



The Trans-Pacific Partnership: **Implications for India**

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ABSTRACT

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement was signed on 5 October 2015 by the US and 11 countries in the Asia-Pacific. The writers of the TPP expect the agreement to result in the dynamic evolution of global standards for trade and investment. India, being a non-TPP trading partner, will find it difficult to access markets unless its domestic capacity and standards improve. This paper examines the likely implications of the TPP for India and other emerging economies which are not part of this mega FTA, and outlines a roadmap to deal with the expected adverse impacts while preparing to join the TPP in the long term.

INTRODUCTION

Negotiations on crucial issues at the World Trade Organization (WTO) have been slow and tedious, and can hardly keep up with the ebbs and flows of international trade and investment. Stepping up, therefore, are the mega Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) that have begun to negotiate and set rules towards creating a 21st-century template for global trade. One such recently concluded mega FTA is the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which is set to re-write the principles of global trade and investment. India, an emerging country with high aspirations, anticipates significant ripples from the agreement. For an emerging country like India, its decision to stay out of the TPP, regardless of its fairness and manner of implementation, is a geoeconomic goal it has set for itself. India must now steel itself to tackle the

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various tariff, non-tariff and market access issues that are likely to arise out of TPP and protect the country's trade ambitions, particularly its exports which have been consistently contracting in the last many years.

Once implemented in full force, the TPP is projected to change the global trade architecture and result in such high standards in markets covering one-third of world trade and two-fifths of world GDP. India, being a non-TPP trading partner, will find it difficult to access these markets unless its domestic capacity and standards improve. Thus the implications of the TPP for India, and other emerging economies which are not part of this mega FTA, would be the imperative to develop a strategy to deal with the expected adverse impacts while preparing it to join the TPP in the long term.

To begin with, the TPP varies from existing multilateral trade agreements as it covers areas such as competition policy, regulatory symmetry, and standards for labour and employment. It also tackles other major features such as trade in services, technical barriers to trade, and intellectual property rights. As TPP includes other developing countries, it is expected that the trade disciplines and standards will be implemented in these countries other than non-TPP members, affecting India's trade once TPP gets implemented. The potential impact of TPP on India will be on three fronts, namely:(a) trade diversion; (b) drop in FDI; and (c) geopolitical exclusion.

This paper describes the nature and key elements of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. It examines the agreement's potential implications on India and suggests specific policy measures that India would need to undertake to deal effectively with the likely impact of this major FTA. India cannot afford to lose both its existing and potential markets for trade as it upscales its manufacturing sector through initiatives such as 'Make in India' and works hard to achieve double-digit growth rates and address unemployment issues as well. Exports constitute almost one-fifth of India's GDP and thus it is crucial for India's manufacturing sector to become integrated with the world's value chain production. India must prepare itself in terms of standards, institutions and logistics so that it does not get disengaged while dealing with its share of world trade after the implementation of TPP.

TPP: EVOLUTION, KEY ELEMENTS AND SCOPE

The TPP traces its roots to a much smaller group called the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership (P4) comprising the four small countries of Brunei, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore and coming into force in 2006. In October 2008 the US, too, joined the group. The TPP, concluded in October 2015 after seven years of negotiations, is a comprehensive, US-led FTA covering all modern-day elements of trade. It comprises a dozen countries: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam, and the US. The TPP goes beyond trade and involves the near-complete harmonisation of regulations and trade disciplines among member countries. Further, it covers many behind-the-border measures aimed at instilling discipline on state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in various matters such as observing competition rules, ensuring regulatory coherence, facilitating supply chains, setting out labour standards, environment standards and securing more protection for IPRs including patents and copyrights.¹

The TPP is geographically inclusive and extends to ASEAN and NAFTA countries. Other Asian countries such as South Korea and Thailand have indicated their interest in joining the group in the foreseeable future. China is also considering joining the TPP, although it remains to be seen how it will meet the standards to do so. The TPP agreement aims to maintain high standards on labour, environment and intellectual property. China, being a manufacturing-led growth economy, is highly dependent on labour-intensive techniques and has a weak IPE regime and poor labour and environmental standards, making entry into the TPP difficult.

Given other Asian countries preparing to join the group, the TPP is certainly now sitting in India's backyard. Japan's entry into the TPP is equally significant, given its historical preference for protective measures on its farm and non-farm sectors; TPP will force it to open up. Such a scenario makes it difficult for India to avoid being marginalised in the trade rule-making process, if it continues to stay out of the TPP.

Following are the key elements of the TPP:

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- Comprehensive market access. The TPP reduces, and aims to eventually eliminate, tariff and non-tariff barriers across goods and services trade and investment, so as to create new opportunities and benefits for business, workers, and consumers.
- Regional approach to commitments. The TPP facilitates the development of production and supply chains, seamless trade, enhancing efficiency and facilitating cross-border integration. Goals include creating and supporting jobs, raising living standards, enhancing conservation efforts, and opening domestic markets.
- Addressing new trade challenges. The TPP promotes innovation, productivity, and competitiveness by addressing new issues, including the development of the digital economy, and disciplining state-owned enterprises in the global economy.
- Inclusive trade. The TPP includes commitments to help small- and medium-size businesses to understand the agreement, take advantage of its opportunities, and bring their unique challenges to the attention of the TPP governments. It also includes specific commitments on development and trade capacity building to ensure that all parties are able to meet the commitments in the agreement and take full advantage of them.
- Platform for regional integration. The TPP is intended as a platform for regional economic integration and designed to include additional economies across the Asia-Pacific region.

The scope of the TPP is vast (See Note 1). TPP itself covers about 40 percent of global GDP and nearly a third of world trade. In their projections of the economic impact of TPP, Petri and Plummer (2012) find that the enforcement of the TPP could yield annual income gains of \$295 billion, including \$78 billion in the US alone. It is expected to unleash potential gains of as much as around \$1.9 trillion in the Asia Pacific through free trade.

One-third of US gains are likely to come through investment provisions of the TPP. This is not surprising as capital flows to and from the US will inevitably rise, in view of US-led investment regulation harmonisation within the aegis of TPP. The study further finds that Vietnam's economy is expected to grow by some 14 percent under the TPP as it would become a hub of low-end manufactured goods like textiles and garments. Likewise, American service export is going to lead the export growth figures in that country. Japan will experience a two-percent hike in its GDP and an increase in trade volume in the amount of \$340 billion. Another study considers the possibility that these figures are exaggerated, but nonetheless concludes that the TPP will substantially add to Japan's GDP, and any addition is welcome given Japan's economy grew at less than one percent in the past two decades.2 In short, the benefits of the TPP in terms of trade and investment growth - as well as overall economic growth - have been established by the literature on the subject, however limited due to its topical nature.³

TRADE DISCIPLINES AND STANDARDS OF TPP

TPP seeks to institutionalise certain labour standards. Participating countries have agreed to enforceable labour rights and higher labour standards that will eventually give way to high-standard framework for labour rights (see Note 2) and help reduce trade barriers. In the TPP, negotiated environmental standards are of the highest order that include provisions on enforcement of environmental laws, including the multilateral environmental agreements. This has implications for the TPP countries as well as for the non-TPP countries like India as TPP countries are also major trading partners. Not all TPP countries have acceded to the different existing multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), but ratifying the TPP will compel them to eventually accede. Besides, the TPP dispute settlement mechanism will appoint a panel to decide if a party has failed to implement its environmental expectations under an MEA. This raises concerns as the MEAs themselves currently lack such dispute settlement systems. There is a clear attempt here to link trade and

environment which has been thwarted by the developing countries at WTO so far (see Note 3).

The biggest concern is the aggressive stance of the US on protection of IPRs, which will allow IP to be monopolised by a few corporations. While TPP's objective is to "encourage innovation", these IPR rules would, however, lead to inaccessibility of important medicines, particularly for developing countries like India. Not only would it make it difficult for generic drug makers, it will also restrict the free flow of information and knowledge. The TRIPS Agreement already seeks to actively protect intellectual property rights, the dominant players in this area being the technologically advanced countries like the US. (India is part of the TRIPS Agreement.)

Further, the TPP seeks to strengthen the Rules of Origin, with specific-origin rules on sensitive sectors like farm products and textiles, so that only the TPP countries get the benefit of market access. Overall, it is an all-encompassing economic deal. This is reflected in the joint statement released by the trade ministers of the 12 member countries, which said that in addition to "liberalizing trade and investment between us, the agreement addresses the challenges our stakeholders face in the 21st century, while taking into account the diversity of our levels of development." It added that the deal would also promote economic growth, support higher paying jobs, enhance innovation, productivity and competitiveness, raise living standards, and reduce poverty among the member countries.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

All these provisions of TPP, particularly trade disciplines and harmonisation of standards at the higher level, may spell trouble for India: in essence, the impact on India will be in the form of trade diversion leading to falling exports, stiffer competition for local industries, and rising unemployment. However, major structural reforms in the economy would help India ward off any plausible ill effects of the TPP and other mega regional deals. A good trade policy begins at home; India would do well to follow this premise.

Trade: Though India is relatively less integrated into the global economy compared to its rival, China—which has five times more trade share in world trade—India, with a share of 2.1 percent in global trade cannot do with further trade diversion. In fact the negative growth exports for the last four quarters has worried Indian policy-makers, whose eyes are set on a growth rate of eight percent. One reason why China has the clout it has today is because it has for decades integrated into the global economy, actively leading exports and FDI inflows tables.

Today 80 percent of international trade is constituted by global supply chains (UNCTAD, 2013). The TPP is going to intensify this trend as it will seamlessly link production facilities across borders. If India is to integrate more to these production networks through global value and supply chains, joining the TPP will help. International production network would keep off India if there is fear of market access to India on the grounds of India not meeting TPP standards and procedures, being a non-member country. Therefore, India needs to prepare itself to meet the tariff and non-tariff standards of TPP. To begin with, Indian exports are most likely to be hit as the TPP provides special concessions to its partners. For example, Indian textiles exports, of which the US corners 30 percent, will come under pressure as competitors such as Vietnam, which is a TPP member, will be in a better position to usurp India's market share on the back of benefits granted under the agreement.

Further, the provision of higher labour standards and environmental standard scould serve as non-tariff barriers to India's exports. Textile, for example, is labour-intensive and its export comprises a huge chunk of India's exports basket. A huge one-third of India's exports are directed towards TPP/TTIP countries. For this reason alone, joining TPP would help boost India's exports, particularly those aimed at the US market. By choosing to be absent from the TPP—which accounts for more than 30 percent of world trade and 40 percent of global GDP—India runs the risk of threatening itself. According to a 2014 study by the Center on Global Trade and Investment, India's nominal GDP is likely to be trimmed by more than one percent as a result of TPP. The ensuing negative effects on the economy by way of revenue and job losses are going to be huge. It is therefore

imperative for India to step up on its efforts to join the TPP through fastpaced reforms on various fronts, including revising and improving standards across sectors to match the standards being set up the mega regionals.

The clause of incorporating sustainability standards, which are sure to keep evolving in the future, will likely make India's exports vulnerable to competition from TPP countries. These standards cover a wide range of issues like child labour, human rights & working conditions, animal health, testing requirement, quality management, and IPRs. Even now, India still exports heavily in industries that are of low value added, are labour-intensive, and are heavily dependent on archaic processing standards. Indian producers need to take serious note of this scenario and begin improving their standards in the same manner done by other countries aspiring to be a member of TPP, like China. China has initiated some big steps in recent years in areas of improving IPR, carbon emission in certain SEZs by 90 percent, and improving working conditions of labour by implementing reforms like wage hikes.

The TPP will affect not only India's exports, due to trade diversion, but also the country's imports. If TPP member countries do not find it profitable to export to India as a consequence of both low tariff and non-tariff barriers in TPP member countries, India's essential imports, which are crucial for exports and growth, will get costlier and thereby negatively affect competitiveness. Apart from trade diversion, there could re-routing of exports from non-TPP member to TPP members as many of the latter are having FTAs with countries that compete with India in many sectors.

Various studies have found that India's trade, particularly exports of textile and apparel, agricultural products, processed food, and heavy manufacturing, would get affected by TPP.⁵ Most of these sectors are labour-intensive and informal, to begin with. Given their nature, these sectors lack the sophistication called for by TPP in terms of labour standards, environmental management, and IPR issues. They are thus quite likely to get negatively affected in TPP markets, consequently impacting employment opportunities in India. For example, textile and clothing, which is amongst India's top labor-intensive manufacturing exports, will certainly get

affected because of trade diversion towards countries like Vietnam, a TPP member. Even as these projections already sound the alarm on the TPP's negative impact on India, they have yet to paint the whole picture: these analyses are in fact underestimating the magnitude of the impact as non-tariff measures, which will facilitate trade among TPP member countries and services trade, are not yet being taken into account.

Foreign direct investment: FDI inflows into India started to pick up from the mid-2000s and India is today one of the largest recipients of FDI in the developing world, and the largest in South Asia. With the exclusion of India from the TPP, the relative attractiveness of India as a destination will go down as TPP member states will have an investment pact amongst themselves which provides higher incentives to foreign investment. TPP also involves regulatory harmonisation, meaning that MNCs under the aegis of the TPP do not have to face regulatory hostilities in host countries or grapple with different laws wherever it operates. Even as India's legislations are not particularly aligned with global standards, companies have earlier faced issues like retrospective tax legislations. In this context, a TPP sans India is not good news for the latter. Given its emphasis on manufacturing for employment creation and infrastructure building, India will hardly be in a position to forego potential FDI inflows. As most of the production today happens across borders, multinational companies would less likely prefer India as part of their production process as they would find it difficult to access markets in TPP countries. Though India was the most favored destination for FDI in 2015, its absence in TPP and inability to achieve the trade and investment disciplines to reach the high standards of TPP would keep away foreign investors to make India their production base or at least part of their process.

Trade and investment coverage of TPP, along with TTIP, is about half of global share. With supply chains, this coverage will be much larger. Some experts have said that Indian firms are capable of meeting the standards and even desire to produce modern and knowledge-intensive manufactures; however, it might actually require a platform such as TPP for it to fulfill its agenda of effectively meeting the required standards. Trade and

investment go hand in hand, after all. Investors not only look at the certainty of their return and stability of host market but also future opportunities to cater to the world market. As India lacks TPP standards, investors wanting to make India their base would be highly discouraged. That would deprive India access to the latest technology in different sectors and also keep it away from global supply chains. Moreso, given the strong IPR regime envisioned by TPP and India's poor IPR eco-system. Though protecting millions of Indians from strong IPRs in the pharmaceutical sector is sound public policy that is envied by other nations, India needs to strengthen its IPR regime to protect technology and innovation to improve overall standards and attract investment into the country. In fact, IPR has been one of the biggest thorns in India-US relations for some time now; the US has kept India on its priority list in 2015 requiring close scrutiny of IPR weakness in many sectors.

Geopolitics: The TPP is a well-crafted geoeconomic exercise as much as it is a trade and investment pact. It has succeeded in excluding China from the game and stunting its rapid rise by narrowing the very channel that it treaded to rise in stature: commerce. However, today's mega-FTAs are intended to outcompete each other and TPP is a good example. The EU-US TTIP, on the other hand, has less geopolitical connotations, but will nonetheless serve a blow to China. While studies show that the US would gain substantially with the implementation of the TPP-though it is evident that there will be demand also from within US for improvement in standards and US companies would need to provide technology, finance and consultancy for the same-nonetheless, the US has clearly gained a geopolitical victory. This is understandable as it might want to stamp its authority on the global economic governance mechanism after it lost some credibility following the 2008 financial crisis and newer groupings like BRICS started to gain attention and assert their clout in creating a more multipolar world. India has to deftly navigate the TPP waters by making sure it does not isolate itself by staying out of the TPP picture for too long. At the same time, actively committing to the TPP will be difficult. An incremental process may be more desirable: where India initially joins the discussions and then figures out how well it is placed to enter the TPP as a member. India can bring in much needed flexibility in the TPP and also boost its ties with the US through TPP.

However, there is no clear consensus yet within the Indian government on whether enhanced market access through the TPP will be worth the gains as it would involve huge costs to a few select still protected Indian industries. Undoubtedly, India would need to prepare itself for higher standards than it has ever committed to in the past. But the gains to India if it joins the TPP also cannot be overlooked. According to a study, India would gain as much as \$500 billion in exports by joining the TPP. But until India prepares itself to join the TPP, its imultaneously could open its negotiations with the US on an FTA. An FTA with the US could help to a considerable extent to nullify the adverse impact of the TPP and also prepare itself better to join the TPP with the help of US support. The overall impact of the TPP on India could be limited if India signs the FTAs with EU, Australia, Canada and the US. It is evident that the government fully understands the importance of mega FTAs and has stated it clearly in the 2014-15 Economic Survey: "The trading environment is becoming more challenging as the buoyancy of Indian exports has declined with respect to world growth and as the negotiation of mega regional trading agreements threatens to exclude India". However, India needs to prepare well domestically, in terms of its policies and standards, for better negotiation and successful conclusion of agreements with TPP countries. Otherwise, India may not have the desired results in terms of market access as has been the case with most of India's trade agreements so far.

Effect of TPP: India vs. China

Some analysts have opined that China and India are in the same boat when it comes to the TPP as both these countries have their own set of domestic issues and problems which would make it nearly impossible for them to meet the standards set by the TPP in all sectors. Moreover, with the coming into force of the TPP, the smaller FTAs would continue to remain important to help developing economies such as India to meet their export targets.

However, a comparison of the effects of TPP on China and India shows that India is more likely to be affected by the TPP. To be sure, China is similarly facing potential problems from the TPP, as its economy is currently facing a downturn and is suffering from massive domestic problems including urban migration, increasing unemployment, and inequality. With great difficulty China has been able to comply with WTO rules after its entry into the organization in 2001 at Doha. Thus it is unlikely to be ready for new and higher trade standards being proposed by the TPP especially when its economy is struggling to sustain high growth rates. The entry of China into the TPP would be possible only if China substantially revises some of its standards. These include China's procurement policy standards which would drastically alter the structure and operations of Chinese-state-owned enterprises. Further, China may not be able to meet TPP's high electronic and commerce standards that would affect China's censorship and information control policy. In a bid to counter the adverse impact of TPP, China will continue negotiating bilateral and regional trade agreements. It has also been seeking support for its grandiose idea, the maritime initiative, One Belt One Road that wishes to link nearly 60 countries spanning the three continents of Asia, Africa and Europe to establish its trade and commercial ties and hegemony in the Asia pacific region. Given the fact that China is one the largest exporters in the world, with a huge trade surplus with its major trading partners, it will not be greatly affected by not being a member of the TPP.

On the contrary, India stands to lose given that it is not a part of existing global value chains and not in a position to meet the standards set by the TPP. India's market access and competitiveness could be significantly affected if the TPP is implemented fully after countries have ratified it domestically. Some calculations estimate that the diversions in Indian exports could be one percent. Others estimate that India is set to lose US\$ 2.7 billion annually. To thwart the probable ill effects of the TPP, India needs to aggressively undertake a few of the pending reforms at the earliest possible. These include domestic as well as trade reforms such as the imposition of the Goods and Service tax, changes in land and labour laws, and reducing subsidies. The trade reforms would include reducing tariff

barriers for partners and ensuring a more level playing field for international partners including in protection of Intellectual Property Rights.

CONCLUSION

A multipolar world requires trade policy and domestic policy to go hand in hand to prepare India for its larger role as an emerging market economy. India has been a founding member of the GATT, which was replaced by the WTO in 1995. Consistent reforms, particularly trade and industrial reforms, helped India to integrate with world economy. For example, merchandise trade to GDP has increased from 13.88 percent in 1991 to 42 percent in 2013.

But while multilateralism survived in Bali in 2014 and in Nairobi last year, the bitter reality of the ambitious mega trade deals like the TPP and the TTIP cannot be ignored: they are creating a snowball effect on global trade and leaving developing countries like India with little or no leverage to bargain. What is also noteworthy is that over the past few years, India has criticised the WTO in areas pertaining to IPR, trade-related investment measures, general agreement on trade and services and non-tariff barriers. Moreover, India requires a consensus-based multilateral regime under the WTO framework which will work for its betterment. Unfortunately, because of the presence of 159 WTO members, an agreement on a proposal is hard to achieve. The recent tumult over getting the trade facilitation agreement (TFA) passed is a case in point. It is, therefore, essential to look into the international trade policy regulations and conditions which led to the emergence of mega-regional negotiations such as the TPP, TTIP and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), with the objective of determining the conditions for market access in large parts of international trade and trade policies in the not too distant future.

In terms of market access, TPP will adversely affect India because of the conditions that will likely emerge from it. India lacks standards and capacities due to which it will lose its market access for exports to the markets of countries negotiating mega-FTAs. India also requires developing

an inclusive system of conformity assessment, failing which it will get difficult for India to access global markets on a wide level. This will require India to negotiate under the RCEP as it is seen by a few of Indian exporting firms as the key to achieving the evolving standards of the TPP. In terms of tariff reductions and service liberalisation, the TPP has the potential to go beyond WTO; however, there is a possibility that the advantage of the liberalisation will accrue to handful of trading partners. Moreover, it will not address the issues of anti-dumping/countervailing duties or subsidies at all.

The inclusion of standards—one which is generic, related to environment and labour, and the other which is product specific – is going to make trade negotiation all the more complex, and countries that are outside the negotiations, especially India, need to be prepared. Similarly, the TTIP will focus on mandatory standards prevailing in the EU and the US which are generally private standards whose content requirement keeps increasing with time and competition measures. This agreement will largely benefit the member countries, while the countries outside will be negatively affected. Even at a broader level, because standards incorporated in the mega-FTAs discussed here will potentially become international benchmarks in years to come, India stands to gain little if it stays out of the picture. However, the credibility of WTO should notbe ignored as compared to TPP as its rules are less complex and WTO addresses the issues of anti-dumping and subsidies, which are vital for India. Besides, the WTO with its transparent and meritbased dispute settlement system has been the most distinguished example of successful multilateral cooperation since its inception – a view India has fiercely advocated.

The way forward for India to remain relevant in the global trading system might well be membership of mega FTAs such as the RCEP, TPP and TTIP. However, rushing into FTAs without a level playing field for domestic businesses would be of little help to India. A desirable strategy would be to have a good mix of bilateralism and multilateralism by targeting trade pacts which are comprehensive, particularly with members of TPP, TIPP and RCEP. India has a few legitimate concerns that need to be addressed. For instance, India along with other developing countries will find it difficult to abide with the evolving environmental standards on account of the

uniqueness of its process of economic development. It continues to face huge issues of miserable poverty and inequality, even as it attempts to join the international community in larger efforts to mitigate the ill effects of global environmental issues like climate change. Likewise, on the IPR front, India will have a hard time conceding to IPR protection regime of the kind that US wants as it has a huge generic drug manufacturing industry which provides immense benefits to its population, huge proportions of which are poor and therefore dependent on cheaper, generic drugs. Other concerns are in the domains of sweeping tariff cuts that are expected under the TPP, something that India cannot afford to participate in as it has legitimate domestic concerns to address. Labour standards of the developed West are also hard to meet. However, these are issues that should be threshed out and negotiated as staying out of these mega FTAs does not help either in economic or foreign policy terms. Even if one finds policy interventions to partly surmount the economic setbacks, the geopolitics is difficult to miss.

Finally, the government is aware of the fact that India has been faring poorly with its FTA partners such as South Korea and Japan, except Singapore. In fact, the government has set up a high-level committee to review all FTAs. Thus the main argument of this paper is not to highlight that trade and investment will improve if India is a part of the TPP but to reinforce the fact that only major structural changes in the Indian economy—from infrastructural overhauls to legislative fixes, institutional reforms (including curbing corruption) to human resource development—that will determine whether India manages to battle it out in a world of complex supply chain-led international trade and investment. It may not be greatly beneficial for India to join the TPP but at the same time it could be detrimental if India stays out of the TPP for too long. Mega FTAs are mere enablers, which India should partake of according to its needs at a given time. ©RF

NOTES

- 1. The TPP includes 30 chapters covering trade and trade-related issues, beginning with trade in goods and continuing through customs and trade facilitation; sanitary and phytosanitary measures; technical barriers to trade; trade remedies; investment; services; electronic commerce; government procurement; intellectual property; labour; environment; 'horizontal' chapters meant to ensure that TPP fulfills its potential for development, competitiveness, and inclusiveness; dispute settlement, exceptions, and institutional provisions. Further, it also includes issues related to the internet and digital economy, the participation of state owned enterprises in international trade and investment, the ability of small businesses to take advantage of trade agreements and other topics.
- 2. The calls for commitment on protection of labour rights have grown louder after the tragic Bangladeshi clothing factory collapse in 2013, which killed 1,129 people.
- 3. Similar attempts are being made at the WTO in the Doha Development Agenda, where the developmental agenda is being burdened with non-development issues. Such attempts so far have been thwarted by the developing countries.

ENDNOTES:

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