

POLAR GEOPOLITICS? KNOWLEDGES, RESOURCES AND LEGAL REGIMES. Richard C. Powell and Klaus Dodds (editors). 2014. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. ix + 325 p, hardcover, illustrated. ISBN 978-1-78100-941-3. £81.00.

Politics are indeed something hardly understandable for outsiders and often simplified or overly sensationalistic media headlines contribute to an even more aggravated degree of understanding. And it is especially these media headlines that contribute further to a very negatively connoted understanding of ‘geopolitics’, fostered and triggered for example recently by the very controversial and complex developments in Ukraine in which Russia has been commonly portrayed as an expansionist and utterly aggressive polity. Similarly, Arctic and Antarctic ‘geopolitics’ have been vividly portrayed as being a ‘scramble for resources’ or a ‘grab’ for power spheres when states submitted their ‘claims’ to the Commission for the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS). But then there is a counterweight, that of researchers such as Powell and Dodds who in this book ask right away ‘why places like the Arctic Ocean and the polar continent and Southern Ocean frequently attract such headlines’ (page 3)? This book therefore aims to tackle this question and to create a new polar geopolitics which goes beyond the (neo-) realist understanding of the term, with a focus on knowledges, resources and legal regimes.

And, indeed, it succeeds in doing so! 17 contributions of senior and early career experts on different facets of polar geopolitics paint a significantly different picture here than that of a ‘scramble’ or a ‘race’. The world, as this book so wonderfully shows, is far more complex. It is thus that for instance issues of the law of the sea are covered in this volume, Arctic policies of Russia and the United States, Antarctic national politics of Argentina and Australia, and issues related to the geopolitical involvement and impact of and for indigenous peoples of the Arctic. Unfortunately, only three of the 17 articles exclusively deal with the Antarctic, albeit the book’s bipolar focus. But these are particularly thought-provoking.

Take for example Hemmings’ incredibly intriguing contribution on, in essence, the legitimacy of the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) in the 21st century and in a changing, globalised and evermore globalising post-cold war world. He is indeed starting a discussion on, as the chapter’s title implies, ‘[r]ejustifying the Antarctic Treaty System for the 21st century’. For example, he discusses the role of the United Nations in the ATS and in how far it does or is able to accommodate internationally recognised and implemented concepts and principles, such as sustainable development, common heritage or intergenerational equity. Hemmings makes clear that although in essence for example the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) or the Madrid Protocol make use of these concepts, they are nevertheless nowhere mentioned. This inevitably raises the question on the timeliness of the ATS. While at the time of its crafting and adoption around 50 years ago especially the Antarctic Treaty was considered modern and progressive, the ATS in its current form unveils important gaps based on which a re-justification and re-evaluation of the system and the Antarctica-debate as well as Antarctic futures is necessary. Hemmings’ contribution would have also been very well-suited for the equally thought-

provoking volume *Antarctic futures* (Tin and others 2014) that may complement the ‘Antarctic gap’, as I would call it, of the present volume.

But also other articles in *Polar geopolitics?* are particularly noteworthy. Depledge’s contribution ‘(Re)Assembling Britain’s “Arctic”’ opens up very important aspects on the discussion of non-Arctic states being or becoming interested in Arctic affairs especially since UK government officials construct different ‘Arctics’ and therefore create a (geo)political space and locate Britain in it. This occurs *vis-à-vis* Britain’s role in the world that Depledge characterises as ‘an outward-looking maritime trading nation embedded in a global network of states’ (page 184). This is indeed an interesting statement, but the author shows that Arctic interest is present in numerous government agencies and departments and although, at the time that Depledge wrote his article, a streamlined UK Arctic policy did not exist, the country has strong ties to the Arctic and with different Arctic actors. Of course, with regard to energy UK-based firms such as BP have been long engaged in Arctic energy production. Although this may continue in the future, also within the UK calls are getting louder to characterise Britain rather as a steward of the Arctic rather than an exploiter. Also science has been an important element of UK engagement in the Arctic and Antarctic and research leads and collaborations are significant linkages to the polar environments. This accounts certainly also to defence, which the author highlights as well. All in all, therefore, Depledge notes that in pursuit of its Arctic policies the UK combines ‘different assemblages of the Arctic as a place of science, resources and economic opportunities, while similarly blurring the UK’s roles as scientist, steward and economic opportunist with different kinds of future-oriented strategies’ (page 195). For the sake of completion must be mentioned that on 17 October 2013 the UK published its Arctic policy in which the three principles of ‘respect, leadership and cooperation’ are highlighted (Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2013).

A difficult and certainly controversial issue is touched upon by Strandsbjerg in his wonderful chapter on ‘Making sense of contemporary Greenland: indigeneity, resources and sovereignty’. He here deals with the indigenous challenge of statehood and thus ‘indigenous geopolitics’. While seemingly a new approach, the article quickly makes clear that it is not new at all, but that indigenous peoples have always struggled for land and resource use and thus sovereignty. These issues are particularly relevant in Greenland where the indigenous Inuit constitute the demographic majority while Greenland is aiming towards independence from Denmark. It is thus that Strandsbjerg presents the difficult and relationship between Denmark and Greenland and how equality between the two countries is a challenging issue. But he takes it even further and looks at how the self-rule government in its newly-gained administrative role of lands challenges the collective administration of land as traditionally found in Greenlandic society. Therefore, it is the Greenlandic government that directly challenges indigenous peoples’ rights by adopting laws that do not take these adequately into consideration. This is best shown by companies that, although sticking to the legally-inscribed social impact assessments, do not make reference to possible encroachments of indigenous peoples’ rights. Ethnic Inuit identity and territorial or state identity, albeit it being constituted of a majority of Inuit, therefore do not correspond in a Greenlandic context. For

a deeper discussion on the issues briefly touched upon in this article, I can point towards Jessica Shadian's work *The politics of Arctic sovereignty* (Shadian 2014).

All in all I have truly enjoyed this volume. Although some of the articles do not necessarily provide utterly new aspects of Arctic geopolitics, others, such as the described, are indeed very thought-provoking. The articles are not particularly long and therefore often merely frame a certain issue. But they do lay important groundwork that is very inspirational for future inquiry. What I particularly liked about many of the articles is the referencing of political and media sources. While not basing scientific arguments on them, the authors provide the reader with the ability of gaining insight into prevailing (geo)political discourse on the issues presented. What I do miss is a bit more geopolitical focus on the Antarctic. For example discussions on the Antarctic claimant states' ambitions in the 21st century would have been a very interesting topics to deal with along similar lines as Avango has done in his highly enlightening article *Heritage in action* (Avango 2013). Also, a list of acronyms would have been beneficial as some of the acronyms do not find explanation in the text. As is, it is in the reader's discretion to find answers to the question posed at

the beginning of the book and of this review as a summarising conclusion is missing. It would have been beneficial to add one as it leaves the reader a little lost at sea of polar geopolitics. But this could also an asset of this book: it presents and analyses, but does not draw definite conclusions. This underlines the groundwork character of this work. (Nikolas Sellheim, Faculty of Law, University of Lapland, PO Box 122, 96101 Rovaniemi, Finland (nikolas.sellheim@ulapland.fi))

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