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Security and the Global Environment: An Introduction

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Title: Security and the Global Environment: An Introduction

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Abstract. This article describes some of the psychopolitical consequences of managing economic activities in an era of globalization.

Security usually denotes the quest for political power--the degree to which one approaches a desired disparity between what one has and what one wants, between what one is and what one wants to be. Specific security issues comprising aspects of political power can be as personal as self-esteem, as interpersonal as physical attractiveness, as collective as a corporation's economic viability or a nation's military might. Thus, the psychopolitical consequences of global economic management--the security consequences having primarily psychological import--also span multiple levels of analysis.

The individual managing economic assets may feel overwhelmed in that the world of activity affecting these assets never sleeps. People and organizations never even apperceived by the individual may be significantly affecting these assets. Attempting to monitor global events affecting economic assets may result in being massively bombarded with information. What is relevant or irrelevant in this morass may not even be surmised because of the information's share. Three strong temptations may arise within individuals managing economic assets. One is giving up and not attempting to develop and implement some coherent economic management approach. (In essence, the individual has learned learned helplessness.) Another is giving up operational control of one's assets to so-called experts who may manage the assets well or who may exploit the trust of the individual to varying degrees through decisions that are too conservative or too risky or through outright embezzlement. In fact, with novel economic instruments and activities continually being developed and with never before considered economic activities being carried out through a number of different legal jurisdictions, behavior of the individual or the individual's "expert" representative that is wrong in an ethical or moral sense may technically not be criminal in a legal sense.

A third temptation is to carry on in the old-fashioned way--dogmatic, inflexible, and oblivious to globalization. Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead. Here the individual is trading a sense of order and of relieved anxiety for chump change.

Concerning the various collective levels of analysis, companies and subsidiaries of corporations can more easily threaten to relocate if employees too persistently advocate for higher wages, more benefits, shorter working hours, or unionization. Or these sources of employment can more easily move instead of sticking it out during economic downturns or after natural disasters, gross mismanagement, or criminal negligence. This relative ease of mobility is predicated on the notion that finding representatives for a company or corporation who are nationals of a new host country is easier than the often psychological uncomfortable and unlikely occasion of employee relocation. An even more unlikely option--to the point of being extremely unusual--is that employees would attempt to find their own representatives elsewhere--and somehow tap into the latter's labor for profit, e.g., by franchising labor opportunities.

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National governments may develop laws to provide compensation to citizens being hurt by the global market, but often the help will go to population segments that seem vital to the political viability of the government and those who hold office rather than to the people being most hurt. Also, national governments and those who hold office will more often find their sovereignty violated by the ease of international and transnational currency transfers, speculator-induced runs on currencies and commodities, and political desires of foreign political entities who provide economic support for incumbent and contending political leaders during campaigns. The economic activities of international crime organizations also may have many deleterious effects on a national government's sovereignty and viability through exploiting international differences in tax rates, customs duties, and legal codes in collusion with local and foreign nationals and organizations.

Finally, as to the enterprise of creating products for a global market, national governments, companies, and multinational and transnational corporations will have to ever more comprehensively follow political, social, and cultural traditions and events throughout the world. The consequences of applying this knowledge will be more uniquely crafted work practices involving more diverse population segments of workers and managers, more appealing products for more diverse populations, and more social science experts being involved in international and transnational economic activities intended to reap profits.

Does all of the above suggest that a more sophisticated and more exploitive psychopolitics is arising that may make the excesses of the Industrial Revolution look like Workers R Us? Digging up an old saw from the New Left days of the 1960s in many United States universities, all the above--especially the increasing application of social scientists, e.g., political psychologists--suggests that when the revolution comes, there'll be so many new candidates to be hung, so little time. (See Inoue, Y. (1989). *Japanese Economic Studies*, 17, 41-92; Pauly, L.W., & Reich, S. (1997.) *National structures and multinational corporate behavior: Enduring differences in the age of globalization. International Organization*, 51, 1-30; Symposium: U.S. trade policy in transition: Globalization in a new age. *Law and Policy in International Business*, 25, 1227-1308.) (Keywords: Economics, Globalization, Security.)