

Introduction

Controversies, sometimes bitter controversies, are an inherent element of international relations. Conflicting interests, different values, overlapping spheres of influences... all this make dispute settlement mechanisms crucial elements of international system. Searching for cooperation mechanisms that may help in overcoming existing controversies in Asia is the main topic of this monograph.

The monograph is based on the case studies in which authors analyse disagreements as well as collaborations between different actors in Asia. They are chosen different point of views that might be roughly divided into two groups. The first set of authors tries to look at regional or even internal problems that have international impact. The second group gives an outlook on the controversies linked to rising global presence of Asian countries, in particular China.

The opening chapter, written by Russian scholar Dmitry Kuznetsov, describes the phenomenon of rising Chinese nationalism in the context of the foreign relations. This process is, at least partially, controlled by the PRC authorities, who try to use it for their political purposes. In particular growing anti-American and anti-Japanese sentiments might be instrumentally used by the Chinese Communist Party.

The second chapter, by Agnieszka Batko, presents the Japanese policy of 'Womenomics'. This idea, part of the famous 'Abenomics', concentrates on persuading Japanese women to act more actively on the job market and seek for the opportunities to advance their careers. This highly controversial idea poses a series of evident challenges to the traditional concept of the role of women in Japanese society. However, what is even more important, it is a crucial part of Abe's reform package and its success or failure will have the consequences for Japanese position in the region and in the world.

In the next chapter Karol Żakowski analyses the reasons of failure in establishing a stable framework for Sino-Japanese security cooperation after the end of Cold War. The author argues that both countries have been unable to develop a full-fledged cooperation in the security field due to history problems, contrasting visions of regional security system, territorial disputes and rivalry for leadership in East Asia.

Kahraman Süvari examines North Korea's January 2016 nuclear test. He put it in historical perspective and also analyses the possible reasons behind the North Korean aggressive behaviour. In this chapter it is argued that North Korea's leadership carried out the fourth nuclear test mainly because it wants to strengthen its nuclear deterrent against the perceived regional threats.

The last chapter in this part of the book is dedicated to the South China Sea conflict, one of the most important international disputes in the regions. Hungarian analyst Péter Klemensits examines the main aspects of the defence reforms in the Philippines. He argues that the changes of the international and domestic security environment force the government to upgrade the armed forces capabilities and achieve a minimum credible defence posture.

The global outlook starts with study of the flagship Chinese initiative One Belt One Road (OBOR), written by Dorota Roszkowska and Emilia Radkiewicz. They analyse this programme, or maybe better strategy, in the context of the EU–China relations. The controversial Chinese initiative is undoubtedly a priority in Beijing's foreign policy but the Europeans are reluctant or at least indecisive.

In the next chapter young Chinese researcher Gu Hongfei analyse also OBOR but in the context of EU–China security relations. He identifies the major challenges and discusses opportunities that might be created by the implementation of Chinese grand plan. He predicts that, however controversial OBOR might be in Europe, it will lead to closer cooperation between the EU and China in the field of security.

Tightened cooperation in economic sphere between Europe and China is presented in the chapter written by Lukáš Laš. On the basis of Visegrad Four (V4) trade relations with East Asian partners he shows that not only China matters but also Japan and other countries from the region. He also advocates for building a particular 'Visegrad Brand' in Asia as a part of economic diplomacy. That might be helpful for V4 actors (countries, regions, cities and companies) to implement their business plans in East Asia.

The next three chapters are dedicated to China–US rivalry. David Jones assesses the American 'Pivot' to Asia arguing that "Neo-realist security traditions appear to have been blurred with neo-liberal trade temptations, the result forming a 'neo-liberalism' paradigm that could work if it contained the best ingredients of each." He predicts that only by focusing on opportunities for Sino-American cooperation the much wanted military de-escalation might happen.

His position is strengthened by Kamer Kasım that also analyses consequences of America's rebalancing towards Asia. He stressed that further economic integration and continuation of regional economic growth will help the rebalancing strategy and to improve relations between China, the US, and its allies.

Mateusz Smolaga approaches the topic of US–China confrontation from a different perspective. He makes comparative analyses of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) (Japan-led multilateral institution with strong American presence) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) (Chinese-led multilateral institution with no US membership). He identifies and explains possible scenarios of ADB-AIIB relationship, trying to predict if we should anticipate strong rivalry between these two institutions, as political realism would suggest, or will the ADB and the AIIB find a way to offer their best to the Asia-Pacific countries without any major conflict?

In the last chapter Joanna Wardega confronts the controversies arousing around Confucius Institutes. They are seen as government-backed institutions present on Western universities and use as instruments of Chinese soft power. She analyses one particular aspect of language education in the Confucius Institutes: how the Chinese territory is shown to the students of the Chinese language in the textbooks. Contrary to her hypothesis it turns out that the names associated with controversy, such as Tibet, Taiwan, and Xinjiang, are not particularly emphasized in the analysed textbooks.

Obviously the list of controversies in the region is much longer but this book does not pretend to present the comprehensive catalogue. We rather aim in this monograph, based on case-studies, to illustrate the complexity of controversies in Asia and different paths to overcome them.

TOMASZ KAMIŃSKI, Ph.D. in humanities, assistant professor at the Faculty of International and Political Studies, University of Lodz. His research activities are concentrated mainly on various aspects of the EU–China relations, the Sovereign Wealth Funds and regional/local authorities who develop paradiplomatical relations with foreign partners. He is also an active blogger and regular contributor to the magazine *Liberté!*, leading Polish political quarterly. His publications can be find at academia.edu or researchgate.net. Contact at tkaminski@uni.lodz.pl.