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Law Enforcement and Political Demonstrations as the Whole World Watches: The Rise of Globocop?

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Abstract. This article posits that--at present--the promise of global telecommunications-induced progress for human and civil rights may be oversold.

As of this writing, the Chief of the Seattle, Washington Police Department has resigned his position amidst criticism of police handling of political demonstrations that occurred during the recent meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO). One significant factor contributing to the criticism and criticism-induced resignation was a pervasive globality--e.g., the nature of the WTO crypto-agenda, WTO representatives, media representatives and technology, and geographical and Issue characteristics of protesters. One might well surmise that it is becoming more and more difficult to mismanage and even repress political demonstration without global reprobation and pressure to cease and desist or pay the consequences. It is as if there's a Globocop policing police forces in matters of political demonstrations. Environmental, labor, and consumer concerns will soon be adequately addressed.

One might quickly wax eloquent in citing example after example of a new, globalized world that will feature the apotheosis of human rights--free speech, freedom of assembly, equality under the law, even a decent amount of health, education, and welfare. Those who stand in their way will be exposed courtesy of the global telecommunications network and will not be able to resist irresistible pressures to change. In fact, the same will apply to corporate citizens who act above their global civic responsibilities. Irresistible pressures will induce right behavior for the wrong reason of bottom-line profitability. Right?

Maybe not. Forces of political repression and forces of economic exploitation are not going to take the winds of change lying down. Global telecommunications can be employed to counter motives, motive-driven behavior, and behavior-generated consequences. In fact, the most elegant counter would be to induce behaviors that superficially address the concerns of human rights while below the surface there's business as usual.

Hope from the rise of Globocop must be tempered in a world of Globocops--each policing in the interests of the forces of Good or the forces of Evil. The human penchant for Manichaeism precludes another conclusion. (See Doise, W., Spini, D., & Clemence, A. (1999). Human rights studied as social representations in a cross-national context. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 29, 1-29; Howe Verhovek, S. (December 8, 1999). Seattle police chief resigns in aftermath of protests. *The New York Times*, p. A13; Jennings, T.E. (1996). The developmental dialectic of international human rights advocacy. *Political Psychology*, 17, 77-95; Marsella, A.J. (1998). Toward a "global-community": Meeting the needs of a changing world. *American Psychologist*, 53, 1282-1291; Riva, G., & Galimberti, C. (1997). The psychology of cyberspace: A socio-cognitive framework to computer-mediated communication. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 15, 141-158; Sheehy, N., & Gallagher, T. (1996). Can virtual organizations be made real? *Psychologist*, 9, 159-162; Wittig, M.A., & Schmitz, J. (1996). Electronic grassroots organizing. *Journal of Social Issues*, 52, 53-69.) (Keywords: Civil Rights, Globocop, Human Rights, Telecommunications, WTO.)