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İç Savaşın Yıprattığı ve Kurumları Çökmüş Bir Ülke İçin DTÖ›ye Katılımın Faydaları

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BENEFITS OF WTO ACCESSION FOR A CIVIL WAR-TORN COUNTRY WITH TATTERED INSTITUTIONS

İÇ SAVAŞIN YIPRATTIĞI VE KURUMLARI ÇÖKMÜŞ BİR ÜLKE İÇİN DTÖ'YE KATILIMIN FAYDALARI

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ABSTRACT

Challenges Syria is facing in its path towards having an effective government with working institutions and a stable economy abound and can hardly be comprehended in full. Leaders of new regime have limited experience of statecraft, struggles for ensuring security in urban as well as rural areas of the country are still ongoing, while rule of law has yet to appear. Furthermore, rivals and direct uprisings against the legitimacy of the prospective central government are ubiquitous. Support from international organizations is a prerequisite for a resilient government and its extraterritorial recognition which would empower the new leaders of Syria in dealing with the complexities ahead. In this respect an accession to World Trade Organization (WTO), the main international institution with 166 Members with an expansive mandate over the governance of international trade represents a tremendous opportunity for the new government to overcome at least some of these complexities. This study envisages the benefits of Syria's accession of WTO to be threefold. First, given the position of WTO governing 98 per cent of world trade with a membership roster consisting of an overwhelming majority of international society seconded only to the United Nations, the accession procedure itself would provide international legitimacy, recognition and *de jure* character to the new government. Second, the Organization's intensive Article XII membership procedure ensures that a prospective member would have legal and structural framework prerequisite for the effective functioning of financial and economic national administrative institutions. Finally the accession to WTO would enhance the new government's ability to consolidate central authority and thereby tilt the balance of a national compromise favorable to the interests of the central governance. After addressing the challenges that the new governance would have to overcome in securing these benefits, the study concludes with a proposition that the new government of Syria should start accession negotiations without any delay.

Keywords: Syria, WTO, accession, civil war, working party reports

ÖZET

Suriye'nin etkin bir hükümete, işleyen kurumlara ve istikrarlı bir ekonomiye sahip olma yolunda karşı karşıya olduğu zorluklar son derece fazladır ve bunların tamamını kapsamlı bir şekilde kavramak neredeyse imkânsızdır. Yeni rejimin liderleri devlet yönetimi konusunda sınırlı bir deneyime sahiptir. Ülkenin hem kentsel hem de kırsal bölgelerinde güvenliğin sağlanmasına yönelik mücadeleler hâlen devam etmekte olup hukukun üstünlüğü ise henüz tam anlamıyla tesis edilememiştir. Bunun yanı sıra gelecekte kurulması öngörülen merkezi hükümetin meşruiyetine karşı çıkan muhalif gruplar ve doğrudan ayaklanmalar ülke genelinde yaygın durumdadır. Uluslararası kuruluşların desteği, dayanıklı bir hükümetin kurulması ve bu hükümetin uluslararası alanda tanınması açısından temel bir ön koşuldur. Böyle bir tanınma, Suriye›nin yeni liderlerinin karşı karşıya oldukları karmaşık

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sorunlarla daha etkin şekilde mücadele edebilmesini sağlayacaktır. Bu bağlamda, uluslararası ticaretin yönetiminde geniş yetkilere sahip olan ve 166 üye devleti bulunan temel uluslararası kuruluş niteliğindeki Dünya Ticaret Örgütü'ne (DTÖ) katılım, yeni hükümet açısından bu karmaşık sorunların en azından bir kısmını aşmak için önemli bir fırsat sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Suriye'nin DTÖ'ye katılımının sağlayacağı faydaların üç temel boyutta ele alınabileceğini öngörmektedir. İlk olarak, dünya ticaretinin yaklaşık %98›ini düzenleyen ve üyelik yapısı bakımından Birleşmiş Milletler'i takip eden en kapsamlı uluslararası örgüt olan DTÖ'nün konumu dikkate alındığında katılım sürecinin kendisi yeni hükümete uluslararası meşruiyet, tanınma ve de jure (hukuken tanınmış) statü kazandıracaktır. İkinci olarak, DTÖ Anlaşması›nın XII. Maddesi kapsamında yürütülen ayrıntılı üyelik süreci, aday ülkenin mali ve ekonomik alandaki ulusal idari kurumlarının etkin biçimde işleyebilmesi için gerekli hukuki ve kurumsal çerçevenin oluşturulmasını güvence altına almaktadır. Son olarak DTÖ'ye katılım, yeni hükümetin merkezi otoriteyi güçlendirme kapasitesini artıracak ve böylece ulusal uzlaşma sürecindeki güç dengesinin merkezi yönetimin çıkarları doğrultusunda şekillenmesine katkıda bulunacaktır. Çalışma, yeni yönetimin bu faydaları elde edebilmek için aşması gereken zorlukları değerlendirdikten sonra Suriye'nin yeni hükümetinin DTÖ'ye katılım müzakerelerine vakit kaybetmeksizin başlaması gerektiği yönündeki öneriyle sona ermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Suriye, DTÖ, katılım, iç savaş, çalışma grubu raporları

1. INTRODUCTION

World Trade Organization (WTO), one of the pillars of post-World War II multilateralism has lost its prevalence in international decision-making, since the demise of the latest Doha Rounds. First of all, we are at a point of "rupture, not a transition" as Canadian Prime Minister, Mark Carney brilliantly put it in his speech delivered at 2026 World Economic Forum Meeting.[1] Rule-based international system is in ruins, while the 21st century followers of Thrasymachus are in power chanting 'might is right'. We are coming to an awareness that the neutralization of the Appellate Body of WTO was not an isolated crisis about the legal status of international trade disputes but a pretext of a drastic contextual shift within international relations. Multilateral institutions such as WTO may not be of features governing the political picture of the emerging international system.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that the whole organization is to be interred with its organs. Some of them still hold value, can be devoured for other objectives or incorporated into other less-inclusive organizations such as free-trade agreements, custom unions. Accession to WTO is such an institution that can serve to objectives other than those of old-fashioned multilateralism. Its utility does not rely upon the ultimate membership to WTO which as addressed above had already lost its context within the new phase of international relations. Instead, the process of the accession provides unique opportunities for acceding governments to reach other ends. These ends may range from reaping better deals in international negotiations to engaging in institutional statecraft. Some of these ends might be intended, others may come as sidekicks. Several factors may demarcate the teleological basis of WTO accession such as the profile of acceding countries, ideological frameworks in which acceding governments operate, regional and/or internal conjectures

[1] World Economic Forum, 'Davos 2026: Special address by Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada' (2026) <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2026/01/davos-2026-special-address-by-mark-carney-prime-minister-of-canada/> accessed 28 June 2026.

that can render accession a necessity. Thus accession is a forum through which several domestic or international policies can be pursued and materialized.

In this respect, the accession to WTO may also present means that a post-conflict and civil war-torn country, such as Syria, can employ to rebuild its future. Negotiation-intensive nature of an accession can help a revolutionary government to better assert itself in foreign relations and strengthen its international standing, while the legal framework dictated by WTO agreements may serve as a policy anchor for necessary reforms that would be hard to pursue against domestic interest groups. Most importantly, accession can help construct a transcendent state capacity that will determine trade, industrial, agricultural policies and enforce them in a uniform manner within territorial boundaries, fundamental for ensuring non-violation of WTO obligations. Nevertheless none of these benefits are given automatically with the initiation of the accession process. They are to be reaped only via careful planning and extensive labor of trade experts and bureaucracy as well as collaboration with certain foreign counterparts.

A careful reader of this paper would realize that there is a twist in the argument this paper proposes; a civil war-torn country with limited resources and tattered institutions should spend much of its energy and effort to accede to an international organization that, as many assert, is of a prominence hardly existent in the international system heretofore. Without placing any normative weight to obligations under WTO, such as arguments of how WTO rules are beneficial to economic growth and welfare of acceding countries or how open-market transition helps acceding countries penetrate into global supply chains, this paper establishes how accession rather than membership benefits such a country through an extensive analysis of accession experience under the WTO drawing connections between accession protocols and the art of statecraft.

The paper comprises of four sections, the first section provides a general picture of accession phases and experience so far, along with the embedded normative framework governing whole process. The second section incorporates three sub-sections each corresponding to a distinct outcome to be reaped from the accession process; strengthening international legitimacy, building institutional structure, consolidation of central authority. The third section identifies particular challenges a post-conflict low-income country may encounter during the accession process, securing tailor-made negotiations, capacity restrains and finding benevolent adversaries. In this section the paper discusses how such challenges can be overcome through market intelligence efforts, establishing human capital and collaborating with certain WTO members. Finally, the paper concludes with explaining why an accession to WTO is worth the effort, even though the membership does not carry the same weight as it did until the last decade.

2. ACCESSION TO WTO

2.1. GENERAL

WTO is an international organization that evolved from the institutional framework created during the post-World War II period for the governance of international trade

between States under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade of 1947 (GATT 1947). The organization was defined by its three features: almost universal membership roster, trade-related negotiation platform and effective dispute settlement mechanism. As of January 2026, WTO consists of 166 member states, 38 of which, including major trading nations such as China[2] and Russian Federation[3], acceded through the procedure stipulated under Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement of 1994, the agreement founding WTO (hereinafter the WTO Agreement). This extensive membership attributes WTO a universal coverage regarding to all trade-related subjects governed under covered agreements annexed to the founding agreement.[4] Only two percent of world trade remains outside of WTO coverage[5] meaning that the accession to the organization is a major policy tool aimed at participating the regulation of international trade.

WTO is also a negotiation platform on which sovereign participants of world trade governance discuss matters of nearly every trade related issues stretching from tariffs, market access, and trade facilitation to quantitative restrictions, policy exceptions, e-commerce, and investment facilitation. These issues are brought before Members in bilateral, regional as well as multilateral negotiations, the latter of which can be regarded functioning as law-making bodies at a global level.[6] Since stakes in these negotiations are high and weights

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2 China's accession date is 11/12/2001. For further info on China's accession, see: <https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/countries_e/china_e.htm#acc_box> accessed 28 June 2026.

3 Russian Federation became a WTO member in 22/08/2012. <https://www.wto.org/english//thewto_e/countries_e/russia_e.htm> accessed 28 June 2026.

4 The package of agreements annexed to the WTO agreement involves: General interpretative note to Annex 1A; General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 (GATT 1994); General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1947 (GATT 1947); Explanation on the relationship with the GATT 1994; Members' goods schedules; Differential and More Favourable Treatment Reciprocity and Fuller Participation of Developing Countries ("Enabling Clause"); Understanding on the Interpretation of Article II:1(b) of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994; Understanding on the Interpretation of Article XVII of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 (State trading enterprises); Understanding on the Balance-of-Payments Provisions of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994; Understanding on the Interpretation of Article XXIV of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 (Regional Trade Agreements); Understanding in Respect of Waivers of Obligations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994; Understanding on the Interpretation of Article XXVIII of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 (Modification of Schedules); Marrakesh Protocol to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994; Agreement on Agriculture; Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS); Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT); Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMs); Agreement on Implementation of Article VI of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 (Anti-dumping Agreement); Agreement on Implementation of Article VII of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 (Customs Valuation Agreement-CVA); Agreement on Preshipment Inspection; Agreement on Rules of Origin; Agreement on Import Licensing;Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM); Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies; Agreement on Safeguards; Agreement on Trade Facilitation; General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS); Members' services schedules; Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS); Integrated IP Conventions; Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes (DSU); Trade Policy Review Mechanism.

5 For recent figures, see: World Trade Organization, 'What is the WTO?' <https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/who_we_are_e.htm#:~:text=> accessed 26 January 2026.

6 Andrew T. Guzman et al., *International Trade Law* (3rd edn., Wolter Kluwer 2016) 84.

that countries bear in the balance of international trade differ, risk-aligned countries form coalitions to better assert themselves against their more powerful trade partners.[7]

WTO includes a dispute settlement mechanism in which trade-related disputes between Members are resolved through a procedure that combines politics and adjudication along with an option to apply to *ad hoc* and permanent legal review that would issue binding decisions on disagreements regarding to the implementation and/or interpretation of covered agreements. This multi-faceted approach gained WTO one of the most effective dispute settlement mechanisms available to States at international level[8] to the extent that it even destabilized the balance between rule-making and dispute resolution functions of the organization[9] which according to Jens Lehne, brought about the apparent demise of the Appellate Body[10] and the dispute resolution mechanism at the end.[11] These features put the organization at the centre of globalization paradigm which dictated the fragmentation of supply chains and a multilateral approach to ensuring uniformity of trade-related subjects.

2.2. ACCESSION PROCESS

There are two types of accession procedures to WTO. The Contracting Parties of the GATT 1947, became the members of the organization automatically under Article XI. Countries who are not of the Contracting Parties yet seek to become a member of WTO are to negotiate their accession under Article XII of the WTO Agreement which states that:

> "Any State or separate customs territory possessing full autonomy in the conduct of its external commercial relations and of the other matters provided for in this Agreement and the Multilateral Trade Agreements may accede to this Agreement, on terms to be agreed between it and the WTO (…)."

This Article does not reveal much as to what the Organization can stipulate during accession procedures and the Agreement does not provide any further information on 'terms to be agreed' between an acceding country and the Organization. Details of accession processes were determined and shaped gradually through accession practices and the implementation of Article XII gained almost a uniform structure that has been followed consistently. However this uniform structure does not prevent the advent of

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7 As to groups in WTO negotiations, see: World Trade Organization, 'Groups in the Negotiations' <https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dda_e/negotiating_groups_e.htm> accessed 26 January 2026.

8 The average time period of a dispute settlement process in WTO has been 10 months before the paralysis of its Appellate Body. This time period is four years for International Court of Justice and two years for European Court of Justice.World Trade Organization, 'Dispute settlement' <https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/mc11_e/briefing_notes_e/bfdispu_e.htm> accessed 26 January 2026.

9 Claude Barfield, *Free Trade, Sovereignty, Democracy: The Future of World Trade Organization* (2001) 7.

10 The United State has been blocking the elections of new members to the Appellate Body, the permanent body of legal review under WTO since June 2017. With the expiration of existing terms, the Appellate Body lacks necessary seats for adjudication since December 2019. Joost Pauwelyn 'WTO Dispute Settlement Post 2019: What to Expect?'(2019) 22 JIEL 297-321.

11 Jens Lehne, *Crisis at the WTO: Is the Blocking of Appointments to the WTO Appellate Body by the United States Legally Justified?* (Sui Generis, 2019) 108-111.

tailor-made accession protocols resonating with the circumstances in which individual acceding countries reside.

In order to become a member of WTO, acceding countries are required to go through a three-stage accession procedure. The first stage starts with a communication from the acceding country notifying its intent to become a member and ends with a decision through consensus[12] by WTO's Ministerial Conference, or General Council the primary decision-making and governing bodies of the Organization, of the establishment of a Working Party which is to be an *ad hoc* organ responsible for making acceding country suitable for membership. The second stage ends with the adoption of a Working Party Report which is going to include details of the transformation, the foreign trade regime of an acceding country that has experienced during its individual and/or collective interactions with the members of the Working Party along with its commitments to ensure compliance with obligations incurred under the covered agreements. The third stage starts with the Ministerial Conference receiving the Working Party Report and annexing it to the Accession Protocol that is to be submitted to the acceding country for approval. The accession process concludes with the acceding country's approval of the Accession Protocol which also becomes a legal document binding upon acceding country along with other WTO Covered Agreements.

The benefits of the WTO accession that this paper points out, are embedded in the second stage of the process which may include labor- and expertise-intensive bilateral and multilateral negotiations regarding to almost every trade-related aspects of acceding countries. The level of severity at which negotiations are conducted, substantially differs based upon certain factors surrounding the accession process.[13] For example, low income countries with limited prospects of gaining global market shares tend to find their accession stages running smoothly, while acceding countries with significant import substitution and export-oriented industrial capacity have to go through intense bargaining with working party members embracing firm stances regarding to the acceding countries' prospective position in world trade.[14] The accession practice also demonstrates that later accessions

[12] Article IX of Marrakesh Agreement reads as: "The WTO shall continue the practice of decision-making by consensus followed under GATT 1947. Except as otherwise provided, where a decision cannot be arrived at by consensus, the matter at issue shall be decided by voting." Even though Article IX refers to the possibility that consensus rule might be overruled, due to constant failures to reach a decision, this possibility has never been materialized, as Members treated decisions by consensus as an absolute rule, declining to any resort to voting. For further information on WTO's consensus rule, see: <https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/tif_e/org1_e.htm> accessed 28 June 2026.

[13] Oliver Cattaneo & Carlos A. Primo Braga, 'Everything You Always Wanted to Know About WTO Accession' (2009) World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 5116.

[14] Samoa and Vanuatu were subjected to only two, Tonga and Nepal were subjected to only three working party meetings. China and Russian Federation, on the other hand were required to attend respectively 38 and 31 working party meetings with additional question and answer sessions. For extensive overview of Accessions, see: <https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/acc_map_e.htm> accessed 28 June 2026.

have been subjected to harsher conditions for entry, compared to those imposed upon earlier ones.[15]

The second stage of the accession process involves five steps. The stage starts with the formation of Workin Party and the determination of its chair. Each WTO member can become a member of a Workin Party at any time of the accession process. In the second step, the acceding country is required to submit a memorandum underlying whole domestic normative framework regulating trade with other nations and this 'Memorandum on Foreign Trade Regime' will determine the course of the rest of the accession process. A detailed and articulate memorandum illuminates not only the members of a working party, but also the government of an acceding country as well which would gain a better insight into the strength and weaknesses of its own domestic production, economy and governance. This insight would further make sure in the third step that the acceding member is better prepared for the questions of working party members and thus able to produce better answers.

After questions and answers, the acceding country engages in negotiations both multilateral and bilateral in which members of the working party seek to ensure the WTO-compliance of the acceding country's legal regime as well as to force it for further commitments regarding to *inter alia* enhancing foreign access to national products and services sectors and customers. All discussions and commitments made in these negotiations are to be noted and formed into a draft working party report shaped and changed throughout the second stage. Once the negotiations are concluded for both the acceding country and members of the working party, a final report with a recommendation of accession is prepared and adopted by the working party which subsequently submits it to decision-making bodies of the organization, General Council or Ministerial Conference.[16]

2.3. RATIONALE BEHIND ACCESSION

Policy objectives of acceding countries, albeit interrelated, differed to a certain extent. Several countries found their accession as an important means for participating in global

[15] Evenett and Braga engaged in an extensive analysis featuring the discrepancies between early and later acceded countries as to the levels of tariff binding and services commitments, with a showing that the cost of accession has been increasing. See: Simon J. Evenett & Carlos A. Primo Braga, 'WTO Accession: Moving the Goalposts?' in"Newfarmer, Richard (ed) *Trade, Doha, and Development : A Window into the Issues* (World Bank 2006) 231, 232-6.

[16] For a more detailed picture of the accession process, see: Peter J. Williams, *A Handbook on Accession to the WTO*, (Cambridge 2008) 24-47.

trade governance.[17] For some countries, WTO represented an important element in their quest for being a market economy.[18] Others saw it as a key for achieving economic development and/or access to foreign markets.[19] There were also countries looking at the process through lenses of a more political character. For Mongolia and Albania, accessions were directly related to the policies of democratic transformation, while Montenegro's accession to WTO was dictated by the EU through a promise of EU membership yet to be materialized.[20] The process as laid out in Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement was comprehended by acceding countries as an instrument for achieving other ends, while memberships to the organization have barely been identified as the teleological basis of accession initiatives.

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[17] Of 38 Accessions, 15 addressed the integration to the multilateral trade system as one of their policy objectives in becoming a member of WTO. See: for Panama, GATT, Minutes of Meeting (04 November 1991) C/M/252 2; for Latvia, GATT (24 January 1994) C/M/268; for Estonia, Accession of Estonia Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime (28 March 1994) L/7423 3; for Jordan, GATT (10 March 1994) SR 49/71 5; for Oman, Minutes of Meeting (30 July 1996) WT/GC/M/12 1; for Croatia, Minutes of Meeting (12 November 1993) C/M/267 4; for Saudi Arabia, Minutes of Meeting (21 July 1993) C/M/265 2; for Cabo Verde, Minutes of Meeting (14 September 2000) W/GC/M/57 3; for Vanuatu, Minutes of Meeting (17 August 1995) WT/GC/M/5 4; for Tajikistan, Minutes of Meeting (16 March 1998) WT/GC/M/66 7-8; for Yemen, Minutes of Meeting (14 September 2000) W/GC/M/57 6; for Seychelles, Minutes of Meeting (17 August 1995) WT/GC/M/5 3; for Liberia, Accession of Liberia Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime (20 April 2011) WT/ACC/LBR/3 1-2; for Comoros, Minutes of Meeting (15 November 2007) WT/GC/M/110 2; for Timor-Leste, Minutes of Meeting (21 February 2017) WT/GC/M/165 5-6. Careful eyes would notice that some of the documents cited above predates the Marrakesh Agreement founding WTO, which raises a reasonable and logical question of how they can implicate the purported desire of GATT Membership, while WTO itself did not yet exist. This paper uses WTO as the embodiment of multilateral trade system which also includes the Organization's predecessor, GATT 1947. Although nuances preside, this usage is appropriate for the purposes of this paper which do not include providing a detailed history of WTO. It is also important to note that all GATT accessions starting prior to WTO were converted to WTO accessions with the advent of the organization.

[18] Of 38 Accessions, 10 included WTO membership as a part of their transition to market economy and liberal trade reform. See: for Mongolia, Minutes of Meeting (4 November 1991) C/M/252 2; for Latvia, GATT (24 January 1994) C/M/268 5; for Albania, GATT (19 November 1992) L/7120 1; for Lithuania, Minutes of Meeting (22 March 1994) C/M/270 5; for Moldova, GATT (24 January 1994) C/M/268 6; for China, Minutes of Meeting (30 March 1987) C/M/207 9; for Armenia, GATT (24 January 1994) C/M/268 4; for Ukraine, GATT (24 January 1994) C/M/268 7; for Cambodia, Accession of Cambodia Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime (22 June 1999) WT/ACC/KHM/2 1; for Russian Federation, Minutes of Meeting (14 July 1993) C/M/26 3.

[19] In 13 Accessions, either economic growth or access to world markets or both have been identified as major objectives. See: for Ecuador, Minutes of Meeting (27 October 1992) C/M/259 5; for Bulgaria, GATT (10 September 1986) L/6023 1; for Panama, GATT, Minutes of Meeting (04 November 1991) C/M/252 2; for Kyrgyz Republic, Minutes of Meeting (25 May 1996) WT/GC/M/11 2; for Lithuania, Minutes of Meeting (22 March 1994) C/M/270 5; for China, Minutes of Meeting (30 March 1987) C/M/207 9; for Nepal, Minutes of Meeting (31 July 1989) C/M/234 4-5; for Viet Nam, Minutes of Meeting (28 February 1995) WT/GC/M/1 4; for Tonga, Minutes of Meeting (13 December 1995) WT/GC/M/8 2; for Samoa, Minutes of Meeting (30 September 1998) WT/GC/M/29 2; for Lao People's Democratic Republic, Minutes of Meeting (16 March 1998) WT/GC/M/26 2; for Kazakhstan, Accession of the Republic of Kazakhstan Memorandum of the Foreign Trade Regime (23 September 1996) WT/ACC/KAZ/3 1.

[20] See: for Mongolia, Minutes of Meeting (4 November 1991) C/M/252 2; for Albania, GATT (19 November 1992) L/7120 1; for Montenegro, Communication from the Commission on the Preparedness of Serbia and Montenegro to Negotiate Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU, COM(2005)476 Final (Brussels 12 April 05) 5-6; Minutes of Meeting (07 April 2005) WT/GC/M/92 6.

In this respect, the accession process may also serve as an instrument of rehabilitation, reconstruction and restoration for a post-conflict, civil war-torn country such as Syria whose government strives to strengthen its legitimacy in international relations and its authority in domestic affairs, while trying to rebuild the institutional structure of the State. Several elements of a memorandum on foreign trade regime directly touches upon the institutional capacities of acceding countries for the enactment, implementation and the enforcement of national legislation in compliance with the obligations incurred under WTO. Since the extent of these obligations coincides with almost every aspect of public policy objectives of national governments, acceding countries have to undertake a complete overview of their state structure as well as studies of global and domestic market intelligence pinpointing sectors in which acceding countries may have comparative advantage in global markets.[21] This market intelligence would enable acceding countries to develop domestic industrial strategies such as domestic strategies on market access to domestic services sectors or studies over projected tariff levels at agricultural and non-agricultural products and thereby conduct better bargaining in bilateral and multilateral negotiations.

The experience of WTO demonstrates that commencing an accession itself would not suffice to materialize the benefits identified in the policy objectives of acceding countries. Nor does the fact that a country concluding the process and thus becoming a member of WTO ensure that all of the policy objectives attributed to the accession are achieved. In order for a country to reap benefits from its accession, the process is required to be heavily contested by the Members of relevant Working Parties on grounds of compliance with WTO obligations. This necessity arises from the fact that most of the reforms and commitments needed for a successful accession are of a nature that cannot be carried out voluntarily by an acceding country. Costs of certain commitments such as tariff reductions and the revocation of quantitative restrictions are to be incurred totally or partially by domestic producers straining any political support enjoyed by acceding governments. These costs may even be fatal for a post-conflict, civil war-torn country in which the success of a national peace is relied upon political and economical compromises, when these compromises are in violation of obligations under the WTO Agreement and the Covered Agreements. In such cases, heated debates in working party meetings and strong positions held by at least some members thereof would serve as policy anchors for pursuing reforms and commitments which are otherwise near impossible to be overcome.[22]

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[21] Bernard Hoekman & Jayanta Roy, 'Benefiting from WTO Accession and Membership' in Bernard Hoekman & Jamel Zarrouk (eds), *Catching Up with the Competition: Trade Opportunities and Challenges for Arab Countries* (University of Michigan Press 2010) 308.

[22] For example the driving force of China's markets, taxation and uniform governance reforms in 1990s against interests of national sectors and local authorities was its accession to WTO. See: Michael J. Ferrantino, 'Policy Anchors: Do Free Trade Agreements Serve As Vehicles for Developing Country Policy Reform?' (2006) US ITC Office of Economics Working Paper No:2006-04-A 11-12. See also: Mona Haddad et al., 'The Structural Reform Implications of WTO Accession' in Uri Dadush & Chiedu Osakwe (eds), *WTO Accession and Trade Multilateralism: Case Studies and Lessons from the WTO at Twenty* (WTO 2015) 86.

3. BENEFITS OF ACCESSION

3.1. GENERAL

An accession to WTO may create three distinct outcomes which might prove to be particularly prevalent from the point of post-conflict, civil war-torn countries. The first outcome is related to international recognition and legitimacy to be enjoyed by the government conducting the process. Next, an accession can provide means through which institutional structure of acceding countries can be moulded and recalibrated in a manner towards market economy and rule of law. Finally, the process would also strengthen a revolutionary central government's grip over local or provincial authorities on grounds of creating a single custom territory where WTO-related legislation is applied and enforced in a uniform manner.

3.2. INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Despite the purportedly technical nature of WTO and its underlying legal regime, certain practical features of the organization result in implications for international politics. First, as noted above WTO and its predecessor the GATT 1947 have been of the primary institutions of rule-based multilateralism taking hold after the World War II. For entities striving to participate in this post-war international system, the GATT 1947 and WTO have been regarded as a land registry against threats over autonomy, territorial integrity and authority of acceding countries and governments.[23] This was particularly evident in the accession documents of former Soviet Republics such as Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Georgia, which referred to integration into multilateral system and sharing equal rights and obligations with other States as among the goals of their accession processes.[24]

Political implications of WTO and its predecessor the GATT 1947 with respect to governments representing members and contracting parties thereof have been evident from the beginning. For instance, Republic of China, albeit being a founding Contracting Party of the GATT 1947, withdrew its membership in 1950, after the toppling of the nationalist government, Kou-min-tang (KMT) and its exile to the island of Taiwan by the communist forces of Mao Zedong at the outset of Chinese Civil War in 1949. Objections raised by the new communist government who controlled the mainland China and thus held the title of its *de facto* government were not listened by the GATT 1947 that continued to respect KMT as the legitimate government until the issuance of the U.N. General Assembly Resolution No. 2758 (XXVI) which acknowledged the communist government as the only legal representative of China to the United Nations in 1971.[25] Furthermore, after

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[23] Chiedu Osakwe & Uri Dadush, 'Accession. Protocols As Building Blocks' in Uri Dadush & Chiedu Osakwe (eds), *WTO Accession and Trade Multilateralism: Case Studies and Lessons from the WTO at Twenty* (WTO 2015) 910-11.

[24] For Estonia, see: Accession of Estonia Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime (28 March 1994) L/7423 3; for Latvia, see: GATT (24 January 1994) C/M/268; for Estonia, Accession of Estonia Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime (28 March 1994) L/7423 3; for Lithuania, see: Minutes of Meeting (22 March 1994) C/M/270 5; for Georgia see: Minutes of Meeting (28 August 1996) WT/GC/M/13 4.

[25] Ya Qin, 'China and GATT: Accession Instead of Resumption' (1993) 27 J. World Trade 77, 79-80.

this recalibration, GATT 1947 and WTO remained faithful to the legality of their earlier determination, by rejecting China's appeals for resumption to the framework and requiring it to apply to Article XII for accession as a new member.[26]

A more radical stance has been taken regarding to the representation of Afghanistan in WTO after 2021 Taliban takeover. Afghanistan acceded to the organization in 2016, becoming its 164th member after nearly 12 years of negotiations[27] and actively participated in the WTO activities and deliberations for five years.[28] This participation, however, was interrupted with the international boycott targeting Taliban, the country's new *de facto* government which has been denied from the representation and recognition from other governments.[29] This denial persists despite the lacking of a *de jure* Afghan government in exile. WTO is a major platform upon which the boycott of Taliban government has been exercised.[30]

The negotiation-based nature of the organization has been a fundamental feature driving countries towards WTO accession. International trade regime under WTO and its predecessor GATT 1947 took shape through series of bilateral and multilateral negotiations in so called 'rounds' spanning over almost 80 years.[31] These negotiations have included contested issues of international trade and acted as a quasi-legislative body of international law setting forth rights and obligations incurred and overseen by sovereign states and separate custom regions. This feature of the Organization also resonates with accession procedures in which bilateral and multilateral negotiations with existing members constitute the most crucial and time-consuming part. For example, Osakwe and Dadush finds that acceding countries deposited 504 agreements on goods and 244 agreements on services during their succession.[32]

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[26] Monica Hsiao, 'China and the GATT: Two Theories of Political Economy Explaining China's Desire for Membership in the GATT' (1994) 12/2 UCLA Pacific Basin Law Journal 431, 433-36.

[27] For details on Afghanistan's accession to WTO see: World Trade Organization, 'Afghanistan' <https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/a1_afghanistan_e.htm> accessed 28 June 2026.

[28] Patrick Low, *Afghanistan: A Retrospective on Five Years of WTO Membership* (ITC 2021) 13.

[29] International Crisis Group, 'After the Aid Axe: Charting a Path to Self-reliance in Afghanistan' (2025) Crisis Group Asia Report No: 350, 16.

[30] For the comments by the Taliban's Minister of Commerce on lacking representation in WTO see: Afghanistan International, 'Taliban and UNAMA Discuss Reactivating Afghanistan's WTO Membership' (2024) <https://www.afintl.com/en/202405304868> accessed 28 June 2026.

[31] Eight of these rounds were held during GATT 1947 era: Geneva (1947), Annecy (1949), Torquay (1950-51), Geneva (1956), Geneva (1960-61) - also known as the Dillon Round - the Kennedy Round (1964-67), the Tokyo Round (1973-79) and the Uruguay Round (1986-94) World Trade Organization, 'Derestriction of bilateral negotiating material from GATT rounds of negotiations' <https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/gatt_documents_e.htm> accessed 28 June 2026. Doha Round which is the only round held under WTO started in 2001and has been ongoing since then with very limited success. World Trade Organization, 'The Doha Round' <https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dda_e/dda_e.htm> accessed 28 June 2026. For the evolution of the GATT regime, see: Douglas A. Irwin et al., *The Genesis of GATT* (Cambridge 2008).

[32] This study was conducted in 2015 and thus did not include later accessions of Timo-Leste, Comoros, Afghanistan, Liberia and Kazakhstan. Chiedu Osakwe & Uri Dadush, 'Accession. Protocols As Building Blocks' in Uri Dadush & Chiedu Osakwe (eds), *WTO Accession and Trade Multilateralism: Case Studies and Lessons from the WTO at Twenty* (WTO 2015) 913.

Though engaging in foreign relations is not a constructive element of a *de facto* government under public international law, emerging governments of post-conflict and civil war-torn countries tend to immediately start and develop bilateral or multilateral relations with the governments of other nations to expand and strengthen their notion of legitimacy. For instance, the first major obstacle of the Syrian provisional government after the toppling of Assad Regime has been securing recognitions from its external counterparts and international organizations through engaging in relations. Given direct communications with global powers such as the United States and Russia and relations established with regional counterparts such as Türkiye and Saudi Arabia, as well as acceptance of credential by the United Nations resuming the Syria's chair in the organization, the Syrian Provisional Government has increased its international recognition to a considerable extent. The accession procedure, on the other hand, would enable the provisional government to expand its recognition further through intense and constant multilateral and bilateral negotiations with projected trade partners as well as its participation into interest groups such as Asian Developing Countries, G-90, and Article XII Countries.[33]

3.3. INSTITUTIONAL RESTRUCTURING

Obligations to be incurred through WTO membership are immense to the extent that almost every trade-related norm within national legal and structural frameworks need to be reviewed and restructured during an accession process. In addition to, *inter alia*, lowering average percentage of tariff rates, eliminating non-tariff barriers to international trade and opening market access to domestic services sectors, acceding countries are expected to set out institutions and procedures ensuring the implementation of obligations and commitments to be attached to accession protocols. Establishing a judicial review mechanism or the provision of a constitutional superiority over domestic legislation would not be regarded as sufficient to convince prospective compliance. In 27 of 38 working party reports, countries were subjected to a specific commitment that they would act to enforce WTO provisions without requiring affected parties to petition through courts.[34] In so doing, these countries would introduce enquiry points and administrative mechanisms

[33] For a complete list of these interest groups see; World Trade Organization, 'Groups in the Negotiations' <https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dda_e/negotiating_groups_e.htm> accessed 09 February 2026.

[34] See for Estonia: (09 April 1999) WT/ACC/EST/28 para 30; for Jordan: (03 December 1999) 9 para 43; for Georgia: (31 August 1999) WT/ACC/GEO/31 para 40; for Albania: (14 July 2000) WT/ACC/ALB/51 para 38; for Croatia: (29 June 2000) WT/ACC/HRV/59 para 41; for Lithuania: (07 November 2000) WT/ACC/LTU/52 para 29; for Moldova: (11 January 2001) WT/ACC/MOL/37 para 48; for Armenia: (26 November 2002) WT/ACC/ARM/23 para 36; for Viet Nam: (27 October 2006) WT/ACC/VNM/48 para 131; for Tonga: (02 December 2005) WT/ACC/TON/17 para 48; for Ukraine: (25 January 2008) WT/ACC/UKR/152 para 84; for Cabo Verde: (06 December 2007) WT/ACC/CPV/30 para 60; for Montenegro: (05 December 2011) WT/ACC/CGR/38 para 59; for Samoa: (01 November 2011) WT/ACC/SAM/30 para 58; for Russan Federation: (17 November 2011) WT/ACC/RUS/70 para 214; for Vanuatu: (11 May 2011) WT/ACC/VUT/17 para 31; for Lao: (01 October 2012) WT/ACC/LAO/45 para 55; for Tajikistan; (06 November 2012) WT/ACC/TJK/30 para 76; for Yemen: (04 October 2013) WT/ACC/YEM/42 para 59; for Seychelles: (05 November 2014) WT/ACC/SYC/64 para 96; for Kazakhstan: (23 June 2015) WT/ACC/KAZ/93 para 208; for Liberia: (09 October 2015) WT/ACC/LBR/23 para 66; for Afghanistan: (13 November 2015) WT/ACC/AFG/36 WT/MIN(15)/6 para 65; for Comoros: (18 January 2024) WT/ACC/COM/51 para 67.

entrusted with the observance of and compliance with obligations and commitments stipulated under these accession protocols.

Substantive obligations, such as most favored nation clause and national treatment principle are of particular importance for institutional restructuring, as their relevance transcends nearly every layers of domestic governance. For example detailed recalibrations in tariff classifications with varying levels of rates or the adjustment of a pharmaceutical reimbursement scheme within the provision of general health services would attract the attention of and bring about complaints by other WTO members on grounds that such practices constitute violations of respectively most favored nation clause and national treatment principle enshrined under Articles I:1 and III:4 of GATT 1994. Preventing these conflicts before they arise requires automation mechanisms and constant communication between expert state personnel working at the different levels and segments of state administration.

WTO accession also result in the undertaking of specific conduct obligations such as obligations of transparency[35], standardization[36], intellectual property protection[37], which would require acceding members to establish specific institutions and agencies to oversee the compliance. The formation of these institutions and agencies along with a detailed guidance on specific conduct patterns that they are supposed to scrutiny, requires considerable capital and human resources. Thousands of pages of checklists would be prepared and used for navigating the compliance in every part of national economy and making sure of a smooth navigation would be possible only after the implementation of capacity-enhancing strategies and frameworks in administrative governance.

These benefits of institutional restructuring are particularly crucial for post-conflict and civil war-torn countries in which the administrative function of state organs as well as the provision of public services are devastated.[38] In Syria, for example, the civil war was accompanied by constant purges carried out within the state apparatus transferring the state assets to newly emerged roque officials, and thinning out the nation's administrative capacity.[39] Accession process and commitments along with it would direct revolutionary governments towards a paradigm in which governance efforts are concentrated over the

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[35] Transparency and notification measures are stipulated in a myriad of annexed agreements such as; Article X of the GATT 1994, Article III of GATS, Article 63 of TRIPS, Article 2.9 of TBT, Article 7 of SPS, Article 5 of Agreement on Agriculture, Article 12 of SCM, Articles 6.4 and 18.5 of Anti-Dumping Agreement.

[36] Primary rules that govern the relationship between governmental measures and international standards are Article 2.4 of TBT and Article 3 of SPS.

[37] See: Article 1.3 of TRIPS provides that 1967 Paris Convention and 1971 Berne Convention, two international treaties that provide transnational standards for the protection of intellectual property rights are binding for Member States of WTO.

[38] Joakim Reiter, 'Managing The Challenge of Acceding Post-Conflict States' in Uri Dadush & Chiedu Osakwe (eds), *WTO Accession and Trade Multilateralism: Case Studies and Lessons from the WTO at Twenty* (WTO 2015) 609.

[39] For an extensive list of key figures replacing old state elites since the outset of the civil war, see: Abdulazim Almgarbel et al., *The Economy of the Syrian Regime: Approaches and Policies 1970-2024* (Jusoor for Studies 2024) 34-36.

development and the promotion of capital and human resources orchestrating and overseeing the effective functioning of administration as a whole with effective organizational mechanisms[40] ensuring a uniform legal framework across the national territory.

3.4. CONSOLIDATION OF AUTHORITY

Another important chapter of an accession process is making sure that an acceding government incurring all the obligations annexed to WTO and undertaking further commitments such as opening services sectors or lowering tariff rates, would be able to comply with and apply them without discrepancies across its custom territory.[41] Working party reports so far indicate two separate commitments directed specifically towards ensuring that acceding countries possess such capacities. The first commitment involves an undertaking that all WTO obligations and other commitments annexed to accession protocol are to be applied in a uniform manner throughout acceding countries' territories. The extent of uniformity includes customs territories, regions engaging border trade and frontier traffic, special economic zones and other ares where special regimes for tariffs, taxes and regulations were established. This commitment with minor deviations in language is incorporated in almost all working party reports.[42]

In order to evaluate the capacity of acceding governments in enforcing prospective protocol commitments, members of Working Parties seek details on the structure of legislative, executive and judicial branches along with state organs entrusted with the implementation thereof.[43] Acceding countries are expected to provide information on governmental procedures for uniform implementation of WTO related legislation and

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[40] Hoekman and Roy proposes the formation of a Trade Policy Department entrusted to oversee the compliance with WTO obligations and commitments, while ensuring coordination between state organs at different levels and private sector under the auspices of Minister of Trade or Commerce. See: Hoekman & Roy (n 21) 316-19.

[41] Article XVI:4 of the WTO Agreement: 'Each Member shall ensure the conformity of its laws, regulations and administrative procedures with its obligations as provided in the annexed Agreements'.

[42] Of 38 accessions, 26 included uniformity commitment. See for Estonia: (09 April 1999) WT/ACC/EST/28 para 30; for Jordan: (03 December 1999) 9 para 40; for Georgia: (31 August 1999) WT/ACC/GEO/31 para 40; for Albania: (14 July 2000) WT/ACC/ALB/51 para 38; for Croatia: (29 June 2000) WT/ACC/HRV/59 para 41; for Lithuania: (07 November 2000) WT/ACC/LTU/52 para 29; for Moldova: (11 January 2001) WT/ACC/MOL/37 para 48; for China: (01 October 2001 WT/ACC/CHN/49 para 73; for Armenia: (26 November 2002) WT/ACC/ARM/23 para 36; for Saudi Arabia: (01 November 2005) WT/ACC/SAU/61 para 88; for Viet Nam: (27 October 2006) WT/ACC/VNM/48 para 134; for Tonga: (02 December 2005) WT/ACC/TON/17 para 48; for Ukraine: (25 January 2008) WT/ACC/UKR/152 para 84; for Cabo Verde: (06 December 2007) WT/ACC/CPV/30 para 60; for Montenegro: (05 December 2011) WT/ACC/CGR/38 para 59; for Samoa: (01 November 2011) WT/ACC/SAM/30 para 58; for Russan Federation: (17 November 2011) WT/ACC/RUS/70 para 214; for Vanuatu: (11 May 2011) WT/ACC/VUT/17 para 31; for Lao: (01 October 2012) WT/ACC/LAO/45 para 55; for Tajikistan; (06 November 2012) WT/ACC/TJK/30 para 76; for Yemen: (04 October 2013) WT/ACC/YEM/42 para 59; for Seychelles: (05 November 2014) WT/ACC/SYC/64 para 96; for Kazakhstan: (23 June 2015) WT/ACC/KAZ/93 para 208; for Liberia: (09 October 2015) WT/ACC/LBR/23 para 66; for Afghanistan: (13 November 2015) WT/ACC/AFG/36 WT/MIN(15)/6 para 65; for Comoros: (18 January 2024) WT/ACC/COM/51 para 83.

[43] Josefita Pardo De Leon & Rafat Al-Akhali, 'Domestic Framework for Making and Enforcing Policies' in Uri Dadush & Chiedu Osakwe (eds), *WTO Accession and Trade Multilateralism: Case Studies and Lessons from the WTO at Twenty* (WTO 2015) 732.

ambiguities within domestic frameworks are required to be subjected to streamlining legislative actions. For example in a question and answer session in 18/06/2008, representatives of Kazakhstan were asked to provide information on legislative action taken for the implementation of WTO commitments and state authorities responsible, which was replied with a 5-page list of legislation taken.[44] Acceding governments were also asked to clarify the relationship between their central and sub-central authorities to see if there are any discrepancies that may distort the uniform enforcement of prospective WTO commitments and obligations. In the accession of Tajikistan, a considerable effort was made by Working Party members for the comprehension of Gorno-Badakhstan's status within the Tajik Constitution and whether enforcement capacity of the sub-central government would undermine the commitments taken by the central one.[45]

Perhaps the most striking example of how uniformity requirement transformed the overall legal and institutional framework of an acceding country is China's accession process. China which had set out an economic reform of decentralization since 1979 established a plethora of enormous special economic zones where special tax treatments and lax regulations were the main features of their governance. Legal frameworks that were applied to these zones diverged considerably from other parts of the country as well as from each other. One of the major themes defining the complexity of China's accession to WTO was transforming decentralized, localized and divergent multiple financial and legal ecosystems into a single body of governance ensuring the uniform application of the WTO related legislation all across the country.[46] Zhao Hong reports that more than 190 thousands of sub-central regulations on foreign trade and economic cooperation were revised or annulled to ensure a unified legal system across the country.[47] The Tax Reform of 1994 unifying the Chinese tax system was one of the efforts made by the central government for the consolidation of authority with respect to trade-related subjects.[48]

The second commitment working parties sought in accession procedures with respect to the relations between central and sub-central authorities is that acceding countries were expected to ensure that concessions given by the former would not be forfeited by the actions of the latter. Accordingly, 21 accession protocols included a commitment that sub-central governments were to be given no autonomous authority as to subsidies, taxation, trade policy

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[44] Accession of Kazakhstan: Additional Questions and Replies, (25 June 2008) WT/ACC/KAZ/67 20-25.

[45] Gorno-Badakhstan's status was a heated topic in Tajikistan's question and answer sessions. See: Accession of Tajikistan: Additional Questions and Replies, (27 January 2004) WT/ACC/TJK/6 7-8; Accession of Tajikistan: Additional Questions and Replies, (02 March 2005) WT/ACC/TJK/11 3; Accession of Tajikistan: Additional Questions and Replies, (29 March 2006) WT/ACC/TJK/13 4-5; Accession of Tajikistan: Additional Questions and Replies, (07 August 2008) WT/ACC/TJK/15 17-18; Accession of Tajikistan: Additional Questions and Replies, (04 June 2010) WT/ACC/TJK/17 9.

[46] For the concerns raised by the working party members on the authority of sub-national bodies regarding to the administration of foreign trade, see: Revised Outline of The Draft Report of The Working Party on The Accession of China to The WTO, (14 June 2000) WT/AACC/SPEC/CHN/1 para 46-47, 58, 62, 106, 108.

[47] Zhao Hong, 'China's Accession to The WTO and Its Rule of Law' (2016) 6 Journal of WTO and China 40, 45.

[48] Memorandum on China's Foreign Trade Regime: Revised Version, (21 March 2000) WT/AACC/CHN/17 4

or any other subjects addressed under WTO rules.[49] Again in China's accession, working party members spent considerable time to understand the extent of capacities local governmental authorities enjoyed in determining their own taxation, subsidy and trade policies and sought to make sure that the obligations to be incurred by the central Chinese government would not be undermined by measures taken at sub-central levels.[50] In another example, the working party members of Comoros' accession finding out that one of the import charges (trade tax) levied at the border were directly determined by sub-central authorities and thus differed to an extent on the basis of the location of custom entry points, requested the elimination of this charge which is complied by Comoros with a transitional period.[51]

In some procedures where acceding countries were reluctant to truncate provincial capacities, this commitment was generally enforced through compelling them to engage in further constitutional actions giving WTO obligations a normative superiority over other domestic legislation.[52] For instance in Russia's accession, working party members questioned the competences enjoyed by sub-federal entities regarding to the regulation of local policies of taxation and subsidies.[53] Noting that sub-federal entities had autonomies in determining their own charters and legislations, Russia guarantees that those charters and legislations could not contradict those at federal level through pinpointing the rights held by the President of the federal government to suspend the operation of acts and powers of sub-federal governments, if they did not comply with the commitments taken at international level.[54]

Accession experience on containing the competences of sub-central governments for trade-related subjects projects benefits fundamental for revolutionary governments' quest in post-conflict and civil war-torn countries to consolidate political authorities therein. The accession process, on the one hand, would provide a revolutionary government the means

[49] See for Kyrgyz Republic: (31 July 1998) WT/ACC/KGZ/26 para 28; for Latvia: (30 September 1998) WT/ACC/LVA/3230 para 30; for Estonia: (09 April 1999) WT/ACC/EST/28 para 30; for Jordan: (03 December 1999) 9 para 43; for Albania: (14 July 2000) WT/ACC/ALB/51 para 38; for Croatia: (29 June 2000) WT/ACC/HRV/59 para 41; for Lithuania: (07 November 2000) WT/ACC/LTU/52 para 29; for Moldova: (11 January 2001) WT/ACC/MOL/37 para 48; for China: (01 October 2001) WT/ACC/CHN/49 para 70; for Armenia: (26 November 2002) WT/ACC/ARM/23 para 36; for Tonga: (02 December 2005) WT/ACC/TON/17 para 48; for Ukraine: (25 January 2008) WT/ACC/UKR/152 para 84; for Montenegro: (05 December 2011) WT/ACC/CGR/38 para 59; for Samoa: (01 November 2011) WT/ACC/SAM/30 para 58; for Vanuatu: (11 May 2011) WT/ACC/VUT/17 para 31; for Lao: (01 October 2012) WT/ACC/LAO/45 para 55; for Tajikistan; (06 November 2012) WT/ACC/TJK/30 para 76; for Seychelles: (05 November 2014) WT/ACC/SYC/64 para 96; for Liberia: (09 October 2015) WT/ACC/LBR/23 para 66; for Afghanistan: (13 November 2015) WT/ACC/AFG/36 WT/MIN(15)/6 para 65; for Comoros: (18 January 2024) WT/ACC/COM/51 para 83.

[50] Replies to Additional Questions Raised by Members of the Working Party on China's Status as a Contracting Party, (17 March 1992) SPEC(88)13/Add.11 19-20; (13 July 1998) WT/ACC/CHN/15, 2, 10.

[51] Accession of the Union of The Comoros: Questions and Replies, (14 October 2022) WT/ACC/COM/38 8.

[52] See for Russian Federation; (17 November 2011) WT/ACC/RUS/70 para 203-13; for Kazakhstan: (23 June 2015) WT/ACC/KAZ/93 para 203-4.

[53] Accession of the Russian Federation to the WTO: Additional Questions and Replies, (01 November 1995) WT/ACC/RUS/4 98; (30 May 1996) WT/ACC/RUS/9/Add.1 7; (14 October 1996) WT/ACC/RUS/13/Add.1 1, 24; (11 March 1997) WT/ACC/RUS/17 62; (02 December 1997) WT/ACC/RUS/23 5, 38, 60.

[54] Draft Report of The Working Party on The Accession of The Russian Federation to The World Trade Organization, (28 March 2002) WT/ACC/SPEC/RUS/25 para 8, 65-8.

for asserting the normative superiority of administrative actions taken at the central level and thus an absolute control over sub-central authorities at least at matters of international trade. It would ensure, on the other hand, that any barriers hindering a central government's capacity to enforce WTO-related commitments and obligations across a custom territory such as the employment of local militia outside the authority of central government would be questioned and required to be eliminated by respective working party members.

The fragmented political landscape pertaining to post-conflict environment in Syria renders it open to gains reaped through the quest of a centralization under the auspices of WTO accession. Since the collapse of the Assad Regime, a significant portion of the revolutionary government's energy has been directed at[55] consolidating political power against local and regional actors with an ideological tendency towards decentralization.[56] Breaking this ideological tendency may necessitate a pragmatic vision whose administrative legitimacy within the national context can at least be attested in relation to multilateral frameworks. The centralization of Syria would be presented as a policy dictated not only by the revolutionary government but also by the multilateral institutions of international community. In these regards, the accession process may function as policy anchors providing a leverage these governments can employ against their local counterparts and tilting the balance of a national compromise favorable to the interests of a relevant central governance.

4. CHALLENGES TO A PRODUCTIVE ACCESSION

4.1. GENERAL

It is fundamental to note that starting an accession does not guarantee post-conflict, civil war-torn countries the achievement of the attributed benefits discussed above. The success of the process depends on, *inter alia,* an acceding country's ability to engage in effective negotiations with members of working parties and to overcome capacity challenges arising both domestically and internationally. In order for an effective operation of an accession process, acceding countries must first know what are to be negotiated in multilateral and bilateral gatherings. This would entail conducting an extensive study of market intelligence at both domestic and foreign markets exploring local industries and sectors with capabilities to participate in export markets in a competitive manner and enabling acceding countries to develop strategies regarding to such as market access to national service sectors, privatization of state-trading entities, subsidies, safeguard measures, the protection of intellectual property, public procurement and applied tariff levels to be adopted with respect to agricultural and non-agricultural products. Intellectual theme of these preparations requires the availability of a skilled task force excelled in financial, legal and administrative aspects of international markets. Financial and capacity restraints

[55] Syrian Arab News Agency - SANA, 'Terms of the Ceasefire and Integration Agreement between Syria and SDF' (2026) <https://sana.sy/en/syria/2291194/> accessed 28 June 2026.

[56] Aynen Jawad Al-Tamimi, 'Why Arab tribes haven't defected from the SDF' (2026) Syria In Transition <https://www.syriaintransition.com/en/home/opinion/why-arab-tribes-haven-t-defected-from-the-sdf.> accessed 28 June 2026.

for training and employing this task force constitute challenges a civil war-torn country would not easily cope with. Furthermore, overcoming these challenges would be in vain, if the working party of an accession process lacks one or more benevolent adversaries which would push the acceding country to its limits and thus rendering the accession process as the policy anchor for reforms necessary to secure a productive, hard-earned accession.

4.2. SECURING TAILOR-MADE NEGOTIATIONS

As mentioned above, an accession to the WTO is a negotiation-intensive process requiring acceding countries to negotiate, both bilaterally and multilaterally, access to their domestic markets and sectors with the members of their working parties. An important feature of these negotiations is that they do not involve an exchange of rights and obligations between their parties. Instead, the terms of the accession are dictated to the extent that acceding countries sometimes are obliged to enter into additional commitments and obligations that are not binding upon the original members of the Organization[57] and these additional commitments have to be submitted without any expectation of reciprocity.[58]

Nevertheless, the one-sided nature of these negotiations does not necessarily implicate that all terms put forward by working party members are to be accepted at face value. Depending on their specific needs and objectives, acceding countries may adopt sterner approaches and resist requests of commitments with respect to certain subjects of market access. For example, Nepal, in its accession negotiations succeeded in securing high level of binding tariff rates on agricultural products. Similar strategies were also followed by China and Russia who considered that transitional protection from import competition was a prerequisite in certain sectors in which domestic enterprises were inefficient and thus needed to be restructured.[59]

Influencing the outcome of accession negotiations requires an extensive investigation of domestic output portfolio and their prospective competitiveness in international markets. Acceding countries must have knowledge on sectors that they would be willing to provide access to international trade and those in need of protection from import competition as well as the means to be employed in so doing. Commitments submitted with respect to the former may compensate the pressure working parties can exert regarding to the latter allowing acceding countries to secure tailor-made accession protocols serving their special needs and objectives.

Furthermore, the need for protection against import substitution can also arise from non-economic concerns. Governments may find it necessary to retain subsidies to certain stratum of their society and revoking such funds may threaten the fabric of political stability within

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[57] These commitments are referred as WTO-plus commitments and subject to the WTO a la carte criticism that is this practice resulted in a fragmented WTO membership where obligations acceding members undertook through their accession protocols under Article XII of the WTO agreement differ considerably. See: Steve Charnovitz, 'Mapping the Law of WTO Accession' in Merit E. Janow et al. (eds), *The WTO Dispute Settlement, Governance, and Developing Countries* (Juris Publishing 2008) 1083-125.

[58] Cattaneo & Primo Braga (n 13) 16.

[59] Constantine Michalopoulos, 'WTO Accession' in Bernard Hoekman et al. (eds), *Development, Trade, and The WTO: A Handbook* (World Bank 2002) 61, 66.

acceding countries. For instance, in Yemen's accession to the WTO, the working party members sought the reduction of subsidies granted to petroleum products[60] which severely affected the poorest sections of the society[61] and constituted one of the reasons leading to the eventual Houthi takeover in the country.[62] In another example, dictating standardized, out-of-shelf policy objectives such as the reduction of import duties has been a major factor depriving financial income necessary for the functioning the Republic of Afghanistan and that consequently resulted in its demise at the hands of Taliban.[63] In this regard, both economic and non-economic features of an acceding country that necessitate a tough stance in certain topics of negotiations must be identified at the beginning of the accession process.

4.3. CAPACITY RESTRAINTS

Market intelligence, strategy development and the alleviation of adverse domestic reactions that are of the fundamentals of the accession process would only be carried out under the good care of a state bureaucracy trained in rules and functioning of trade and global supply chains. Acceding countries must possess expert personnel streamlining the complexities as to comprehending the domestic implications of the WTO agreements, ensuring their implementation at the national level as well as coordinating different state authorities with respect to trade-related administrative measures. In addition, continuous representation and participation in WTO with a permanent mission in Geneva where the headquarters of the Organization resides is a prerequisite to reap the most from the accession process.[64]

Considerable costs are to be incurred by acceding countries in training the task force and building the state structure capable of achieving aforementioned objectives. Moïsé estimates that the total capital expenditure for introducing trade facilitation measures would reach EUR 19 million.[65] The costs of implementing three WTO Agreements, SPS TRIPS and CVA, were projected to be USD 130 million.[66] Along with other expenses such as building infrastructure and supply of basic public services that were damaged and interrupted during civil conflicts, these figures would easily overwhelm annual development budgets of post-conflict countries.

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[60] Report of the Working Party on the Accession of Yemen to the World Trade Organization, (04 October 2013) WT/ACC/YEM/42 para 44.

[61] The New Humanitarian, 'Yemen Fuel Subsidy Cuts Hit Poor Hardest' (2014), <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2014/08/25/yemen-fuel-subsidy-cuts-hit-poor-hardest> accessed 26 January 2026.

[62] Adam Baron, 'Yemen's Transitional Road Map to Chaos' (2015) <https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_yemens_transitional_road_map_to_chaos/> accessed 26 January 2026.

[63] Ahmad Sharaf Shams & Sayed Abdul Hakim Hikmat, 'Accession to the TWO and Its Effects on Afghan SEMs' (2025) 14/1 J Econ Manag Sci 1, 3. See also: Gareth Price, 'Why Afghan nation-building was always destined to fail' (2021) Chatham House <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/09/why-afghan-nation-building-was-always-destined-fail.> accessed 28 June 2026.

[64] Hoekman & Roy, (n 21) 316.

[65] Evdokia Moïsé, 'The Costs and Challenges of Implementing Trade Facilitation Measures' (2013) OECD Trade Policy Papers No. 157.

[66] J. Michael Finger & Philip Schuler, 'Implementation of Uruguay Round Commitments' (2000) 23/4 The World Economy 511–25.

Nevertheless, the accession process also brings about means to be employed to pursue the individual ends. Several training programs have been promoted by Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation established under the auspices of WTO such as Technical Assistance Management System[67], and WTO e-Learning Database.[68] These systems delivered 330 face-to-face and online training activities with more than 17000 participants in 2024.[69] The costs of these training programs were covered by the organization and voluntary contributions from member states referred as WTO Global Trust Fund.[70] As to financing capacity building projects and structural reforms, acceding countries have had access to World Bank's Development Policy Financing, a program that supports structural reform initiatives in developing and least-developed countries.[71] According to Haddad et al., nearly half of the funds disbursed under this program was done so in relation to WTO accessions.[72] The study also demonstrates that the majority of reform actions acceding countries have undertaken and funded by the Bank were related to public sector governance covering reforms of, *inter alia*, administrative, civil services, taxation and public procurement.[73]

4.4. FINDING BENEVOLENT ADVERSARIES

Finally squeezing the best out of an accession process requires a benevolent adversary, a WTO Member who would seek acceding countries to undertake above-mentioned commitments and oversee whether they are to be observed after the conclusion of accessions. One of the challenges jeopardizing the advent of benefits related to both accessions and subsequent memberships is the lack of incentives prevailing over the members of working parties regarding to driving acceding countries and new members towards undertaking necessary commitments and eventually their compliance with those commitments. For instance, despite designating building an institutional and governmental capacity for ensuring compliance with multilateral legal system as objectives of its accession

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[67] Virtual and Non-virtual training activities on almost every subject of WTO agreements are posted daily on this system. See: World Trade Organization, 'Technical Assistance Management System' <https://tams.wto.org/> accessed 26 January 2026.

[68] Featuring a catalogue of courses on the major subjects of WTO such as trade in services and agricultural products. See: <https://www.learning.wto.org/course/index.php?page=4> accessed 26 January 2026.

[69] WTO Annual Report, (WTO 2025) 138.

[70] Teaching and Assistance plan for 2024-2025 session was estimated to cost CHF 42 million. See: World Trade Organization, 'WTO Technical Assistance And Training' <https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/teccop_e/tct_e.htm> accessed 26 January 2026.

[71] World Bank Group, 'Development Policy Financing (DPF)'
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/what-we-do/products-and-services/financing-instruments/development-policy-financing> accessed 26 January 2026.

[72] Mona Haddad et al., 'The Structural Reform Implications of WTO Accession' in Uri Dadush & Chiedu Osakwe (eds), *WTO Accession and Trade Multilateralism: Case Studies and Lessons from the WTO at Twenty* (WTO 2015) 106-7.

[73] ibid 103. Comparing political and institutional quality ratings of the International Country Risk Guide (ICRG) and the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA), the same study also finds that the accession process significantly promotes acceding countries' risk scores. ibid 107-20.

to WTO, Timor-Leste was not subjected to any commitments relating to its capacity to enforce WTO Agreements such as ensuring uniform application of incurred obligations across the country or preventing sub-central authorities from undermining commitments undertaken during the accession. Timor-Leste was not even asked to provide any review process at administrative level other than judiciary.[74]

Problems that this lack of incentives creates at accession level are further aggregated after securing memberships, as the costs of bringing compliance actions before the dispute settlement mechanism of WTO may far exceed the gains achieved through ensuring compliance, if this action is to be brought against a least-developed or a low-income developing country. In order to prevent this deterring effect, 22 Working Party Reports (that on Timor-Leste is not among them) integrated a commitment that WTO Agreements prevail over, take precedence or supersede contradicting national legislation in these countries.[75] However this type of commitment brings about its own problems as some countries may find themselves in need of persisting measures that violate WTO Agreements, albeit the subsequent repercussions and counter-measures from other members.[76] Granting normative superiority to WTO Agreements at national legal frameworks would undermine the policy making capacity of acceding countries.

A WTO member acting as a benevolent adversary can help an acceding country and especially a post-conflict, civil war-torn one overcome these challenges. Participating in the working party and collaborating with the country throughout the accession process,

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[74] Working Party on the Accession of Timor-Leste, 'Report of the Working Party on the Accession of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste' (18 January 2024) WT/ACC/TLS/34, WT/MIN(24)/4 para 67-93.

[75] See for Kyrgyz Republic: (31 July 1998) WT/ACC/KGZ/26 para 23; Estonia: (09 April 1999) WT/ACC/EST/28 para 30; for Jordan: (03 December 1999) 9 para 43; for Georgia: (31 August 1999) WT/ACC/GEO/31 para 31; for Albania: (14 July 2000) WT/ACC/ALB/51 para 38; for Croatia: (29 June 2000) WT/ACC/HRV/59 para 35; for Lithuania: (07 November 2000) WT/ACC/LTU/52 para 26; for Moldova: (11 January 2001) WT/ACC/MOL/37 para 44; for Armenia: (26 November 2002) WT/ACC/ARM/23 para 36; for Nepal: (28 August 2003) WT/ACC/NPL/16 para 24; for North Macedonia: (26 September 2002) WT/ACC/807/27; for Cambodia (15 August 2003) WT/ACC/KHM/21 para 40; for Montenegro: (05 December 2011) WT/ACC/CGR/38 para 44; for Cabo Verde: (06 December 2007) WT/ACC/CPV/30 para 60; for Russian Federation: (17 November 2011) WT/ACC/RUS/70 para 151; for Lao: (01 October 2012) WT/ACC/LAO/45 para 50; for Tajikistan; (06 November 2012) WT/ACC/TJK/30 para 72; for Seychelles: (05 November 2014) WT/ACC/SYC/64 para 93; for Kazakhstan: (23 June 2015) WT/ACC/KAZ/93 para 207; for Liberia: (09 October 2015) WT/ACC/LBR/23 para 59; for Afghanistan: (13 November 2015) WT/ACC/AFG/36 WT/MIN(15)/6 para 54; for Comoros: (18 January 2024) WT/ACC/COM/51 para 77.

[76] This was the case in Hormoned-Beef dispute between the European Communities and the United States spanning from 1989 till 2019. The European Union continued to keep its ban on beef containing artificial growth hormones despite the Appellate Body's finding of its SPS violation and the subsequent withdrawal of concessions by the United States, the complainant. The dispute ended with an agreement between parties with a commitment that the European Union established a tarif rate quota for beef imported from the United States, while the ban on hormone-treated beef was preserved. See: Office of the United States Trade Representative, 'United States and European Union Sign Breakthrough Agreement on U.S. Beef Access to EU' (2019) <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2019/august/united-states-and-european-union> accessed 26 January 2026. For general information about the WTO dispute see: World Trade Organization, 'European Communities — Measures Concerning Meat and Meat Products (Hormones)'

<https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/cases_e/ds26_e.htm> accessed 26 January 2026.

this member would make sure that an accession process would serve as the policy anchor an acceding member can rely on in promoting and entrenching domestic centralization reforms.[77] A benevolent adversary would be able to ask an acceding country to eliminate any obstacle such as local militia or provincial armed forces hindering the enforcement capability of central government against a non-compliant provincial/local measure. In this regard the concurrent performance of accession process and national reconstruction in post-conflict civil war-torn countries would enable revolutionary governments to consolidate political authority.

Through targeted drafting of market access commitments, tariff concessions and national legal framework on privatization, standardization and intellectual property protection, an acceding country along with a working party member acting as the benevolent adversary would be able to keep alive the incentives for WTO observance long after the conclusion of the accession process. These two countries would mould the accession protocol in a manner promoting investments and economic integration between themselves, thereby increasing the costs of non-compliance. Commitments on access to services markets, in particular, can be instrumental to that end, as they tend to create a augmenting effect on foreign direct investments and regional economic integration.[78]

4.5. REFLECTIONS ON SYRIA

Syria's interest in being a WTO member is not a new phenomenon. Since October 10 2001, Syria had submitted four requests for WTO accession, with only the last of which secured a consensus of the General Council on 4 May 2010, and since then, it also retains the Observer Status with rights to attend to and observe formal meetings of the General Council and its subsidiary bodies.[79] Remarks by Egyptian Representative in the General Council Meeting on May 4th 2010 indicated that Syria had been able to raise governmental experts which reportedly produced a draft trade regime memorandum to guide the prospective working party meetings.[80] Nevertheless, no such meetings have ever been made, neither has any trade regime memorandum ever been submitted. Since the General Council's meeting on 4 May 2010, no progress has been recorded with respect to the accession process. Furthermore, it is safe to assume that 14 years of civil war severely affected the availability of the governmental experts along with the relevance of the reported memorandum.

Building an expert task force that will develop a trade regime memorandum reflecting the post-war political, social and economic realities of the country is a prerequisite for a successful and productive accession process. Even though any resource utilized to facilitate this task force is valuable, the extent to which the bureaucratic capacity from the Assad

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77 Hoekman & Roy (n 21) 314.

78 Stephen S. Golub, 'Openness to Foreign Direct Investment in Services: An International Comparative Analysis' (2009) 32/8 The World Economy 1245.

79 The Guidelines for Observer Status for Governments in the WTO annexed to the Rules of Procedure for Sessions of the Ministerial Conference and Meetings of the General Council. WT/L/161 para 9.

80 General Council, Minutes of Meeting, (22 June 2010) WT/GC/M/126 para 130-1.

Regime can be inherited or even be warranted by the new government is an open question. However, reaching out training programs and technical assistance mechanisms designed at multilateral levels is of great importance in building the necessary task force, irrespective of the bureaucratic choices available to and made by the new government.

The structural capacity that is necessary for conducting an effective accession process is to be accompanied with policy objectives determined on the basis of extensive academic works with respect to Syria's political, social and financial landscapes. Yemen and Afghanistan examples clearly illustrate that standardized policy objectives without serious research on the relevant social and economic realities would bring about political repercussions destabilizing the integrity of revolutionary government. Multi-ethnic, sectarian and tribal structures of Syrian society are of fundamental concerns to be taken into account during prospective accession negotiations. For example certain monopsony powers enjoyed by state enterprises in agricultural sectors might be necessary to curb social unrest as well as to ensure balance between central and regional authorities[81], which would require certain recalibrations as to the privatization policies to be demanded by working party members. Determining the extent to which, these recalibrations are to be elaborated in relation to politics, demographics and economics of Syria requires an extensive study enshrined with multi-faceted, interdisciplinary approach.

Even though Syria may enjoy the availability of multiple candidates that can serve as benevolent adversaries and collaborate during the accession process such as neighboring Arab WTO members Jordan and Lebanon as well as Saudi Arabia that lobbied for the US lifting sanctions against Syria[82], Türkiye represents the most appropriate, effective and feasible candidate for the role. Close links between Syrian and Turkish governments climaxing during former's ascension to power after the civil war have been moulded into multiple layers of political and economic integration. Almost identical and integrated policy objectives can be illustrated in the national compromise between the revolutionary government and Syrian Democratic Forces, in which the latter was dictated to severe its ties with Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) a terrorist organization that committed atrocities in Türkiye.[83] As to economic integration, Türkiye represents the most important trading partner of Syria in terms of both imports and exports. According to the Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), in 2024, 56.4% of Syria's imports came from Türkiye.[84] As to Syria's exports, Türkiye is the most important destination accounting for 39.3% of all

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[81] Before the outset of civil war, monopsony powers of state-owned entities had been of main instruments employed by the Assad Regime against Sunni and Kurdish agrarian population located in east and north of Syria. See: Abdulazim Almgarbel et al., *The Economy of the Syrian Regime: Approaches and Policies 1970-2024* (Jusoor for Studies 2024) 8.

[82] See: Ibrahim Khazen et al., 'Arab countries welcome Trump's decision to lift sanctions on Syria; hail Türkiye, Saudi efforts' (2025) <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/arab-countries-welcome-trump-s-decision-to-lift-sanctions-on-syria-hail-turkiye-saudi-efforts/3568217> accessed 28 June 2026.

[83] Dmytro Hubenko, 'Syria: Kurdish-led SDF and government agree integration deal' (2026) <https://www.dw.com/en/sdf-ypg-syria-ceasefire-integration-al-sharaa/a-75724282> accessed 28 June 2026.

[84] <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/syr?selector345id=2024&selector343id=Import>, accessed 28 June 2026.

exports in 2024.[85] Close correlations in political and economic aspects of national policies indicate a strong, ongoing partnership between these nations that can also play out to be effective in reaping the best deals from working party negotiations.

5. CONCLUSION

Despite being a pillar of waning multilateralism, WTO can still serve as an instrument for achieving certain ends that are fundamental for particularly post-conflict and civil war-torn countries such as Syria. This paper puts forward three sorts of benefits that would be accrued through an accession to the organization. Accordingly the accession process, thanks to its negotiation-based nature and universal coverage, would reinforce revolutionary governments in entrenching their international legitimacy and recognition. Next, the extent of commitments expected to be undertaken by an acceding country would help revolutionary governments concentrate on reforms targeting the revival of institutional capacities. Finally the accession process can provide a policy anchor central authorities would rely on in consolidating political authority and thus serve as a leverage employed to tilt the balance of post-conflict national compromise in favor of revolutionary governments.

In order for reaching out these benefits, this paper also points out certain challenges that acceding governments need to overcome. First, acceding governments are expected to develop an extensive negotiation strategy aimed at meeting the demands of working party members, while securing a market intelligence and national policy leverage to promote export-oriented production mix. Developing such a negotiation strategy requires the availability of a human capital expert in trade related matters along with funds and investment that will be channeled into the observance of commitments and obligations incurred. Lastly, the paper asserts that the efforts made by acceding members in attaining a productive accession process would be in vain, if within the working party a benevolent adversary that will work with the acceding country during the process and beyond is missing. As to Syria's accession, Türkiye with its already existing cultural, economic and political connections is a suitable candidate for this role.

The accession process to WTO provides an effective forum upon which that revolutionary governments can perform the overwhelming task of reconstruction in post-conflict, civil war-torn countries. After more than a decade-long and devastating internal strife, Syria is at the beginning of confronting this task. Concurrent performance of accession and reconstruction processes would assist the government immensely in dealing with internal and foreign obstacles that can hinder its efforts and endanger the realization of its objectives. Therefore this paper proposes that the new Syrian government must immediately notify WTO of its intention to revive its accession negotiations and start preparing a memorandum on its foreign trade regime with the set of tools described above.

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[85] <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/syr?selector345id=2024&selector343id=Export>, accessed 28 June 2026.

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