

The European Union and the Geopolitics of the Arctic. Andreas Raspotnik. 2018. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing. 240 p, hardcover. GBP 72.00.

While the role and interests of China in the Arctic are increasingly studied and frequently debated, the political ambitions, motivations and practices of the European Union in and towards the Arctic have long been in need of a comprehensive book-length treatment. Andreas Raspotnik's 'The European Union and the Geopolitics of the Arctic' succeeds in making a strong scholarly contribution to filling this gap in the literature. The book demonstrates a 'distinct European geopolitical discourse on why the EU should be involved in Arctic matters' and discusses thoroughly why the EU's efforts have not been fully successful, 'despite the EU already being a *de facto* regional actor' (p. 175).

While making substantial original contributions, the book also deserves praise for its extensive and thoughtful use of extant literature, which lies spread across book chapters, articles and commissioned reports and research. Consequently, the book also fulfils a function as a kind of state-of-the-art review of the literature relevant to understanding EU Arctic politics and practices.

The book will also serve to deliver a corrective to some biases or tendencies in public/policy debates and narratives about the EU in Arctic states. Frequently, the European Union's engagement in the region is set up as a kind of non-Arctic state 'straw-man of non-understanding' of regional contours and complexities, perhaps drawing more upon public debates in the European Parliament rather than on the breadth of EU sites of Arctic-relevant policy work. This may stem back to some of the Arctic states' own narratives of diplomacy in the 2007–2008 period, which underlined the importance of simple 'teaching' about the Arctic (e.g. that the Arctic is different from Antarctica) to an 'overly concerned' European Parliament at the time.

'The European Union and the Geopolitics of the Arctic' presents a comprehensive view of EU legal, economic, political and environmental functions and interests in the circumpolar region. The book is clearly structured and has three substantive parts.

Part II unpacks the concept of geopolitics, both in scholarship and in policy usage/political practice. This section will be handy for any academic or policy actor who has noticed the ways in which the term geopolitics is bandied about, which often happens without sufficient reflection about the mixed heritage of the word, nor specification about why something is 'geopolitical' rather than simply 'political'. Given the topic of the book, the author has usefully chosen to weave in many examples of how geopolitics looks from the EU. He describes the European Union's discomfort with the 'crude concept' (p. 17) of geopolitics and halting and changing efforts to act as a unified 'geopolitical' actor as well. This use of EU examples in the section on geopolitics serves as a gentle and interesting introduction to core European challenges and commitments for the reader unfamiliar with EU politics, norms and policy practices.

Part III turns to the politics, institutions and economies of the Arctic. This section serves the opposite function from Part II: for the reader coming at the book from an interest in EU politics but new to Arctic issues, this comprehensive, analytically sharp and well-referenced section will serve as a useful introduction to the Arctic. An especially useful aspect of the section is that it does not conflate the politics shaping the region with the institutions/forums of the region. For example, the Arctic Council is treated thoroughly in the section, but the informal drivers of markets and economic opportunity come across clearly as well. A discussion of competing security interests and how EU interests align with or depart from NATO regional security concerns and interests would have added a further useful dimension to this section.

Part IV explores the dimensions that have emerged as significant in justifying EU presence and interest in the Arctic. It also details the policymaking process and the multitude of locations of politics and debate leading to EU actions in the region. Raspotnik considers the reception of all of these initiatives and interests and concludes that 'claiming to be a regional actor by making a variety of linkages has not been crowned with circumpolar acceptance, as the mixed institutional signals have rather led to many sceptical depictions of the EU's regional role' (p. 123). At the same time, the chapters show how progress on contentious issues (such as a compromise with Canada concerning trade in seal fur) and the EU's ongoing substantive contributions to Arctic Working Groups and Arctic research more broadly have contributed to a greater awareness and acceptance

of the EU's Arctic value and role. In a creative and engaging final empirical chapter, the Arctic is placed in the EU's broader 'space-making' practices by considering the various ideas and 'technologies of geopolitics' that the EU has employed in its efforts to 'get a regional foothold and claim Arctic legitimacy' in the critical years following the historic Arctic sea ice low in 2007 to the time of the book's completion in 2017.

In sum, the book's extensive case study of the EU and its Arctic engagement is revealing of practices, normative and cognitive commitments and competing logics/drivers in the politics of both the Arctic and the EU. (Elana Wilson Rowe, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), ew@nupi.no)

DOI: [10.1017/S0032247418000542](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247418000542)