

CANADA AND THE CHANGING ARCTIC – SOVEREIGNTY, SECURITY AND STEWARDSHIP.

Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert and P. Whitney Lackenbauer. 2011. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press. xxix + 310 p, illustrated, softcover. ISBN 978-1-55458-338-6. \$34.95.

When glancing through media sources, ‘conflict’, ‘race for resources’ or ‘scramble for the Arctic’ are common narratives. Unfortunately, often substantial backings for these rather alarmist terms are absent. But luckily we have books! And books such as *Canada and the Changing Arctic* deal exactly with these narratives, in combination with Canadian ‘sovereignty’ and ‘security’. But the authors don’t just pick up the narratives and (dis)prove them – no – the papers seem to argue with each other or as the *Introduction* reads, they are in ‘dialogue with each other’ (page 5). The three authors, all renowned scholars, were selected by the Canadian International Council (CIC) in 2008/09 to produce a White Paper on Canadian Arctic policy based on three papers by each author. And it is these three papers that are the core of this book. Shortly after the publication of these papers in July 2009, the Canadian Arctic Strategy *Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future* was released, however, too shortly after to directly make use of the authors’ findings.

But what does this book contribute? Indeed, it contributes so much that it is difficult to summarise or to evaluate. It is probably the approach that the book takes that makes it so unique. This is because of the fact that the three authors all deal with Canadian sovereignty and security, but take very different approaches to the same issue. Therefore, three chapters, each written by one of the three authors, constitute the main body of the book, framed by an *Introduction* and a conclusion entitled *Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship: An Update*. In each of the chapters the authors present and argue their stances on the issues at hand.

In essence, the different core arguments are already summarized in the *Introduction* which presents short biographical and academic backgrounds of the authors and then provides a comparative summary of the authors’ claims. The reader is therefore already prepared for the different nature the papers have.

And Huebert starts with a rather strident chapter on Canadian sovereignty and security entitled *Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security in a Transforming Circumpolar World*. He takes a realist standpoint and argues that the main element in Canadian (and other) sovereignty claims and interests in the Arctic is control. Control and the ability to respond to threats is therefore the centrepiece of Canadian security. Since climate change makes the Arctic more accessible, outsiders find more interest in the Arctic ultimately challenging Canadian sovereignty. Although at present this is not the case, he argues that it is not a matter of ‘if’, but of ‘when’.

To this end, increased military presence to be able to control foreign vessels and foreign activities to enforce Canadian laws are, according to Huebert, necessary. And while up to this part the chapter was rather modest, the tone becomes much harsher now and Huebert engages in a discussion about the UNCLOS and the US’ non-ratification of such. This discussion is rather thin and not very convincing and I would

recommend Byer’s (Byer 2013) treatise on the issue to the reader.

And then the tone becomes even harsher and bristles with Cold War fears, rhetoric and state-centred paradigms when Huebert discusses Russian activities in the Arctic, which he sees as a major security threat – in the military sense – to the Arctic and which he ascribes drastic responses in case of disagreements. Basing this claim for example on Russian engagement in Georgia or on the 2007 North Pole flag planting, I found especially this part through its rhetoric and simplifying generalisation very confusing and not appropriate in a academic/political book. Indeed, this article is fuel to the fire of alarmist media when Huebert states that the ‘indicators [in the Arctic] are becoming somewhat worrisome’ (page 59).

Lackenbauer’s constructive and reflective chapter *From Polar Race to Polar Saga: An Integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World* is the calm after the storm. It is much more nuanced and more solidly argued and articulated than its predecessor. Lackenbauer takes an opposite stance to Huebert’s and claims that the notion of a ‘polar race’ is created by southern Canadians who do not know enough about the North. Given the diverse problems and challenges in the Arctic, proactive thinking is needed. And although he also contents that there are disputes and there is a need to further Canada’s engagement in the North, his interpretation of the same events that Huebert sees as threats to Canadian sovereignty results in the opposite: they through soft means strengthen international recognition of Canadian sovereignty.

Contrary to Huebert, Lackenbauer takes northern views into account. He shows that for northern governments and aboriginal groups, cooperation with non-Canadian and non-Arctic actors, sustainable communities and education are seen as the guarantors for sovereignty and security. Moreover, he takes a step back and claims that it is not an ‘Arctic Race’ that Canada should pursue, but instead should focus on an ‘Arctic Saga’, which includes strong governance systems and fruitful business opportunities in and for the Arctic. Therefore, he proposes a ‘3-D’ approach, meaning the focus on defence, diplomacy and development.

In much detail he explores what this means for Canadian future engagement in the North. Instead of conflict-laden narratives, Lackenbauer puts great emphasis on a constructive and peaceful sovereignty approach in the Arctic. He maintains that also other actors are interested in peaceful settlement of ongoing or potential disputes. It becomes clear that he asserts much importance to devolution and education in the North to ensure effective sovereignty and security. He concludes by saying: ‘Building the national will to seize our northern destiny, not out of fear but out of confidence and a sense of national purpose, will contribute to a stronger, more prosperous Canada and a stable and constructive circumpolar world’ (page 163).

Griffith goes even further than Lackenbauer in the chapter *Towards a Canadian Arctic Strategy* and notes that keywords for Canada should be ‘sovereignty’ and ‘stewardship’. Although not advocating an Arctic treaty, he advocates a central institution of Arctic governance that counters the current fragmentation. Not being treaty-based, it should be consensus-based and should observe, oversee, support and receive results of efforts of the Arctic Eight state initiatives while having the ‘big picture in mind’ (page 185). The Arctic Council could serve as the basis for this forum.

By focusing on a rights-based approach for the environment as such, Arctic peoples and cultures are inevitably respected, constituting the stewardship approach. Through this recognition and the transboundary nature of environmental challenges, the nation states need to cooperate more deeply. This, on the other hand, can occur through regional efforts.

For Griffith, a Canadian Arctic strategy should consider five general characteristics of the Arctic, namely its remoteness, its peacefulness, climate change, its fragmentation and lack of institutionalisation. Canada should therefore become a forerunner in a proactive and progressive governance system for the Arctic that is endowed with means to include these five characteristics. And ultimately, by creating this type of governance structure, its global opening should be imperative.

Canada's approach should therefore elevate Arctic relations to the highest political level, establish direct pan-Arctic collaborations for those regions most in need, and aim to broaden the mandate and structure of the Arctic Council to achieve coordinated stewardship for the Arctic. He provides numerous very, and sometimes perhaps too, proactive suggestions for policy makers and for the Arctic Council on how to achieve this.

As a last chapter, Lackenbauer presents post-Canadian Arctic Strategy developments. Although not summarising the

chapters, he presents once more how the developments in the Arctic can be interpreted differently. For a better contextual understanding of the Canadian Arctic Strategy, I would recommend to read Heininen's comparative analysis of the Arctic Eight's different Arctic strategies (Heininen 2012). But it needs to be said that the differences of interpretation is the strength of this book. It interprets, analyses, evaluates and recommends. While Huebert's article is the weakest through its rather weak argumentation and comparatively strong language, it may be necessary to stimulate discussion. And yes, the articles are in dialogue with each other and through their divergences deepen the understanding of the complexity of Arctic change (Nikolas Sellheim, Faculty of Law, University of Lapland, PO Box 122, 96101 Rovaniemi, Finland, (nikolas.sellheim@ulapland.fi)).

References

- Byers, M. 2013. *International law and the Arctic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Heininen, L. 2012. State of the Arctic strategies and policies – a summary'. In: Heininen, L., H. Exner-Pirot and J. Plouffe (editors). 2012. *Arctic yearbook*. Akureyri: Northern Research Forum. URL: http://www.arcticyearbook.com/images/Articles_2012/Heininen_State_of_the_Arctic_Strategies_and_Policies.pdf