

TOMASZ KAMIŃSKI
SYPIAJĄC ZE SMOKIEM. POLITYKA UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ WOBEC CHINY
[‘SLEEPING WITH THE DRAGON.
THE EUROPEAN UNION’S POLICY TOWARDS CHINA’]

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The importance of China in the international arena has been growing steadily for years. In the modern world due to the economic links connecting states and the nature of global challenges, it is simply impossible to ignore China, that is the title ‘dragon’. Also the European Union itself trying to maintain its current position in the international arena is simply doomed to a partnership with China. However, as the author indicates ‘sharing the bedroom with the “dragon” is neither comfortable nor easy’ (p. 8). It seems that these words perfectly describe the situation the European Union is now in. In his book Tomasz Kamiński tries to present the complexity of relations between the two entities, showing what changes they underwent in the period between the publication of the first EU strategy towards China in 1995 and 2014 when China became the world’s largest economy. The main aim of the author is to prove the thesis ‘that in the balance of power between the EU and China there was a fundamental change to the disadvantage of Europe, as a result of which it lost the possibility to effectively use a part of the tools of its external policy’ (p. 13). In addition to the main aim, the author also lists three specific objectives which include: the identification of historical and institutional conditions, the analysis of the key areas of the EU’s policy towards China, and the determination of the scope of necessary changes in the assumptions of the EU’s policy.

The main part of the work was divided into eight chapters, each of which is dedicated to a different issue associated with the EU’s policy towards

China. This division results in part from the above-mentioned aims adopted by the author. The first chapter of the book entitled „Bilans pierwszego dwudziestolecia relacji – polityka wobec ChRL w latach 1975–1994” [‘The balance of the first two decades of the relations – the policy towards China in the years 1975–1994’] presents the genesis of the EU’s relations with China. In order to systematise the chapter, this period is further divided into three characteristic stages. The first covers the years 1975–1989, that is the stage of development of economic relations. Particular attention was devoted to the Agreement on Trade and Cooperation adopted in 1985 which still constitutes the current legal basis for mutual relations. The next stage covers the years 1989–1991, i.e. the period of the crisis in relations caused by the massacre in Tiananmen Square. The last stage are the years 1992–1995, that is the period of normalisation of relations. The author shows how the first Asian strategy was adopted by the European Commission in 1994, which became the reason for the adoption of a strategy dedicated exclusively to China a year later.

The second chapter entitled „Ewolucja strategicznych założeń polityki unijnej wobec Chin” [‘The evolution of strategic objectives of the EU’s policy towards China’] is a direct continuation of the narrative begun in the previous chapter. The starting point for the author is the programme document entitled ‘A long term policy for China-Europe relations’ adopted by the European Commission in 1995. In this chapter Tomasz Kamiński makes an in-depth analysis of six programming documents adopted in the period from 1995 to 2006, when the last strategy was issued, entitled ‘Closer partners, growing responsibilities’. Each of these documents is thoroughly described in separate subsections.

The third chapter is entitled „Struktura instytucjonalna polityki Unii Europejskiej wobec Chin” [‘The institutional structure of the EU’s policy towards China’]. In this chapter the author presents the institutional state both before and after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. A lot of attention was devoted here also to the issue of high mismatch between the current legal basis of the EU-China relations and the current reality. Both parties are unable to agree on the scope of a new framework agreement which would replace the current agreement dating back to 1985. While Europe wants to conclude a comprehensive agreement which would cover both political and economic issues, China wants to reduce its scope solely to economic issues.

The fourth chapter is entitled „Gospodarczy wymiar współpracy Unii Europejskiej z Chinami” [‘The economic dimension of EU cooperation with China’]. In terms of size it is the most extensive chapter in the whole work,

which is justified by the fact that economic issues are still the most important aspect of the relations between the two entities. A lot of attention was devoted to changes in trade relations which occurred when China joined the World Trade Organisation. Moreover, Tomasz Kamiński raises an extremely valid issue related to granting of the status of the 'market economy' to China.

The next chapter „Unia Europejska wobec problemu łamania praw człowieka w Chinach” [‘The European Union and the problem of human rights violation in China’] was dedicated to one of the most problematic issues in the relations between the EU and China. The author describes how the attitude of EU decision-makers to the issue of human rights violations changed from the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989 to the reactions to the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008.

The sixth chapter is entitled „Problem ochrony środowiska w polityce wobec Chin” [‘The problem of environment protection in policy towards China’]. This topic is very important because this is now one of the most serious challenges of a global nature. What is worth attention is the fact that it is one of few areas of cooperation, in which both parties at least seem to agree with each other on the merits. Chinese policymakers have been trying to acquire Western know-how in the field of renewable energy technologies for years, so Europe is the ideal partner for talks.

The next chapter, „Embargo na sprzedaż broni” [‘The embargo on arms sales’] raises the issues of the embargo imposed on China after the massacre in Tiananmen Square in 1989. Despite long-term attempts of Chinese authorities to abolish the embargo there has been no breakthrough yet, partly, as indicated by the author, as a result of strong pressure from the United States.

The last, eighth chapter entitled „Pomoc unijna dla Chin” [‘The EU’s aid for China’] describes the issue of development aid granted to China in the past. The author attempts to answer the question about the effectiveness of the executed aid projects and programmes. However, an answer which is unfavourable for the European Union emerges from his considerations. In the current EU budget for 2013-2020 European states did not foresee further development aid for China.

There is no doubt that Tomasz Kamiński’s book clearly indicates that indeed in accordance with the adopted thesis there was a change in the distribution of power. When in 1995, the EU adopted its first programme document entitled ‘A long term policy for China-Europe relations’ it was clearly a dominant party in the relations. Since then, China has undergone a remarkable economic transformation and has become a power as influential as the EU itself. The original plan of constructive engagement of China in

more active participation in the international arena lost its meaning a long time ago because the People's Republic of China has occupied an important position in world politics for a long time. We may wonder, however, if the thesis advanced here is ambitious enough, whether this fact is not already well-known in the second decade of the twenty-first century to the majority of researchers interested in international relations. Nevertheless, the book according to its subtitle „Polityka Unii Europejskiej wobec Chin” [‘The European Union’s policy towards China’] provides an extremely valuable knowledge about a wide spectrum of issues related to the EU-China relations. Thanks to the efficient and coherent narrative the reader is led through all key aspects of these relations.

The title chosen by the author „Sypiając ze smokiem” [‘Sleeping with the dragon’] very well illustrates Europe’s relations with China outlined in the book. After reading, it seems that the title can be understood in two ways. The first way involves the spontaneous association with the saying ‘sleeping with the enemy’. Indeed, the EU has to deal with a partner but also – what you have to remember – a more and more influential competitor in the international arena which presents completely different values. It is difficult for both parties to reach an agreement in the majority of issues. It can be assumed that some of the issues which have been in deadlock for years, for example the European arms embargo, will still be valid for many years. But despite all issues that divide the two sides, they are aware that they are doomed to cooperate with each other and whether they want it or not they have to find a way to common coexistence. The other way of understanding the title is connected with the assessment of the hitherto prevailing activity of the EU in relations with China. After considering this it can be concluded that while the ‘dragon’ is becoming more and more influential, the Union is simply asleep. It is aware of the need for closer relations with China and yet is still doing far too little to turn the relations with that country into a real, not just on paper, strategic partnership.

„Sypiając ze smokiem” [‘Sleeping with the dragon’] is a very important item on the Polish market since, as the author notes in the introduction, the relations of these two world powers have not yet been summarised in a comprehensive monograph in our native language. Given the scale of political and economic ties between the European Union and China this state of affairs is incomprehensible. That is why, we should appreciate Tomasz Kamiński’s book which can contribute to the popularisation of the issues in Poland. The advantage of the book is that the author draws his knowledge from the analysis of sources, both primary and secondary, the majority of

them are foreign publications in the English language, not readily available in our market.

The only drawback of the book is the fact that the burden of the narrative seems to sometimes stop in the years 2005–2008. For example, the author discussing the issue of the impact of exchange rates on trade relations focuses on the rates of the yuan against the euro from 1999, 2004 and finally 2008, when one euro cost even 10.7 yuan (p. 89). He does not mention, however, that at the end of 2014 one euro cost only 7.6 yuan. In another place he writes, ‘it is estimated that the average savings of a statistical European household arising from the availability of cheaper goods from China amount to about 300 euro per year’ (p. 74). While this information is valuable for the reader, it seems that the author should have explained that the source on which he relies says about the state of as late as 2006. These minor shortcomings on the part of the author may partly result from the fact that, as he himself admits, the book is to some degree based on the doctoral thesis, in which the narrative ended in 2008 (p. 9). It cannot be denied, however, that the author has put a lot of effort to expand and update the narrative by adding events until 2014. In the book we find a lot of information and statistical data on the present state and current activities of the European Union.

In conclusion, the book is a very good position for all persons for whom the subject of relations between the European Union and the title ‘dragon’ remains unknown. It is also worth recommending to all persons who wish to systematise and supplement their existing knowledge. Due to the fact that the author used a thought out and transparent structure of the work, and a very intelligible language readers can easily and fast familiarise themselves with basic information about the complex relations between the European Union and China.

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