

Globalization Undermines Human Rights

 *The Third World*, 2006

"Globalization ... compromises the capability of the state to ensure the rights of [its] citizens."

Carlos Castresana Fernandez is a visiting professor of law at the University of San Francisco. He served as a public prosecutor in Spain for many years. In the following viewpoint Fernandez claims that globalization has adversely affected human rights. In developing nations, he argues, globalization has stripped governments of their power to safeguard civil liberties and placed citizens at the mercy of multinational corporations. Because the concern for human rights does not keep pace with economic development in these instances, civilian populations end up suffering many social ills such as war, hunger, crime, and corruption as the corporations exploit nations, with no regard for sustained development.

As you read, consider the following questions:

1. How does Fernandez relate Rousseau's "social contract" to his own argument?
2. According to the author, what characterizes the new "wars of globalization?"
3. In Fernandez's view, why are so many developing countries corrupt?

In democratic societies, the state guarantees its citizens the protection of their most fundamental rights for personal development: life, liberty, the right to elect representatives and be elected, equity both of opportunities and justice, as well as many others. These protected rights also bring order to the members of the society in their relations with each other.

Globalization has made possible the access to new communication technologies, has improved transportation and commerce and has also furthered the free movement of persons and goods as well as increased the number of market economies. Globalization has brought numerous advantages to millions but it has also worsened the lives of much of the world's population. The maldistribution of wealth has soared to the levels of the 1920s. As a result, most democratic societies have begun to face great threats to their societies: corruption, political violence and organized crime. These threats are present at all levels of society, and globalization makes it easier for them to germinate.

There are many consequences of these threats. In many non-democratic societies, corruption and violence strengthen authoritarian regimes and prevent political and economic development. In democratic societies, violence and corruption undermine entire social and economic structures and complicate the effective functioning of democratic institutions. In both cases, increased violence and corruption instigate humanrights violations. The health of a democratic society is measured by the way it deals with these activities.

The Changing Social Contract

For hundreds of years, international relations were based upon the principle of not interfering in the internal affairs of other states. This meant that the authority of every state renounced interference with the competences of each other. Sovereignty was articulated on the notion of frontier, which was indispensable in limiting the territory of the sovereign powers. But these geographical frontiers have not been the only mechanisms used to distribute and organize states' power. States have also used structures based on politics, economics, race, culture and religion. But it was the French Revolution that marked the beginning of the generalized use of the concept of human rights to protect citizens against the state. And since then national and international legal instruments have defined human rights and the obligation of the state to prevent the violation of any citizen's rights.

The concept of human rights has always had a revolutionary meaning. The concept of human rights questioned the original ideals of sovereignty because these rights were developed as a mechanism to rectify the previously enforced "natural law" of the strongest controlling the weakest. Human rights were based on the belief that a person is a rational being and therefore the law places everyone at the same level of equality. Sovereignty, in this structure, is passed from the monarchy to the people and from the people to the nation. With time, the people began to choose their representatives through democratic mechanisms. This is the pillar of [philosopher Jean Jacques] Rousseau's "social contract" : the state has the duty to guarantee its citizens the effective enjoyment of their individual rights. Today, this model is subject to alteration because of the progress that has occurred [since the late twentieth century] as well as the violence and corruption that prevent modern states from implementing their duties under the contract....

Globalization has overruled the traditional notion of state sovereignty and compromises the capability of the state to ensure the rights of [its] citizens. The growth of economic powerhouses has increasingly limited the power of governments. Institutions created to protect the rights of sovereign governments have not evolved at the same pace as market economies. The law of the state is being replaced by the law of the market, thus bringing crises that citizens and their representatives have been unable to solve. The invention of the steam engine gave birth to the first industrial revolution, which ignited the world by the end of the nineteenth century. But there is a difference between this technological revolution and the current globalization. While globalization was born out of technology, humanity has now achieved an interconnectedness from which there is no way back.

Poverty and Violence

Social inequalities are but the first of the major effects of globalization. It is not possible for governments and markets to keep planning for the future while ignoring what the majority of the world's population thinks and needs. Between 500 million and one billion people live comfortably but the remaining five billion or more people live in poverty and are subject to war, hunger, disease and underdevelopment. Overpopulation of the planet is seemingly unstoppable, even though hunger kills 30 million people every year in Africa and Asia....

Globalization has also wrought violence and uncontrolled development. The balance between environmental protection and economic development will ultimately be unbearable as the continued exploitation of natural resources generates an unacceptable rate of violence and irreversible

environmental deterioration. Citizens of all nations are reverting to the law of the strongest controlling the weakest. But this time there is no monarchy but rather only corporations....

The wars of globalization are wars of attrition and are fought from a distance. Superpowers do not intervene directly, but send and exchange weapons for natural products. The victims of this trade are most often citizens. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), formerly Zaire, offers a paradigmatic example. The country has suffered more than three-and-a-half million human deaths over the last four years [2000-2004] in a land of great natural resources. The October 2002 report from the UN Security Council states that most of the corporations that buy natural products from the DRC belong to American, Canadian and EU [European Union] member countries, thus breaching the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) rules of transactions with a warring nation. Uganda, one of the countries that border the DRC, participates quite actively in the war, receiving natural resources as payment. The World Bank has pointed out that Uganda's development is based upon the export of minerals that it does not produce.

Corruption

Globalization has further changed the face of corruption. Traditionally, corruption was an individual phenomenon; for example, a public employee earned access to a post and used it for personal gain. Modern corruption ... affects the effective functioning of democratic systems. This corruption is a generalized corruption, inherent to political and economic systems, that goes beyond individual behavior.

Traditional corruption still affects many countries struggling with development and is often directly linked to ongoing poverty. Nonetheless, many underdeveloped countries are corrupt because developed countries corrupt them. The two are inextricably linked to one another. The corruption index published by Transparency International shows that Bangladesh and Azerbaijan are the two most corrupt countries. But the countries most associated with corrupting countries through bribes are Australia, Sweden and Switzerland. The United States, France and the United Kingdom secure a majority of their international contracts through bribes and political pressure.

Modern corruption is also based on the permanent mingling of the public and private sectors through the trafficking of information; in other words, the use of privileged information for private gain. This is coupled with a constant flow of laundered money from various illegal activities, organized crime, political delinquency and other various forms of corruption that, when combined, will destroy any possibility of equity in economic opportunities.

Fernandez, Carlos Castresana. "Globalization Undermines Human Rights." *The Third World*. Ed. David M. Haugen. Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2006. Opposing Viewpoints. Rpt. from "Justice, Globalization, and Human Rights." *Peace Review* 16 (June 2004): 199-205. *Gale Opposing Viewpoints In Context*. Web. 18 Apr. 2012.



Globalization Promotes Human Rights

 Human Rights , 2008 



"For the past three decades, **globalization**, **human rights**, and democracy have been marching forward together, haltingly, not always and everywhere in step, but in a way that unmistakably shows they are interconnected."

In the following viewpoint, Michael Griswold argues that **globalization** leads to freedom, democracy, and respect for **human rights**. Griswold says that **globalization** empowers people, makes them less dependent on governments for their livelihood, more politically aware, and less accepting of government **human rights** violations. Furthermore, when governments allow their citizens to participate in the global economy it becomes harder for them to deny civil and political **human rights**. Daniel Griswold is director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies at the Cato Institute in Washington, D.C.

As you read, consider the following questions:

1. What is the "CNN effect," according to Griswold?
2. According to a survey by the human rights organization, Freedom House, the number of people in the world that are "free" has increased by how much in the last three decades?
3. Name ten countries where Griswold says political reforms have followed economic reforms.

When trade and **globalization** are discussed in the U.S. Congress and in the American media, the focus is almost entirely on the economic impact at home—on manufacturing, jobs, and wages. But trade is about more than exporting soybeans and machine tools. It is also about exporting freedom and democracy.

Since September 11, 2001, the [George W.] Bush administration has articulated the argument that trade can and must play a role in promoting democracy and **human rights** in the rest of the world. In an April 2002 speech, President Bush said, "Trade creates the habits of freedom," and those habits "begin to create the expectations of democracy and demands for better democratic institutions. Societies that are open to commerce across their borders are more open to democracy within their borders."

Globalization Can Empower People

The connection between trade, development, and political reform is not just a throwaway line. In theory and in practice, economic and political freedoms reinforce one another. Political philosophers

from Aristotle to Samuel Huntington have noted that economic development and an expanding middle class can provide more fertile ground for democracy.

Trade and **globalization** can spur political reform by expanding the freedom of people to exercise greater control over their daily lives. In less developed countries, the expansion of markets means they no longer need to bribe or beg government officials for permission to import a television set or spare parts for their tractor. Controls on foreign exchange no longer limit their freedom to travel abroad. They can more easily acquire tools of communication such as mobile phones, Internet access, satellite TV, and fax machines.

As workers and producers, people in more open countries are less dependent on the authorities for their livelihoods. For example, in a more open, market-driven economy, the government can no longer deprive independent newspapers of newsprint if they should displease the ruling authorities. In a more open economy and society, the "CNN effect" of global media and consumer attention exposes and discourages the abuse of workers. Multinational companies have even greater incentives to offer competitive benefits and wages in more globalized developing countries than in those that are closed.

Economic freedom and rising incomes, in turn, help to nurture a more educated and politically aware middle class. A rising business class and wealthier civil society create leaders and centers of influence outside government. People who are economically free over time want and expect to exercise their political and civil **rights** as well. In contrast, a government that can seal its citizens off from the rest of the world can more easily control them and deprive them of the resources and information they could use to challenge its authority.

Globalization Tied to Democracy and Freedom

As theory would predict, trade, development, and political and civil freedom appear to be tied together in the real world. Everyone can agree that the world is more globalized than it was 30 years ago, but less widely appreciated is the fact that the world is much more democratized than it was 30 years ago. According to the most recent survey by Freedom House, the share of the world's population enjoying full political and civil freedoms has increased substantially in the past three decades, as has the share of the world's governments that are democratic.

In its annual survey, released in December 2005, the **human rights** research organization reported that 46 percent of the world's population now lives in countries it classifies as "Free," where citizens "enjoy open political competition, a climate of respect for civil liberties, significant independent civic life, and independent media." That compares to the 35 percent of mankind that enjoyed a similar level of freedom in 1973. The percentage of people in countries that are "Not Free," where political and civil liberties are systematically oppressed, dropped during the same period from 47 percent to 36 percent. The percentage of the population in countries that are "Partly Free" has remained at 18 percent. Meanwhile, the percentage of the world's governments that are democracies has reached 64 percent, the highest in the 33 years of Freedom House surveys.

Thanks in good measure to the liberating winds of **globalization**, the shift of 11 percentage points of the world's population in the past three decades from "Not Free" to "Free" means that another 650 million **human** beings today enjoy the kind of civil and political liberties taken for granted in such countries as the United States, Japan, and Belgium, instead of suffering under the kind of tyranny we still see in the most repressive countries.

Within individual countries, economic and political freedoms also appear to be linked. A 2004 study by the Cato Institute, titled "*Trading Tyranny for Freedom*," found that countries that are relatively open to the global economy are much more likely to be democracies that respect civil and political liberties than those that are relatively closed. And relatively closed countries are far more likely to deny systematically civil and political liberties than those that are open.

Economic Freedom Can Lead to Political Reform

In the past two decades, a number of economies have followed the path of economic and trade reform leading to political reform. South Korea and Taiwan as recently as the 1980s were governed by authoritarian regimes that did not permit much open dissent. Today, after years of expanding trade and rising incomes, both are multiparty democracies with full political and civil liberties. Other countries that have most aggressively followed those twin tracks of reform include Chile, Ghana, Hungary, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Portugal, and Tanzania.

In other words, governments that grant their citizens a large measure of freedom to engage in international commerce find it increasingly difficult to deprive them of political and civil liberties, while governments that "protect" their citizens behind tariff walls and other barriers to international commerce find it much easier to deny those same liberties. Of course, the correlation between economic openness and political freedom across countries is not perfect, but the broad trends are undeniable.

The application for U.S. foreign policy is that trade and development, along with its economic benefits, can prove to be powerful tools for spreading broader freedoms and democracy around the world.

Globalization Can Promote Human Rights

In mainland China, for example, economic reform and **globalization** give reason to hope for political reforms. After 25 years of reform and rapid growth, an expanding middle class is experiencing for the first time the independence of home ownership, travel abroad, and cooperation with others in economic enterprise free of government control. The number of telephone lines, mobile phones, and Internet users has risen exponentially in the past decade. Millions of Chinese students and tourists travel abroad each year. That can only be good news for individual freedom in China, and a growing problem for the government.

Free trade and **globalization** can also play a role in promoting democracy and **human rights** in the Middle East. In a May 2003 address outlining his plan for a Middle East free trade area, President Bush said, "The Arab world has a great cultural tradition, but is largely missing out on the economic progress of our time. Across the globe, free markets and trade have helped defeat poverty, and taught men and women the habits of liberty."

Economic stagnation in the Middle East feeds terrorism, not because of poverty but because of a lack of opportunity and hope for a better future, especially among the young. Young people who cannot find meaningful work and who cannot participate in the political process are ripe pickings for religious fanatics and terrorist recruiters. Any effort to encourage greater freedom in the Middle East must include an agenda for promoting economic liberty and openness.

Globalization Interconnected with Human Rights

On a multilateral level, a successful agreement through the World Trade Organization (WTO) would create a more friendly climate globally for democracy and **human rights**. Less developed countries, by opening up their own, relatively closed markets and gaining greater access to rich-country markets, could achieve higher rates of growth and develop the expanding middle class that forms the backbone of most democracies. A successful conclusion of the WTO Doha Development Round of trade negotiations that began in 2001 would reinforce the twin trends of **globalization** and the spread of political and civil liberties that have marked the last 30 years. Failure would delay and frustrate progress on both fronts for millions of people.

For the past three decades, **globalization**, **human rights**, and democracy have been marching forward together, haltingly, not always and everywhere in step, but in a way that unmistakably shows they are interconnected. By encouraging **globalization** in less developed countries, we not only help to raise growth rates and incomes, promote higher standards, and feed, clothe, and house the poor; we also spread political and civil freedoms.

Griswold, Daniel T. "Globalization Promotes Human Rights." *Human Rights*. Ed. Jacqueline Langwith. Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2008. Opposing Viewpoints. Rpt. from "Globalization, Human Rights, and Democracy." *eJournalUSA: Global Issues*. 2006. *Gale Opposing Viewpoints In Context*. Web. 18 Apr. 2012.