

Handbook on Geopolitics and Security in the Arctic: The High North Between Cooperation and Confrontation

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The Arctic has now become the new theatre of strategic confrontation between the superpowers such as the United States, Russia, and China. Following US President Donald Trump's stated interest in purchasing Greenland from Denmark, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo emphasised, in his statement given at the re-opening of the US Consulate in Nuuk, a US interest in the current economic development in which Russia and China have been deeply involved.¹ It is unclear whether the US has really meant to be committed to this Strategic Triangle in the Arctic before the 2020 US Presidential Election, despite a global concern about a risk of dragging the High North into a playground of the trilateral conflicts among these powers. As the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) recently held a webinar on the issue of the Arctic Strategic Triangle,² however, a growing number of scholars and experts on Arctic issues have seriously considered the current turbulent situations surrounding the High North with a global disorderly political condition accelerated under the COVID-19 pandemic.

The book under review is among trendy quality publications on Polar issues with the attractive title of 'Handbook'³ — especially for those who seek a holistic approach to multi-faceted topics of high profile such as the Arctic — although it lacks an in-depth analysis and consideration of currently urgent geopolitical and strategic issues, such as that of the Arctic Strategic

Triangle mentioned above. To 'deliver the latest insights from years of research into highly specialised topics' (p. x), this volume represents a handy thematic compilation of experts' discussions of applicable theoretical frameworks and current regional issues concerning geopolitics and security in the Arctic. This volume is divided into the following five parts: (1) Shareholders (The Arctic Five); (2) Arctic Stakeholders; (3) Basics: Economies, Infrastructures and Law in the Arctic; (4) Between Cooperation and Confrontation (Dimensions of Arctic Geopolitics and Security); and (5) Arctic Security and Beyond.

The first part addresses five shareholders, whose coastlines face the Arctic Ocean: Russia, the United States, Canada, Norway, and Denmark. Shareholders are defined in this volume as 'the most powerful players within existing governance structures, such as the members of the Arctic Council' (p. xiii).

The first chapter (J. Staun) analyses a balanced but dilemma-like situation of Russia's 'two-track approach' (p. 15) to the Arctic in order to maintain the balance between its civilian interests in a resource-oriented development of the region; this is done, on one hand, by way of oil and gas extraction, developing the Northern Sea Route, and establishing the limits of the extended continental shelf, and through its military interests in defending its adjacent maritime areas and nuclear deterrent against the US and NATO countries on the other. Analysing the role of Congress in US Arctic policy-making and military leadership, the second chapter (V. Herrmann and L. Hussong) critically examines the U.S. reactionary and responsive attitudes — as those of 'a reluctant Arctic nation' (p. 36) — towards Arctic security issues such as energy resources, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), icebreakers, leadership, and climate change through the lens of the State of Alaska. The third chapter (A. Lajeunesse) provides a historic overview of Canada's Arctic policy and discusses its future perspective with special reference to its Arctic sovereignty (and particularly the Northwest Passage), defence and security under climate change and rule-based circumpolar relations. Identifying Norway as 'a small power but a large coastal state' (p. 57), the fourth chapter (C. Humrich) reviews Norwegian geopolitics of High North security (particularly vis-à-vis Russia), sovereignty (in terms of the Svalbard marine areas), and sustainable development (the increasing tensions between economic development and environmental protection)

for the last three decades since the end of the Cold War. The fifth chapter examines the strategic rationale behind Denmark's Arctic policy by addressing its geopolitical relationship as the 'Middleman' or an 'intermediary' (p. 90) with the United States and Greenland for the sake of its territorial sovereignty over Greenland, the regional cooperation in the Arctic Council (AC), and an enhanced American presence in the region.

The second part deals with China, the European Union, India, and Singapore as Arctic stakeholders, which the volume defines as 'the players that are slightly more removed' (p. xiii). The sixth chapter (S. Reinke de Buitrago) warns China's presence in the region as a weighty and influential stakeholder in the name of a 'near Arctic State', discussing, for the sake of a sustainable and stable Arctic, the possibility of questioning the inclusion of security in the AC mandate despite its original aspiration to avoid security issues in its dialogue. Raising the specific character of China's state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and the lack of transparency from the Western viewpoints, the seventh chapter (J. Mohr) also takes a cautious but fairly objective look, with a certain amount of references written in Chinese, at a current polarised debate over the Chinese discourse on Arctic affairs, with a special reference to China's investments in Greenland as a good example to assess its engagement in the Arctic. In reviewing the decade-long involvement of the European Union (EU) in the Arctic, the eighth chapter (A. Raspotnik and A. Stępień) highlighting the EU's 'Arcticness' of many colours (a divide between the European Arctic and the circumpolar Arctic) in determining its role in the region through its engagement and comprehension of future challenges. Both the ninth chapter on India's Arctic policy (A. Ramanathan) and the tenth on Singapore's one (R.A. Bitzinger) provide a comprehensive overview of each state's foreign policy rationale and national interests in the Arctic against the common background that, along with others such as China and Japan, both parties were given an observer status in the AC at the same time in 2013, upgrading its position as a stakeholder.

The third part of the volume contains four chapters that respectively discuss the following basic Arctic issues related with the regional economies, infrastructures and law: (1) maritime boundary agreements and disputes (C. Schofield and A. Østhagen); (2) Arctic maritime traffic and Polar routes (R. Gosnell); (3) Arctic economies and livelihoods (S. Glomsrød et al.); and (4)

infrastructure development of information and communication technology (ICT) (M. Delaunay and M. Landriault). This part succinctly presents that climate change and melting ice in the Arctic require the region to be ready for changes in economies and livelihoods and for the emerging needs for infrastructures such as a maritime route and network connectivity, while the law of the sea, including the UNCLOS, which has been largely observed by Arctic littoral states, serves the maintenance of the regional stability and security through the relevant agreements made among the states concerned.

The fourth part deals with various aspects of Arctic geopolitical and security realities that hover between cooperation and confrontation in accordance with the numerous conditions given. The first article in this part (D.P. Auerswald), discussing three Arctic narratives that explain regional management and governance after the Cold War critically characterizes the current prevalent narrative as a unilateral and competitive one introduced by the three great powers — the US, Russia, and China — against multilateralism supported by minor European Arctic states. The second article in this part (D. Lambach) highlights Arctic cooperation in light of the 2011 Arctic Search and Rescue (SAR) Agreement as a result of a climate-driven motivation as well as the material environment and geography of the Arctic, regardless of the application of any theoretical framework of International Relations (IR). The third article in this part (R. Pincus) addresses, against the background of climate change, the connections between Arctic fishing (the so-called 'low politics') and geopolitics, including national security (high-level foreign affairs). The fourth article (R. Berg) explores the geopolitical significance of the Spitsbergen Treaty of 1920, under which the close cooperation and conflicts between Norway and Russia through the competition of natural resources still currently demonstrate the fact that the 'strait' between Svalbard and Norway mainland is the most important 'channel' (p. 317) between the Atlantic and the Northern Sea Route (NSR). Discussing the interplay between regional (Arctic) military security and the international one, the fifth article in this part (B. Schaller) argues that the ups and downs in NATO-Russia relations since the end of the Cold War have specifically affected the regional stable security environment in the Arctic through regional cooperation and geopolitical confrontation.

The last part of the volume juxtaposes Arctic security in terms of (1)

cooperation between Russia and China and (2) a comparative analysis of the two Poles: the Arctic and the Antarctic. Dealing with the former issue, the first article in this part (J. Weber) submits a historical overview of Sino-Russian ‘geo-economical’ (p. 348) and military cooperation in the Arctic for common interests. Addressing the latter issue, the second article in this part of the volume (D. Abdel-Motaal) warns about the growing tendency of a ‘go-it-alone’ approach taken by powerful players in the Polar regions, i.e. the High North and Antarctica, where multilateralism has been practiced to resolve transboundary political, economic, environmental and security issues, in the wake of a changing world order.

The book under review is readable in that, with some inserted maps, data and coloured graphs, it provides the recent information and profound analyses by experts of a wide range of career paths and professional backgrounds with respect to the main coverage intended by the contributors on geopolitical and security issues in the Arctic. Moreover, the topics — dealt with and well organised in the volume with painstaking management by the *single* editor, Joachim Weber, at the Institute for Security Policy, Kiel University — cover a well-balanced amount of Arctic issues with different angles of perspectives over geopolitical and security conditions and concepts such as shareholders, stakeholders and cooperation/confrontation.

In this sense, the book under review could have contained an index for the sake of convenience and utility, as is the case with this type of encyclopaedic (though unintended) *Handbook*, unlike other simple compilations of academic articles of common themes. A major challenge for this volume is that, as is also common with a publication on a global issue such as Polar regions, it is edited by Westerners and it lacks contributions made by Easterners such as Chinese scholars to the issues on China’s growing influence in and around the Arctic region. Of course, no handbook-typed academic publication of any field would perfectly cover world-wide contributors of various nationalities to balance the analysis and description of the issues contained. For example, it is certainly unfortunate that ‘no Russian author was willing or able to eventually deliver a Russian perspective on security issues in the High North’ (p. x), as is mentioned in the Preface by the editor; therefore, this volume does not contain a Russian perspective written by a Russian author but one of ‘the Western’, as is admitted by the editor,

over the Russian viewpoint of Arctic security. Even though an Indian scholar, A. Ramanathan, contributed to the 'Arctic Stakeholders' part by introducing Indian Arctic policy, and two authors of 'the West' (p. viii) displayed China's rather contrasting negative and positive images in their respective contributions, no Chinese author is involved in this highly intriguing part or in any part of the whole volume. Therefore, this book under review may be of interest to the scholars and experts on the Arctic of the West, whereas those of the East, such as the Chinese and even the Japanese, would only find certain limits of recent, banal Western viewpoints on Arctic geopolitics and security — particularly in a quasi-era of world disorder or paradigm change from the West to the East.

¹ 'Pompeo says US to expand Arctic role to deter Russia, China', *AP News*, 23 July 2020, <<https://apnews.com/article/bb865b24f17b963edbe23400117cc7ea>> (accessed 1 October 2020). See also his similar statement in the previous year: Simon Johnson, 'Pompeo: Russia is "aggressive" in Arctic, China's work there also needs watching', *Reuters*, 6 May 2019, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-finland-arctic-council-idUSKCN1SC1AY>> (accessed 1 October 2020).

² 'SIPRI Webinar Series: The Strategic Triangle in the Arctic', SIPRI, <<https://www.sipri.org/events/2020/sipri-webinar-series-strategic-triangle-arctic>> (accessed 1 October 2020).

³ See, for example, *Handbook of the Politics of the Arctic*, edited by L.C. Jensen & G. Hønneland, Edward Elgar, 2015; *The Routledge Handbook of the Polar Regions*, edited by M. Nuttall et al., Routledge, 2018; *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, edited by K.S. Coates & C. Holroyd, Palgrave/MacMillan, 2020; and *Research Handbook on Polar Law*, edited by K.N. Scott & D.L. VanderZwaag, Edward Elgar, 2020.