

BLANC ALTEMIR, Antonio (Director), COS SÁNCHEZ, Pilar and ORTIZ HERNÁNDEZ, Eimys (Coordinators), *The Trade Relations of the European Union with the rest of the World an Analysis after the Pandemic and the Russian Invasion of Ukraine*, (Aranzadi, Pamplona, 2023, 533 pp.)

The purpose of this book is “to analyse the EU’s trade relations with the rest of the world, in the framework of its trade policy and the main agreements signed with other countries and economic blocs, at a time marked by a pandemic that refuses to disappear completely and, in particular, by the Russian invasion of Ukraine” (back book cover). The Director, coordinators and authors have successfully achieved these goals. Indeed, while several publications have analysed the EU’s trade policy and legal framework, the book under review stands out for several reasons. Firstly, the book provides a complete overview of the Union’s trade relations across the world with a particular emphasis on the impact that the recent pandemic and the war in Ukraine holds in those relations. In this regard, most chapters include helpful annexes that are very useful to better comprehend the extent of the individual trade relations with the different partners and their evolution. Secondly, the edited book includes country cases that are particularly relevant for the EU such as those covering the relationship with the United Kingdom, China, the United States, Switzerland or Japan, to name but a few. Thirdly, the book goes beyond the immediate impact of recent crises on particular trade agreements and navigates the reader into the broader context in which those agreements were entered into (or rejected such as in the case of the Institutional Agreement with Switzerland). Fourthly, the monograph benefits from the long experience of many of the authors and from a robust legal theoretical background complemented with some chapters that analyse trade relations from an economics viewpoint (e.g., the chapter on the relationship with the UK post-Brexit). Lastly, while the theme of trade relations after the COVID-19 and Ukrainian crises permeates throughout the book, the Director and coordinators have succeeded in avoiding repetitions and overlaps between the different chapters and Parts.

The book is structured in six parts and an introductory chapter on the Union’s trade relations after the COVID and Ukrainian crises based on discussions held in the context of the seminars organised by the Jean Monnet Chair held by the Director of the book, where 25 academics from 14 institutions participated. While the first part is devoted to the analysis of the EU and multilateralism, the remaining five parts are divided along geographical lines, making it appealing to the reader, and more accessible for the non-initiated in the world of trade relations. Notwithstanding, perhaps the introductory chapter and the two chapters on multilateralism could have also been merged under a general Introductory part on the EU in a multilateral context. My comments will focus on some of the most salient features of the introductory chapter and each of the six parts.

The first chapter (by Professor Blanc Altemir) introduces the reader into the book’s topic and provides very valuable background on the impact of the two abovementioned

crises on EU trade policy, on the Union's new trade strategy and on the position of the European Union in World Trade. The chapter shows how recent shocks have altered the context in which EU trade policy has developed and how the EU has reacted to those challenges, trying to combine, through the new Open Strategic Autonomy its multilateral soul with an increased need for pragmatism.

Part I analyses the interplay between *The European Union and Multilateralism*, the first chapter of this Part (by Professor De Castro Ruano) studies the conceptualization of Multilateralism and the impact of the pandemic and the Ukrainian crisis on Multilateralism, notably in its application in relation to the European Union. The chapter underlines, rightly in my view, that the Union's interest might not always converge with those of the United States, and therefore that the latter should not be followed in all instances. The second chapter of this Part (by Professor Alcaide Fernández) provides another lens to the relationship of the Union with Multilateralism, notably through the focus on prevention and resolution of international conflicts after the adoption and subsequent revision of the 2016 Global Strategy.

Part II provides a rich analysis of *the trade relations of the EU with the rest of Europe*. This Part starts with an analysis of the relationship with the United Kingdom (by Professors Podadera and Garashchuk), that includes an interesting proposal to establish a strategic partnership between the EU and this country to create a third pole, beyond the United States and China, in the international system. The second chapter (by Professor Gestri) deals with the European Economic Area. The author notes that, despite some references to the EFTA countries as "rule-takers", the EEA agreements have led the countries involved to benefit from access to the Single Market without accession and the overall assessment is thus positive. By contrast, the third chapter of this part, by Professor Bermejo García, analyses the relationship with Switzerland and shows how important for trade relations is a deep understanding of internal politics, as well as of the economic and financial situation of a trade partner in order to explain (or avoid) the rejection of an agreement (the Institutional Agreement in this case). The next chapter, by Professor Bou Franch, studies the relationship of the EU with European microstates, an often-overseen subject that is liable to have significant repercussions, particularly in the financial regulation area. A different but also timely issue is the relationship between the EU and Western Balkans, analysed by Professor Cisneros Cristóbal that alerts about the importance to act beyond the current Union's economic sphere and of the risk of "losing" these states if the right choices are not made. Finally, this Part concludes with an analysis of the relationship with Türkiye (by Professor Aldaz Ibáñez) which interestingly shows that the prospect of accession (or rather lack thereof) has complicated the needed update of an economic and trade relationship that has been overall positive.

Part III examines the EU's *trade relations with the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood*. The first chapter of this Part, by Professor Rodríguez Prieto, studies the Union's relations with Eastern countries and shows how it has been characterized by different speeds, being globally positive for Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, somewhat less so for Armenia, mixed with Azerbaijan, notably conditioned by Russian realpolitik according to the author, and negative with Belarus, for reasons linked to the political system followed by this neighbouring country. The second, and last, chapter of this Part, by Professor Pérez Salom, examines the Euro-mediterranean agreements and attractively observes that the

EU has sometimes failed to adopt a comprehensive approach towards this region. In this regard, the author also notes that the bilateral approach followed by the Union has failed to foster regional cooperation between med-countries. The author also criticizes the non-effective implementation mechanism devised.

Part IV covers the *relationship between the Union and North Central and South America*. This Part opens with a chapter by Professor Cos Sánchez, one of the book coordinators, which shows how the recent pandemic has put a halt to an overall positive tendency in the trade exchanges between Canada and the Union, which could resume in the current post-pandemic context. The second chapter of this Part, drafted by Professor Manero Salvador, analyses the relationship with the United States and explains that, despite the overall agreement in many global issues, the Biden administration has not shown a significant interest in reopening bilateral trade agreement talks. The focus lately, and understandably, has been on security cooperation. However, the situation is not satisfactory, notably for United States companies, which are put at a disadvantage when compared with others from Canada or the United Kingdom, which can rely on an ambitious trade agreement with the EU. Also in this Part, Professor Colom Gorges studies the relationship with Mexico and Professor Díaz Galán the European Union Central-América agreement. In both cases the overall assessment is positive, with Professor Colom interestingly underlying that the agreement with Mexico provides for ambitious environmental and labour goals and Professor Díaz that the cooperation in the support for International Law has provided a fruitful basis for entering into the agreement with Central American countries. By contrast, the analysis in the last two chapters of this Part by Dr. Presta Novello concerning the trade relations with Colombia, Peru and Ecuador, and by Professor Coppelli Ortiz, concerning the relations with Chile and MERCOSUR, highlight that while the balance of the relationship is positive, the impact of the trade relation is rather limited. In the case of Colombia, Peru and Ecuador, despite the fact that trade agreements are in place, there remain several social and environmental concerns. In the case of Chile, the author notes that the new Chilean Government decided to hold the signature of the new trade agreement for further study, although this has recently changed. Notably on 13 December 2023 the EU and Chile signed an Advanced Framework Agreement and an Interim Trade Agreement.

Part V analyses the *EU trade relations with Asia*. In particular, the first chapter of this Part, by Professor Tirado Robles, examines the EU-Japan economic partnership agreement. This author highlights that the agreement can be considered a success in light of the experience of the last years. Significantly, the author also underlines that the agreement with Japan has not only facilitated business exchanges but also a firm commitment to rules and principles, something very important in the current multipolar context. Equally interesting is the next chapter, by Professor Salinas Alcega, on the relationship between the EU and China. The author shows that the relation with the Asian giant represents a dilemma for the Union between economic gains and the observance of the values on which the Union is based. Interestingly, the author also explains that an investment agreement with China would ultimately be more beneficial for the EU. It should be noted that an agreement in principle was reached in December 2020. The third chapter of this Part, by Professor Martínez Pérez, examines the less-known relationship with India and includes a relevant proposal to set up a Trade and Technology Council with this partner, as the one in place with the United States, in

order to overcome the current difficulties in the trade relations between the two trade players. Subsequently, Professor Ortíz Hernández, one of the book coordinators, studies the relations with South Korea and concludes that, while positive in economic benefits, broader issues have not been covered and, as such, it lacks a certain ambition in terms of multilateralism. Finally, Professor Moltó Aribau, analyses the trade relations with Singapore and Vietnam, and interestingly highlights that, while it might be too early to assess in-depth the impact of the recent agreements, these agreements could provide a template for a future deal with ASEAN.

The last part of the book takes the reader to the *Union's trade relations with Africa and Oceania*. To this extent, the first chapter, by Professor Esteve Moltó, examines the relations with ACP countries in the post-Cotonou context and finds that the balance sheet is rather modest, with China displacing the EU in terms of influence. The author also notes that the Union has not been able to provide a viable alternative to the ill-reputed Washington Consensus. The second chapter of this Part, by Dr. Florensa Guiu, studies the trade relations with South Africa, and notes, as does Professor Escardibul Ferrá concerning the relations with Australia and New Zealand in the last chapter of the book, that the relationship of the EU with these jurisdictions has improved over the last years although the trade agreements, particularly with Australia and New Zealand, are very recent to have a complete overview of their impact.

In light of the foregoing, I definitively recommend this monograph to practitioners, researchers and academics interested in the trade relations of the European Union, but also more generally for students of European Union Law. They will benefit from an overarching work that provides not only a detailed account of the Union's trade relations, but also a rich understanding of the context that underpins them. The Director, coordinators and authors of this work should thus be commended.

JUAN JORGE PIERNAS LÓPEZ

Jean Monnet Chair and Senior Lecturer of International Law and International Relations
at the University of Murcia, Faculty of Law. E-mail: jjpiernas@um.es