

USAWC students engage with experts about current economic issues and national security implications

By Elena Patton 07 December 2022



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Dr. Joel Hillison and Professor Fred Gellert and, USAWC faculty recently engaged with students about economics—specifically, trade policy and the American approach to trade, Nov. 28, 2022.

Students at the Army War College focus on studying issues of national security from all aspects—diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. Adding layers of complexity, students evaluate how these elements of power intersect with one another and impact dynamics with partnered and allied nations.

Dr. Joel Hillison and Professor Fred Gellert and, USAWC faculty, recently engaged with students about economics—specifically, trade policy and the American approach to trade. The discussion covered a lot of ground—history, scope, pros and cons of free trade, types of trade agreements, challenges, etc., Nov. 28, 2022.

This discussion is one of 12 talks in the Economic Issues lecture series

offered to the students—an intellectual enrichment opportunity.

“One of the clear foundations for why the United States is such an important and powerful country is the strength of the American economy,” said Mark Duckenfield, USAWC Professor of International Economics. “It not only provides a high standard of living for its population and funds the military and other important institutions but is also a means of promoting American interests.”

The ideas of free trade are rooted in the ideas of Adm Smith and were refined by David Ricardo, enabling lower prices for all, more efficient use of resources, and increased global prosperity, said Hillison. On the other hand, Alexander Hamilton and Friedrich List highlighted the consequences of free trade for nations: loss of jobs, unfair competition, security threats, etc.

In terms of security threats, war impacts trade relations, and trade relations have led to war. For example, following the economic devastation of WWI, nations tightened barriers to trade, which led to a global depression and sowed the seeds for the next conflict, WWII, said Hillison. Economic interests were part of the catalyst for the Russian/Ukraine War, which has greatly impacted the global prices and supply chains.

China, the third largest nation trading partner, continues to be America’s biggest competitor, presenting challenges related to security and policies related to technology transfer, intellectual property, and innovation, said Gellert. The U.S., nevertheless, remains an economic world leader through trade promotion and restriction tools, through various trade policy actors—executive branch, Congress, and interest groups—and organizations.

Dr. Joel Hillison is the Director of National Security Policy and Strategy and teaches economics and national security. Retired Col. Fred Gellert is the Professor of Science and Technology, teaching in the areas of strategic leadership, defense management, and Asia/Pacific studies.