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**GRILLER, Stefan, OBWEXER, Walter,  
VRANES Erich (eds.). Mega-Regional Trade  
Agreements: CETA, TTIP, and TiSA. New  
Orientations for EU External Economic  
Relations. Oxford: Oxford University Press,  
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On 21 September 2017, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between the European Union and Canada entered into force provisionally. For the EU, it is considered a milestone in its trade policy. The agreement represents the first material outcome of the shift, which commenced in 2006 by the EU's admitting its re-orientation of its Common Commercial Policy from multilateral negotiations under the framework of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to regional and bilateral ones.<sup>1</sup>

It was only natural for the movement to be towards “mega-regional” agreements and to deeply integrated partnerships in the form of regional free trade agreements between countries or regions. Beyond market access, this process of integration emphasises the quest for regulatory compatibility and a harmonisation of various rules possibly affecting trade and investments. And the EU as one of the dominant trading blocks has started vigorously to pursue this negotiating agenda. The EU Commissioner for Trade Cecilia Malmström stated on the occasion of CETA entering provisionally in force that “[i]t helps us shape globalisation and the rules that govern global commerce.”<sup>2</sup> And the ambitiousness of this goal cannot be overstated in the context of studying mega-regionals.

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission. *Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Global Europe – Competing in the world – A contribution to the EU's Growth and Jobs Strategy*, COM (2006) 567, 4. 10. 2006.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission. *Press release: EU–Canada trade agreement enters into force*. Brussels, 20 September 2017.

Further, this is also the rationale behind the “rush” in negotiations all over the world. At the same time, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) entered into force in December 2018 and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is in the final stages of negotiations.

At the same time, mega-regionals raise serious concerns and complex legal, political, economical and methodological questions. Accordingly, they have recently become the subject of several studies<sup>3</sup> as well as the subject of higher public scrutiny. Many observers ask if this attention is deserved and what the real implications will be for the world trade system. There are indeed divergent views on the consequences of such treaties and the uncertainty over costs and benefits of mega-regionals remain a point of concern for the general public.

The topic of the book at hand is thus pertinent for the current and future development of the multilateral trading system and the EU trade policy. The volume itself presents a collection of sixteen contributions edited by Stefan Grillner, Walter Obwexer and Erich Vranes. The book is divided into three parts: I) Fundamental and introductory issues; II) Selected sectoral issues; and III) New challenges for politics, law and legitimacy. In adopting this broad approach, it offers comprehensive analysis which employs a socio-legal approach.

The unifying theme of the book is the current EU trade policy based on negotiations of mega-regional agreements, the already mentioned CETA, but also the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the EU and the United States, and finally the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA), a possible treaty among almost fifty members of the WTO. While CETA and TTIP are well known even among the public, the TiSA negotiations have remained in their shadow for 21 negotiation rounds by November 2016 before it was suspended due the Trump administration coming into office.

The significance of topics covered in this book cannot be overemphasised and the authors successfully demonstrate a relevance of their examined issues. For instance, Ernst-Ulrich Petersmann persuasively presents the challenges arising from mega-regionals from a conceptual perspective of international economic law. Mega-regionals, he explains, are political responses to “governance failures” in WTO practices, reflecting legal fragmentation and methodological disagreements over how to liberalise and regulate trade (p. 22, 33). Despite pursuing beneficial economic convergence, the negotiators should not disregard the EU’s

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<sup>3</sup> RENSMANN, T. (ed.). *Mega-Regional Trade Agreements*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017; CHAISSE, J., GAO, H., LUO, Ch. (eds.). *Paradigm shift in international economic law rule-making: TPP as a new model for trade agreements?*. Singapore: Springer-Verlag, 2017; World Economic Forum, *Mega-regional Trade Agreements Game-Changers or Costly Distractions for the World Trading System?* 2014.

“cosmopolitan trade policy constitution” committing the EU to protection of its citizens, the rule of law and parliamentary and participatory democracy.

Stephan W. Schill focuses on an important and controversial component of trade and investment agreements: dispute settlement rules. After an analysis of the inter-state procedures envisaged in mega-regional agreements he takes rather an unconventional approach towards investor-state dispute settlement. In his view, CETA or TTIP will influence the structures of these disciplines in international economic law. He puts the development in the context of the EU proposal for a permanent investment court which may lead to a constitutional moment in international economic governance (p. 148). This is indeed a compelling conclusion which will deserve further attention. One of the most interesting chapters is certainly Lorand Bartels’ part on human rights, labour and environmental standards. His contribution focuses on “non-trade” issues which are incorporated in trade agreements recently. Despite their growing status in trade negotiations, Bartels remains rather critical of real progress in this area based on the CETA text (p. 215) which is quite the opposite view to the EU and Canada’s public proclamations.

These three briefly introduced contributions are only an appetizer for the whole high-quality volume subjected to the review. To conclude, *Mega-Regional Trade Agreements: CETA, TTIP, and TiSA*, based on well-researched analysis of the examined EU trade and investment negotiations, is remarkably timely scholarly piece of work not only on the EU trade policy.