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A 'Critical Mass' Approach To Negotiations In The WTO: A Case Study Analysis

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A ‘CRITICAL MASS’ APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS IN THE WTO: A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

The World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement, which succeeded the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs of 1947 (GATT 1947), was concluded in 1994. The WTO Agreement’s institutional form took shape in the WTO as an international organization that administers the regulation of trading activities between member states. The WTO Agreement replicates most of the GATT 1947 including the negotiating methods used under it. Some of these methods require unanimous or near-unanimous approval, causing problems in the ability of the WTO membership to negotiate or extend successful trade agreements over the years. As a result of institutional paralysis partly caused by traditional negotiating modalities, the ‘critical mass’ approach has been suggested as a possible way forward for present and future WTO negotiations. Through case study analysis, this thesis examines to what extent a critical mass-based approach to trade negotiations can apply and be useful in the WTO negotiating context generally.