

BOOK REVIEW (I): «DEEPENING THE EU-CHINA PARTNERSHIP. BRIDGING INSTITUTIONAL AND IDEATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD»

BY C. ZHANG

Providing comprehensive and up-to-date analyses of key policy areas of the EU-China partnership, this edited volume itself is resulted from long-term and fruitful collaborations between European and Chinese scholars. The book has an ambitious agenda to analyse the various dimensions of highly institutionalised cooperation between China and the EU, as two 'emerging powers' of different kinds, in a systemic and coherent manner. While the contributors represent a wide range of disciplinary expertise including international relations, political economy, law and science and technologies (S&T) studies, most contributions share a neo-institutionalist approach to the study of EU-China relations, which is considered by the editors as forming the general conceptual framework of the book. This theoretical choice is informed by the observation that no fundamental security dilemmas between the two entities exist, which renders the realist approach largely irrelevant, and that the relationship is characterized by a 'complex interdependence' (p.31) in areas such as trade, sustainable growth, and environmental policies. However, the authors also discuss important divergences between China and the EU in terms of both normative frameworks – e.g. perceptions of sovereignty, human rights, and peace keeping norms – and behavioural patterns - in Men Jing's words, ways of doing things (p.62).



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Mario Telò
Chun Ding
Xiaotong Zhang

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Structurally the book consists of 17 chapters and is divided into 9 thematic sections. Following an introduction that sets out the aims and innovative features of the collection, Section II provides an overview of the historical trajectory (Chapter 2) and theoretical considerations (Chapter 3) of EU-China relationship. Defending the neo-institutionalist approach, Telo argues that the two relatively 'young' international actors share not only critical interests in economic stability and trade growth, but also the perspective of 'a multipolar global power structure' and a 'multilayered form of multilateralism' (p.33) in the context of global governance. From a theoretical perspective, it is noted that the increasing institutionalisation of bilateral and multilateral relations between the two serves crucial functions such as developing rules and procedures, limiting

misunderstandings, and socialising the governing elites. Although major differences in perceptions of national sovereignty persist, Telo proposes here a 'pluralist third way' (p.41) for theories of global governance beyond the dilemma between the traditional statist concept of sovereignty and the model of pooled sovereignty exemplified by the EU.

The next chapter (Chapter 4), however, is less optimistic about the potential of liberal institutionalism to overcome ideational difference and political restraints due to domestic regimes. While recognising the positive influence of regular diplomatic and policy dialogues on trade and climate governance, Cottey points out that persistent divergence between the two actors in human rights and territorial issues demonstrate the limitation of the liberal logic. The author also draws attention to the important impact of domestic politics on foreign policies, and notes that the 'new assertiveness' of Chinese foreign policies must be understood in relation to the ruling Communist Party's domestic concerns.

Section IV continues to explore the internal complexity of external/foreign policies. Menegazzi (Chapter 6) looks at the role of think tanks with a special focus on China, showing that the demand for EU-related expertise is fast increasing and

that although not directed participating in decision making, Chinese think tanks are able to 'influence how leaders see and think about the world' (p.75). Ghislain and Ponjaert (Chapter 7) employ an actor-specific theory to scrutinise the complex decision-making processes of the EU in the debates over WTO and MES issues in the EU-China partnership.

The following sections then examine the dynamics of divergence and convergence in legal cooperation, international interventions, sustainable growth, and trade and financial issues. Notably, Zhong Zhun (Chapter 9) traces patterns of agreement and disputes in the EU and China's respective responses to a series of intervention cases by adopting a neo-institutionalist approach that emphasises both the logic of appropriateness and that of consequence. Zhong concludes that the divergence between the two caused by normative rule structures is beginning to decrease, as China is pursuing a status as responsible rising power and the EU is turning to 'principled pragmatism' in its latest policy paper on global strategy.

Looking at a different case – technology and innovation policies, Defraigne (Chapter 11) arrives at a similar conclusion that stresses on convergence rather than a scenario of neo-mercantilist confrontation. The non-linear nature of technological development and the complementarities between the two economies are more likely to lead to cooperation than aggressive competition. However, he also admits that meeting serious challenges such as the rise of right-wing populism and potential US interference would require a 'strong political will' (p. 151) on both sides.

After a short section evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of science and technology cooperation, the final section looks at the politics of climate politics

both in the context of the EU-China partnership (Chapter 15) and in relation to their respective industrial policies (Chapter 16). Explicating in great detail the structure and processes of industrial policy making in China and the EU, Goron and Freeman show that both entities have seen a paradigm shift towards framing climate change as an economic opportunity rather than a 'burden'. However, they also notice significant differences between the two in what kind of industrial policy this positive framing entails.

A major strength of the collection is that it brings together multidisciplinary expertise to provide a thorough and well-organized review of various aspects of the EU-China relationship, which goes beyond formal institutions of the partnership and involves meticulous comparative studies. The volume adopts primarily a neo-institutionalist approach to researching EU-China relations, and situates the discussion in the wider debate about global governance. It is also noteworthy that the role of key third actors such as the United States and the United Nations is also given a careful consideration throughout the book. However, the wide-ranging scope of the book also means that the theoretical framework is not always addressed, as some chapters fall short of providing deeper conceptual analyses of empirical facts. Although the relevance of domestic political regimes and the challenge of populist movements is mentioned at times, a more grounded discussion of the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policies would be welcomed. Despite this, this book is unquestionably an essential reading for anyone with an interest in EU-China relations and an important text in the literature of neo-institutionalism and global governance.

Dr. Chenchen Zhang is a GEM PhD School Alumni, and wrote her thesis on «Territory, Rights and Mobility: Theorising the Citizenship/Migration Nexus in the Context of Europeanization» in a Joint European Doctorate between the Université libre de Bruxelles (BE) and LUISS Guido Carli di Roma (IT). Dr. Zhang is currently a visiting researcher at the Institute for European Studies at the ULB.



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