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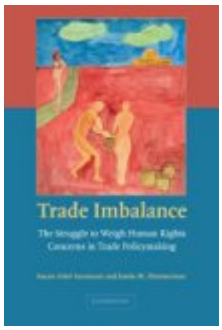
Susan Ariel Aaronson, Jamie M. Zimmerman. *Trade Imbalance: The Struggle to Weigh Human Rights Concerns in Trade Policymaking.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. x + 337 pp. $34.99, paper, ISBN 978-0-521-69420-9.



Reviewed by Robert Blanton

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In *Trade Imbalance*, Susan Ariel Aaronson and Jamie M. Zimmerman assess the policy intersection between trade and human rights. Though the prospective relationship between trade and human rights is contentious, the authors posit that "in fact we know very little about that relationship" (p. 3). Toward resolving this dilemma, the authors trace the precise ways in which the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as four leading actors in world trade--South Africa, Brazil, the European Union (EU), and the United States--deal with the complex, and sometimes conflicting, goals of expanding trade and promoting human rights.

At the root of this analytic problem are "imbalances" in the way that trade and human rights are dealt with in the international system. First, the global human rights regime is vastly underdeveloped in comparison with the well-established institutional framework governing international trade. As such, the ways in which states deal with the "intersection" of trade and human rights varies greatly. Some states take a proactive role, developing explicit policies for dealing with potential conflicts between the two. In some instances, countries use trade policies to encourage various facets of human rights, such as Brazil and South Africa's efforts to protect their right to health by obtaining less expensive pharmaceuticals. However, many countries simply ignore the potential linkages between trade and human rights, or respond in an ad hoc manner. The result is that trade and human rights are in politically "murky" territory (p. 4).

Toward elucidating the policy linkages between trade and human rights, Aaronson and Zimmerman first survey how the relationship between the two has evolved across time, as well as how human rights concerns have begun to enter into broader discourses on development. The authors then turn to the role of human rights in the global trade order, in particular the WTO. Interestingly enough, they show that the initial International Trade Organization (ITO) charter explicitly incorporated language concerning human rights. However, such provisions were essentially absent from the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) framework. When the GATT be-

came the WTO, the omission of explicit human rights language continued and the new institution failed to develop mechanisms for dealing with human rights. Nonetheless, human rights concerns are beginning to "seep" into WTO decisions and practices. In some instances, such as food security or the right to essential services such as water, the WTO has been forced to directly confront issues related to human rights. There are also areas in which the WTO rules may indirectly influence human rights. For example, discussions surrounding the admission of new members (most notably China) often deal with human rights issues. Additionally, the requirement of periodic trade policy reviews may have a positive effect upon overall transparency and political participation within member states.

The authors next comparatively examine how South Africa, Brazil, the EU, and United States handle the relationship between trade and human rights. The four case studies each follow a similar structure--after commenting on some of the broader human rights issues and priorities of the actors, the authors provide a concise summary of the trade policy process, and elucidate the particular points at which human rights concerns may be interjected into the policy process. Next, the authors trace the particular ways in which states have dealt with human rights issues that are germane to their particular polity.

The cases reveal some interesting patterns in the way that states handle human rights and trade issues. First, there are some differences in the human rights priorities of the developed versus developing states--South Africa and Brazil deal with rights that pertain directly to the well-being of their populations, including the rights to health care, basic services, and environmental preservation. For their part, the EU and United States take a broader view of human rights that encompasses political and personal integrity rights. There are also differences in the particular targets of human rights and trade policies. Specifically, South Africa and Brazil use trade policies as means to promote human rights within their own polities, as exemplified by the South African emphasis on right to work and equality as well as Brazil's measures against child and slave labor. Their developed counterparts are more outwardly focused, using a broad variety of economic tools, such as sanctions and preferential trade arrangements, to promote human rights in other countries.

There are also areas in which the various human rights goals are in conflict. This is particularly apparent with regard to the issue of pharmaceuticals, which involves the rights to affordable healthcare, the intellectual property rights of American multinational corporations, and even Brazilian concerns over the protection of indigenous knowledge. Though labor rights are on the agenda of all four actors, there are also idiosyncrasies in the priorities of each--such as South Africa's emphasis on Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), Brazil's concern with the protection of its environment versus imports of retread tires, European (particularly French) concern with the protection of cultural diversity, and American support for intellectual property rights. Whatever the actors' human rights goals, the case studies reveal that none of the policy processes are conducive to dealing with the intersection of trade and human rights concerns. With the partial exception of the United States, trade policy is done through executive branch institutions and is largely insulated from human rights concerns. Moreover, among the many policymakers who Aaronson and Zimmerman interview, there is a widespread perception that trade and human rights exist in separate spheres. As such, though officials profess to place a high priority on both trade and human rights, in no case are there any institutional channels through which to coordinate the two.

Toward reconciling some of these problems, the authors conclude with several policy recom-

mendations for better handling the linkages between trade and human rights. In particular, the authors suggest that human rights policymakers and/or advocates need to have some institutionalized channels of access in the trade policy process. Moreover, states and institutions should begin to commission assessments of the specific ways in which trade policies affect human rights. With regard to the WTO, the authors suggest the establishment of a human rights liaison as well as the establishment of working groups to deal with widely held areas of concern, such as trade in conflict areas and export processing zones.

Broadly put, *Trade Imbalance* is a call to both policymakers and scholars to more fully examine the relationship between trade and human rights. It is accessible to non-academics, and the policy recommendations--like much of Aaronson's past work in this area--are pragmatic and potentially useful to practitioners. The study also makes a substantial contribution to the extant, though still underdeveloped, academic discourse in this area. In particular, the case studies are very helpful in tracing the specific mechanisms through which the linkages between trade and human rights are handled. Indeed, their nuanced and detailed coverage provides very rich fodder for future empirical research--including the impact of WTO ascension on human rights as well as the prospective ways in which trade policies affect (or may be affected by) different types of human rights. Overall, this book is an ambitious and well-executed effort that is a service to policymakers and scholars alike.

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