

ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNALAvailable Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 04 No. 02. October-December 2025. Page# 1513-1522

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17576931>**The role of the World Trade Organization in global economic issues****Muhammad Salman Farooq**

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The World Trade Organization (WTO) is a very important institution that responds to the problems of the world economy influenced by sophisticated geopolitical, economic, and institutional processes. Some need to handle trade conflicts, reduce protectionism, deal with imbalances in market access, and handle shocks such as pandemics and sanctions. The trade agreements and the dispute settlement mechanism in the WTO are designed to bring about fairness, but in most cases, there are systemic biases that favor the developed countries, leaving the developing economies behind. The presence of geopolitical tension and unilateralism further undermines the multilateral cooperation, and the ethical issue of fair trade governance is brought up. The effects of cultural and economic diversity, especially in such areas as Pakistan, affect the impact of the WTO on the local trade practices. WTO structures offer very straightforward principles in international trade, but there are real-world challenges that can impede the implementation process, including arduous stalling and inefficiencies. Through this research, the role of the WTO in facilitating trade liberalization, food security, and response to the current economic trends is discussed, and reforms to make the global trade systems more equitable and resilient are necessary.

Keywords: challenges, historical context, laws, opportunities, theoretical context

Introduction

The WTO plays a leading role in addressing the economic issues of the world because it determines the rules of international trade, adjudicates on disputes, and promotes fair competition between nations (Eyo-Udo et al., 2025; Li, 2022; Norouzi, 2021). WTO facilitates the liberalization of trade amid globalization, which is vital towards economic growth and poverty and inequality alleviation in the international economy (Cevik, 2025). However, geopolitical shocks, pandemics, and the transformation of power relations hamper such efforts to destroy the multilateral system (Heldt et al., 2025).

Such issues as trade imbalances and disruption of supply chains, access market inequalities and protectionism, sanctions, and failure to implement institutional changes are global economic problems (Morgan et al., 2023). The above issues highlight the ethical and practical challenge of ensuring equitable benefits to the developing countries, and yet ensuring free markets (Johnson et al., 2023). These can be mitigated with the help of the WTO dispute settlement mechanism and even such agreements as the Agreement on Agriculture, but there are also systemic barriers that emphasize the need to take adaptive measures (Sampson & Wang, 2023).

The impact of geopolitical disputes and restrictions on the flow of trade is among the most acute economic issues in the world because the WTO has no assurances of compliance with rules in an increasingly protectionist and unilateral world (Cevik, 2025). It creates a situation where powerful states will be in a position to use trade to their advantage at the expense of the smaller economies and undermine multilateralism (Heldt et al., 2025). Practically, the ideals cannot always be as effective as the WTO, as discussions are blocked and new challenges emerge in terms of power (Sampson & Wang, 2023).

Research Justification

The WTO is the most significant entity in global trade whose contribution to economic issues cannot be overrated, particularly in light of the rising geopolitical problems and trade imbalances. Aspects such as protectionism and the unequal accessibility of markets, especially to third-world economies such as Pakistan, mar the economic equity on a world scale. To appreciate how the WTO navigates through such challenges to improve stability and equity, one should take into consideration the role that is played by the WTO plays.

The trade arrangements and dispute settlement mechanisms established in the WTO are bound up with different economic and cultural histories, and they affect world and country-wide trade activities. The prejudices that are in the system are usually favorable to the developed countries, depriving the emerging economies of opportunities. The analysis is essential in determining the weak points in the relation between WTO policies and policy implementation to correct issues of impediment to fair trade and economic growth among countries. The topicality of the current research is emphasized by the international problems of the modern world, i.e., pandemics and geopolitical wars.

The continuous discussion about the WTO reforms and the increased participation of the new economies points to the fact that solutions are required in order to improve the multilateral cooperation. The paper will also seek to make some recommendations that will facilitate fair, sustainable, and inclusive international trade that adheres to international standards and regional demand paths of the economy.

Research Objectives

1. To discuss the historical context of the role of the WTO in global economic issues.
2. To highlight the theoretical context of the role of the WTO in global economic issues.
3. To analyze the laws regarding the role of the WTO in global economic issues.
4. To identify the key challenges regarding the role of the WTO in global economic issues.
5. To explore the opportunities for the role of the WTO in global economic issues.
6. To propose effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Research Methodology

This study employed a systematic review methodology, with research objectives established accordingly. A comprehensive literature review was conducted (Komba&Lwoga, 2020). Research findings were categorized based on their content (Hiver et al., 2021; Petticrew& Roberts, 2006), and classified information was incorporated into the study by organizing it into headings (Gan et al., 2021; Pawson et al., 2005). The evaluation of classified information and titles formed the basis of the study (Page, 2021; Rahi, 2017), ensuring the integrity of the research subject and its contents (Egger et al., 2022; Victor, 2008). The criteria for selection are listed.

1. **Relevance:** Researches that directly addressed the questions posed by this study are included.
2. **Quality:** Studies that meet a certain quality threshold (e.g., methodological rigor, bias risk) are included. Most of the research is from Scopus-indexed and Clarivate Analytics journals and reputed publishers.
3. **Recency:** Consideration of the publication date to ensure that the review reflects the most current evidence. Most of the studies are from the last three years.
4. **Language:** Only studies published in English are included.
5. **Data Completeness:** Previous studies must provide sufficient data on outcomes of interest for practical synthesis; this is also ensured in this research.

This study did not use primary data from human participants; therefore, no ethics clearance letter from the ethics committee was required.

Literature Review

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is one of the key participants in the resolution of global challenges in the economy, trade policies, and international cooperation (Keskin et al., 2025; Norouzi, 2021). The literature highlights the role of the WTO in enabling liberalization of trade and overcoming the aggravations of geopolitical hardships, pandemics, and imbalances in the process of regulating global trade (Li, 2022; Naseer et al., 2023). The importance of the WTO position must be interpreted in the framework of Pakistan because of the influence on the economy and the agricultural trade (Kumar et al., 2024). The review is the synthesis of the literature on the effectiveness of the WTO, its emphasis on trade barriers, institutional issues, and an opportunity for reform (Aguar et al., 2023).

Much of the literature shows that the WTO is not responding to geopolitical shocks and protectionism. It is found that geopolitical distance is not contributing substantially to the current trend of the trade relative to the economic fundamentals despite the exigency of tariffs as a threat to global integration (Cevik, 2025). COVID-19 has revealed the unproductive nature of the worldwide supply chain and diminished trade that required WTO adaptive measures (Naseer et al., 2023). Besides, the WTO dispute settlement mechanism has been criticized as an inappropriate method of offering equity to the developing countries (Johnson et al., 2023). These concerns demonstrate the need for the transformations that may help boost the fairness and resiliency (Eyo-Udo et al., 2025).

The remaining areas of concern involve the role of China in the regulation of world trade since it is not always keen on participating in the WTO structures (Heldt et al., 2025). An additional reason is the focus on such tools as the gravity model and GTAP database to study the dynamics of trade that provides information about

the efficiency of policies (Yotov, 2022; Aguiar et al., 2023). All these works are united in their demand regarding reforming the WTO to align it with modern-day economic challenges (Sampson & Wang, 2023).

Historical Context of the Role of WTO in Global Economic Issues

It can be traced back to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) that was formed in 1947 as part of an attempt to enhance international trade and economic recovery after the Second World War (Eyo-Udo et al., 2025; Li, 2022). The elephant in the room that GATT was concealing was the cutback removal and encouragement of multilateral cooperation that gave rise to the WTO in 1995 to control the extended trade provisions, such as the services and intellectual property (Keskin et al., 2025; Norouzi, 2021). The revolution solved the emerging economic issues but transferred injustices to the advantage of the developed countries (Johnson et al., 2023).

The early years of GATT were more inclined towards trade liberalization, where the organization was more likely to sideline the developing countries, which is ethical when it comes to fair access in the market (Cevik, 2025). The agreements, such as the Agreement on Agriculture, were to address this, but the discrimination has continued, which has led to pressure for reforms by coalitions such as the G20 (Johnson et al., 2023). The insertion of China into the WTO in 2001 was a game-changer, and the fact that made it even stronger in the regulation of global trade (Heldt et al., 2025; Sampson & Wang, 2023).

The success of the WTO has since been challenged by geopolitical tensions, economic sanctions, and the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating that the global trade structures are bad (Naseer et al., 2023). Although the WTO has a strong structure, the problem of protectionism and lack of negotiations drives the reformation of adapting to changes in the quest to solve the problems of modern economies (Morgan et al., 2023; Sampson & Wang, 2023).

Theoretical Context of the Role of WTO in Global Economic Issues

The theoretical frame of the WTO's role in the global economic problems is based on the financial and political theory that informs the international trade regulation. The mission of the WTO is based on liberal economic theory, which focuses on free trade, open markets, and comparative advantage in a bid to achieve the best global welfare. It is the view that will encourage liberalization of trade as an engine of economic growth and stability, but which has been criticized as ignoring inequities.

Realism focuses on the aspect of power in international trade whereby countries that hold a dominant position in global trade affect WTO regulation, leaving out the developing countries, such as Pakistan. This theory highlights such issues as protectionism and geopolitical tensions that make cooperation between countries more difficult. It is supplemented by institutional theory, which concentrates on the function of the WTO as a formal rule-making and rule-enforcing institution that influences state behavior in terms of norms and agreements.

Dependency theory is a criticism of the WTO frameworks, that they are promoting economic inequality, therefore benefiting developed countries. It emphasizes the necessity of fair policies to deal with trade imbalances and to help marginalized economies. All of these theories inform the WTO to navigate ethical

dilemmas, including the provision of fair market access, dispute resolution, as well as keeping the global economy stable and promoting inclusive trade.

Laws Regarding the Role of WTO in Global Economic Issues

All these agreements are geared towards ensuring that there is an equilibrium and predictable trading environment; however, issues such as protectionism and geopolitical tensions still require reforms that encourage inclusivity and focus on global economic inequalities in an effective manner.

1. Agreement on Agriculture: This deal is intended to transform agricultural trade through subsidy reduction and greater market accessibility, but has been criticized as rewarding the developed countries at the expense of other countries, such as Pakistan.

2. Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU): DSU offers a systematic system of settling trade disputes, and the rules of the WTO are followed, but the problem of inefficiency casts doubts on its fairness and efficiency.

3. General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 1994: This fundamental WTO accord encourages the principle of non-discrimination based on the most-favored-nation and national treatment, which provides a fair trade practice among the countries.

4. General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS): GATS regulates services trade, which encourages liberalization, but it does not eliminate the challenge of equal development by offering a discrimination element.

5. Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS): TRIPS establishes international norms on the protection of intellectual property but looks after both innovation and access, especially in developing countries, though the implementation remains problematic.

Challenges for the Role of WTO in Global Economic Issues

Unfair market access continues to create economic gaps, especially in developing countries. To deal with these, reforms are needed to become more WTO frameworks, more inclusive, and more dynamic to address the current economic issues to ensure that all member states participate in fair trade.

1. Disruption due to pandemic and supply chain: The world shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, reveal the weaknesses in the supply chains, thus making the task of the WTO to achieve strong transport systems more difficult.

2. Geopolitical Tensions: The capacity of the WTO to impose multilateral rules is challenged by geopolitical disputes and unilateralism, such as sanctions, undermining cooperation in world trade.

3. Inequitable Market Access: The developing countries, such as Pakistan, have restricted access to the market because of the systematic bias of WTO agreements, which may benefit developed economies, thereby reinforcing the economic inequalities.

4. Protectionism: The increasing protectionist measures, including tariffs and trade barriers, erode the objective of the WTO to develop free markets, which distorts international trade.

5. Weaknesses in Settlement of Disputes: The WTO dispute settlement system is plagued with delays and inefficiencies, and is limited in its effectiveness to address trade disputes and lost trust by members.

All these obstacles prevent the WTO in its efforts to achieve fair and balanced global trade. Multilateral cooperation is restricted by protectionism and geopolitical tensions, and destroyed by inefficiency in dispute resolution.

Opportunities for the Role of WTO in Global Economic Issues

These prospects allow the WTO to strengthen its role in global economic regulation. Protectionist trends can be counteracted by reform of trade policies so that the market is accessed fairly. The credibility is strengthened by having a strong dispute resolution system, and inclusivity is fostered by having specific support for developing nations dealing with systemic biases.

1. Adjusting to Global Upheavals: The WTO can better stabilize the global markets by developing strong trade structures to combat disruptions such as pandemics and supply chain issues. The need to adapt to such disruptions as COVID-19 provides resiliency in the trade systems, and this is to the advantage of all members.

2. Empowering Dispute Resolution: Improvement in the efficiency of the WTO dispute settlement system by streamlining processes can be used to regain confidence in the system, as well as see trade disputes resolved promptly by the system.

3. In aid of developing countries: An increase in aid to developing nations, such as Pakistan, in terms of capacity building and technical support will help close the market access disparities to promote inclusive growth.

4. Trade Policy Reforms: Protectionism can be counteracted by adopting widespread reforms to WTO agreements to facilitate access to markets and increase fairer practices in trade around the world.

Through these opportunities, the WTO will be able to enhance multilateral cooperation, match up with the contemporary economic demands, and enhance fairness, which will lead to a more level and stable global trade environment.

Discussion

The World Trade Organization (WTO) also opposes protectionism, which is not in line with its vision of encouraging open markets. The imposing tariffs and individualistic policies have a disruptive effect on the trade in the world, particularly on the economies of developing countries like Pakistan that rely on fair access as the foundation of economic growth. The agreements of the WTO, such as the Agreement on Agriculture, among others, are structurally tilted towards the developed nations, and as such, they limit the market opportunities for the marginalized economies. The inability of the WTO to apply fair trade laws is also cast by the fact that the geopolitical tension and inefficiency of the dispute settlement further erode the trust.

Systemic disruptive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the supply chains render WTO flexibility challenging. These concerns have ethical problems, such as fairness in the governance of trade. The reform efforts taken to address disparities aim to make it more inclusive and strong enough to enable the WTO to take a central part in guaranteeing equal growth of the world economy.

Conclusion

The WTO has a weak response to problems facing the world economy because of challenges that impair its performance. Open trade is interrupted by protectionism and geopolitical crises, and developing countries such as Pakistan are excluded by systemic prejudice in the agreements. The lack of efficiency in resolving

conflicts and the weaknesses revealed in turbulence caused by such events as COVID-19 undermine the trust in the systems in the WTO. These problems raise ethical questions regarding fair trade governance, especially in the case of the marginalized economies. Nevertheless, the WTO is failing to be fair and inclusive regardless of its detailed agreements. To promote a balanced and equitable trading environment in the world, reforms are important to redress imbalances, enhance multilateral cooperation, and encourage resilience that will help the WTO to promote a balanced and equitable global trade environment.

Recommendations

- 1. Adapt to New Economies:** Change the WTO policies to ensure that the rising powers of economies such as China are embraced so that there is balanced governance.
- 2. Develop Resilient Supply Chains:** Develop systems to make global supply chains resistant to disruptions such as pandemics.
- 3. Enhance Dispute Resolution:** Simplify the Dispute Settlement Understanding procedures to minimize time delays and enhance equity in conflict resolution in trade disputes.
- 4. Enhance Unequal Agreements:** Reform other agreements, such as the Agreement on Agriculture, to be fair in biases towards the developed countries.
- 5. Enhance Multilateral Cooperation:** Encourage coalitions such as the G20 that encourage reforms that improve WTO inclusivity.
- 6. Improve Trade Policy Reforms:** Establish flexible WTO agreements in response to protectionism that guarantee equitable market access to member countries.
- 7. Manage Geopolitical Tensions:** Nurture a dialogue that does not overemphasize the effects of sanctions and unilateral measures on multilateral trade cooperation.
- 8. Promote Openness:** Introduce open trade policy monitoring in an effort to develop trust and obedience between member states.
- 9. Support Developing Nations:** Give technical support and capacity-building schemes to increase market access by other countries, such as Pakistan.
- 10. Support Innovation Access:** TRIPS balance to make sure that developing countries have access to intellectual property without impairing innovation.

Research Limitations

The academic research on the World Trade Organization and its role in world economic issues is inadequate in several aspects. First of all, WTO processes are not as transparent as they could be, and it means that it is not easy to access detailed and up-to-date information about trade policies and the resolution of disputes. Second, research is limited due to the absence of empirical studies on particular economic issues, such as those related to trade in Pakistan.

Third, biases may be introduced by geopolitical and economic vulnerabilities since the critical findings may be countered by the stakeholders. In addition, the varying economic and cultural backgrounds of states that have joined the WTO complicate the generalization of the results, particularly for the developing states. Finally, the dynamism of world trade, which is always uprooted by events like pandemics and geopolitics, is a

menace that would render the investigation irrelevant in a very short time. These limitations demand a close understanding of findings and indicate the need to undertake continuous up-to-date operations in order to be relevant in the discourse of the role that the WTO plays in governing economies across the globe.

Research Implications

Research may also be effective in ensuring fair economic growth through addressing systemic bias, better responses to disputes, and resilience to adapt to the interests of various member states in the dynamic globalized trade environment through WTO policies.

1. Capacity Building: Findings show that the developing countries should be supported in the WTO systems through training programs to enhance their trading potential.

2. Dispute Resolution: The study can be leveraged to establish steps that can be taken to optimize the WTO dispute settlement mechanism, which is more efficient and can restore the confidence of members.

3. Equity Advocacy: It encourages a more justifiable access to the market, particularly in countries like Pakistan that suffer economic imbalances due to the identification of biases in agreements.

4. Policy Reform: WTO policies can be changed using the enlightenment to avoid protectionism and also to facilitate fair trade across all member countries.

5. Resilience Strategies: Familiarity with disruptions or pandemics influences policies to augment worldwide supply chains, which ensures trade is stable.

These implications highlight the fact that research will be able to change the WTO, and such changes will be inclusive and fair in world trade.

Future Research Directions

The study concerning protectionism, equity, and dispute systems may help in overcoming the problems in the structure, and the study connected with resilience and the place of emerging economies will result in a more inclusive process, and the WTO will be more suited to the altering economic conditions.

1. Dispute Settlement: The inefficiencies can be resolved through researching reforms to simplify the WTO system of dispute settlement in an effort to rebuild confidence among the members.

2. Equitable Market Access: The obstacles of developing nations, such as Pakistan, to their market might be explored as a means of influencing the policies of inclusive trade development.

3. Protectionism Mitigation: The neutralization of the protectionist policy needs to be researched so that it can enable the WTO to proceed with its task of having an open world market.

4. Resilience to Disruptions: The study of the effect of such interruptions as pandemics on trade should inform the creation of a WTO structure of resilience.

5. The strength of the new economies: Research into the contribution made by such economies as China in shaping policies of the WTO can provide suggestions for moderate governance. The above lines of study can enhance the position of the WTO in global trade.

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