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**‘SOCIAL DIALOGUE’ AND THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS FOR THE NEXT
GENERATION OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS IN THE 21ST
CENTURY**

**Ohiocheoya (Ohio) Omiunu
School of Law, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK**

Abstract

Of recent, there have been growing concerns over the continued relevance of the post-World War II ‘rules-based model’ of liberal international economic cooperation. Notably, there are growing agitations by non-traditional actors (NTAs) in international law such as civil societies and sub-national governments about the current trajectory of international economic agreements, especially cross- continental deep integration Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs). The ability of NTAs to scupper major multilateral and regional initiatives such as the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and more recently to threaten the ratification of the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) are among telling signs that there is need for a re-evaluation of the way international economic agreements are conceptualised. Coupled with growing populism and nationalism sentiments epitomised by events such as ‘Brexit’ and a Trump Presidency in the USA, commentators have argued severally that NTAs are growing in influence and prominence on the international scene because there is a lack of accountability/transparency during the negotiation of these agreements and uncertainty surrounding their potential economic benefits vis-à-vis problems to the societies impacted by their far-reaching scope. In light of these developments, the critical research question which this paper seeks to answer is: Will 21st century international economic agreements better address social concerns if NTAs are formally integrated into the international economic system during the negotiations of future regional and multilateral trade deals?