
BOOK REVIEW

Karen E. Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, 3rd ed. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014, 292 pp.

The book titled *European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World* by Karen E. Smith offers an insightful discourse on the changing contours of Europe's foreign policy. Divided into eight comprehensive chapters, Smith discusses the conceptual underpinnings of the European Union's foreign policy, the Union's evolution as an influential political actor, the development of the EU's foreign policy instruments to cover more diverse and recent issues such as human rights, democracy and good governance, conflict resolution and the fight against international crime. This lends a template to the EU's foreign policy. The war in Afghanistan which began in 2001 and the war in Iraq (2003-2011) left the US with plunging levels of self esteem. These testing times provided the EU with the opportunity to emerge as an influential global actor.

It took nearly a decade at the beginning of the twentieth first century, for the EU to strike a consensus for framing a constitutional treaty, which did not reach the stage of ratification. This was followed by a period of reflection, and then agreement on the Lisbon Reform Treaty. It was hoped that the Lisbon treaty would herald a new chapter in the EU's role as a leading international actor.

The optimism dissipated as the eurozone crisis set in since 2009. It was a difficult phase where the EU was unable to concentrate on global affairs or respond with concrete actions on international issues. The Lisbon Treaty which entered into force in December 2009 was followed by global upheavals, turf wars and widespread turmoil, making the implementation of a common foreign and security policy a tad difficult. The drastically changing dynamics of world politics shifted the spotlight to Asia, with India and China emerging as powerful global actors.

The European Union has categorically laid down the objectives of its foreign policy. These broadly defined objectives are imperative for a bloc comprising as many as 28 countries. Hence, the author emphasizes that foreign policy objectives must be differentiated from general aspirations, as

carefully devised foreign policy objectives prioritize policy areas. In case of the EU, the fulfillment of foreign policy goals can be a daunting challenge as the Union has to generate consensus among member states with disparate national interests.

The chapter “The Evolution of the EU as an International Actor”, traces the evolution of the EU as a credible international actor. It highlights the concerted efforts that went into the formulation of foreign policy objectives. Till 1977, the European Community member states, which had launched political cooperation in 1970 outside the Community’s institutional framework had only vaguely enumerated their common foreign policy objectives as maintaining peace and stability in the world, and safeguarding the interests of the Community. The 1958 Treaty of Rome which established the European Community did not mention foreign policy cooperation as an objective, making it amply clear that the focus of the Community would be on economic integration. Before 1970, foreign and security policy cooperation were not considered as viable objectives for the then six member EC.

The chapter titled “The EU’s Foreign Policy Instruments” sheds light on the economic, diplomatic and military instruments, which play a pivotal role in furthering foreign policy objectives. It is interesting to note that the Copenhagen Report of 1973, and the London Report of 1981 did not chalk out the aims and objectives of European Political Cooperation (EPC). These reports mainly outlined the modalities of cooperation among member states. Smith points out that it was the preamble of the Single European Act (SEA) of 1987, which articulated the goal of ensuring that “common principles and objectives are gradually developed and defined” in the realm of foreign policy.

The chapter on “Human Rights”, identifies the promotion and protection of human rights as an important objective of foreign policy cooperation, which the author says was prioritized by the European Community ever since it launched EPC. During the first two decades of EPC, emphasis was placed on human rights through diplomacy and dialogue. In the later half of the 1980s, human rights were promoted more vigorously. Although the Luxembourg and the Copenhagen reports do not mention human rights, it was the 1973 Declaration on European Identity which mentioned ‘human rights’, albeit only once. Critics however detect a link between economic

interests and EU's propagation of the international human rights regime. Yet the EU professes that it perceives safeguarding human rights as a 'virtuous cycle', as mentioned by Smith. Since economic and political reforms call for liberalization, the protection of human rights is a significant marker of prosperity.

The chapter titled "Democracy and Good Governance", brings out the haziness surrounding the terms, as neither of these are codified in international agreements, nor is there wide agreement on them. Legitimizing both the terms is difficult in the light of international criteria. In 2009, the EU charted out the basic elements of democracy. These include the principle of non-discrimination, protection of minority rights, equal rights for men and women to participate in political decision-making, democratically elected representatives' role in governance and the accountability of public officials. Giving aid to the developing countries on the condition that they foster democratic principles may help in the promotion of democratic ideals.

The last chapter, "Conclusion" is devoted to analyzing whether the pursuit of the EU's five major foreign policy objectives (the promotion of regional cooperation, human rights, democracy and good governance, the prevention of conflict and international crime), is prompted by internal dynamics of the EU, or is a genuine and altruistic effort to foster these values across the globe. The "Conclusion" offers a discourse on whether the EU's policy making and practices fall in line with its avowed goals.

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