



Written by [Gary Benoit](#) on May 9, 2016

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## Building Understanding About the TPP

Long before many Americans were aware of the Obama administration-negotiated Trans-Pacific Partnership, much less concerned about it, *The New American* devoted an entire issue of the magazine ([our September 2, 2013 issue](#)) to sounding the alarm about the TPP and other mega trade deals. Such deals are often referred to, approvingly, as “free trade.” Yet, as we wrote in 2013, “the free trade agenda is not about creating genuine free trade (which would mean almost no government involvement), and it is not confined to the issue of trade; it is instead about transferring political and economic power to regional arrangements as steppingstones to global governance under the guise of free trade.”



When we offered that assessment, the full text of the TPP agreement, which was still being negotiated, had not yet been released. Its release last November, together with other recent evidence, has strengthened our case against the TPP and other elements of what has become known as ObamaTrade. But evidence does not change minds unless it is presented, and the ongoing publication efforts of this magazine, together with the grassroots efforts of this magazine’s parent organization, The John Birch Society, have had much to do with creating awareness of, and building resistance to, the TPP in particular and ObamaTrade in general.

Another important development contributing to public awareness of the TPP has been the emergence of the TPP as a major issue in the presidential race, where the leading Democrat contenders (Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders) and the two leading GOP contenders (Donald Trump and Ted Cruz) have all criticized the TPP. That criticism, of course, is contributing to the fight against ObamaTrade. But let’s not overlook the fact that the fight against ObamaTrade may also be contributing to the positions taken by the presidential aspirants.

Clinton supported the TPP as secretary of state. Could the growing public opposition to the trade pact have something to do with her change of heart?

Senator Cruz stated unequivocally in the March 15 Republican debate in Miami, “I opposed TPP and have always opposed TPP.” Well, not quite. In a letter sent to a constituent soon after becoming senator, Cruz wrote: “I hope the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) produce agreements that reduce government-created barriers to trade, enabling increased prosperity for all involved.”

Moreover, Cruz joined with Representative Paul Ryan to co-author an April 21, 2015 opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal* that stated in reference to the TPP and TTIP: “The United States is making headway on two historic trade agreements, one with 11 countries on the Pacific Rim and another with



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America's friends in Europe. These two agreements alone would mean greater access to a billion customers for American manufacturers, farmers and ranchers."

Although the Senate has not voted on the TPP yet, the Senate has voted on Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), also known as "fast track." On May 22, 2015, Cruz voted for the TPA, and a statement that (as of this writing) still appears on his tedcruz.org campaign website explains that he did so because the TPA "breaks the logjam that is preventing the U.S. from entering into trade deals." However, when the TPA was voted on once again by the Senate on June 24, 2015, Cruz voted *against* it.

In light of Cruz's record on the TPP, it is reasonable to consider how committed his current opposition may be. Put simply, might he shift his position once again should he become president?

How about Donald Trump? He has repeatedly called the TPP a "horrible deal," a "bad deal," etc. But would the author of *The Art of the Deal* be willing to renegotiate the TPP to get a "good deal"? He has said he'd rather make deals with individual countries than multinational deals, but does that necessarily rule out the latter?

We have no crystal ball to divine the answers to such questions. We do know that Thomas Jefferson offered sage advice not only for his own time but for all time when he warned: "In questions of power ... let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution."

That "binding" process includes creating sufficient understanding to cause politicians who want to win elections and stay in office to take constitutionally sound positions. It is encouraging that the growing opposition to TPP has reached a point where it has become a presidential campaign issue and leading candidates are criticizing it. It is also encouraging that it now appears that the congressional leadership that supports TPP will not bring it up for a vote any time soon.

This magazine's reader-activists can take a well-deserved bow for helping to create this understanding. But more work is needed to kill the TPP, which is why [our cover story in this issue is on this subject](#) and why we encourage you to read it and bring it to the attention of others.

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