

Alexandar Damjanovski

'Buffering' the US-China Tech Rivalry: The EU Strategy in the Era of Technological Competition

Technology has always been an important factor for assessing a state's international leadership and its strategic autonomy. As a key variable in the 'security dilemma', technology, and its application, influences polarity and is a crucial variable in comprehending the intricacies of international alignments in an era of great-power competition. By focusing on balancing and its cognates approaches, traditional realist analysis has proven insufficient to fully account for the EU's strategies in the struggle for technological power and sovereignty. While 'buck-passing' and 'chain ganging' perspectives may shed some light on the EU's foreign relations under multipolarity, 'buffering' better explains the EU's positioning vis-à-vis US-China tech rivalry, in an era still dominated by the US hegemony. The case of the EU's 'buffering' approach is illustrated here by the empirical evidence of EU initiatives over semiconductor technology, fundamental for its strategic autonomy. The research will also inflate the academic debate revolving around the EU's attempt to ascend as new 'defence technological power' and how trade politicisation has also reached the security domain.

Loretta Dell'Aguzzo and Emidio Diodato

The Belt and Road Initiative: An Opportunity or a Threat for the European Union?

This article discusses the stances adopted by EU institutions and Member States towards the Belt and Road Initiative and aims at accounting for the factors that shaped EU's response over time. In particular, through the analysis of official documents, publications and policies, this article

shows that at first EU's reaction was more favorable and later, starting from 2016, its attitude changed to become more hostile. This shift towards a more 'protectionist' stance reflects a change in the perception of China's external policy occurred not only at the EU, but also at some Member States' level. Whereas during the first two years after its launch, the BRI appeared as a carrier of opportunities for development, when the first BRI-related projects were implemented, both EU and its core Member States started to see it as a threat not only from an economic, but also from a political and security perspective. In particular, EU worries concern both the threat that this initiative poses to the rules-based current international order and to EU cohesion, as the BRI affects in different ways European sub-regions. Moreover, this paper argues that, even though EU and US have different interests and attitudes towards the BRI, the EU involvement in this initiative has not negatively affected transatlantic relations and over time EU and US reactions to the BRI evolved in similar ways. However, whereas on the one side the EU has started to counterbalance the ascendance of China, on the other side it has pursued this goal autonomously from the US and without overlooking the fact that China is not only a rival and a 'systemic competitor' but also an important negotiating partner.

Elena Icardi

Why Limit Excessive Individual Wealth? Reasons and Problems of Limitarianism

Can excessive individual wealth be restricted? This is the provocative question addressed by limitarianism, a recent theory of distributive justice put forward by Ingrid Robeyns. On this account, the fortune of the super-rich should be restrained both to prevent their disproportionate political influence and to cope with some contemporary issues, e.g., global poverty or climate change. Indeed, Robeyns proposes two arguments in favour of limitarianism: the democratic argument and the argument from unmet urgent needs. However, while for preserving the democratic ideal of political equality a top marginal taxation rate of 100% should apply, for raising the needed resources to tackle the unmet urgent needs such a top marginal taxation rate should decrease not to disincentivize individuals from collecting these resources in the first place. Given this tension, in the present

paper, I argue that only the democratic argument justifies limitarianism. Firstly, I explain why the friction imposes a choice between the two arguments. Secondly, I show how, by calling for a progressive taxation scheme rather than for an actual ceiling to individual wealth, the argument from unmet urgent needs is not a good argument for limitarianism. Finally, I argue that, if limitarianism is justified by the democratic argument, the limit should be sensitive to the overall economic distribution – namely the limit should be relative rather than absolute as Robeyns upholds. More precisely, in my view, the threshold should be established with respect to how much median wealth a citizen might own without enjoying boundless political influence.

Costanza Marcellino

**Between Autocratic Linkage, Support and Non-interference:
An Assessment of China's Influence in South-Eastern, Central,
and Eastern Europe**

The enthusiasm driven by the third wave of global democratization during the 1970s recently rolled back at the onset of a new wave of autocratization and the simultaneous rise of authoritarian powers such as Russia and China. Whether the empirical phenomenon of recent autocratization is connected with the increasing Chinese engagement with other countries remains unclear. This article addresses this gap by investigating the impact of the Chinese external influence on the evolution of regimes located in South-Eastern, Central and Eastern Europe. By employing data from different sources such as V-Dem dataset, WITS and CEPII database and by running random- and fixed-effects regression analyses, this study presents a comprehensive picture of the Chinese engagement's role on other countries' autocratization tendencies and their shifts in democratic quality.

