

Abstract

This thesis examines the role of mediators in WTO trade negotiations and the impact of individual mediation strategies on the outcome of these negotiations. It seeks to answer the question how mediators can help negotiators to overcome the bargaining problem and reach an agreement. The thesis first presumes that mediators who frequently apply more interventionist and inclusive tactics can increase the likelihood of a successful outcome of negotiations. Secondly, it presupposes that particular mediation tactics enable negotiators to save their face not only in front of their opponents, but more importantly also in front of domestic constituencies. Using the case of Geneva-based negotiations and the Bali Ministerial Conference, the thesis tracks individual mediation strategies which were employed by WTO chairs or the Director-General to determine their impact on the final adoption of the Bali package, representing the first multilateral trade agreement concluded under the auspices of the WTO. The analysis indicates that mediators who actively intervene in the bargaining process and assist negotiators in decreasing their audience costs may positively influence the chances of reaching an agreement. Contrarily, it shows at the same time that the effects of inclusive mediation are varied and unpredictable, which opens up room for further research.