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Internalising Environmental Obligations under New-Generation FTAs: Adaptive Coordination and Domestic Green Transition in Vietnam

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Abstract

This article develops a mid-level theory of how environmental obligations under new-generation free trade agreements (FTAs) are internalised in developing economies, using Vietnam as a revealing case. Existing trade-and-environment scholarship has mapped the design, density and enforceability of environmental provisions in FTAs, while related work has examined trade-related environmental measures and domestic green reforms in developing states. What remains underexplained is the institutional mechanics through which dispersed treaty obligations become domestic governance capacity. The article addresses that gap by conceptualising internalisation as adaptive coordination: a three-layer process linking normative translation, institutional coordination and compliance infrastructure. Drawing on doctrinal analysis of the European Union-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), selected multilateral environmental agreements and Vietnamese legal instruments, the article argues that implementation cannot be reduced to legal transposition. Vietnam shows that the distance between legal compatibility and substantive internalisation is produced by treaty dispersion, institutional fragmentation, asymmetrical treaty layering, firm-level compliance burdens and the risk of symbolic greening. The article contributes a theory-building account of green FTA implementation in developing economies and shows how contemporary trade law is being reconfigured from tariff liberalisation toward green and conditional market governance.

Keywords: [new-generation free trade agreements](#); [environmental obligations](#); [internalisation](#); [domestic green transition](#); [adaptive coordination](#)

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