## Polar Geopolitics?: Knowledges, Resources and Legal Regimes

Edited by Richard C. Powell and Klaus Dodds Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2014. Pp. x, 325. Index.

## Taisaku IKESHIMA

Geopolitics has about a century of history as a field of science. However, geopolitics as a branch of social science, or international relations, is still developing, and the term as well as its adjective, 'geopolitical', is nowadays often used in the mass media, without a clear-cut definition or concrete explanation. Particularly when it comes to the relationship between a geopolitical consideration and a legal framework in a region, international law, for example, may not be able to resolve questions that might arise, mainly due to its limits deriving from universal application and geographical (in-) consideration. Moreover, it may be easily assumed that a geopolitical scientist would not easily intend to construct a theory or discourse that solely deals with the Arctic or the Antarctic as a scope of study, let alone both polar regions as evidenced by the title 'Polar geopolitics'. Thus, it is considerably intriguing and timely to find such a title on a book.

The book under review derives from an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Seminar Series grant, Knowledges, Resources and Legal Regimes: The New Geopolitics of the Polar Regions (January 2010 – October 2011; RES-451-26-0661-A), through which four seminars and a workshop took place in Liverpool, London and Oxford, probably due to the affiliation of some of the contributors. This volume is divided into three parts: the first part, 'Global and Regional Frameworks', contains 5 chapters; the second, 'National Visions', 8 chapters; and the third, 'Indigenous and Northern Geopolitics', 4 chapters.

In Part I, which deals with global and regional legal frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (LOSC), the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), and the Arctic Council (AC), Chapter I, written by Richard C. Powell and Klaus Dodds, the editors of the volume, provides the reader with an introductory overview of the methods and coverage concerned with the idea of critical geopolitics in studies of the polar regions in order to show that, despite the 'ambivalent geographies of the Polar Regions' (p. 7), the aim of their work is 'to establish a Polar Geopolitics' (p. 9). With a brief explanation of the three main themes of knowledges¹, resources and legal regimes dealt with in the volume, the editors critically refer to the conventional geopolitical notions of agents, sites, spaces, resources and public culture, before presenting the structure of the book by way of giving a succinct summary of each chapter.

In Chapter 2, Donald R. Rothwell considers the issues of maritime claims in the Polar Region and of polar governance with special reference to the growing significance of the law of the sea, including LOSC, for the ongoing management and resolution of polar marine resources, environmental and shipping issues. Rothwell rightly admits that the governance mechanisms in these regions are legally different, though 'both remain subject to global and regional geopolitics' (p. 34). In Chapter 3, Harald Brekke examines the practices of the coastal states in defining and recognizing the outer limits of the continental shelf in the Polar Regions in accordance with LOSC and the recommendations indicated by the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS). Brekke, comparing the relevant conditions of the continental shelf in both the Polar Regions, stresses the significant roles played by LOSC and CLCS, particularly in peacefully settling a conflict between coastal states in the Polar Regions.

In Chapter 4, Alan D. Hemmings addresses the issue of whether the ATS maintains international legitimacy from the viewpoint of global justice and can be 're-justified for the 21st Century' (p. 57) against the background of the widening and diversified international community. Although the ATS may be justified under some fundamental principles of conventional instruments such as the United Nations (UN) Charter, as Hemmings argues, the future of the globalized community will require the ATS to live up to the now wider set of universal values and principles which encompass not only

states but also other actors so that the Antarctic finally sits more comfortably in a global context (p. 68). In Chapter 5, Erik J. Molenaar outlines the need for adaptation by the international regime such as LOSC and the AC for the governance and regulation of the marine Arctic to the new and likely future realities triggered by climate change, and examines 'the suitability of various pathways and outcomes that could be used for addressing gaps and shortcomings in the current Arctic regime' (p. 79). Molenaar supports the current pathways of adaptation that the AC has been gradually and incrementally taking by way of a 'two-tiered approach' (p. 87) through which the AC and the international legal instruments under its auspices will develop the notion of the AC System (ACS) with an appropriate balance between Arctic states, non-Arctic states, other entities and the international community as a whole.

In Part II, national views, perspectives and interests in the Polar Regions are examined. In Chapter 6, Andrew Foxall gives a geographical, historical and geopolitical overview of Soviet/Russian interests in the Arctic and its corresponding policy with special reference to resources, transportation and security. Russia's economic and security interests in the Arctic will, for Foxall, have global geopolitical implications through a tension between 'the securitization of the region' (p. 109) and international cooperation. In Chapter 7, the analysis by Philip E. Steinberg of National Security Presidential Directive 66/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 25 (NSPD-66) issued by the Bush Administration in 2009 stresses that NSPD-66 represents a 'fundamentally disinterested Arctic policy' (p. 126) of the US, as an Arctic state, which will need to develop its economic and security interests particularly through Alaska to preserve its global hegemony. In Chapter 8, Berit Kristoffersen points out Norway's geopolitical discourses in the High North where 'strong interconnections between environmental and petroleum politics' (p. 145) affect the Norwegian government's logics and strategies concerning Arctic governance in the light of its sensitive bilateral relations with Russia in the Barents Sea. In Chapter 9, Sverker Sörlin elaborates on the historical development of Sweden's reluctant relationship, due to its geographical position and domestic problems, with the Arctic from the 16th century to the time when it served as Chair of the AC (2011-13), at the outset of which Sweden presented its 'first-ever', but still not 'clearly

articulated', Arctic strategy (p. 162).

In Chapter 10, Chih Yuan Woon's analysis of the two influential media outlets, *The Globe and Mail* (TGAM) of Canada and Xin Hua News Agency (XHNA) of China, examines the geopolitical and ideological images of China's Arctic affairs in the contrast between Canadian fears of China and China's responsible attitudes towards Arctic activities for the benefit of the global community. In Chapter 11, Duncan Depledge discusses the UK's Arctic policy, in which the government tries to portray its 'role in the world' particularly in the 'three different assemblages of the Arctic', namely, science, energy and defence (p. 184), but points out its still drifting struggle to assemble an Arctic strategy due to the lack of an official ideal of the Arctic image as well as of the role that should be played by the UK in the ACS.

The following two essays in Part II cover national practices in the case of Antarctica. In Chapter 12, Matt Benwell, by considering Argentina's practice and policy, in which it utilizes resources, knowledge and legal regimes in order to stress the connections between its continental, insular and polar territories, demonstrates that Argentina seeks to eventually strengthen its Antarctic claim in conjunction with the regional cooperation of South American countries vis-à-vis the UK's claim and presence in the region of the 'South West Atlantic' (p. 205). In Chapter 13, Klaus Dodds maintains his realist and vigilant view (or 'frontier vigilantism' (p. 220) due to Antarctica's militant geography) over the traditional Australian Arctic policy and future perspective concerning the preservation of the Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT) against others such as Russia and China on the basis of Australia's historical and geopolitical background in the region even before and under the ATS.

In Part III, in which indigenous and Northern geopolitics are discussed, Chapter 14, written by Lassi Heininen, succinctly demonstrates the multi-dimensional qualities of contemporary Northern geopolitics where, due to various multi-functional changes, including environmental and climate change, the entire North is also a 'knowledge-based region with innovations in governance, and political and legal arrangements' (p. 255) despite the fact that the five littoral states emphasize their territorial sovereignty though the presence of globalization is seen in the region. In Chapter 15, Jeppe Strandsbjerg examines Greenland's dilemmas and tensions between being

a state based on territorial sovereignty and being indigenous based on an ethnic identity in order to preserve its autonomy in the face of economic development deriving from the exploitation of oil and minerals and of security/foreign policy in Arctic geopolitics.

In Chapter 16, Mark Nuttall considers the relations between the politics and political ecology of pipeline development in northwest Canada with special reference to some megaprojects of oil and gas field development and to the social and local life of the indigenous people whose knowledge is 'often ignored or misunderstood' (p. 292) in the course of development. In Chapter 17, Hannah Strauss and Nuccio Mazzullo offer the case of the indigenous people's livelihood and governance system in Finnish Lapland as a good example for a discussion about resource governance in the Circumpolar North, where indigenous legal orders and management systems are normally 'ignored and overruled' in the face of more advanced 'formalization that western law and science have' (p. 308).

Considering the abovementioned contents, the following points are noteworthy with respect to the volume under review. First, it covers several geopolitical issues in both the Arctic and the Antarctic from various viewpoints. Part I deals with general issues on global and polar frameworks in a well-balanced fashion except for the first chapter, which provides a general overview of polar geopolitics with an introductory summary of all chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with general and commonly specific matters (e.g., the outer limits of the continental shelf) on the law of the sea, including UNCLOS, while Chapters 4 and 5 respectively discuss the Antarctic and the Arctic governance institutions, that is, the ATS and the ACS. However, the rest of the volume (ten out of the twelve chapters) are simply concerned with the Arctic, as Chapters 12 and 13 cover the Antarctic from the Argentine and Australian perspectives, respectively. It may be understandable that Chapter III, which contains four essays on indigenous and Northern geographical situations, very scarcely touches upon the case of Antarctica, since the Antarctic, which is basically uninhabited, does not have any indigenous issues. The national visions in Part II could have included more countries, particularly such major concerned parties in the ATS as Chile and New Zealand, so that Part II would have become more balanced and enriched with diversified views resulting from a comparative viewpoint between the two Polar Regions. A Norwegian policy on the Antarctic, for example, could have been included since Norway is the unique stakeholder on the basis of the fact that it claims its territorial sovereignty in Antarctica whereas it is a littoral state in the Arctic Ocean. Moreover, Russia and the US, both of which are littoral states in the Arctic Ocean, are, as non- but potential- claimants in the Antarctic, active enough to show their strong interests in the South Pole as well. The volume appears to have focused mainly on a geopolitical consideration of the Arctic region, with little comparative analysis between these two geographically, historically, and legally different Polar Regions.

Second, the readers of this book should note in advance that it mainly covers the situations of both the Polar Regions before 2012 or so, as there is a regrettable but inevitable time-gap between its publication year of 2014 and the origin of the collected essays that goes back to the seminars and workshops of 2010 and 2011. Unfortunately, therefore, the volume does not consider more recent hot topics such as the observer states that were newly accepted in the AC in May 2013. This issue concerns the expansion and globalization of the AC in the current high-profile discussion surrounding Arctic governance, mainly due to the rise and involvement of industrialised states such as China, India, Japan, Singapore and South Korea, to name a few. These non-Arctic (and Asian) states, with their economic capacity and incentive, are also interested in the North Pole for energy and resource extraction and maritime route development, whereas the five Arctic littoral states (Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Norway, Russia, and the United States) are eager to reserve their geopolitical control over the region. In this sense, the volume under review could have invited some more contributors from non-Arctic countries in order to cover some urgent and global issues such as the roles played by these Asian players in Arctic governance.

Third, as the title of the book under review suggests with a question mark, the aim of its publication, which is 'to begin a conversation in this rapidly expanding field' (p. 17), seems to pose the fundamental questions of whether a notion of 'Polar Geopolitics' exists or not; whether there are any geopolitical considerations peculiar to each Polar Region or not; and if yes, what. This book may have been somewhat influenced by the British school of geopolitical scholars and those who have an academic base/background in

the UK, as is indicated at the outset of this review. It is certainly ambitious and challenging to pursue these questions and to construct a branch of 'Polar Geopolitics' in the field of geopolitics or international relations. This task is certainly a worthwhile endeavour, as the Arctic, in particular, has been increasingly attracting the world's attention. Therefore, this book will surely be a good starting point for a wider future discussion of the possibilities and perspectives of 'Polar Geopolitics'. As the subtitle of the book under review seems to imply, this is because the knowledges of the Polar Regions are still expanding, the resources in and around the regions are still being sought, and their legal regimes are still being developed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> As the word 'knowledge' is a mass noun, this plural form appears to be unusual. The reviewer of this book, however, retains it, since this form is largely maintained in the book, including its title.