

The Politics of Arctic Sovereignty: Oil, Ice and Inuit Governance. Jessica M. Shadian. 2014. Abingdon-on-Thames and New York, NY: Routledge. xix + 252 p, hardcover. ISBN 978-0-415-64035-0. GBP 120.

In *The Politics of Arctic Sovereignty: Oil, Ice and Inuit Governance*, Jessica M. Shadian follows the origins and development of political self-determination of the Inuit, that is, the indigenous inhabitants of Greenland, the Canadian North, Alaska, and the Russian Northeast. Shadian, currently a senior fellow at the Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History at the University of Toronto, Canada, divided her monograph—at the heart of which is tracing the origins and development of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC)—into 10 chapters and 3 parts: The introductory chapter and chapter one set up the book contextualising the topic and the theoretical concept of sovereignty; part one historically traces the roots of colonialism and Inuit nationalism in chapters two and three, respectively; part two, in chapters four to eight, describes the historical and current trajectory of Inuit domestic governance to circumpolar Inuit politics and indigenous internationalism, including the role that natural resources, especially oil, played in that; and part three looks at the ICC and Inuit politics in the years since 2007 and how they are embedded in current debates around the Arctic.

Prior to part one of the book, Shadian first contextualises the book, its outline, and topics in the introduction. Next, in chapter one which is entitled “Sovereignty historicized,” the author problematises the theoretical concept at the core of the monograph, that is, that of sovereignty, and implicitly political self-determination of peoples, as the book, of course, deals with a specific ethnic group spread across multiple countries and two continents.

Following this introduction, part one (“Constructing Westphalia”) goes beyond the general theoretical underpinnings and looks at the specific context of the Inuit in Alaska (US), Canada, and Greenland (Denmark) (though, as mentioned above, there are Inuit living in the Russian Northeast, too). Shadian starts with the historical, colonial background in chapter two finding that “while the processes which colonized the Inuit were a feature of internal state development (rather than a case of external colonization, as with Asia and Africa), the loss of self-determination impacted the Inuit in much the same way as it did indigenous peoples throughout the rest of the world” (p. 26). The chapter scintillates in revealing nuanced similarities and differences based on location. While the basic colonisation of Inuit into a nation-state (Westphalian) system is established, chapter three concerns itself more with the social construction of the Inuit as “the ‘uncivilized’ indigenous ‘other’” (p. 38)—again breaking it down into sub-sections for the history within the three aforementioned countries and regions (Alaska, Canada, and Greenland). Significantly for the historical tracing of Inuit circumpolar identity building (and, eventually, the creation of the ICC), Shadian finds that, though, governments tried, “[m]ost attempts to assimilate Alaskan, Canadian, and Greenlandic Inuit eventually failed. Indirectly, however, those failures helped to lay the foundation for a circumpolar Inuit Arctic polity” (p. 50).

Subsequently, part two (“Expanding the boundaries of Westphalia”) concerns itself more with autonomy-seeking of the Inuit in each of the three focus geographic areas—while, within that context, taking natural resources into consideration—and the movement to represent Inuit interests regionally and internationally via the ICC as the main vehicle. Interestingly, Shadian shows in chapter four that the process within which Inuit sought and were partially granted “self-determination (...) has been driven by resource development concerns” (p. 77). Chapter five then looks specifically at “oil, gas, as well as other major resource development projects in Alaska, Canada, and Greenland (...) [and the phenomenon that] Alaskan, Canadian, and Greenlandic Inuit learned that they faced similar political challenges at home and came together to address their joint concerns at a regional level” (p. 91). Starting as early as the 1950s with delegations of Inuit visiting each other, this process culminated in the mid-1970s with efforts to establish the ICC and, eventually, the first meeting of it in June 1977 in Barrow, Alaska. Chapters six through eight trace the actions of the ICC to build an Arctic regime and represent Inuit interests internationally, for example, through the United Nations or the Arctic Council. While the author assesses that the Inuit were largely successful in creating such an international narrative that often occurred through owning natural resources and being granted the right to sustainably develop in their respective regions, chapter eight also cautions this trend by way of climate change: “In more recent years (...), the discourse of

sustainable development has been superseded by a new discourse of climate change [focused on] (...) how to mitigate the resulting damage [of controlling the environment in a sustained manner] (...) [which] had a strong impact on indigenous peoples and the international narrative of indigenous rights, particularly as regards rights to resource development” (p. 165). Regarding these changing dynamics caused by climate change, the author ends this second part by asking the thought-provoking question—the answer to which remains to be seen—“whether the narrative that the Inuit helped write has begun to unravel and whether indigenous peoples will be able to accommodate to a changing political discourse” (p. 171).

In part three which is entitled “Governance beyond Westphalia,” Shadian starts chapter nine with building it around the after-effects of the 2007 Russian Arctic expedition led by Artur Chilingarov: She correctly identifies this expedition as highly relevant to theory of Arctic sovereignty as it caused an uproar in the international community and the ensuing discussion on the belonging of the Arctic after Chilingarov placed a Russian flag made of titanium at the sea bed of the North Pole’s Lomonosov ridge which is claimed by Russia as belonging to its continental shelf. Importantly for the book’s focal topic of Inuit politics, the author thematises the ICC Declaration on Inuit Sovereignty of 2009 as a reaction to this discussion on Arctic sovereignty since August 2007 (pp. 195ff.). Chapter ten serves as the concluding chapter in which Shadian recaps the development of the ICC: “Since its inception, the ICC (...) made the Inuit narrative from that of a dispersed and marginalized people without the ability to govern themselves into a narrative about a legitimate and powerful non-state political actor in a changing Westphalian political

system” (p. 199). While further making the connection between oil, natural resources, and Inuit sovereignty, looking ahead into a future beyond Westphalia, Shadian concludes rather philosophically that “[t]he founding aim of the ICC was not (...) for a ‘new country, but a new consciousness’. In many respects, it can be said, then, that the ICC has become the consciousness of a world slowly outgrowing the long-held attachment to the traditional Westphalian political framework” (p. 212).

Throughout the book, the author’s style of integrating a plentitude of direct quotations not only taken from secondary literature but also from first-hand in-person as well as email interviews helps to convey to the reader a very deep insight into the subject matter of Inuit politics. Shadian follows this style, on the one hand, throughout the chapter texts, and, on the other hand, by using an epigraph to assist with contextualising, summarising, and setting the scene at the outset of each chapter.

In conclusion, Shadian provides us with an extraordinary monograph on Inuit circumpolar politics and the ICC that has no equal in scholarship. It will be the basis for many future studies on Arctic affairs, and with special regard to the Inuit is sure to be a much-cited work. In times of climate change and the role the Arctic takes therein being well-covered in media and topping many governments’ policy agendas, this work is guaranteed to garner much attention—not just from academic but also policy-making circles (Lukas K. Danner, Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence, Florida International University & East Asia Security Centre, Bond University (LDanner@fiu.edu)).

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