

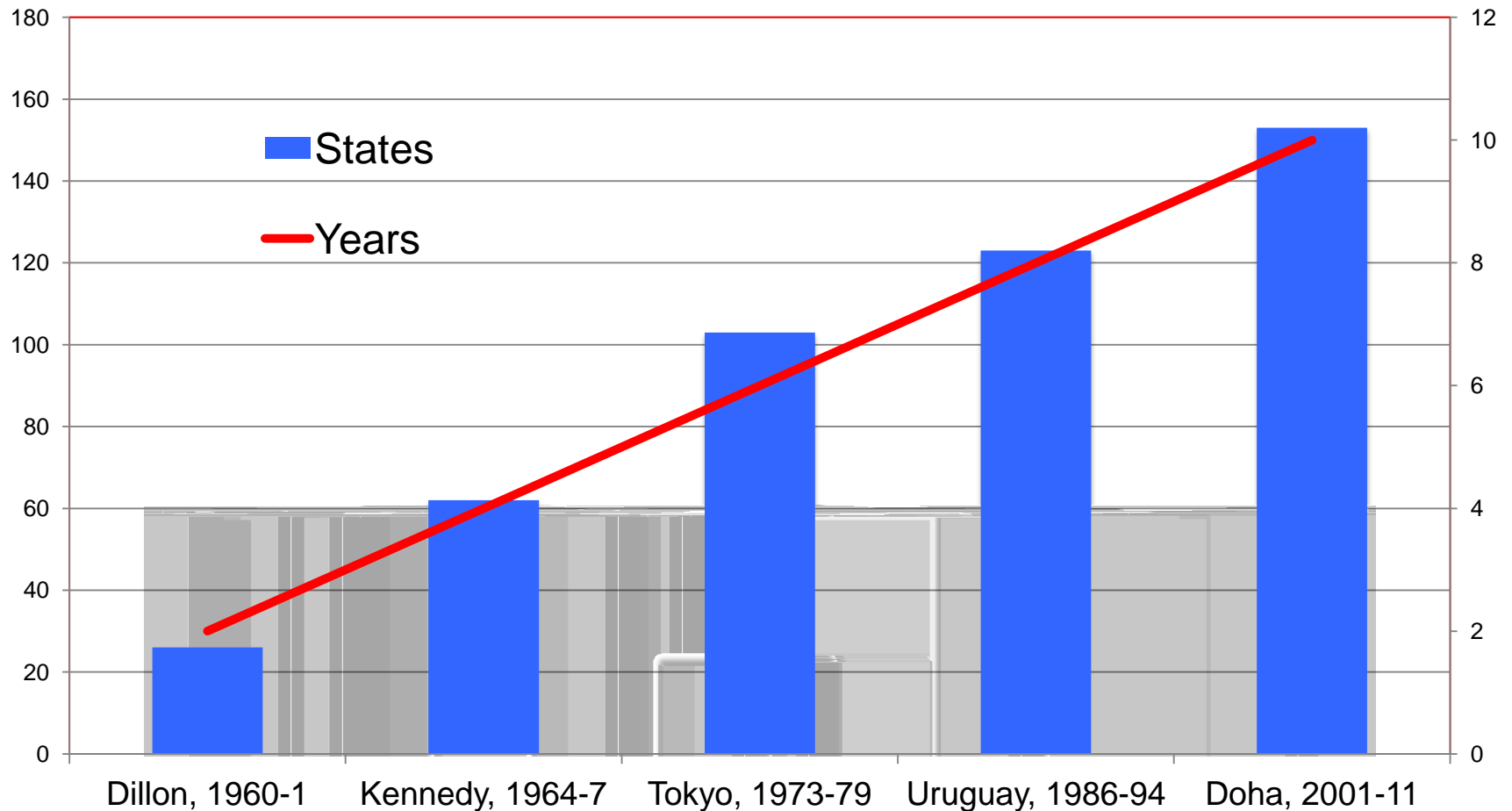
Can plurilaterals be multilateralized?

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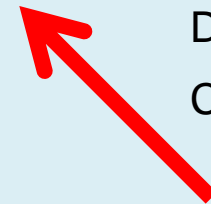
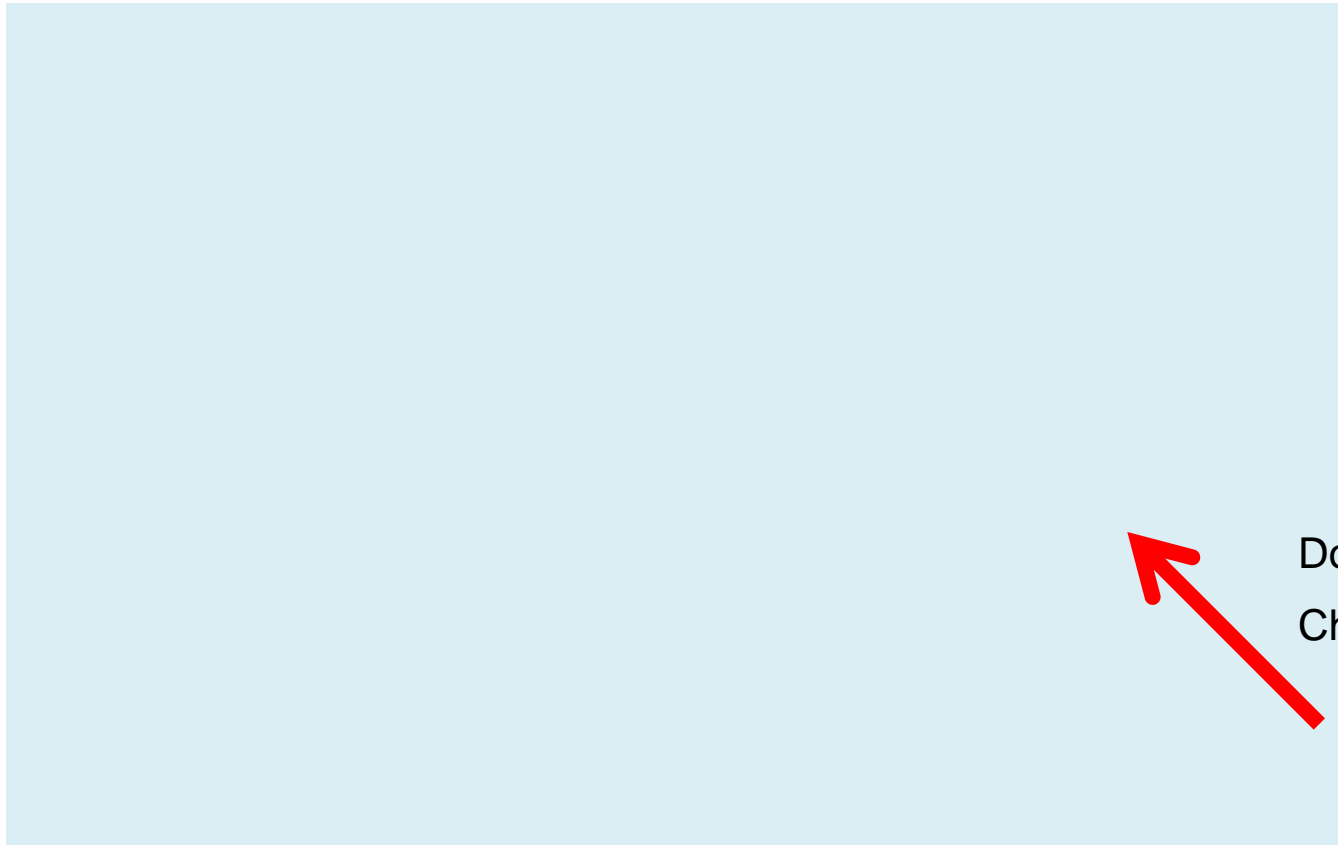
Robert Wolfe

September 2012

# GATT/WTO negotiation "rounds"



# How markets changed during Doha Round

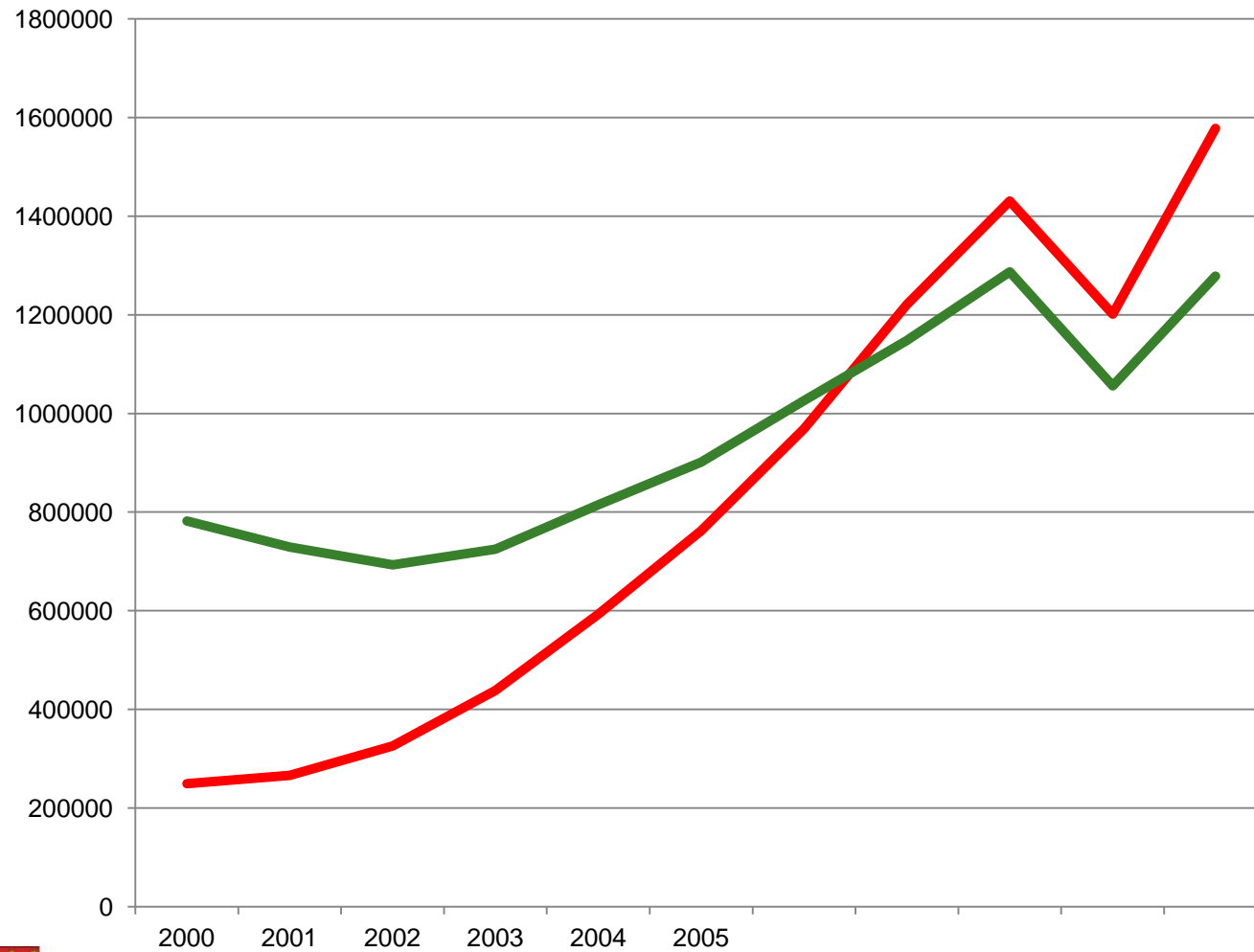


Doha starts;  
China joins WTO

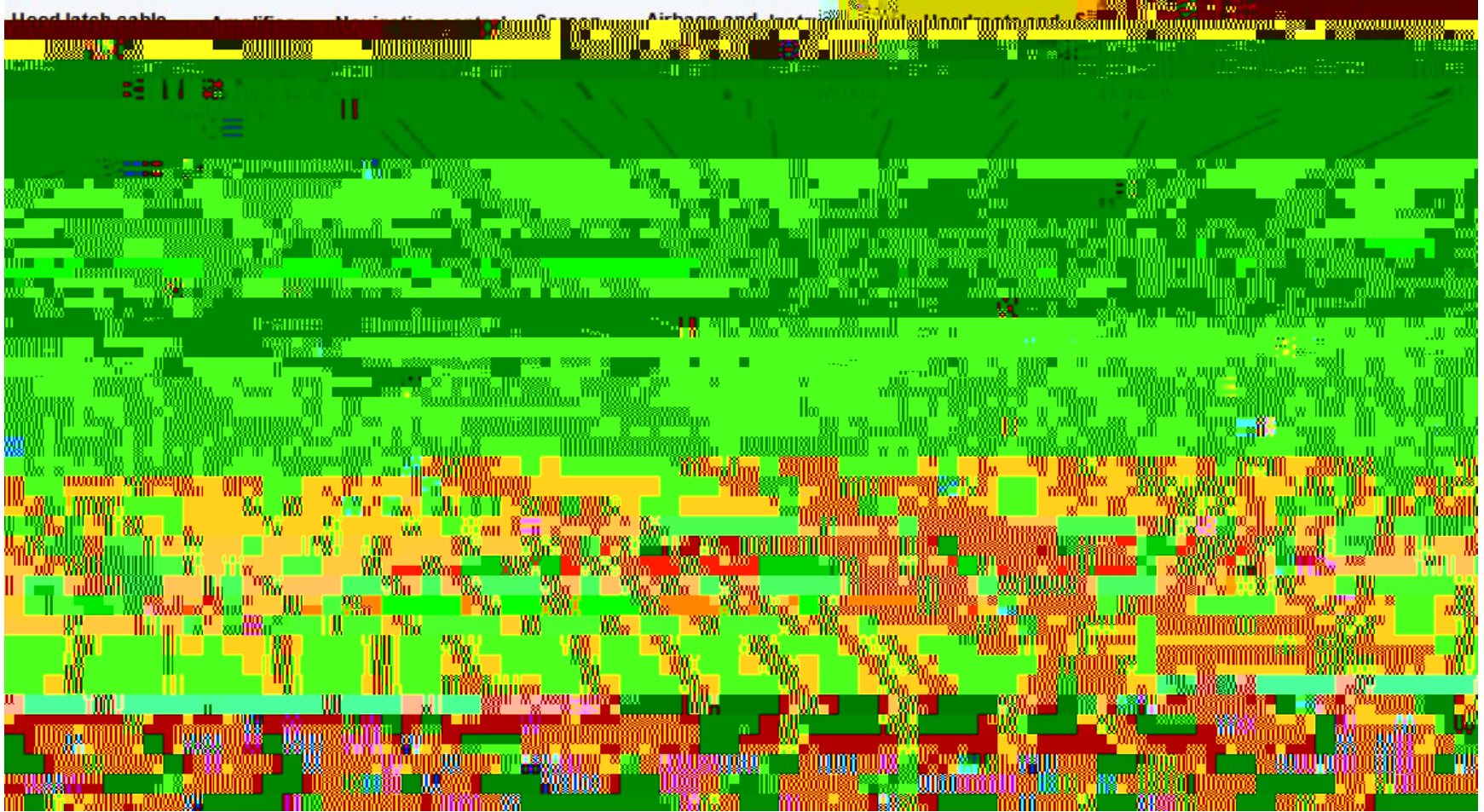
Source: World Bank



# Trade flows transformed



# Made in the world (only half in Sweden)



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# Institutional design of "plurilateral"

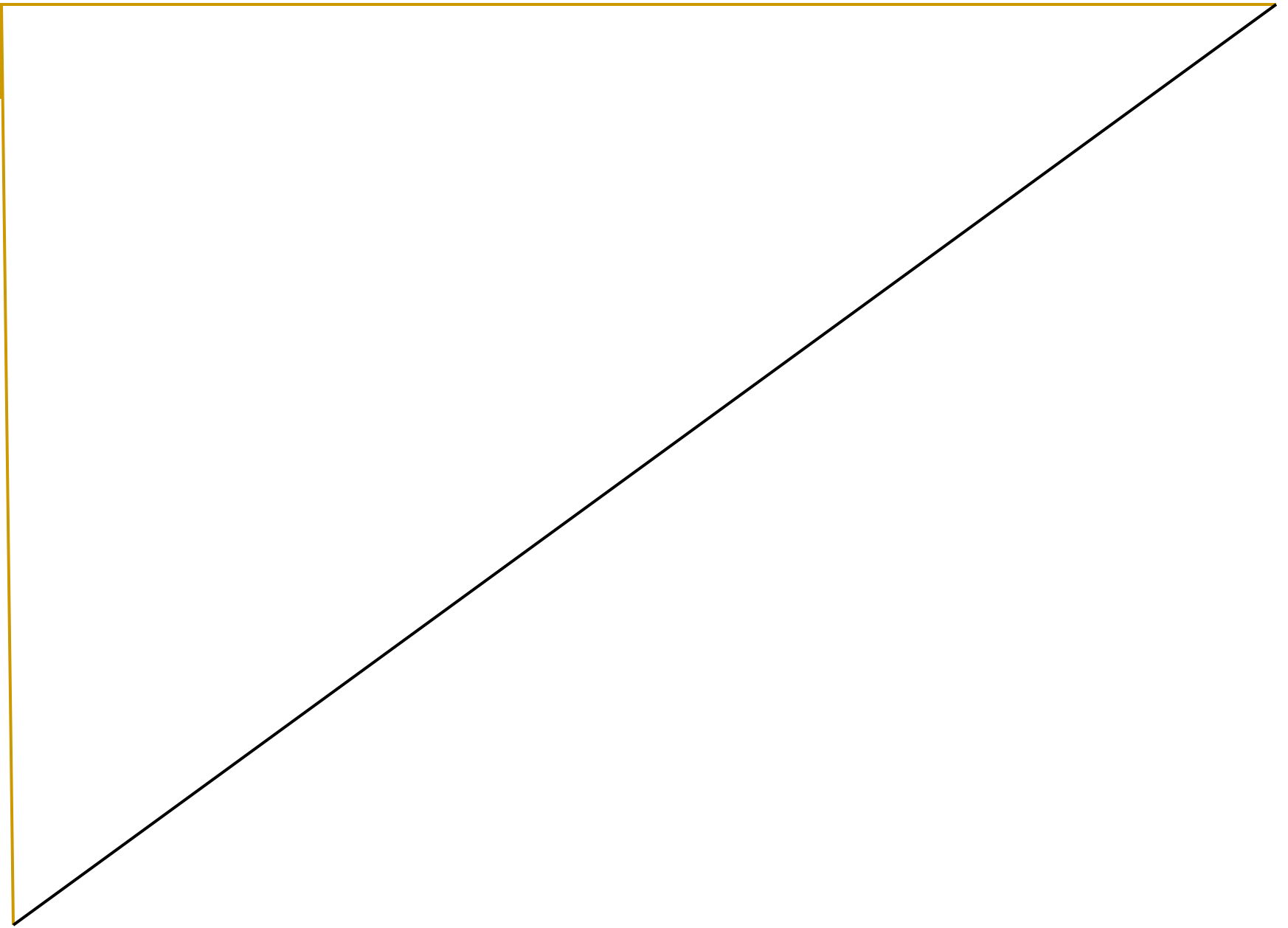
Less than full WTO membership

Limited range of issues

Critical mass decision-making not consensus

**Problem:** asymmetry of interests on issues **and** partners





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# Who matters in a plurilateral?

Doha Round problem 153 Members, or 5?

Is a deal without all 5 worth having?

Given asymmetrical interests among them, can the 5 reach a deal on one issue in isolation?

Is a package a “single undertaking”?





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# Three meanings of "single undertaking"?

1. Doha Round package as re-defined through Hong Kong and July 2008

2. Negotiation has to be a package

Doha: 'the conduct, conclusion and entry into force of the outcome of the negotiations shall be treated as parts of a single undertaking'

TPP?



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## 3. The WTO acquis

‘the WTO Agreement shall be open for acceptance as a whole....’ *Final Act* para 4



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# Logic is clearest with the United States

Other countries are unlikely to conclude any negotiation with U.S. without some version of “fast track”

U.S. needs a package deal does not unravel once submitted to Congress.

Given heterogeneity of Congress, any deal has to have something for many different constituencies.

Logic will tend to favour deals with a critical mass of *issues* and *participants*

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To what extent is it possible to  
“multilateralize” plurilaterals?

Most WTO negotiations a linked set of  
self-selected critical mass building blocks

Necessary bundling is in effect a single  
undertaking

At some stage Members have to agree on  
what is a necessary part of the bundle

To close the deal

To maintain integrity of WTO *acquis*

