

ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATING CHINA INTO THE WTO SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

Since China's accession to the WTO in late 2001, one of the most intriguing questions for trade analysts has been whether the "new kid on the block" would seek to disrupt the status quo in the WTO upon its entry. This paper answers the question by reviewing China's participation in two key activities of the WTO, i.e., trade negotiations and dispute settlement, as well as another important component of global trade governance: regional trade agreements (RTAs). Drawing from an in-depth study of China's record in these activities, the author argues that, overall, China has transformed from a passive "taker" of the existing rules to a country that will "shake" the rules for its own interests or even "make" new rules, albeit at uneven paces in different areas. The paper analyzes the reasons for China's varying behavioral patterns in the three areas, and concludes by exploring China's future role in the WTO, as well as the potential ramifications of China's ascent in global trade governance.

KEYWORDS: *WTO, international trade, trade negotiation, Doha Round, Free Trade Agreements, Dispute Settlement, China*

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