Currently, one of the leading problems in international legal debate is the fragmentation of international law. The international legal system continues to develop in an increasingly fragmented fashion creating seemingly independent branches of law. These different normative branches interact with each other and potentially create normative conflicts. The question then arises how to deal with this interaction of branches of law in the decentralised international legal order. Joost Pauwelyn attempts to address some of these issues in his doctoral thesis on *Conflict of Norms in Public International Law: How WTO Law Relates to other Rules of International Law* which builds on his previously published articles and his expertise on WTO law. This new book is now an extension of these articles and an attempt to address the interaction between WTO law and general international law in a more comprehensive manner.

In his own words Pauwelyn explains that “this book does not go into specific cases of interplay or conflict between WTO rules and other rules of international law. Rather, it attempts to provide a conceptual framework within which the interplay between norms can be examined.” (p. 3). Clearly, he sets himself an ambitious task to establish a systemic framework for conceptualising norm relations in the international legal order, albeit with a strong emphasis on WTO law. This effort is welcomed as one of the first comprehensive effort to deal with the topic. It should be noted, however, that Seyed Ali Sadat-Akhavi, in his recent thesis on *Methods of Resolving Conflicts between Treaties* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Leiden 2003), also discussed and developed issues dealing with treaty-conflicts. These normative conflicts form an important part of Pauwelyn’s

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thesis, although his aim is more ambitious and extensive: developing a general framework to analyse norm relations between all sources of international law. This task is daunting, and unfortunately the risk of overly general debate can hardly be avoided. Therefore, it cannot be too harshly judged if his efforts to build up a general framework are not entirely successful. Although the current writer feels that Pauwelyn fails to provide a clear general framework, he does offer an interesting discussion of several relevant areas of international law that relate to norm relations and norm-conflicts. He draws attention to such important questions as hierarchy of sources, the idea of fallback to international law, the question of accumulation and conflict of norms and conflict-resolution techniques. Each of these chapters analyses pertinent issues and the reader acquires a fine understanding of the current discussion. Pauwelyn analyses these issues from two perspectives, namely that of international law and that of WTO law, dividing the book into two parts: each chapter deals first with a particular topic from the perspective of general international law and discusses the same subject in the WTO context. For the reader it is a slightly tedious and repetitive exercise, although it allows her to focus on either side of the debate if she so chooses. And it is probably possible to read these parts separately, which may serve some readers’ interests well.

Beyond the general aim of the book, Pauwelyn offers two other messages at the outset of the book. And these messages are very clear. The first point is that trade is good, and that this fact cannot be stressed too much. In effect, he claims that “trade between nations makes the world a better place. It also makes it a safer place.” (p. xi). This categoric premise limits his way of addressing the topic, so the reader should not expect to find an all too critical approach to free trade. The “trade is good approach”, however, does not lead Pauwelyn to claim that WTO law is superior to international law; instead, his second point is that now that we know that trade is good, we need to figure out how it relates to the rest of the world, and also how WTO law may and should be developed. And here, his view is unmistakably that the WTO is part of international law. This is further reinforced by his plea for the unity of international legal order. The uniting theme, repeatedly expressed, is that WTO law is “just another branch of public international law” (p. 25). It is nearly like a manifesto. In effect, according to him, there is almost unanimous support for this proposition, something which may surprise some WTO experts and practitioners. Pauwelyn, however, simply claims that their position is neither tenable nor credible (p. 26).

His argument in this regard is relatively simple. As international law can be defined as “legal norms governing international relations”, “no one can deny that WTO agreements govern a particular aspect of ‘international