

*La Unión Europea y los BRICS (Brasil, Rusia, India, China y Sudáfrica)*. Edited by Antonio BLANC ALTEMIR (Aranzadi, Madrid, 2015) 250 pp.

The work *La Unión Europea y los BRICS*, led by Professor of Public International Law and International Relations Antonio Blanc Altemir, is the logical result of one of his lines of research in the study of the relations between the European Union and other world regions that started in 1992. In this sense, the work is a logical continuation of some of his earlier monographs such as, "Las relaciones de las Comunidades Europeas con el espacio post-soviético" (1999), " L'Unione Europea e i paesi terzi mediterranei. Verso una vera Associazione euromediterranea"(1999) and "La Unión Europea y el Mediterráneo. De los primeros acuerdos a la primavera árabe" (2012).

The current importance of the topic is evident if we consider that, despite being developing countries with low GDP per capita and scattered Gini coefficient, BRICS countries generate the 25% of the global GDP and their medium-term outlook is for further growth and development.

In this sense, the contrast between the short extension of the book -just 205 pages- and ambitious topic studied is surprising if we consider that it studies none other than the relationship between the European Union and each of the members of the Group of BRICS. And precisely one of its main merits derives from this approach, since as it is well known, the BRICS are not a geographical region, but political, and their notable differences make a uniformed studio complex.

The work has just one Part and it is divided into five Chapters. Each Chapter is dedicated to a single State, following the order of the acronym BRICS (In this order: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). As criticism, it could be argued that dividing the book into two parts could have resulted satisfactory: one part dedicated to the individualized study of each country and the second one devoted to expose the factors, conditions and problems of EU-BRICS relations as a whole. In compensation for this absence, the work begins with a foreword written by former Spanish Ambassador to Russia and China Eugenio Bregolat Obiols, who convinces the reader to continue reading the book thanks to the use of the fullest possible contribution of growth indicators. Also, this book lacks final conclusions —conclusions are only presented at the end of each chapter— that would serve as a culmination of the work. Despite the mentioned absence, the book is simple, easy to read and really useful for researchers interested in the isolated study of a member of the BRICS group.

The first chapter is dedicated to the EU-Brazil relations, and it is signed by Consuelo Ramón Chórner. It begins with an enhancement of the carioca country. Immediately, the author focuses on two aspects that are advertised as controversial: firstly, the assessment of the positives and the negatives aspects of the Brazil emerging economy, and the secondly, the pragmatic diplomatic role developed by Brazil. From this point, the chapter covers the various bilateral meetings between trading blocs —that is to say, Mercosur— held since 1999. She pays special attention to those produced since 2007, after the adoption of the European Economic and Social Committee Opinion, in particular those held in Brasilia (2013) and Brussels (2014). According to this author, despite

considering Brazil as a strategic partner, the partnership between both countries has not been so fruitful as expected. The author briefly discusses the environmental issue, security and respect for Human Rights as reviewing the corruption offenses detected under the mandate of President Dilma Rousseff and her controversial response to protests happened during the football World Cup and Petrobras Affaire. Apart from legal arguments, and using a more typical style of international relations —including references to press—, she concludes by recalling the obvious. Despite the difficulties inherent to the relationship between the two actors, their potential collaboration is essential for issues concerning Human Rights, the overall improvement of human security and the action against the progressive degradation of the environment.

The second chapter is devoted to relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation. It begins with a brief but accurate historical tour starting with the Declaration of Minsk (8 December 1991) and the implementation of the TACIS program (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States). An excellent combination of legal principles, economic and geographic data, and political arguments allow the Director of the work —also the author of this chapter— to summarize exceptionally the interdependent and troubled relations existing (energy, commercial, financial, etc.). Indeed, the analysis of the tensions between the two subjects that have taken place, and particularly, those from Ukraine —including the case of events in Crimea and the imposition of sanctions—, is one of the most outstanding contributions of the chapter. The updated treatment of the issue —obviously, before the start of the Russian military action in Syria—, the legal perspective provided and the opinions expressed about the European *modus operandi* allow the reader to enjoy a very last scientific paper specialized in the Ukrainian question in a work with a general spirit. This chapter is one of the great contributions of the work so that one of the main problems that have affected the EU-Russia relations is the lack of common strategic objectives. Consequently the author concludes with an informed perspective on the complex new stage in which the relations between Russia and the European Union have entered.

The third chapter, written by Dr. Bénédicte Real, researcher attached to the Centro Universitario de Defensa de Zaragoza, analyses the relations between the European Union and India. The structure of the chapter begins with an overview that analyses the various agreements of cooperation between the two countries, including a review of the system of bilateral summits. It advances towards more specific aspects of the cooperation: the main trade relations —reason of the relationship—, climate change and international security. Particularly, the international security, topic in which, the author, according to her research career, goes deep in the cooperation in the fight against international terrorism (in particular in counter-information tasks facing the jihad of Pakistani origin and cyber-terrorism), and the cooperation to get a safe maritime traffic in the Gulf of Aden and the coast of Somalia. The author shows concern about a possible worsening of bilateral relations as a result of the approach of President Modi to Moscow.

The fourth chapter, written by Professor of Public International Law and International Relations Sergio Salinas Alcega, is one of the main contributions of this work, representing excellently the phenomenon of BRICS countries. EU relations with China exemplify magnificently the evolution of the European perspective on the group of emerging economies. The author divides his exposure into

two separate parts, the first one devoted to strategic and political level, and the other one focused on the economic and trade connection. Whilst the first serves to expose the Copernican revolution experienced in relation to the influence and power experimented by the BRICS; the second one, more interesting from my point of view, is a reflection on the adequacy of reciprocal legal instruments to an increasingly unequal relationship. Relationship that becomes even more complex, due to the different views on the international sphere, the rampant growth of the China's foreign investment and the difficult economic situation in Europe. Salinas concludes expressing concern about the effectiveness of the conditionality clause in European policy after the creation of the Bank of the BRICS with special support from China itself.

In the last chapter, Dr. Eimys Ortiz Hernandez covers the EU-South Africa relationship from 1974 to the present distinguishing three stages: the first one (1974-1990), regarding the timid initial reaction of the European Communities, especially from the incidents in Soweto and its further passivity backed by the English and German positions, and based on the condemnation of Apartheid. A second one (1991-1997), coinciding with the arrival to the Presidency of Nelson Mandela, that was the beginning of the South African participation in the programs for ACP countries. And finally, a third one (1998-2007), to consolidate the democratic process, to reintegrate South Africa to the GATT and WTO Agreements, and to establish a Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA). The researcher of the University of Lleida concludes that the incorporation of South Africa, as the African representative of the BRICS, has been welcomed by the European Union, where some states consider it a strategic ally that must realize the challenges for the continent.

It is striking that the differences raised in the framework of the WTO —only treated in the chapter on China— hardly have been reflected. Another striking thing is the vision, perhaps too optimistic, of a relationship that begins to be troubled. The provision of references per chapter does not transfer an idea of unity of the work. However, it is a necessary, useful, multidisciplinary and readable book despite the amount of information. A recommended work by itself and, also, for being framed in the compendium of specialized monographs on foreign relations of the Professor Blanch Altemir.

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