

Global Economy Podcast – Episode 115

Trump's Tariffs and the WTO's Future

Full Transcript

Fredrik Erixon: Hello everyone and welcome to ECIPE's Global Economy Podcast. My name is Fredrik Erixon and today I am pleased to welcome Stuart Harbinson to the podcast to talk about trade, the Trump tariffs, the World Trade Organisation and discussions about whether the World Trade Organisation can be revived through reform.

It is certainly a busy time for trade right now. We are recording this on July the 4th, which means we are just a few days away from the deadline that the Trump administration established for new trade negotiations. So, in theory, countries that have not signed new trade agreements with the United States will soon face the full force of the so-called liberation day tariffs. And while some countries seem to have clinched deals with the US, many countries have not.

So, this is what we're going to talk about today. And there are a few people with so much insight and experience on all matters related to trade as Stuart Harbinson. We are very proud to have him associated with us as senior fellow. He has held very many senior positions in the World Trade Organisation Secretariat. And before that, he represented Hong Kong as ambassador to the WTO. He chaired the General Council of the WTO when it launched the Doha Round. And after leaving the WTO, he moved to UNCTAD where he joined forces again with Dr. Supachai as he also moved to the UN organisation from the WTO. Stuart, you are very welcome back to the podcast.

Stuart Harbinson: Thank you very much, Fredrik. And it's a real pleasure to be joining you here today.

Fredrik Erixon: Well, thank you, Stuart. And we are going to start our conversation on the basis of an [essay](#) that you wrote for us about a week ago and that we also are going to link to in the show notes. And it's one that I recommend people with an interest in trade policy to read because it points to a number of issues of growing concern and not just the Trump tariffs.

But let us start with the Trump tariffs. The economic aspects of them are one part. And of course, the entire world has spent a lot of energy discussing them since early April when the Liberation Day, as it was called, was announced.

But I'm curious about their effect on the international trading system. Here we have a leading country with systemic importance for the WTO who seems to end up with an extraordinary messy tariff schedule. Other countries have negotiated or are negotiating with the United States.

And the result is that the United States will get favours that other countries won't. It is true that many countries have for a long time slid away from the Most Favoured Nation principle. But the process now and over the past months are a giant step in this direction.

So, Stuart, how do you think this is going to affect the international trading system?

Stuart Harbinson: Well, good question, Fredrik. Starting with an easy one, I guess.

Yes, you're absolutely right. You put your finger on it there that the benchmark principle of the trading system and the World Trade Organisation is the MFN principle under which you can,

you know, it's a treaty provision, which means that one state or economy undertakes to accord to another state or economy treatment no less favourable than it accords to any other state or economy. And this has been the bedrock of the of the world trading system for many years. And its major virtues are, first of all, non-discrimination. Everybody gets treated the same. And secondly, predictability. Everybody knows what the tariff rate or trade treatment will be.

Of course, you know, this is not the first instance of moving away from MFN. We have legal means of doing so, actually, under the WTO, because there are preferential trade agreements, regional trade agreements, customs unions, etc., which are a legal derogation, but they are subject to certain conditions, such as that the trade restrictiveness should not be any greater than it was in the past, and that the agreement should cover substantially all the trade. So, you know, subject to that, you can have an FTA or a trade agreement with another country. And indeed, we've seen a proliferation of those agreements over the last 20, 25 years.

You also correctly said that, you know, an issue with all of these bilateral deals, which appear to be in the offing, and we've already had the US-UK agreement, and there's a lot of speculation in the media about where the next deals are coming from. But it means that the US will get favours that others won't. And, you know, maybe this is something that we don't like, but have to learn to live with. But the huge danger is that it leads to a sort of downward spiral. And that, so if I am jealous of you, because, you know, you've got away into the US, and in return for that, you have given the US preferential treatment, thereby affecting my exports, then I'm likely to look for some form of retaliation. And this can get out of hand. It hasn't done so yet. But it's a real danger.

I was very pleased to see recently that the launch of this trade dialogue between the European Union and the CPTPP members, because these are two groups of economies, which are very much reliant on the trading system, and very much strong supporters of the global trading system. So maybe they can work something out. But, you know, it won't be easy, because there are some countries in the CPTPP, who will be very anxious to do deals with the US. And in fact, one, the UK has already done that. There is some hope there, I think.

But the point I was making in the [blog](#), basically, is that at present, we're in this rather unsatisfactory situation, where really a contradiction that in Geneva, and at the WTO, everyone is still professing support for the global trading system. But then the reality, the economic reality is that they, you know, they have to save themselves and do a deal with the US. So, it's just to finish on that, it's an extremely volatile and unpredictable trading environment at present.

Fredrik Erixon: Indeed, coming back to the MFN principle before going into some of the other issues you just raised, Stuart. So, this is not just one principle among many, it's actually a very, very important principle. And there is a reason for why it is enshrined in sort of the core articles of the various type of WTO agreements, and of course, was also a core part of all the treaties that have been established around international trade agreements.

Sometimes, you hear references to the MFN principle, but you think that perhaps people haven't understood the significance of it and why it's so important. So, if we just take a step back, Stuart, and ask the question, why is the MFN principle so important?

Stuart Harbinson: Well, I think we can learn some lessons from history here. I'm not one of those who thinks that history repeats itself, but certainly we can learn a lot from history.

And of course, I think the MFN principle in, you know, as a principle goes back quite a long way. But it's really since the beginning of the 20th century that we've seen such a significant

development in relation to that. And of course, we had the Great Depression in 1929, which led to the passing of what was called the Smoot-Hawley Act in the US in 1930. And the aim of that act, which raised tariffs on, I think about 20,000 products, if my memory serves me correctly, was to boost domestic employment and to also boost domestic manufacturing.

In other words, very much the sort of idea that President Trump seems to have in mind right now. But unfortunately, it had the opposite effect, it made the depression worse, and it provoked retaliation, particularly in the form of imperial preferences by Great Britain. And then I think Cordell Hull in the 1930s had the bright idea, extremely bright idea that we need to get away from this, have a level playing field, a non-discriminatory situation. And he was the one really that moved this through under FDR and the New Deal and all of that. And there was the Reciprocal Tariff Act in then, I think about 1934 in the US, which gave the President authority to reduce tariffs, US tariffs, where a trade deal could be done with another country, incorporating the MFN principle.

So that's the kind of background. So, in a way, it looks like history's repeating itself. I don't believe it is, because things are never exactly the same. But nevertheless, there is a lesson that I think we need to absorb from that.

Fredrik Erixon: Indeed, yes. And like you, I don't think history repeats itself. And I don't want to be an historical determinist either. But of course, there are themes and there are rhymes through history, which tend to return every now and again in history. And this is one of them.

And to build on what you also said, Stuart, the systemic governance, the architecture point around MFN, I think is extraordinarily important, because if you go back to that episode or previous episodes, for that matter, when you find that countries are being put in a very, very disadvantageous position, simply because there are other deals that are being made. So, then you get second round effects. And then you begin to get third round effect and fourth round effects. And gradually, you're going to move into territory where you basically lose the ability to have any meaningful market economy-based trade relations at all. I mean, it's just bilateral flows you end up managing in one way or the other. And I think that is one of the lessons from history. And it's also one of the lessons that it's not just immediate protectionism that have provoked gunboat diplomacy, or that you have resorted to more violent measures in order to sort of manage the fact that you have trade frictions. That has also happened in second and third round order effect as well.

And then I think you can also add the economic aspect to it. And something we have also learned from history, which is that many of the benefits of trade, they do actually arise when you open markets to everyone. It's not when you clinch bilateral type of deals. They tend to quite often reallocate existing trade more than they generate a lot of new trade. So, if the principle is that we're just reallocating trade from one bilateral relation to another bilateral relation, then after a while, you are going to find that the benefits from trade, that they are not very strong. And people are going to start to question why do we have these agreements at all, when the only thing we're doing is just shuffle around trade between different countries.

Stuart Harbinson: I totally agree. And in fact, I read something recently, that under the GATT and WTO system, relying, as we all know, on MFN, I think the volume of world trade between 1950 and 2024, something like that, multiplied 45 times on a value basis, and much, much higher than that on, sorry, I beg your pardon, on a volume basis, and much, much more than 45 times on a value basis. So, you know, I think the system has served the world well, as well as, whilst not being perfect at all, lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, which is a huge, huge accomplishment.

Fredrik Erixon: Indeed, indeed, one of the great, one of the great accomplishments over the last 30, 40 years is the amazing reduction of poverty in the world. And trade has been extraordinarily influential in shaping that outcome.

Now, Stuart, so if we think now, so the member of the WTO that is turning in this direction is not any member, it's actually a very, very important member. I mean, you went back to Cordell Hull and the establishment and principles, and of course, despite the immediate complications that existed after the Bretton Woods Agreement in order to establish a multilateral, at least the first basis of a multilateral trading system with support from the US Congress, it is the fact that America has played an outsized role for shaping the multilateral system ever since, basically, 1947 up till now. So, it's a very, very important country that is now deciding to go in a different way.

And that is, of course, leaving any other, any other member. And of course, it's also leaving the institution in itself in a very, very strong predicament, because what can it do if one very important member decides to go in a different direction?

But thinking then about the sort of second round problems that are coming to the WTO as a consequence of that, do you think there is a role here? Or do you think the Secretariat can be active in trying to manage the fallout from what Trump is doing and the negotiations that other countries have with America to avoid that we are going to have a stronger rush into a free for all type of system? Is there something the Secretariat and the institution can do, of course, in conjunction with other initiatives that have been taken? Is there something they can do?

Stuart Harbinson: Yes, I mean, another really, really excellent, excellent question. Of course, in the WTO, some of some of the listeners may be familiar with the fact that there's a there's a sort of a mantra in the WTO, that it is a quote, unquote, "member driven organisation". Some people say, with dark humour, that it's being member driven over a cliff, actually. But we won't go into that.

But the Secretariat has a somewhat limited role in the WTO. That has been clear from the beginning. And there's no one more vigilant in that respect than the US. The US recently, in fact, circulated a paper in the WTO saying just that, that the Secretariat was doing too much, and that every every move that it made had to be had to be agreed by the members.

But having said that, I think, you know, that's a US point of view. And, and, and there would be others that might subscribe to that as well. But there's a huge body of opinion in the in the World Trade Organisation, particularly amongst what you might call the middle ground countries, as well as developing countries, that, you know, they regard the Secretariat and the Director-General as custodian of their interests, because, you know, in a pure power game, then a lot of the smaller countries will be completely lost. And they, they want to, they see the Director-General as the guardian of their interests. So, they would be very happy to see the Secretariat becoming more active.

It's a very difficult role for the Director-General to play to navigate between all of these different currents of opinion. But, you know, the Director-General is an honest broker. He or she is not following the orders of any particular member or group of members. And, and so, you know, he or she must play a major role.

Fredrik Erixon: Indeed, and I suppose there are things that can be done in various ways in order to just be helpful to the larger membership of the organisation.

I mean, the first one, of course, you that comes to mind is to just be a good provider of analysis and a good provider of basically being a resource to make sure that it is clear to everyone what agreements there are out there, what they say, what they cover, and the extent to which they do have an impact on other countries, which is purely a research and analysis function rather than something else.

We have seen with the establishment of alternative and new dispute resolution mechanisms that came during the first Trump administration that there is also a knowledge transfer, which can be quite significant in order to quickly establish frameworks, in this case, outside the framework of the WTO itself in order to be helpful to members that are seeking more constructive ways in order to resolve disputes in this case.

And a third one, of course, is that what you pointed to, we have a significant body of the membership, also mid-sized economies. I mean, sometimes they are pretty big economies that do have a systemic interest to protect the relevance of the institutions. And here we have a lot of the Europeans, we have many of the Asian countries, we have Latin American and also African countries that have already declared an interest to make sure in the first place that we also do take steps to protect the institution itself.

You referred to the comment that we can hear coming out from Berlaymont in Brussels a few days ago, with Commission President Ursula von der Leyen signalling that there is an interest on the part of Europe to have conversations with CPTPP, not just about the typical stuff that you have context about when you discuss trade, which is market access issues, but also to talk about some of the systemic, perhaps the rules and the architecture that we need to think about as we move forward.

What do you think can come out of such initiatives? I mean, Europe and CPTPP, they are pretty significant economic areas in themselves. So, this is not just anybody talking. Do you think that adds some extra strength and some extra perhaps excitement to the initiative that it's sort of quite a lot of GDP behind, quite a lot of trade behind the countries that are members in these two bodies?

Stuart Harbinson: Absolutely, yes, I totally agree on that.

I mean, I think, you know, we shouldn't expect too much. Clearly, this is not going to evolve, I think, into a free trade agreement between the two blocks, if I can call them that, although CPTPP is not really a block. But, you know, I don't think we're going to see an institutional or legal tie up. But what they can do is coordinate their efforts to bolster the multilateral trading system, and perhaps develop some sort of a code of conduct or something like that, which they would agree to adhere to, in terms of their relations with each other, and with other countries as well.

So, I think it's a very interesting initiative. It's not easy. I mean, I was just reading the Financial Times this morning. I'm not trying to point the finger at anyone. But, you know, it is a case in point that Vietnam is trying to do a deal with the US and is very dependent on trade with the US for its exports. So, you can understand that. Vietnam is also in the CPTPP. So, you know, that's, that potentially is not an easy thing to square. But, but of course, this is just I'm not trying to point the finger at anybody. I must emphasise, it's just a handy example of the of the sort of situation that might arise.

Fredrik Erixon: Absolutely. And Vietnam is not the only country, even if it may be a country which is in an extremely difficult position, since of its proximity to China, and its, of course, economic linkages to China, and then having so much of its final foreign sales in America. So, it's, it's a complicated one.

But I assume also, and this is what I, what I understood from the line to be pointing to, which is that, well, of course, we have all the market access issues, and we have the second-round effect of the Trump agreements, how they're going to play out. But we also have a pretty strong body of rules that we need to discuss. And these rules may be covering the sort of enforcement or the implementation or the application of what we've already agreed on in the World Trade Organisation, how that's going to be reflected now, given that the system itself has received such a strong sort of elbow from part of its major members.

We have a lot of new rules issues that we need to talk about as well. We've seen, especially in the Asia Pacific region, a lot of innovation on digital trade issues, the evolution of new type of agreements between countries like Singapore, New Zealand, and others. We have, of course, questions around, and this may be more relevant for Europe than for others, but we have questions around the boundaries, and how do you dock different type of climate policy measures with trade rules? Also, more of a rule issue than it is, I think, a market access issue. And finally, we have the national security issues that we should try to find a way to straighten these rules up a bit to make them a bit more predictable and a bit less open ended than what we have right now. So, I would imagine that there is an opportunity here to have both rules' discussions about all the new issues.

Stuart Harbinson: Yes, again, I totally agree with you there.

I mean, one of the valid criticisms of the WTO is that, you know, it's not been able to modernise to keep its rules up to date with commercial and technological developments.

Of course, it's a big ask if you've got 166 members at many, many different stages of development, very, very hard, but the WTO should at least be addressing these issues. And it provides a very good forum for discussing international cooperation, and where the boundaries of that might be in the short and medium term. So, they should certainly be paying more attention to this.

Of course, it's related in a way to the other conundrum of decision making in the WTO, because unfortunately, we've got ourselves into a position whereby one or two countries or a small group of countries can use this type of issue, i.e. developing new rules to get their way on the old, if you like, in terms of trying to renegotiate things. I mean, they may not really object to moving into these new areas, but they see a tactical advantage in not allowing that to go ahead, and to use that as leverage.

Having said that, I mean, let's not put too much on the WTO. You know, I think typically, it has evolved by incremental movements. I think the latest on that was, you know, fisheries subsidies a couple of years ago, which, you know, the negotiations continue. So hopefully, they'll ratchet it up another notch in due course as well. And then occasional lurches forward or backwards like the Uruguay Round or the Doha Round, for that matter.

So, you know, I think you can't expect a smooth process in the WTO, put it that way. But they should certainly be addressing these issues.

Fredrik Erixon: Now, and here, I should also confess sort of, at least a bias which I've been cured of in recent time, which is, of course, that my own generation, entering this field in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, of course, we thought that we had entered a period, and perhaps we've read history in the wrong way as well. We thought that the history of GATT and what was to become the World Trade Organisation was all about big, big, big, all-encompassing rounds where you're going to achieve a lot in one go. When the reality, of course, through history, which is that it's a long slog with gradual movements, hopefully mostly in the right direction, but sometimes it's also a few

movements in bad directions as well. But that's the reality. And this is the mental model we should have for our current times as well.

But you pointed to one of the issues which have been at least packaged under the headline WTO reform. And this is also what you discuss in your great essay now, Stuart. So, I hear a lot of people talking about WTO reform. I've heard a lot of people talking about WTO reform, but I'm not so sure that we all have the same definition of what we mean when we say WTO reform.

So, what is your broad take on, what do we mean when we say WTO reform?

Stuart Harbinson: Yes, well, my perspective on that is that there's a list of very important issues which people, countries generally agree form the agenda for WTO reform, but they all have vastly different priorities.

So, for example, there's the question of decision making, which we've talked about a little bit, updating the rules. And in terms of making progress, how do you cope with a situation where 166 members are operating by consensus?

And then for others, its dispute settlement, which is the main issue, and reconstituting the Appellate Body. For the US, it's not reconstituting the Appellate Body, and it's putting the dispute settlement system in a kind of box so that it doesn't go too far down the judicial path.

Then for others, it's all about development and providing proper policy space for developing countries to do their own thing without being constrained too much by the multilateral rules.

And then for others, I think, yet others, it's how can we appease the US to keep them on board? And there are probably a lot of countries out there that are willing to pay a price for that because they think in the long run, it would be beneficial.

The US is kind of in a fortunate position of having, you know, being able to sit back and watch this unfold. I don't know how active they're going to be in terms of WTO reform; they will certainly have their red lines. And consensus will be one of their red lines, because that is their veto. Of course, others have a veto too, but the US is always very keen on that.

So, in short, you know, the membership has got this menu of issues, but the emphasis varies considerably.

Fredrik Erixon: And do you think there is one or several of these items on the menu where you think, all right, here we have something to work with, and there may be opportunities going forward?

I mean, I take it that it's going to be difficult to do something on decision making. You refer to the old Sutherland report in USA. We had a couple of other initiatives to go in 15, 20 years back in time, which were all suggesting some type of qualified majority voting, etc. But all that sounded a bit difficult, even before we ended into the really difficult territory we are in now. So, I struggle to see where this can, you know, the extent to which you can actually move things here.

But are there others where you think that, you know, there are some opportunities here to take to the full membership where they can start to at least have meaningful conversations about how to change things?

Stuart Harbinson: Yes, well, you know, there are members of the WTO, countries, which feel that the whole system needs to be radically overhauled. There's much talk about deep reform. Myself, I'm, you know, not so sure how far that's likely to go, at least in the short and the medium term.

But, you know, there is even on a modest view, there are some things that could be done. I think I mentioned in the blog that, you know, there could be something done about this tactical hostage taking of issues. At least we could do something to inhibit that sort of move.

And also, we need to look, I think, at plurilateral agreements again, because these offer a path forward. And, you know, for example, there's an agreement on investment facilitation for development. And it's supported by the overwhelming majority of members. I think, I can't remember the latest count, 130, something like that, or 140. And, you know, this is not infringing on anyone else's rights. So why not attach it to the WTO as a plurilateral agreement, and then there's some sort of institutional framework that can, you know, monitor it and implement it and all of that. So that sort of thing, I think, is important.

Even dispute settlement, I think there are some things that could be done to improve the situation. Perhaps not the Appellate Body, that may be a bridge too far at present. But there are certain things that could be done in terms of streamlining of processes, because even now the panel process takes a tremendous amount of time. And a lot could be done to speed that up, I think. And, you know, there is a certain amount of common ground in that regard. So, you know, it's possible that could happen as well.

I mean, there are other harder issues like, you know, the US view on state capitalism, and subsidies. Those are those are hard rules, which will be tough. China has said it's willing to discuss. But it's also indicated that it's got its red lines there.

And then there's the whole issue which the US raises of self-designation of developing countries, you know, there's no kind of objective benchmark in the WTO, as to what's a developing country, you're a developing country, if you if you say you are, and the US has pointed its finger at that.

So, there's an awful lot of things to discuss. I think probably what's going to happen is that the members of the WTO are going to discuss all of this over the next six months or so, and maybe try to refine an agenda, a reform agenda, which can be launched at the next ministerial conference in March 2026.

Fredrik Erixon: It basically means that there is an opportunity to at least restart the conversation in a structured way, which can point to some of these particular issues that you raised here.

And to end the conversation, going back to dispute settlement, since this was also, if I'm not mistaken, I think it was, I mean, it was certainly one of the irritations that Robert Lighthizer came in with when he became the United States Trade Representative for America under the first Trump administration. But of course, that issue has a longer history in America, and he was not the first one to raise it.

My understanding of the reactions when America started to block the reappointments of new Appellate Body members was that other countries were frustrated, and they in the first place didn't share many of the concerns that America had. But it seems to me that more and more countries have at least joined that part of the bandwagon, which is that the overarching analysis is that perhaps the legalisation of rules went a bit too far.

If we think about dispute settlement as a swing between diplomacy as a method on the one hand and law as a method on the other hand, many countries seem now to be in a broad agreement that we swung too far towards law and we should go sort of a little bit, perhaps not a little bit, but we should go back to a more diplomatic method for resolving disputes. Is that also how you interpret it where members are?

Stuart Harbinson: Yes, I think in general terms, that's correct, Fredrik. There is a sort of general acceptance, I would say, that the WTO dispute settlement system has become over legalised or overjudicialised, or had become overjudicialised, should I say, because we don't have an Appellate Body now.

But, you know, there are differences of emphasis there. I think, you know, my reading would be that the European Union would be towards the more legalistic side of the spectrum, but still taking the point that, you know, the Appellate Body should not go too far. And then there would be others who would be much more to the US side and say that, you know, this is not what we agreed to when we set up the dispute settlement system in the WTO. We envisaged that it would be settling disputes, settling disputes, not just issuing judgments on all sorts of things that, that, you know, hadn't been fully negotiated in the Uruguay Round or thereafter.

So, yeah, I mean, I think you're right. There's kind of a feeling that, that maybe the Appellate Body went too far, but it's not, but it's a question of degree. And the matter of degree is important to resolving that issue.

Fredrik Erixon: Oh, indeed. Yes, indeed. It's, it cannot be about destroying the Appellate Body, because you need, you need to have an appellate system if you want to be able to actually settle disputes and resolve them. And you also need to have a trusted body who will have the final say about what is it that members have agreed to in the agreements. And that's an important part.

But I suppose the, at least one of the criticisms, and this I've been also hearing from lawyers in the European Commission, which, as you said, tended to be on the more legalistic side of the argument, which is that they're concerned about that new rules were created through the Appellate Body, that absence agreements on issues in WTO agreements, someone had to say something about what should apply. And perhaps they said a little bit too much about how rules should be interpreted. I don't know if that's, if that's a correct representation of the issue or not. But I did find it interesting that even people who are on the legalistic side had some reservations about what happened a few years ago.

Stuart Harbinson: That's, that's entirely correct. I think it's a good way to, to describe it. You know, of course, where the WTO consists of agreements on all sorts of things, it'd be subsidies and countervailing measures, or import licencing, or customs valuation, all of these things, these are the results of negotiations.

You know, an expert or a lawyer has not sat down and said, I'm going to draft the perfect instrument. So, there are lots of grey areas. And the whole point of, you know, not the whole point, but a major point in terms of dispute settlement was that the system should not add to or diminish the rights of their members. So, some members would say, well, that is a grey area in that agreement. And that's what I negotiated. I don't want somebody else coming along now and telling me what it means. You know, if it's a grey area, maybe the Appellate Body should have thrown it back at the members and said, you need to sort this out. And be fair to the Appellate Body, you know, they were put there to hear cases between countries and make a decision. So, you know, what I'm saying is, has to be

taken with a, with a certain amount of nuance, but, but then probably was, you know, were occasions when the Appellate Body went too far.

But the other thing is this multi-party interim arbitration arrangement, the so-called MPIA, which the EU was instrumental in, in setting up. And, you know, and initially some countries stayed out. It's been reasonably successful in the one or two cases that it's dealt with so far. There are certainly more cases coming down the line. For example, China and Canada are both subscribed to this arrangement. And there are some cases that are working through the system there. So, but the interesting thing was that in the last two or three months, both the UK and Japan have said that they're joining. So, this is, you know, it seems to have a little bit of gathering momentum. I mean, these are, these are major economies in the world. And so that's, that's quite a, quite a signal, I think, if, if Japan and the UK are coming on board for this.

Fredrik Erixon: I think you're absolutely right. And it may be a good time to also close this conversation, because that's an optimistic note. And we, we want to close on an optimistic note, which is, of course, that America and Trump, they are not representative of the entire world.

Actually, most of the WTO members remain very supportive of the institution, very supportive of the rules, very supportive of international trade in accordance with basic multilateral rules. And you can sometimes, you know, you also have to be a bit inventive and try to find new alternatives or parallel ways of addressing things. And the multi-party arbitration institution, I think, is one of them. And hopefully it's, it's going to be that bedrock of the system that remains when we don't have functioning dispute resolution in the WTO.

All right, very good. Thank you so much, Stuart. It's been lovely talking to you. And also, thank you for the brilliant essay, which I, as I said, initially, we are going to link to in the show notes. It's also directly available on our website.

And then we just need to hold our breath as we're getting closer to July 9 and see if global trade or at least America's participation in global trade is going to take another major hit. And if we're back into that territory that we were in the first week of April, when we were all thinking that my God, the sky is falling down. We'll see.

Thank you so much, Stuart.

Stuart Harbinson: Thanks, Fredrik. It's been a pleasure. Thank you.