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**Cross-Regional Trade Agreements.**

**Trans-Pacific Regionalism as an Alternative for “Free” Trade?**

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Contemporary integration processes in the world economy, known as the third wave of regionalism, are more and more often taking on cross-regional dimensions. What is particularly important they are not limited only to agreements establishing free trade areas, but also cover non-trade issues (aka the WTO-plus agenda). This new type of trans-regional economic cooperation is especially growing in the Pacific Rim, and this is why discussions in the monograph are focused on this region. The author poses thus a fundamental question, what are the relations between these new phenomena and the multilateral trading regime. Opinions on whether they are complementary or alternative means of comprehensive trade liberalisation still remain divided.

The monograph is intended to be a contribution to the ongoing debate on these issues, which has emphasised their socio-political gravity. Hence, it is also a part of the discussion on the evolution of international economic relations, as well as possible developments and potential consequences of the regionalisation race. Poland, as an EU-member and an economy oriented mainly towards European markets, has an indirect impact on the directions of the common trade policy. This does not mean, however, that it is impossible to have any influence over its direction. The growing activity of the EU – be it only as a strategic imitating reaction – in new trans-border, inter-regional integration projects can significantly affect the competitive position both of the Polish economy as well as of its particular industries, not forgetting the impact of preferential and cross-regional trade agreements on EU law.

Having said that, the research was based on four hypotheses:

**MASZYNOPIS**

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H1: The principles of WTO trading regime are not an effective mechanism of establishing new fields of international cooperation, which is the factor for members states to find better alternatives, also in the form of cross-regional initiatives.

H2: The contemporary trade regionalism is rooted in non-economic rationales and despite its systemic tensions remains for the countries involved the cheaper solution when contrasted with multilateral negotiations and agreements.

H3: The insufficient authority and power of the WTO mechanisms result in an advantage gained by the United States in the process of agenda setting. Securitising their own priorities of foreign policy, including these of a (geo)economic nature, this country makes an effective use of the WTO-plus issues to promote and to implement provisions which are legally and symbolically anchored in the American system.

H4: Transnational corporations are an important factor accelerating the proliferation of deepened cross-regional trade agreements. In contrast to the sector of small and medium-sized enterprises they have sufficient resources, competences and political power to have a constant impact on negotiated trade agreements, thereby securing their own position, especially in the field of protection of intellectual property rights.

Research was concentrated mainly on broad institutional (political and economic) circumstances and the consequences of cross-regional trade agreements covering selected WTO-plus issues (provisions on competition policy, investment, protection of intellectual property rights, labour and environmental standards) and on the identification of integration effects in trade of goods.

Having defined the main goal of the research and hypotheses the monograph was structured as follows. In the first chapter the contemporary state of the art, an extensive review of literature and the main issues forming the pillars for the debate on the multilateralism and regionalism were presented. There were also characterised the economic and political factors shaping trade liberalisation processes after WWII, which were accompanied at the same time by efforts to institutionalise multilateral trade relations and proliferation of PTA/RTA (three waves of regionalism). Resulting tensions within the world trading system give rise to heated discussions and divergent opinions on the comprehensiveness of both the preferential trade agreements' regime and that of the WTO. The latter is thus under a constant pressure to re-adjust or be re-designed to address these new emerging challenges more effectively.

Chapter two is an attempt to theorise cross-regional trade agreements (trans-regionalism). The author makes a synthesis of the classical economic integration theory with the elements of political economy and international politics, putting also a special emphasis on ideational aspects creating regionness, essential for the concept of the social construction of reality. He also embarks upon the theoretical attunement of key elements defining a model trade agreement based on a deepened approach (reduction of tariffs together with the above-mentioned WTO-plus issues).

Chapter three consists of a comprehensive description of regionalism in the Asia-Pacific. It covers the evolution of geopolitical and geoeconomic rationales for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), followed by the most important trade ties having a catalysing impact on the proliferation of trade agreements in the trans-Pacific sphere. Attention is also paid to the political and economic conditions specific to East Asian regionalism (aka the Asian noodle bowl) as well as that of the Americas, with special regard to relations with the U.S., intra-Latin competition for the status of regional trading hub, the reasons for and consequences of the failed idea of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

The fourth chapter covers the empirical part of the research based on the selected sample of deepened cross-regional agreements (U.S.-Chile, U.S.-Singapore, U.S.-Australia, U.S.-Peru, Canada-Chile, Canada-Costa Rica, Canada-Peru, Nicaragua-Taiwan, the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership). In every case the main political and economic motives for completing trade accords were identified and a concise analysis of trade creation/expansion effects was conducted, with special attention being paid to the less developed parties. Fundamental for this section is the conceptual framework of the U.S. competitive liberalisation policy. Canadian trade policy responses to the new reality in the region shaped by the powerful neighbour are also examined, as is the case of Taiwan, where demonstration effect aiming at enhancing its credibility and re-affirming its role at the global/regional level remains a strategic issue. Consideration is also given to the first cross-regional, plurilateral agreement, which has the potential to strengthen and deepen the comprehensive trade liberalisation in the trans-Pacific region.

The last part draws some conclusions and presents expected scenarios for the nearest future and areas of further research.

The methodological perspective of the book is rooted mainly in the new institutional economics and international political economy (British school), together with elements characteristic for neo-realist and neo-liberal thinking. This interdisciplinary approach offers a great deal of promising new insights into the issue of contemporary regionalisation processes, especially when taking into account their social, political, legal and economic contexts determining various ways, forms and intensity of cooperation.

Korekta językowa

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