JURISDICTION OVER ANTITRUST VIOLATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

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CEDRIC RYNGAERT

Lecturer in international law Catholic University of Leuven and University of Utrecht



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email: info@isbs.com

16C Worcester Place 920 NE 58th Ave Suite 300 Oxford OX1 2JW Portland, OR 97213

UK USA

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INTRODUCTION

Discussions of the concept of jurisdiction in international law are often restricted to the field of criminal law. This could be explained by a variety of reasons, one being that the only judgment of the World Court – at the time the Permanent Court of International Justice – on the law of jurisdiction was indeed concerned with assertions of criminal jurisdiction (the well-known case of the *S.S. Lotus*).¹ Another reason is that such assertions are generally considered to be more intrusive, and thus in need of more international rules than assertions of noncriminal jurisdiction. When such criminal jurisdiction is not only exercised over ordinary persons but also over State officials, than red flags will be raised and discussions concerning the lawfulness of the jurisdictional assertion will be rife, as the recent furore about universal jurisdiction over gross human rights violations shows.

The narrow focus on jurisdiction in criminal matters has eclipsed the need for jurisdictional rules in non-criminal matters. It is often overlooked that jurisdictional assertions in administrative, civil and economic matters could also raise important sovereignty concerns. When regulating matters wholly or partly outside their territory, States may interfere with legal and policy choices of the territorial State, and in fact cause as much acrimony as when a State exercises criminal jurisdiction over a foreign offence. One of the fields where this has occurred is the field of antitrust or competition law, ie the law of restrictive business practices. In an era of economic globalization in which major corporations sell their products worldwide, assertions of antitrust jurisdiction over foreignbased conduct are no longer exceptional. On the contrary, such assertions may prove to be indispensable for a viable domestic antitrust policy. Given the entwining of markets, price-fixing conspiracies or mergers entered into in one State nowadays often produce harm in other States, which may understandably wish to bring their laws to bear on these conspiracies or mergers if the former State does not. Doubtless, the effectiveness of antitrust laws would be severely hampered if their scope were restricted to domestic anticompetitive behaviour. On the other hand, the territorial State may have good reasons for not bringing its antitrust laws, if it has any, to bear on conspiracies or mergers originating in its territory. It may be in the interest of that State not to clamp down on the conspiracy or merger. When that interest is substantial and when that State has some

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PCIJ, S.S. Lotus, PCIJ Reports, Series A, No. 10 (1927).

international clout, it will tend to take issue with another State's regulatory assertions over the conspiracy or merger. In that case, an international conflict arises.

If an international conflict arises, law, and international law in particular, may be called upon to provide a solution. It is the modest ambition of this study to identify rules for such situations: rules that may create a balance between the interests of the State applying its law outside its territory and the interests of the territorial State or, in other words, rules that restrain undue jurisdictional assertions while at the same time leaving sufficient space for legitimate jurisdictional intervention. In short, this study will try to ascertain when a jurisdictional assertion in antitrust matters is *reasonable* and when it is not.

This study will not seek answers to the question of how global antitrust is best regulated. It will not examine whether such international institutions as the World Trade Organization or the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, or any regional institutions, ought to be granted the responsibility of overseeing international antitrust efficiency and equity. It will be assumed that the current decentralized system of unilateral antitrust enforcement by single States will remain, for the time being, the main tool of global antitrust enforcement. This is not to say that, in this study, the optimalization of the decentralized system will not be contemplated: on the contrary. In fact, if this system is not to break down due to jurisdictional overreaching, only genuine comity and a balancing of State interests will prevent normative competency conflicts from poisoning international relations. Put differently, only reasonableness, with States deferring their antitrust enforcement to other States which could assert a stronger regulatory interest, might ensure respect for the public international law principle of non-intervention.

METHODOLOGY

As in other fields of the law, jurisdiction in the field of antitrust law is not governed by treaties. While there may be cooperation between States, and Memoranda of Understanding may even have been signed to that effect, there are as yet no international antitrust instruments that could be characterized as binding treaties in the sense of Article 2 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969). Therefore, it has to be ascertained whether there are, under *unwritten law*, possibilities for and limits to the exercise of antitrust jurisdiction. The most important source of unwritten law is customary international law. In order to

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See on this eg W. Sugden, "Global Antitrust and the Evolution of an International Standard", 35 Vand. J. Transnat'l L. 989, 1001–1006 (2002).

ascertain whether a norm of customary law, either prohibitive or permissive, exists, State practice and *opinio juris* ought to be examined.

It is not necessary, for a norm of universal customary international law to come into being, that all States have actively participated in its formation, nor even that they have deliberately acquiesced in it.³ It may suffice that the States that are specially affected by such a norm have done so.⁴ Even if only a limited number of States are specially affected, the State practice requirement for a norm of customary general international law to come into being may be met. In the field of antitrust law, in fact, only a limited number of States are specially affected by a norm that would authorize or, as the case may be, prohibit the exercise of jurisdiction over situations that are not wholly territorial, an exercise sometimes denoted as 'extraterritorial' jurisdiction. Indeed, only a number of western States and organizations have exercised extraterritorial antitrust jurisdiction, ordinarily over situations originating in other western States. Thus, in typical situations of extraterritorial antitrust, only western States, and in particular the United States, the European Community (EC) and EC/EU Member States⁵, have been affected. Almost all State practice⁶, in terms of both asserting jurisdiction and protesting against or acquiescing in jurisdictional assertions, indeed originates in the transatlantic region. The focus of this study will therefore almost exclusively be on practice in the United States and Europe, although other State practice will, if relevant, not be overlooked.

If a customary international law norm regarding the exercise of antitrust jurisdiction could be identified, and it will be argued that it could, States that are new to international antitrust regulation will be bound by the norm, which is a norm of *general* customary law, even if these States do not agree with the norm. The rule has crystallized, and only to the extent that States have persistently and openly dissented from the rule, will they not be bound by it. Legal certainty and stability demand nothing less, since customary international law, especially regarding such a basic category of international law as delimiting spheres of State jurisdiction, sets, more than treaty law, the basic rules of the game.

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International Law Association, Committee on Formation of Customary (General) International Law, Final Report, Statement of Principles Applicable to the Formation of General Customary International Law, Report of the 69 th Conference, London, 2000, at 734, Rule 14 (ii).

⁴ ICJ, North Sea Continental Shelf Cases (Germany v. Denmark; Germany v. Netherlands), ICJ Rep. 1969, p. 3 at p. 42 (paragraph 73).

Competition matters are so-called 'first pillar matters', which are governed by the Treaty establishing the European Community, and not the Treaty establishing the European Union.

It may be noted that the practice of intergovernmental organizations in their own right, such as the EC or the EU, is a form of 'State practice'. See ILA, Committee on Formation of Customary (General) International Law, at 730, Rule 11.

ILA, Committee on Formation of Customary (General) International Law, at 735, commentary (b) to Rule 14.

⁸ Id., at 738, Rule 15.

STRUCTURE

In this study, a partly chronological approach will be taken. Such an approach is useful for our subject, as the exercise of 'extraterritorial' jurisdiction is of recent vintage, and has been considerably refined over the years. Before the Second World War, States did not apply their antitrust laws extraterritorially, either because they did not have antitrust laws (Europe) or because wholly foreign conspiracies were rare in a world which was not as interconnected as today's world (chapter 1). It was only in 1945 that a US court held, for the first time, that the Sherman Act, the US antitrust act, applied to foreign conspiracies if their conduct produced effects within the United States (Alcoa case, chapter 2). Only from the 1960s onwards did European States also start to assert jurisdiction over foreignbased conspiracies (chapters 4 and 5). After the Second World War, western States increasingly perceived effects-based jurisdiction as inevitable to fend off foreign export-based conspiracies preying on domestic markets. This perception obviously had its impact on the lawfulness of such jurisdiction under international law, although the legality of jurisdiction based on domestic effects of foreign conduct is traditionally recognized under the objective territorial principle (chapter 3).

While effects-based jurisdiction might *prima facie* be legal under international law, jurisdictional restraint is warranted however. Indeed, the State where the conduct originates and which has, on that basis, jurisdiction under the *subjective* territorial principle, may take issue with jurisdictional assert ions on the basis of the *objective* territorial principle. In antitrust law, the problem is even further compounded, since the effects of conspiracies or mergers are often not restricted to one State but are, in an interconnected world, spread over different States, which could all potentially be willing to exercise effects-based jurisdiction. Concurrent jurisdiction may give rise to normative competency conflicts, with one State often claiming jurisdictional primacy over the other(s) in a given situation. Legal doctrines of structural reasonableness therefore appear appropriate: they may mitigate the jurisdictional overreaching which the unimpeded application of the effects doctrine could yield.

It will be shown that jurisdictional assertions in the international antitrust field have, since the very beginning, been restricted by the requirement that the effects on which the 'objective territorial State' bases its assertion are to be substantial, direct, and reasonably foreseeable (chapter 6) These doctrines might in themselves, however, not ensure that international jurisdictional conflict will be averted, as effects of conspiracies or mergers will often be substantial, direct, and reasonably foresseable. It will be argued that a more thorough reasonableness analysis, such as the one proposed in Section 403 of the Restatement (Third) of US Foreign Relations Law (1987), balancing the interests of the different States involved, ought to be undertaken (chapter 7). Reasonableness and comity also

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underlie two antitrust agreements (which do not have the status of treaties) concluded between the United States and Europe (chapter 8).

While emphasis will lie on the classical antitrust situation of a foreign conspiracy causing domestic injury, this study will demonstrate that international law questions regarding antitrust extraterritoriality may also arise in other situations. For one, might States, or even should they, exercise jurisdiction over domestic conspiracies causing foreign injury, and might or should they give standing to private plaintiffs alleging foreign injury caused by a foreign conspiracy which also caused domestic injury (chapter 10)? For another, could States use their antitrust conspiracy laws to gain access to foreign markets for their exporters (chapter 11)? It will then be pointed out (chapter 12) that not only foreign conspiracies but also foreign mergers or concentrations may produce considerable, although often only potential, cross-border effects. It will be seen that States' recent exercise of jurisdiction over foreign mergers, on the basis of the merging companies having substantial domestic sales, has at times prompted fierce foreign reaction, although this reaction may not necessarily subtract from the lawfulness of the jurisdictional assertion.

As is well known, and as will be argued extensively in this study, it is the long arm of US rather than of European antitrust law that has traditionally been more controversial. A diffuse idea of US antitrust exceptionalism – antitrust enforcement being uniquely important in the US, more than in other nations, to create economic order – has at times inoculated US antitrust actors against taking into account foreign governmental interests and protests. However, this record of unilateralism has received an unwelcome boost by the promotion of private plaintiffs to attorneys-general (ie by granting them the right to sue antitrust conspirators in federal courts), which is actually a logical outgrowth of the emphasis put on efficient antitrust enforcement in the US. The international implications of this peculiarity, in combination with a number of structural facilitating features of the US system of tort litigation (discovery, class action suits and treble damages) will be discussed in chapter 13.

It may be submitted that, without a private attorney-general system, the arm of US antitrust laws would have been much shorter. Indeed, US antitrust enforcement agencies have traditionally taken a cautious, reasonable approach to claiming jurisdiction over foreign restrictive business practices. It is this cautious approach that this study advocates as a matter of law. It will both criticize the US Supreme Court's and the European Court of Justice's repudiation of reasonableness as a legal requirement of jurisdictional restraint, and propose a return to the jurisdictional rule of reason, which was introduced in antitrust matters in US doctrine in the 1950s and by US courts in the 1970s. Only a rule of reason that carefully balances the interests of all States involved may provide an equitable outcome.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFDI Annuaire français de droit international A.J.I.L. American Journal of International Law

AWD

Cardozo L. Rev.

Am. U. J. Int'l L. & Pol'y American University Journal of International

Law and Policy

Am. U. L. Rev. American University Law Review

Antitrust L. J. Antitrust Law Journal

ASIL Proc. Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the

American Society of International Law Aussenwirtschaftsdienst der Betriebsberater

B.C. Int'l & Comp. L. Rev. Boston College International and

Comparative Law Review

Berkeley J. Int'l L.

Berkeley Journal of International Law
Brigham Young U. L. Rev.
Brookl. J. Int'L.

Berkeley Journal of International Law
Brooklyn Journal of International Law

B.U. Int'l L. J. Boston University International Law Journal

B.U. L. Rev. Boston University Law Review

B.Y.I.L. British Yearbook of International Law

Cal. L. Rev. California Law Review

Cal. West. Int'l L.J. California Western International Law

Iourna

Can. Bus. L. J.

Canadian Business Law Journal

Can.-US L.J.

Canada – United States Law Journal

Cardozo J. Int'l & Comp. L.

Cardozo Journal of International and

Comparative Law
Cardozo Law Review

Case Western Res. J. Int'l L. Case Western Reserve Journal of

International Law

Cath. U. L. Rev. Catholic University Law Review
Chi. J. Int'l L. Chicago Journal of International Law
CFI European Court of First Instance

Colum. Bus. L. Rev. Columbia Business Law Review
Colum. J. Eur. L. Columbia Journal of European Law
Colum. J. Transnat'l L. Columbia Journal of Transnational Law

Colum. L. Rev. Columbia Law Review

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C.M.L.R. Common Market Law Review

Conn. J. Int. L. Connecticut Journal of International Law Cornell J. Int'l L. Cornell Journal of International Law

Cornell L.Q. Cornell Law Quarterly
Cornell L. Rev. Cornell Law Review

Del. J. Corp. L. Delaware Journal of Corporate Law

Denver J. Int'l L. & Pol'y Denver Journal of International Law and

Policy

DePaul L. Rev. DePaul Law Review

Dick. J. Int'l L. Dickinson Journal of International Law

Dick. L. Rev. Dickinson Law Review Doj Department of Justice

Duke J. Comp. & Int'l L. Duke Journal of International and

Comparative Law

Duke L.J. Duke Law Journal

EC European Community/Commission

E.C.R. European Court Reports
ECJ European Court of Justice

E.C.L.R. European Competition Law Review

E.I.P.L.R. European Intellectual Property Law Review E.J.I.L. European Journal of International Law

E.L. Rev. European Law Review

Emory Int'l L. Rev. Emory International Law Review

Emory J. Int'l Disp. Res. Emory Journal of International Dispute

Resolution

Emory L.J. Emory Law Journal

E.P.I.L. Encyclopedia of Public International Law EuZW Europäische Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsrecht

Fla. J. Int'l L. Florida Journal of International Law Fordham Int'l L.J. Fordham International Law Journal

Fordham J. Corp. & Fin. L. Fordham Journal of Corporate and Financial

Law

Fordham L. Rev. Fordham Law Review
FTC Federal Trade Commission

Ga. J. Int'l & Comp. L. Georgia Journal of International and

Comparative Law

Ga. L. Rev. Georgia Law Review
Geo. L. J. Georgetown Law Journal
Geo. Mason L. Rev. George Mason Law Review

Geo. Wash. J. Int'l L. & Econ. George Washington Journal of International

Law and Economics

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Golden Gate U. L. Rev. Golden Gate University Law Review
G.Y.I.L. German Yearbook of International Law

Hamline L. Rev. Hamline Law Review

Harv. Int'l L. J. Harvard International Law Journal

Harv. L. Rev. Harvard Law Review

Hastings Int'l & Comp L. Rev. Hastings International and Comparative Law

Review

Hofstra L. Rev. Hofstra Law Review

Houston J. Int'l L. Houston Journal of International Law ILSA J. Int'l & Comp. L. International Law Students Association Journal of International and Comparative

Law

Ind. Int'l & Comp. L. Rev. Indiana International & Comparative Law

Review

Ind. J. Global Legal Stud.Indiana Journal of Global Legal StudiesIndian J. Int'l L.Indian Journal of International LawI.C.L.Q.International and Comparative Law

Quarterly

I.F.L.R. International and Financial Law Review

Int. Bus. Law. International Business Lawyer

Int. Law. International Lawyer

Inter-Am. L. Rev.Inter-American Law ReviewInt'l L. ForumInternational Law Forum

Int'l Tax & Bus. Law International Tax and Business Law

Iowa L. Rev. Iowa Law Review

IPRax Praxis des Internationalen Privat- und

Verfahrensrechts

J. Air L. & Com.Journal of Air Law and CommerceJ.C. & U.L.Journal of College and University Law

J. Corp. L. Journal of Corporate Law

J.D.I. Journal du droit international (Clunet)
J. Int'l L. & Econ. Journal of International Law and Economics
J. Mar. L. & Com. Journal of Maritime Law and Commerce

J. Marshall L. Rev. John Marshall Law ReviewJ. Pub. L. Journal of Public Law

J. Small & Emerging Bus. L. Journal of Small and Emerging Business Law

J. Transn'l L. & Pol'y Journal of Transnational Law & Policy

J. World Trade L. Journal of World Trade Law J.W.T. Journal of World Trade

Law & Contemp. Probs. Law and Contemporary Problems

Law & Pol'y Int'l Bus. Law and Policy in International Business

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LQR Law Quarterly Review

L.J.I.L. Leiden Journal of International Law

Lloyd's Mar. & Com. L. Q. Lloyd's Maritime and Commercial Law

Quarterly

Louis. L. Rev. Louisiana Law Review

Loy. Consumer L. Rev. Loyola Consumer Law Review

Loy. LA Int'l & Comp. L. J. Loyola of Los Angeles International and

Comparative Law Journal

Loy. U. Chi. L.J. Loyola University of Chicago Law Review

Manitoba L.J. Manitoba Law Journal

Md. J. Int'l L. & Trade Maryland Journal of International Law and

Trade

Me. L. Rev.Maine Law ReviewMich. L. Rev.Michigan Law ReviewMinn. L. Rev.Minnesota Law ReviewModern L. Rev.Modern Law Review

N.C. J. Int'l L. & Comm. Reg. North Carolina Journal of International Law

and Commercial Regulation

N.C. L. Rev. North Carolina Law Review New Eng. L. Rev. New England Law Review

N.I.L.R. Netherlands International Law Review

NJW Neue juristische Wochenschrift

Notre Dame L. Rev. Notre Dame Law Review

N.T.E.R. Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Europees Recht Nw. I. Int'l L. & Bus. Northwestern Journal of International Law

and Business

Nw. U. L. Rev. Northwestern University Law Review N.Y.I.L. Netherlands Yearbook of International Law

NY Law Sch. J. Int'l & Comp. L. New York Law School Journal of International and Comparative Law

N.Y.L.J. New York Law Journal

N.Y.U. J. Int'l L. & Pol. New York University Journal of International

Law and Politics

N.Y.U. L. Rev. New York University Law Review

Ohio St. L.J. Ohio State Law Journal Or. L. Rev. Oregon Law Review

Pac. Rim L. & Pol'y J.Pacific Rim Law and Policy JournalPal. Yb. Int'l L.Palestine Yearbook of International Law

Pepp. L. Rev. Pepperdine Law Review

Rabels Zeitschrift für ausländisches und

internationales Privatrecht

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R.C.A.D.I.Recueil des Cours de l'Académie de droit international **RCDIP** Revue critique de droit international privé Revue de droit des affaires internationales RDAIRegent I. Int'l L Regent Journal of International Law Rev. dr. int. sc. dipl. pol. Revue de droit international, de sciences diplomatiques et politiques Rev. int. dr. écon. Revue internationale de droit économique Rev. suisse dr. int. concurr. Revue suisse du droit international de la concurrence **RGDIP** Revue générale de droit international public RIWRecht der internationalen Wirtschaft RTDE Revue trimestrielle de droit européen San Diego L. Rev. San Diego Law Review S. Cal. L. Rev. Southern California Law Review Seattle U. L. Rev. Seattle University Law Review S.E.W.Sociaal-Economische Wetgeving. Tijdschrift voor Europees en Economisch Recht S. Ill. U. L.J. Southern Illlinois University Law Journal Sing. J. Int'l & Comp. L. Singapore Journal of International and Comparative Law SMU L. Rev. Southern Methodist University Law Review Stanford Journal of International Law Stan. J. Int. L. Stan. L. Rev. Stanford Law Review St. John's J. Legal Comment St. John's Journal of Legal Comment St. Louis U. L.J. St. Louis University Law Journal St. Thomas L. Rev. St. Thomas Law Review Suffolk Transnational Law Journal Suffolk Trans'l L. J. Sup. Ct. Rev. Supreme Court Review Syracuse J. Int'l L. & Comm. Syracuse Journal of International Law and Commerce Temple Int'l & Comp. L. J. Temple International and Comparative Law Journal Temple Law Review Temp. L. Rev. Tex. L. Rev. Texas Law Review Tex. Int'l L.I. Texas International Law Journal Tilburg For. L. Rev. Tilburg Foreign Law Review Transnat'l Law. The Transnational Lawyer Transnat'l L. & Contemp. Probs. Transnational Law and Contemporary

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Problems

Tul. J. Int'l & Comp. L. Tulane Journal of International and

Comparative Law

Tulsa J. Comp. & Int'l L. Tulsa Journal of Comparative and

International Law

Tulsa L. Rev. Tulsa Law Review

UCLA J. Int'l L. & For. Aff.

U. Chi. Legal F.
U. Chi. L. Rev.
University of Chicago Legal Forum
University of Chicago Law Review
University of Chicago Law School

Roundtable

U. Cin. L. Rev. University of Cincinnati Law Review

University of California Los Angeles Journal of International Law and Foreign Affairs

U. Miami L. Rev. University of Miami Law Review

U. Pa. L. Rev. University of Pennsylvania Law ReviewU. Pa. J. Int'l Econ. L. University of Pennsylvania Journal of

International Economic Law

U. Pitt. L. Rev.
U. Rich. L. Rev.
University of Richmond Law Review
USF. L. Rev.
University of San Francisco Law Review

Utah L. Rev. Utah Law Review

Vand. J. Transnat'l L.Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational LawVa. J. Int'l L.Virginia Journal of International Law

Wash. L. Rev. Washington Law Review

Wash. U. L.Q. Washington University Law Quarterly Wash. Univ. Glob. L. Rev. Washington University Global Studies Law

Review

Wayne L. Rev. Wayne Law Review
W. Comp. World Competition
Whittier L. Rev. Whittier Law Review

W. Va. L.Q. West Virginia Law Quarterly
 Wm. & Mary L. Rev. William and Mary Law Review
 Wisc. Int'l L.J. Wisconsin international law journal

Wisc. In '1 E.J.

Wisconsin international law journ

Will Wirtschaft und Wettbewerb

Yale J. Int'l L.

Yale Journal of International Law

Yale J. Reg. Yale Journal on Regulation Yale L.J. Yale Law Journal

Z.a.ö.R.V. Zeitschrift für Ausländisches Offentliches

Recht und Völkerrecht

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