

The new book [China and Europe on the New Silk Road Connecting Universities Across Eurasia](#) (Oxford University Press) was successfully launched On 5 November in a well-attended Zoom webinar.

The book addresses the opportunities, controversies and tensions surrounding the New Silk Road. It looks at how universities, while faced with challenges to their autonomy and values, stand firm to defend global cooperation.



The event included the co-editors, authors, journalists, and an audience from across a broad range of time zones in Europe, Asia, and the USA.

**In the first panel** the book was introduced by the editors: Marijk van der Wende (Utrecht University), William Kirby (Harvard University), Nian Cai Liu (Shanghai Jiao Tong University), and Simon Marginson (University of Oxford).

Edited by



Marijk van der Wende  
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Nian Cai Liu  
Shanghai Jiao Tong University



Simon Marginson  
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Marijk van der Wende was thanked and complimented by her colleagues for her leadership in this project, which clearly brought to the fore that ***This is not a time to be silent.***

Key messages included:

- International history of higher education shows that universities broadly share the same values and objectives in advancing knowledge and learning.
- US-China tensions widen opportunities to deepen Europe-China collaboration.
- Scientific cooperation and academic exchange with China should be continued. It is an essential response to the rising political tensions.
- Universities have a distinct role in society, especially in domains where governments may be less effective, in sustaining the global common good. Hence they have an inherently international agenda.
- Geopolitics should not be confused with (or undermine) academic work which is based on mutual trust and exercised in an open and transparent global science system.
- The EU has a key role to play in rebalancing cooperation with China; making it more sustainable by leveling the playing field and mitigating risk
- Nationalist responses in the West risk to provoke government interventions in universities jeopardizing institutional autonomy and academic freedom; measures for which China is criticized.
- Strong investments and efforts in education are needed to overcome Europe's lack of knowledge about China and to match China's understanding of Europe. Such understanding requires a global rather than a purely Eurocentric perspective.
- Antagonistic frames and "cold war rhetoric" can be detrimental to the openness of global research and learning communities. And inspire world views of no use in educating the next generation, which will have to solve the global challenges, such as climate change, together. Precisely because they are global!

The **first panel** highlighted how the current geopolitical turmoil and global pandemic are affecting the higher education context and discussed what the shifting global flows, the US-China trade war, and the upcoming EU-China trade agreement seem to imply for cooperation in higher education and R&D with China. Simon Baker (Times Higher Education) led the consecutive discussion deepening questions regarding the impact of the pending US presidential elections, the Covid crisis.

The second panel discussed the role of **academic values as a compass for global collaboration**. Dominic Sachsenmaier (Göttingen University), Futao Huang (Hiroshima University), Gerry Postiglione (Hong Kong University), and Zheping Xie (Tsinghua University) highlighted how the political tensions in and around China working out in academic work, with implications for institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and joint efforts towards science as the global common good. The following discussion led by Ben Upton (Research Europe) shed further light on how degrees of institutional autonomy and academic freedom may differ, also within China. And how much “global humanities” still remains Eurocentric, also as it is studied in China, thus contributing to a better understanding of Europe by China, rather than the other way around.

The third and final panel discussed **Conditions for balanced EU-China collaboration**. It included Lynda Hardman (CWI Amsterdam & LIAMA), Marijk van der Wende, Stijn van Deursen (Utrecht University), Barbara Sporn (Vienna University of Economics & Business). It set out the actions and measures the EC needs to undertake to achieve a more balanced relationship with China. Using especially its stronger competencies (i.e. in research and trade) to level the playing field for IPR, technology transfer, mutual data access. From the ensuing discussion led by Koen Jonker (European Commission Joint Research Centre) it became clear that indeed the EU needs to reconsider its “Open strategy”, e.g. stepping up the conditions for participation of non-EU states in R&D and launching compliance guidance for dual-use research.