H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Roland Vogt, ed. *Europe and China: Strategic Partners or Rivals?* Global Connections Series. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012. 276 pp. $30.00 (paper), ISBN 978-988-8083-88-6.

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Published on H-Diplo (November, 2012)

Commissioned by Seth Offenbach

China's development over the last three decades has created a crisis of sorts for scholars as we have come dangerously close to exhausting our supply of adjectives! China's rise is frequently described as unprecedented, unparalleled, remarkable, incredible, even miraculous, but I assert that the proper adjective ought to be "challenging," for there can be no doubt that China's growth presents a number of challenges to the global status quo. Developed countries have had to make room in the global economy for an ascendant China, with little time to adjust to the new reality. The majority of English-language scholarly treatments dealing with China's rise focuses on how the United States is coping with this seismic shift in the global distribution of economic and military power, but relatively few works focus on how the European Union (EU) is dealing with the same challenges. The work under review, *Europe and China*, therefore constitutes a welcome addition. Based on a workshop held at the University of Hong Kong in June 2009, the book brings together a diverse group of scholars who work on various aspects of the Sino-European relationship. The workshop aimed at penetrating the veil of official discourse that frequently obscures the true face of Sino-European relations. Phrases like "constructive engagement" and "strategic partnership" often express aspirations rather than realities, and the authors in this volume clearly demonstrate that there are many obstacles to overcome and much work to do before policymakers in Brussels and Beijing can build a closer Sino-European relationship.

Before reviewing the contents a warning is in order. As is the case with many books that deal with the EU and multilateral global governance, this volume is full of obscure abbreviations. To the uninitiated this avalanche of acronyms can be overwhelming, but to the editor's credit this volume includes a comprehensive table of abbreviations. The volume is edited by Roland Vogt, an assistant professor of European studies at the University of Hong Kong. In addition to the useful table of abbreviations, Vogt provides an excellent introduction and conclusion, pointing out the common threads that tie the chapters together. In particular, his introduction provides a useful overview of Sino-European relations prior to the 1980s, and offers insights into the ongoing problems bedeviling efforts to create a stable relationship that fulfills the expectations of all involved.

The volume is divided into two parts, with the first covering Sino-European relations in general and the second focusing on specific issues that continue to cause friction between China and the EU. In part 1, authors Xinning Song, Chengxin Pan, Vogt, Li Wang, and Reuben Wong examine the Sino-European relationship from a variety of perspectives. Song criticizes the EU's professed goal of creating a "strategic partnership" with China, arguing that such a relationship requires at least some shared strategic concerns. However, aside from a common desire to engage in trade and a general commitment to multipolarity and multilateralism, Beijing and Brussels really do not have any shared strategic concerns. The trade relationship between these two powerful economies is of course immensely important, but is it enough to merit designation as a "strategic partnership"? Song thinks not, and blames both Beijing and Brussels for mischaracterizing the relationship based on their unrealistic expectations about the extent of possible cooperation.

Pan also deals with the unrealistic goals established by both parties in the relationship. He focuses on the EU's attempt to position itself as a "normative power" in the post-Cold War world by championing multilateralism, global governance, and the environment. This reinvention of Europe's role in the world is problematic for

the EU relationship with China for a number of reasons. In keeping with its self-assigned role, the EU occasionally feels compelled to take positions on such issues as human rights that actually interfere with the development of closer ties with China. Beijing does not appreciate being criticized, lectured, or even mentored, and EU efforts to exercise its "normative power" can lead to friction in Sino-European relations.

Complicating matters is the growing sense of unease on the part of European citizens about China's growing influence, as well as its record on human rights and the environment. Vogt's chapter deals with the impact of negative popular perceptions of China on European efforts to foster closer relations. He argues that few national political leaders see any advantage to pursuing closer ties when such efforts promise no electoral payoff at home. Attempts to downplay criticism of Beijing in order to grease the wheels of Sino-European commerce are increasingly viewed negatively, while high profile visits from the Dalai Lama and others from Beijing's *persona non grata* list resonate well with voters. As Vogt notes, these domestic pressures make it difficult for EU officials in Brussels to foster closer ties with Beijing.

In his chapter, Wang examines Chinese perceptions of Europe and Beijing's hopes for the Sino-European relationship. As Wang notes, many policymakers in China hope that a closer Sino-European relationship will curb or at least balance U.S. influence around the world, but he contends that the transatlantic relationship has not weakened to the extent necessary for such a realignment to occur. Wang sees this goal as too ambitious, and argues in favor of forging a relationship incrementally, based on cooperation in areas where Chinese and European interests align.

In the final chapter of part 1, Wong compares European and American perspectives of China. This is a very useful chapter, for no work on Sino-European relations can ignore the influence of the United States. Despite strains that appeared during the George W. Bush presidency, the U.S.-EU relationship remains strong, as does Washington's relationship with individual European powers, and this complicates Chinese efforts to enhance its own relationships in the region. Sino-European relations continue to be influenced by the dynamics of the Sino-American and Euro-American relationships.

When taken together, these chapters make it clear that the Sino-European relationship is both highly complex and difficult. While trade draws these two important economies ever closer, China's prickliness when it comes to unsolicited advice about its internal affairs makes it difficult for European leaders to foster closer relations without downplaying core values. The chapters in part 2 of the book address some of the issues that frequently create friction in the Sino-European relationship. Ting Wai focuses on European advocacy of human rights, a role seen as central to the EU's self-identification as a "normative power." China is famously resistant to criticism, but Ting argues that the EU can still promote the development of human rights without directly challenging Beijing by mentoring members of the Chinese legal profession and fostering the growth of civil society. However, it is unlikely that the current regime in Beijing will welcome such activities, for it sees them as ultimately subversive of its political monopoly.

In the next chapter, Linda Jakobson and Jacob Wood examine China's growing role in Africa. Driven by the search for new markets and the desire to secure access to resources, Beijing is gradually increasing investment in Africa. However, Africa has also been a traditional focus for European development efforts, including programs to promote human rights and good governance. Beijing has few qualms about working with the region's less reputable leaders, and has provided economic benefits to regimes that are under sanction by the EU. This creates friction, for EU leaders see Chinese actions as undermining their efforts while Beijing sees European development policies as neocolonialist. Given that both parties stand to benefit from African economic growth and political stability, the authors feel it is essential for Beijing and Brussels to coordinate their approach to the continent. However, it is questionable to assume that Beijing will sign off on EU development policies that promote human rights and democracy if these threaten the preferential access to resources and markets that China has negotiated with some African regimes.

The next two chapters deal with Sino-European cooperation on environmental issues and the challenges of securing energy supplies. Richard Balme discusses European and Chinese views on environmental protection and climate change agreements. The Europeans see protection of the environment as a core part of their role as a "normative power," and they have been at the forefront of efforts to hammer out multilateral agreements on climate change. It is usually assumed that China's no holds barred approach to economic growth makes Beijing reluctant to agree to environmental accords, but it is also assumed that Beijing must be part of any such agreements if they are to have any chance of success. Balme shows that while Beijing is concerned about a

negative impact such agreements might have on growth, it is also well aware of the dangers posed by environmental degradation, and therefore is willing to negotiate. The Europeans have been successful in enlisting Chinese support for a number of environmental agreements, and have helped China address its environmental problems through transfer of technology and expertise.

Steve Wood's chapter on energy security is somewhat out of place in this volume, unless one accepts the claim that Taiwan is a province of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Every other chapter in the volume focuses on the PRC with the exception of Wood's, which focuses on the search for energy security in Europe and Taiwan. While this chapter is an interesting comparison that highlights shared energy dilemmas–both the EU and Taiwan import much of their energy in the form of oil and both continue to debate the pros and cons of nuclear energy as an alternative–given the themes addressed in this volume, it would have made more sense to include a chapter specifically on Europe and the PRC. Beijing has a growing thirst for energy and actively seeks to bypass existing supply networks by negotiating preferential access. While Taiwan does compete with the EU for energy in some markets, the far bigger challenge to Europe comes from China, which has economic and military clout far beyond Taipei's. One can only imagine what would happen if Beijing sought to persuade Moscow to divert some of its oil to China! Wood's analysis is thought provoking, but a chapter comparing PRC and European energy issues would have been a better fit for this volume.

The final chapter by Beatrice Leung examines the tense relationship between the Vatican and China, and the critical roles played by both Macao and Hong Kong in negotiations between Rome and Beijing. The obstacles that stand in the way of a rapprochement between the Vatican and Beijing are very similar to the obstacles that interfere with the creation of a closer Sino-European relationship. Both the Vatican and the EU want increased access to China, but to gain access Beijing requires them to compromise on some of their fundamental principles–the EU must tone down its advocacy of human rights and democracy, while the Vatican must agree to abandon relations with Taipei and share authority over the Chinese Catholic Church with the PRC government. In both cases, there are powerful incentives to submit to Beijing's terms, and in both cases the parties have attempted to gain benefits without compromising too much. As Leung shows, the Vatican has used Hong Kong as an outpost for projecting its influence into China, but she also notes that Beijing has fought back by promoting the far more compliant Catholic Church in Macao as an alternate channel for communications with Rome. Beijing has little incentive to compromise: given the more cordial relationship between Beijing and the current Kuomintang (KMT) regime in Taiwan, wooing the Vatican away from Taipei is no longer seen as a priority.

Europe and China is worth the read; the chapters are dense, but the insights they offer on the complexities of the Sino-European relationship are worthwhile. The noise generated by U.S. angst over the shifting balance of power tends to drown out everything else, but it is important to remember that Europe has also had to respond to the challenges posed by China's rapid growth. The Europeans and the Chinese have had to figure out how to deal with each other on a variety of issues, many of which are analyzed in this book. Both Europe and China have had to reassess their assumptions and expectations, but this is to be expected in any new relationship. As the authors of this book point out, for economic reasons alone neither party can ignore the other, and the onus is on political leaders to push past the obstacles that stand in the way of a closer and more productive relationship.

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Citation: Colin Green. Review of Vogt, Roland, ed., *Europe and China: Strategic Partners or Rivals?*. H-Diplo, H-Net Reviews. November, 2012.

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