

Editor's Introduction to the inaugural issue

For much of the post-war period, interest in the multilateral trading system – as embodied in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) – was limited to national delegates posted to Geneva, a small number of technocrats in capitals, and a handful of academics, mostly legal scholars plus a few economists and an even smaller number of political scientists. Among politicians and the general public, the GATT was virtually unknown. During those years, a professional journal devoted exclusively to the multilateral trading system would have been hard pressed to fill its pages.

The first steps down the path that would eventually bring the trading system into the public spotlight were taken in 1979, when the Tokyo Round expanded GATT's agenda beyond border measures to include agreements on 'inside-the-border' policies in three areas – technical barriers, production subsidies, and government procurement. Public interest in the GATT began increasing with the launch of the ambitious Uruguay Round in 1986, and continued with a series of trade and environment disputes beginning in the early 1990s. With the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round in 1994 – which among other important changes, added services, intellectual property, and sanitary and phytosanitary measures to the list of inside-the-border policies covered by multilateral rules, substantially revised the dispute settlement system, and brought the World Trade Organization (WTO) into being in January 1995 – the trading system took over center stage in international economic relations.

Since its creation, public interest in the WTO system, as well as increasingly wide-ranging academic research on its many facets, have been further stimulated by a series of high-profile developments. These included a number of important dispute settlement cases; proposals to further extend the WTO's reach inside the border by writing multilateral rules to cover policies dealing with investment, competition, environment, and labour standards; the highly publicized failure of the 1999 WTO Ministerial meeting in Seattle; loud and sometimes violent anti-globalization protests at Seattle and at virtually every important international meeting on economic issues since Seattle; China's protracted but ultimately successful accession negotiations; and the launch of a new round of negotiations at the Doha Ministerial meeting last November.

It was against this background, coupled with an awareness of the growing technical and political complexity of the many issues confronting the WTO, that the WTO Secretariat and Cambridge University Press decided to launch the *World Trade Review* (WTR). The new journal fills a need for an intellectual meeting place for academics from different disciplines, practitioners, and other professionals concerned with WTO issues. The four defining characteristics of the WTR are its

critical focus on the full range of issues surrounding the multilateral trading system, its interdisciplinary approach, its emphasis on publishing articles that are accessible to a broad cross section of readers interested in WTO-related issues, and its editorial independence – the Editor and seven of the eight members of the Editorial Board are independent academics, and all articles will go through a rigorous outside peer review process.

Prospective contributors are encouraged to submit their manuscripts for consideration for publication in the *WTR*. A feature which we plan to develop as soon as possible as a key part of our effort to stimulate debate and the exchange of ideas, is a section devoted to letters and short notes from readers seeking to rebut, challenge, or amplify published articles. We also plan to include occasional invited shorter notes and articles by delegates and others with first-hand practical experience of trade relations in a multilateral setting, as well as timely shorter notes analyzing topics of particular interest to the WTO community.

Our target audience includes economists, lawyers, political scientists, and other academics interested in trade issues and/or international organizations and international relations, WTO delegates and their support staffs in capitals, trade policy makers, NGO staffers, legislators interested in trade issues, and students in international economics and international relations programs. While a certain amount of ‘jargon’ is inevitable, and many contributions will presume a minimum knowledge of the WTO and its history, we also hope the *WTR* will engage the interest of informed citizens with a serious interest in the ongoing integration – globalization – of the world economy. With this varied audience in mind, prospective authors are strongly encouraged to ensure that their contribution is accessible to readers from disciplines other than their own.

Economic historians have convincingly demonstrated how the creation of effective institutions *within countries* played an essential role in the impressive economic growth that has characterized today’s developed countries for much of the period since the Industrial Revolution. Given that it is widely accepted that the various trends encompassed by ‘globalization’ have a forward momentum that is very unlikely to cease, let alone be reversed, any time soon, it seems safe to assume that effective institution building at the *multilateral* level will be one of the dominant challenges as the new century unfolds. Clearly the future activities and evolution of the WTO will continue to be among the most intensely debated issues on the international agenda in the coming years. We expect the *WTR* to play an active and constructive role in stimulating research and furthering this debate.

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