number of U.S. family farmers fell sharply, too. Exports increased, but revenues for most farmers did not. Along the way, large multinational companies gained more control over production, so farmers have fewer options of where to buy or sell their goods. It shouldn’t surprise us that trickledown economics doesn’t work for farmers any better than it does for factory workers.

The TPP aims above all to give multinational corporations more power over standards and supply chains, which expands a U.S. agricultural system designed to produce crops for export rather than to provide consumers with healthy food.

—Karen Hansen-Kuhn, Director of Trade, Technology and Global Governance, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

#7 IT WOULD DESTABILIZE GLOBAL FINANCE.

During nearly all of the seven years negotiators worked on the TPP, the world was mired in or recovering from the worst economic crisis in 75 years—one triggered by the collapse of a deregulated, overgrown and corrupt financial sector. Negotiators must not have noticed, because the TPP gives the world’s biggest banks and finance companies even more power. They could much more easily challenge and overturn laws and regulations in countries where they invest—plus collect compensation if their profits don’t meet the firm’s “expectations” as a result of public policies. The new terms will make it easy for big finance to file challenges to government regulations or policies in ISDS tribunals and win. The loser? Global financial stability.
The TPP would prohibit capital controls, which permit countries to block destabilizing flights of “hot money” from investors who hope to take momentary advantage of speculative opportunities, then pull out of the country just before the bubble they create collapses. It would also stop enactment of financial transaction taxes, a means of dampening speculation and raising needed public revenue.

The list goes on. TPP “market access” rules would undermine efforts to limit the size of banks or to establish “firewalls” between financial activities, such as restoring U.S. Glass-Steagall Act regulations, which were eliminated in 1999, contributing to the subsequent financial crisis. It would make it impossible for countries to reject financial “innovations” such as derivatives—the foundation of many “bubbles” that burst in 2008—if they exist in any other TPP nation. Despite evidence swirling around them every day in the form of global financial chaos, negotiators crafted the TPP’s financial rules following a flawed deregulatory model that was an affront to democracy and sound economic policy—just to protect the “expectations” of profits by big multinational banks and financial firms.

—David Moberg, Senior Editor, In These Times

#8 IT WOULD STRENGTHEN ALREADY-FLAWED INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY REGULATIONS IN AWFUL WAYS, PARTICULARLY ON THE INTERNET.

Copyright laws in America have already had a profound effect on Internet users. The Digital Millennium Copyright Act, or DMCA, was intended to update copyright for the digital age. But over the years, the terms of the law have infringed on fair use and free speech. This ranges from YouTube users flagged for copyright violation because they posted videos of their baby dancing to a Prince song, to more troubling instances of investigative journalists being censored based on things like sketchy defamation claims.

Without an opportunity for the public to weigh in, the U.S. Trade Representative—the lead U.S. negotiator on the TPP—and negotiators for other countries were flooded by lobbyists from corporations, Hollywood and music executives, pushing for more stringent protections on
their content.

The result? An agreement that forces what’s broken with copyright law in the United States upon other countries. The TPP will lengthen onerous copyright terms from a previous trade agreement—keeping information and art locked away from the public domain for decades and opening the floodgates for further abuse of copyright laws and censorship.

What’s more, Internet service providers will continue to hastily remove content flagged as a copyright violation, with little review. And countries will be required and incentivized to deliver heavy-handed sentences and fines to alleged infringers.

Perhaps most shocking to anyone who owns a website is a requirement that countries publish databases of names and addresses associated with certain domains. This is a particularly troubling step for activists and journalists who could face threats and intimidation for the issues they champion—deterring many from speaking out at all.

This is not a done deal. The TPP must go to lawmakers in each country for final passage. Before that happens, activists must be swift to ring the alarm bells and ensure that the very architecture of the Internet is not broken.

—Sara Cederberg, Campaign Director, Demand Progress

DAVID MOBERG

David Moberg, a senior editor of In These Times, has been on the staff of the magazine since it began publishing in 1976. Before joining In These Times, he completed his work for a Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Chicago and worked for Newsweek. He has received fellowships from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Nation Institute for research on the new global economy. He can be reached at davidmoberg@inthesetimes.com.
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Pentagon’s Vietnam War Whitewash Campaign and VfP Counter Campaign

US Global Imperial Military Bases and Nuclear Threat
David Vine, Books on US Global Harms and Diego Garcia
No to the New Trident WMD
Mona Lee, GZ Center: Ending the Nuclear Arms Race

TPP Trans-Pacific Partnership
(OMNI published 4 articles in #15, 10 in #16, now 9 in #17)
Fran Alexander, Fooling the People
Joyce Hale: Benefitting Corporations, Can the Public Follow the Dots?
Senator Sessions Exposes Contents
Grayson: TPP vs. Democracy
Warren to Obama
Baker, Four Reports including how Corporate Media Report TPP: The Washington Post

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