

Book Review

Wyn Rees (2011)

The US-EU Security Relationship

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

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Security cooperation between the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) has fundamentally changed twice in recent times, first after the end of the Cold War and again after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The way in which these changes have impacted on the relationship between the US and the EU in matters of security - accordingly defined more narrowly as matters involving the use of force - is the theme of this book. It is part of the European Union Series by Palgrave Macmillan, which has established itself as one of the leading textbook series on European Union politics. The target audience is thus mainly undergraduate students of politics and international relations as well as generally interested readers and practitioners.

While NATO has often provided the first point of reference on the US-EU security agenda, the book takes a more comprehensive approach in line with its temporal focus by extending the analytical scope to also include bilateral relationships between the US and individual European countries, cooperation at the United Nations, the development of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), enlargement issues in both the EU and NATO, states of concern, nuclear non-proliferation and homeland security cooperation. These specific areas of security cooperation are used as individual case studies in order to demonstrate the validity of five general core arguments: First, the security interests of the US and the EU have been diverging since the end of the Cold War; second, the security focus of the US has shifted away from Europe; third, this shift has seen the prioritisation of global security issues; fourth, the US and the EU have disagreed over the appropriate means to address new security challenges; and fifth, divergences between the two actors in some areas of the security agenda have been accompanied by convergences in other areas.

The first chapter is central insofar as it lays out the conceptual foundations on which the majority of the conclusions in all following chapters are based. It delineates what type of actor the US and the EU have come to represent in consequence of their peculiar histories, the norms and values they have developed in this connection, and how these factors have combined in predisposing them towards one way of behaviour or another. Robert Kagan's metaphorical distinction between Mars and Venus serves as the recurrent theme of the book in this regard. The self-image of the US as an exceptional nation with a duty to domesticate the international, if necessary through the use of force, and of the EU as a group of war-weary nations with a new-found preference for soft power lies behind many of the divergences in the examined areas. Notwithstanding its clear inclination for positive incentives, the book argues further, the EU has come to recognise the importance of improving its military capabilities, not only to prevent a recurrence of impotence in the face of war on the continent, but also to meet its aspiration to act globally, as in the cases

of the completed operation EUFOR Congo and the ongoing operation EU NAVFOR Somalia.

With regards to the development of the EU's CSDP, the core argument of the book is that rather than as a competitor of NATO, the US should view the CSDP as a complementary framework within which new security challenges that NATO may not prioritise under US leadership can be effectively addressed. The risk of a toothless EU is seen as far outweighing the risk of a weakened NATO in consequence of increasing neglect on the part of the Europeans. The improvement of its military capabilities and the required necessary political reforms to make them available, however, has represented one of the most formidable tasks for the EU in the years to come.

While the CSDP has enjoyed limited achievements from the perspective of transatlantic security cooperation, the enlargement processes that allowed ten Central and East European states to accede to the EU and NATO are portrayed in the book as relative success stories. One of the main reasons for why enlargement is considered successful may be the relatively low profile of the issue when compared to other areas of the transatlantic security agenda. For the most part, joint coordination of the processes was largely lacking despite previous agreements by the two actors to the contrary. It comes as no surprise then to see divergences between the US and the EU having resurfaced in relation to the latter's approach towards the western Balkans and Turkey. As a result, the book remains sceptical about the future of transatlantic relations in this context since "no common agenda towards enlargement between the two organizations" exists (p.104).

While preceding chapters emphasise the differences in the approaches of the US and the EU towards new security challenges and the occasional irritations these have caused on either side, the area of homeland security that has emerged following the terrorist attacks of 9/11 shows a new quality of cooperation in which both actors have developed "the sense of shared vulnerabilities" (p.172). Although the US perceives the threat of terrorism in terms of a war rather than the Europeans who frame it in terms of a crime, the intensity of cooperation on judicial matters, border security and data-sharing has been unprecedented and will most certainly become more important in the future.

Overall, the book is a clearly written introduction to the field of transatlantic security cooperation. However, at times its structure sits somewhat uneasily between an informative textbook and an argumentative research monograph. The theoretical background provided in the first chapter forms a sufficient basis for the reader's interpretation of the following case studies, but it remains relatively unconnected to them in the text. As a general introduction with the aim to provide a concise overview of recent developments in the field, however, the book is highly recommended for a second or third year undergraduate course in politics or international relations.
