

deed, one observer argued, if the trade negotiators from the top twenty or so trading economies were to write down their view of such a deal, there would be a high degree of convergence of views. The question is whether we can get there *politically*, domestically and internationally – i.e., is there a feasible solution in political economy terms?

On the one hand, a deal that would bring the then 149 WTO Members into the fold would, it was argued, maximize the pain for the advanced countries, with greater agricultural reform in the EU and the US than had been forthcoming to date. It would also require more in the way of market access concessions from the big emerging markets than has been put on the table so far. On the other hand, a small deal would reduce the pain for the advanced countries but would not be saleable either to the US Congress or to developing countries, particularly the least developed.

Much was seen as depending on the United States and the European Union.

The situation in the United States was seen as problematic if the July 1, 2007 TPA expiry deadline were not met since the case for extension was not there. The gloomy view was that, with the Administration's approval rating in "free fall", the Democrats had no incentive to bail it out. But some held out hope that, by January 2007, with Congress re-shaped by mid-term elections and the unfolding of political and economic events, a case for extension might be made. "Trade votes, it was pointed out, have not been won on economic arguments alone: Foreign policy and security got us into this mess and will get us out of this mess". In support of this view, it was noted that, while the declining polls for the Administration have stimulated protectionist rhetoric in Congress, potential presidential candidates had largely stayed "above the fray" on trade protectionism. As well, recalling that the Uruguay Round agreement was reached shortly after the United States brought in Robert S. Strauss, an individual with a reputation as a "closer", to hammer out a deal, some expressed hopes that Ambassador Portman, an individual