

Unpacking Trade and Investment

Por Anna Schlidt · 21/02/2017

By [Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Brussels](#)

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The year 2017 begins with a peal of thunder. The newly elected US president Donald Trump abandons the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), a genuine geopolitical monster project which aimed at excluding China as main contender of the USA in the Pacific. Simultaneously it looks like the new US administration wants to renegotiate NAFTA, and the future of the TTIP negotiations are also highly uncertain. Do the US thus abandon their classical political hinterland? These big trade agreements have often been understood as substitutes for the stalled WTO negotiations. So, big surprise at the beginning of 2017 – which will be the next steps of the free trade hawks? What should we do against the next neoliberal moves?

To understand all this we need to look back to the history of global trade negotiations. They began in 1947, when 23 governments signed the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to remove tariffs and other trade barriers between countries. GATT was replaced by the World Trade Organization (WTO), signed in 1994 by 123 nations. The focus of the WTO is on regulation of trade through a framework for trade agreement negotiation and a dispute resolution process. In 2001 the WTO launched the Doha Development Round, which was supposed to be a major step in the direction of developing countries listing 21 subjects in the work programme aiming to improve their trade capacities. The

Doha Round is still incomplete due to the ongoing conflict between developed countries wanting to protect subsidies to domestic sectors and developing countries seeking substantiation of fair trade on agricultural products.

Due to this stalemate within the WTO, many bilateral agreements have been signed in the past decades to allow trade between nations mostly to the benefit of developed countries and to the detriment of developing countries. Additionally the past years have witnessed the negotiation and implementation of regional or even mega-regional trade agreements. Those agreements go far beyond the WTO and the Doha Round, fostering the divide between the developed North amassing riches and the developing South being plundered by its so-called trade partners.

Our series of 11 fact-leaflets explains the dangers of the current trade and investment agreements. They are focusing on topics like the 21st century trade and investment regime which is the ideologic umbrella for agreements like the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) or the Transpacific Partnership (TPP), describing differences and similarities between the different agreements, analysing the impact of trade and investment agreements on the Global South and exposing the current state of the WTO negotiations with its failures leading to more global inequality.

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