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Global politics

Sample essay on the World Trade Organization

*Evaluate the view that the World Trade Organization is a failed institution.
(30 marks)*

This sample essay should be used alongside 'Economic global governance' by John Jefferies (pp. 12–15).

How to write a global politics essay

- When answering an essay question, identify the three themes for your paragraphs, so you can construct a clear argument.
- In your introduction, make sure that you don't just repeat the question. Introduce the basis on which you are making your argument and suggest what your overall judgement will be.
- As you have identified your three themes, writing your essay should be easier. Within each section, aim for arguments for and against each theme, supported by examples and with an overall judgement at the end.
- Make sure your conclusion directly answers the question and weighs up the three arguments you have made. Reach a judgement – don't sit on the fence, and make sure your judgement matches the one suggested at the end of your introduction.

Sample student response (A*)

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an international organisation that deals with the global rules of trade between nations. While some critics argue that it is a failed institution – due to its failure to promote economic development and its undemocratic organisational structure – its success in removing trade barriers has been notable. However, without reform the WTO will increasingly be considered a failed institution.

One argument against the WTO is that it has not been successful in promoting global economic development. Critics argue that the organisation's focus on free trade has led to the exploitation of developing countries by more powerful nations. They claim that the WTO's rules and regulations are biased towards the interests of developed countries, leading to unequal trading relationships and limited economic growth for less powerful nations. The WTO has failed to stop increased trade tensions between the USA and China, and between the USA and the EU during the Trump administration. Some states have started to take action outside the WTO, with multilateral and bilateral trade deals such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The WTO requirement for unanimity, combined with realist views on the self-interest of states, has led to ineffectiveness.

However, the WTO has played a significant role in reducing trade barriers such as tariffs and quotas. Through negotiations and agreements, member countries have made commitments to lower tariffs and other trade barriers, leading to increased global trade and economic growth. Furthermore, the WTO has facilitated the negotiation and implementation of multilateral trade agreements, such as the Uruguay Round and the recent Bali and Nairobi packages. These agreements have helped to create a more predictable and stable trading system, providing a framework for resolving trade disputes and promoting fairer trade practices. In conclusion, the WTO's focus on free trade at the expense of global development means that developing countries have been exploited by more powerful nations. The WTO's rules and regulations mean that the interests of developed countries are favoured, which hinders the economic growth prospects of less powerful nations. For these nations, at least, the WTO is a failed institution.

Additionally, the WTO has been accused of being undemocratic and lacking transparency. Critics argue that the decision-making processes within the organisation are dominated by powerful countries, while developing nations have little influence. This has led to concerns about the legitimacy of the institution and its ability to serve the interests of all its members. The WTO is dominated by economic liberal values, which do not take account of other measures of human development or growth, or the impact of their decisions on the environment or workers' rights. These values can mean that they exploit less developed countries and do not do enough to narrow the economic gap between them. Furthermore, the WTO is too powerful and can compel sovereign states to change laws and regulations by declaring them to be in violation of the rules of the WTO.

However, the WTO has a robust and effective dispute settlement system. It provides a neutral platform for member states to resolve trade disputes through a structured and rules-based process. This system has helped maintain stability and predictability in international trade. The WTO's dispute settlement system is considered one of its most successful features, providing a mechanism for resolving trade disputes between member nations and ensuring the rule of law in international trade. Overall, the decision-making process within the WTO is undemocratic and lacks accountability. As there is an imbalance in decision-making power this raises concerns about the legitimacy of the organisation and its ability to serve the interests of all its members. Therefore, as a world trade organisation, the WTO is a failed institution.

Moreover, the WTO has faced challenges in addressing pressing global issues such as climate change and worker's rights. Critics argue that the organisation's narrow focus on trade liberalisation overlooks the social and environmental impacts of trade. Lastly, some critics also point to the challenges faced by the WTO in recent years, including the failure to conclude the Doha Development Round, which aimed at addressing the concerns of developing countries. This perceived lack of progress in negotiations and the inability to reach consensus on key issues has led some to question the effectiveness and relevance of the institution. However, the WTO does provide technical assistance and capacity-building programs to developing countries, helping them participate effectively in global trade. These programs aim to enhance their understanding of trade rules, build institutional capacity, and improve their ability to benefit from international trade. While the WTO has had some limited success in providing technical assistance to developing countries, its failure to address critical global issues such as climate change and worker's rights means that it is ineffective at managing the increasingly complex challenges of the modern world.

In conclusion, while the WTO has faced criticism for its perceived failures, it is essential to recognise its achievements as well. The organisation has succeeded in promoting global trade liberalisation, resolving trade disputes, and fostering economic integration. However, the WTO needs to address its

shortcomings in ensuring fairer trade practices, incorporating concerns about social and environmental impacts, and enhancing the representation and participation of developing countries. Without these reforms, the WTO will increasingly be seen as a failed organisation.

Student tasks

- 1 As you read through the essay, highlight where the essay successfully follows the guidelines at the start of the article.
- 2 Can you add more contemporary examples to each paragraph?

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