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over the last two decades. The reader can use it either to gain a comprehensive understanding of trends and issues, or as a point of reference for individual nations.

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Europe's Common Security and Defence Policy: Capacity-building, Experiental Learning, and Institutional Change, by M. E. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, ISBN 9781107173002); xvi+328pp., £65 hb.

Michael E. Smith's latest book is a remarkably well researched and highly detailed piece of work on the EU's development of its security and defence policy. Throughout eight chapters, the book covers the evolution of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), from its origins to its current state in 2017. After briefly going through the process that led to the creation of the CSDP, the first chapter sets the historical institutionalist-based analytical framework – experiential institutional learning. This approach focuses on three main concepts – responsibilities, rules and resources – as measurers of the EU's institutional change in the field. These three concepts are then applied to the different types of mission conducted by the EU: the initial take-over civilian and military missions in the Balkans (chapter 2); the independent military operations undertaken between 2003 and 2009 in Africa (chapter 3); the civilian and monitoring missions (chapter 4); the rule of law and security sector reform missions (chapter 5); and the EU as a maritime actor (chapter 6). The final two chapters are slightly different in scope, offering a more analytical take on the developments in security and defence with the Lisbon Treaty (chapter 7) and on the approval of the 2016 Global Strategy and what that means for CSDP (chapter 8).

Although the book's most immediate aim is to understand whether the EU has been able to learn from its experiences in missions and operations across the world in the last 15 years, it ends up also addressing a number of extremely important questions regarding the EU as a global actor and of how it is (or is not) capable of balancing its external strategic interests with the needs and demands of its internal integration project. The assessment is sufficiently nuanced to offer both despair and hope. In addition to specific failures and shortcomings of each CSDP mission or set of missions, the book is particular critical of the Lisbon Treaty as a missed opportunity to innovate institutionally based on 'pragmatic operational experiences' (p. 249). Ultimately, the book concludes, the CSDP remains limited by the combination of excessive bureaucracy – too many organizations, institutions and committees with a say in the field – and intergovernmental politics, which has kept CSDP low profile and subject to *ad hoc* motivations and resources, incapable of having a significant say in key hotspots around the world, starting with the Middle East in its own neighbourhood.

But for all the frustrations, CSDP has shown some positive results, namely in its missions in Aceh and EUNAVOR in the Gulf of Aden, a capacity to learn from its past experiences (far more than NATO, according to Smith), and the capacity to adopt a *de facto* comprehensive approach. These are important achievements for what ultimately is 'a regional IO' (p. 273).

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For obvious reasons, most of the book addresses the period before the EU Global Strategy was adopted in 2016. Its implementation, the developments associated with the Permanent Structured Cooperation in the field of defence, and the UK withdrawal from the EU will mean that there might be enough material for an expanded second edition very soon.

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EU–China–Africa Trilateral Relations in a Multipolar World: Hic Sunt Dragones, by A. K. Stahl (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, ISBN 9781137587015); xxiii+228pp., €100.00 hb.

China's role in Africa's development has faced abundant academic polemic in the last decade. This book proposes a welcome, balanced account of a fascinating facet of this story. Anna Katharina Stahl describes the EU's efforts in three policy fora to contain China's proactive role in African development. The empirically rich study unpacks the EU's failed attempts to set up effective institutional arrangements and shows that despite the EU's support of 'African ownership', it aspired to EU–China development policy co-ordination *on,* rather than *with* Africa.

Based primarily on about 100 interviews and content analysis of policy documents, the book demonstrates a rigour for empirical data decidedly above average in its discipline. After introducing the theoretical framework, which draws chiefly from liberal institutionalism and EU foreign policy studies, the book dedicates three chapters to the EU's respective bilateral, multilateral and trilateral efforts to influence China's development activities in Africa. Stahl proposes two strategic frames for EU action: towards Africa and initially towards China, a *transformational* approach attempts to diffuse EU norms and standards; whereas the EU turned to a *reciprocal* approach towards China after encountering resistance, with a readiness to consider partner preferences in renegotiating aid in Africa.

The book's strongest chapter on 'Chinese and African responses' unpacks the contentious diplomatic reality behind the EU's institution-building attempts. Stahl argues that the EU failed to establish policy co-ordination at all three levels because it lacked the readiness to truly co-operate on equal terms; reciprocal rhetoric was matched with transformative policy at odds with emerging powers' self-conception. China's lack of 'adequate institutions' and development expertise accounts for its non-participation in the EU's multi-forum effort (p. 143). Belated and superficial consultations at African Union level and no engagement of African states explain African non-participation as a 'sign of protest' (p. 147). The book concludes with an appreciation of the argument in the context of recent policy developments both inside and outside the EU.

If Stahl's book excels in unpacking the EU's institutional architecture, it is perhaps too light on the agency of China and Africa, both of which are relegated to a reactive role. A disparate, slimmer theoretical framework for non-European actors precludes the 'move away from an introspective and Eurocentric research approach' aspired by the book (p. 44). Lacking liberal institutions and European-style development expertise are arguably underdetermined explanations of rising powers' policies in an emerging multipolar world. Scholars outside EU foreign policy studies will therefore find less meat on the

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