

Joanna Wardęga, ed.. *China–Central and Eastern Europe Cross-Cultural Dialogue: Society, Business and Education in Transition*. Chinskie Drogi Series. Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2017. 456 pp. \$55.00, paper, ISBN 978-83-233-4111-6.

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China–Central and Eastern Europe Cross-Cultural Dialogue, a multi-author volume edited by Joanna Wardęga, is divided into three sections: “Society and Culture in Transition,” “Economy and Markets in Transition,” and “Education in Transition.” The volume attempts to present a broad range of topics related to relations between China and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Chinese ties with CEE countries have been a widely debated topic, especially with regard to China’s political influence in the region. The establishment of the so-called 16+1 platform for cooperation in 2012 serves as a case in point. Since then, sixteen CEE states (both European Union members and non-members) and China started to hold numerous high-level meetings between politicians, experts, and business practitioners. The prevailing Chinese narrative has been one of win-win cooperation and inclusiveness. Yet Beijing’s growing interest in strengthening and institutionalizing ties with CEE states has sparked controversy among many European observers. Moreover, despite the Chinese narrative on successful cooperation, which accelerated even further with the establishment of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, few tangible results have been achieved so far. Western Europe has accused Beijing of trying to destabilize the EU from within, while differ-

ent stakeholders within the CEE region have tried to explore this new environment to achieve their own goals.

It is precisely in this context that the contents of the volume should be analyzed. The book touches on a variety of subjects that are potentially controversial and have theoretical and practical importance. However, by having such a broad scope of interest, the volume risks oversimplifying many issues (for example, the political and strategic implications of Chinese investment in the region), while putting too much emphasis on other topics that are less vital to contemporary developments (for example, overly theoretical and historically grounded essays). While interdisciplinary comparative studies are definitely needed and have great potential for generating new insights, they should also be written in a way that enables readers to draw constructive conclusions. In this context, the volume does offer a broad introduction to many important topics related to Sino-CEE relations, but at the same time it lacks rigor when presenting them. What follows is a brief description of the main contents of the book as well as an evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses.

The first part focuses on a range of topics related to social, cultural, and other types of change

in China and the CEE region. While some of the essays show new perspectives on certain developments (for example, Wardęga's text on the Chinese community in Poland or Tamas Matura and Agnes Szunomar's essay on perceptions of China among CEE university students), most are only loosely related to the book's main theme, and some do not relate to the theme at all (for example, Roxana Ribu's essay on the transition from "mind Confucianism" to political Confucianism or Mateusz Stepień's text on conceptualizations of constitutionalism in contemporary China [p. 141]). Although these essays generate important insights, they are not relevant for the volume's focus. Lukasz Gacek's comparative contribution on Chinese and Polish developments toward low carbon economy presents a good overview of current trends, but it is unclear why it is categorized under the theme of society and culture, especially when the second part of the book ("Economy and Markets in Transition") deals precisely with problems related to markets, economy, and trade.

The second section consists of nine essays highlighting specific aspects of economic change in relation to China and CEE states. Some of the pieces deal with the geographical distribution of China's economic influence in the region (such as Rafal Koszek's and Anna H. Jankowiak's essays), while some others propose practical recommendations for furthering Sino-CEE cooperation (for example, Tomasz Bielinski's piece on Chinese mobile phone game market's development as an export opportunity for CEE mobile game producers). The essays presented in this section are mostly descriptive and analyze the current state of Chinese economic and trade-related activities in the CEE region. One contribution that stands out in terms of its overall perspective is Michal Lubina's essay on the BRI and its geopolitical consequences for Poland. Although it proposes a daring argument (the New Silk Road as a hypothetical long-term opportunity for Poland to escape the destiny of being a peripheral country), it does so by presenting a wide range of sources. As a result, it offers a the-

oretically grounded, albeit controversial, argument.

The last section, focusing on issues surrounding the topic of education and history, presents a range of essays from both academics and practitioners engaged in teaching Chinese as a foreign language and teaching CEE languages in China. The last two pieces attempt to link the history of Jesuit missionaries with contemporary Sino-CEE relations. Essays combining practical and academic knowledge about Chinese-language teaching offer interesting insights related to cultural differences in learning patterns (for example, Wang Yan's comparison of traditional Chinese and Western teaching styles), while some others are quite technical. For example, the quantitative study on the correlation between learning and teaching styles and their relation to cultural intelligence (by Li Xiaomei, Ma Xiaoxue, and Hu Tongtong) will be difficult to comprehend for readers with little knowledge of quantitative research methods.

Although I spotted some minor factual errors in the volume—like wrong start dates for the establishment of the BRI (pp. 227, 250)—its biggest weakness remains, as stated above, the dubious choice of topics. Another visible problem is insufficient proofreading and editing. While some of the essays are indeed well researched and well structured (such as Agnieszka McCaleb and Szunomar's comparison of Chinese, Japanese, and South Korean Foreign Direct Investment in the CEE region), some others are chaotic and unrelated to the leading theme of the volume (such as Balazs Sarvari's essay on China's role in the new world order). Interdisciplinary volumes of this type are undeniably needed, but their scope should be limited in order to create a specific and in-depth account of social change across cultures and continents.

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