

China's Arctic Ambitions and What They Mean for Canada. P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Adam Lajeunesse, James Manicom, and Frédéric Lasserre. 2018. Alberta: University of Calgary Press, Paperback, 274 pp., 18 Illustrations, \$34.99, ISBN: 978-1-55238-901-0

This volume is an early grasp towards something that will attract increasing attention over the coming decades. China's foreign policy in the Canadian Arctic would have been a barely noticeable 'what if?' only twenty years ago. Now, however, China in the Arctic is already a policy, security and economic reality. How Canada responds politically will be a test of policy-making in the shadow spaces of the future, applying policy tools to remote geographies where governance holds much less power, competence and recognition than in unfrozen jurisdictions.

Sovereignty is the underlying maxim throughout both the book and Canada's wider Arctic policy, and all arguments should be read with a mind to the idea that the authors, funders, publisher and likely intended audience wish to bolster the Canadian institutional responses to strengthening this unchallenged but perhaps weakly enforced sovereignty. The book tackles Canadian institutional weight across the many Arctic fields – territorial, maritime, living resources, transit and transport, resource, capital, indigenous rights, resources and development. This is balanced against an increasing interest in the Circumpolar North from both Chinese international capital and the geopolitical state. The book is a step along an ever-widening path towards greater Arctic access by non-Arctic states and what this means across a range of fields for the established and coastal Arctic states.

China's overwhelming interest in polar affairs is still the Antarctic, not the Arctic. But China's political and economic interest in the Arctic contributes to a revivalism of state-centric thinking and geopolitics whereas, with the exception of Russia, all other Arctic stakeholders have moved into 21st century models of transnational institutionalism. This means that Arctic states like Canada are increasingly drawn back in to statist thinking in response to China.

The book is structured around six key themes: China's Arctic Strategy, scientific activities, shipping, resources, governance and the future of China's Arctic policy. The book's strength is the scope of its survey; it is basically an English language literature review of everything related to China and the Canadian Arctic. But that only highlights its weakness; while the Chinese policy-makers and policy implementation institutions are well covered there is little novel China policy research or methodological engagement with the Chinese sources.

Shipping is the principal driver for China's Arctic policy, considering its Malacca Strait dilemma, and the authors offer a good breakdown of the potential of Asian markets to connect to Europe and North America through Arctic routes. This is tempered though with sober statistics demonstrating that the trade potential is far from realised. The authors reiterate that Arctic shipping will probably remain destinational, not intra-Arctic or trans-Arctic, which would only strengthen Canada's sovereignty and the international system. China abiding by the Polar Code and complying with Canadian internal pollution and transit regulations makes China more likely to align with the international system than to redesign it.

The resources chapter again dampens the sometimes rife speculation of a potential resources boom, with realistic appraisals of just how difficult and expensive it is to establish and maintain economically viable mining operations in the Arctic. The allure of geopolitics is always there, but the authors prudently stick with markets which more often than not reveal a graveyard of failed ambitions than a transformative economic good. Overall, the authors paint a picture of a Canadian Arctic resources frontier that is only being taken seriously due to outside interventions. Minerals, hydrocarbons, fisheries and continental shelf resources are slowly coming into higher resolution focus as a result of outside pressure. In this instance for Canada we could be saying that the external forces have resulted in a radical introspection. Bringing Canada's focus on domestic solutions to international pressures is a positive outcome from a potentially negative external stimulus.

The authors repeatedly argue that inclusion is the best manner to deal with China in Arctic affairs. Less big state geopolitics and stronger local government decision-making has been the way forward for effective Arctic governance in both North America and the European Arctic. As always though, there is little attention paid and few solutions offered for strengthening indigenous governance and integrating with the new macroregional paradigms.

Where China, is concerned there is still legitimate worry that all actors are ultimately state coordinated. Yet states like Canada with a firm commitment to international law, private

enterprise, local and indigenous governance and responsible custodianship can take strength from their own institutions rather than being afraid of Chinese institutions.

The Arctic opening to more state players only really means that the rhythms of economic and social life are beginning to develop and diversify in the Arctic. For Arctic states, this only means a new level of complexity of governance. The only challenge is how to best govern this development to reach maximum potential. No one would want the Arctic to stay unapproachable, undeveloped, and unresourced. The burden of Arctic affairs is being lowered down the economic hierarchy, to firms and individuals, and away from the sole responsibility of the state. Coastal states and Arctic states will only strengthen their positions with the increased interaction of non-Arctic states as institutions developed to allow greater roles for all actors while maintaining ultimate state hegemony within territorial jurisdictions.

The premise of the book seems to be a geopolitical threat narrative, and yet the authors consistently approach the problem from constructivist and institutionalist perspectives of inclusion and legitimacy building. For Canadian policy-makers this book is a great primer. There is enough in here for the rest of us too, but the narrative is naturally pinched to magnify the Canadian aspect. It is also more like a reader for a postgraduate course on Arctic politics or international law than a narrative argument or a research monograph with a clear set of goals and outcomes. It is a bit light, only skimming the surface of China in the Circumpolar North. Four authors make the narrative seem disjointed; it could have done with a stronger voice throughout,

one strong edit to make sure that the reader is following a single train of thought. And naturally for the non-Canadian reader, more focus on implications for the greater Circumpolar North would have made a more rounded book, as much of the research on China's Arctic policy applies equally to the Nordics and other states. There are also no institutional or organisational charts in the book. For the casual reader, and particularly for the Canadian government official, a couple of diagrams showing the important institutions and how they interrelate would have been useful. Overall, against the periodic hyperbole of Arctic geopolitics, this work is refreshingly boring. The authors balance a real and persistent problem in accommodating China's rise in the Arctic with the incredibly slow political, economic and social realities of the region. Nothing changes quickly in the Circumpolar North, and this sober treatment is a good reminder of the slowness of any change in Arctic public administration, political and economic research, and scientific institutions. China's policy in the Arctic though is everyone's business and this work only begins to scratch the surface of the China–Arctic–Canada dynamic. Volumes like this will help to guide the way of future scholars as the linkages between China and Canada in the Arctic grow denser and more convoluted in the future.

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