



BOOK REVIEW

Frans-Paul van der Putten and Chu Shulong (eds.), *China, Europe and International Security. Interests, Roles, and Prospects*, Abingdon: Routledge Asian Security Studies, 2011, 216pp, US\$130, Hardback.

Bram Buijs*

This new edited volume by Routledge brings together fourteen authors balanced evenly between Europe and China. The book aims to contribute to the debate on Europe and China as international security actors by focusing on three questions. First, how do Europe and China view each other's security roles, also taking into account their relationships with other parties such as the United States (US) and Russia? Second, in which direction is the bilateral security relationship developing? Third, how are China's and Europe's changing roles affecting international security?

The eloquent introduction outlines several key themes in contemporary research on the role of Europe and China in international security. The first theme is the security aspect in Sino-European relations, which is still quite underdeveloped in relation to economic and political ties. Central topics in this debate are the European arms embargo on China, as well as the issue of Taiwan and technological cooperation. A second strand of research concerns the changing role of both China and the EU in the broader political order and their ideas – and consequent impact – on global governance and multilateralism. Roughly half of all chapters follow-up on these two themes and discuss shifts in the international power relations and perspectives on security affairs, whereas the other half consists of detailed case studies.

One important observation made in the book from the outset is that there exists quite some uncertainty about where the EU is headed with regard to its role in international relations. Conflicting views exist among scholars, in particular on whether Europe is a “declining” or “emerging” power in international security. Such contrasting assessments also appear in the book at various chapters and depend to a large extent on the importance attached to soft power and the “normative” role of the EU.

The issue is analysed in a very balanced and thoughtful manner in Zhang Yanbing's chapter, in which he praises Europe's soft power and maintains that this quality is held in high esteem by China, even though “in the hard power aspect European countries are in relative decline.” According to him, Europe still plays a powerful role in “agenda-setting and initiation,” for instance in the legitimisation of environmentalism as a non-conventional security threat – a theme further explored by Wang Bo, who devotes a large part of the subsequent chapter to analysing fruitful Sino-European cooperation in the fields of energy and climate change. Wang Bo argues that in the traditional security field, much could also be gained from

* Bram Buijs is a Researcher at the Clingendael International Energy Programme.

InBev-Baillet Latour Chair of European Union-China Relations



more intensive interaction, as the Chinese military is currently still “one of the most isolated sectors in China.”

Strikingly, the European contributors to the volume seem much less assured of the EU’s growing role in international security. Frans-Paul van der Putten and Susanne Kamerling note with concern that “China is increasingly regarded by Washington as an indispensable partner to manage international security,” whereas “[d]ue to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the economic rise of Asia, Europe itself no longer has the unique strategic value that it had for the US during the twentieth century.” May Britt-Stumbaum also argues that even though China and Europe are both “emerging actors” in international security, the main challenge for Europe will be how to find a complementary role to positively influence the China-US relationship.

In what is one of the best chapters of the book, Gudrun Wacker addresses this challenge for Europe in a very clear and critical manner. Lamenting the tendency for “declaratory and symbolic” policy, she notes the very limited involvement of the EU in many of the global security hotspots, especially in East Asia. Although the EU and member states “have been trying to contribute to transformation and modernisation in China, (...) they have no contingency planning should these processes lead to a less desirable outcome.” Or, in the words of Zhang Yanbing: “with the renaissance of realpolitik thinking in the region, the EU faces the simple challenge of being taken seriously.”

One of the book’s stronger points is that different perspectives are explored on concepts such as global governance, multilateralism and multipolarity. As May Britt-Stumbaum remarks, China and the EU use “almost identical terminology” if the necessity for international security cooperation and multilateralism is concerned, but use quite “different connotations.” How this works out in practice is illustrated for instance by Janka Oertel. She discusses Chinese and European involvement in UN peacekeeping missions and observes that in comparison to the wider European norm-based approach, China favours a more conservative interpretation concerning the scope and legitimacy of peacekeeping missions, stressing essential conditions such as host nation consent, neutrality and the use of force merely for self-defence. Interesting thoughts on the future of multilateralism and the characteristics of a multipolar world are also presented by Xuan Xingzhang and Yang Xiaoping’s chapter on hegemonic cycles and by Feng Feng’s chapter on Russia-China-Europe relations, although the latter at times seems overly idealistic when it comes to analysing the three parties’ proclaimed preference for multilateralism.

The volume’s different case studies represent a very valuable overall contribution. A fascinating analysis of the EU-China cooperation on satellite technology by means of the Galileo project and the debate on the Chinese indigenous *Beidou* (Compass) programme is presented by Nicola Casarini. The chapter by Willem van Kemenade provides a gripping historical account of the bilateral diplomatic interactions surrounding the Iranian nuclear issue, while Frans-Paul van der Putten and Susanne Kamerling discuss China’s ground-breaking maritime mission to combat Somali piracy in the Gulf of



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Aden, allowing for this unprecedented cooperative interaction at an operational level between European and Chinese military forces.

Overall, the volume has certainly taken an interesting and refreshing perspective by looking at China, Europe and international security without explicitly including the US in every analytical framework. This sets it apart from other publications, such as the recent book *US-China-EU Relations: Managing the New World Order*, also published in the Routledge Asian Security Studies series (and reviewed in the *EU-China Observer*, Issue 5, 2010). Although the US' influence looms in the background, the book offers some new insights and analysis of various cases where Sino-European interaction on international security affairs might eventually play a larger role in the future.