

Book Reviews

Britain and the Arctic. Duncan Depledge (author). 2018. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. xiv +142 p, hardcover/e-book. Hardcover ISBN 978-3-319-69292-0. EUR 51.99

Asian Foreign Policy in a Changing Arctic: The Diplomacy of Economy and Science at New Frontiers. Aki Tonami (author). 2016. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. xv + 140 p, hardcover/e-book. Hardcover ISBN 978-1-137-53745-4

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It is easy to forget that it has not always been set in stone that geographical proximity would be the key factor in determining who had a seat at the table of Arctic governance. From the waning days of the Cold War, one can trace debates about how to facilitate the participation of key scientific milieus outside the Arctic in cooperative research efforts (Smieszek, 2016). Likewise, U.S. diplomats were long preoccupied in the early days of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (which was subsumed by the Arctic Council) with how to include the NGOs with whom Washington had worked closely in managing Antarctic governance (English, 2013).

Two recent books from Palgrave bring the Arctic interests of the now clearly delineated ‘non-Arctic’ states to the forefront. Although each book is indeed worthy of its own review, this review considers them together, as these books are both core contributions to a growing scholarship that illustrates how states outside the ‘Arctic eight’ club seek to find a place in Arctic politics today – and to change the policy contours and scope of Arctic politics.

Duncan Depledge’s *Britain and the Arctic* (Palgrave, 2018) provides a fascinating glimpse into the various ways that the UK has been intertwined with the Arctic over time. His book also problematises and discusses in an original and well-documented fashion the emergence of this Arctic/non-Arctic dichotomy over time and explores the logics that make that division of space possible and politically significant. Throughout the book, Depledge employs a running discussion on the various ways of thinking about proximity and illustrates how the UK’s engagement in the region over time has been based more on engagement and connectivity (from history’s explorers and merchants to the scientists and petroleum companies of today), rather than on geographical positioning.

The book illustrates and argues that Britain and the Arctic matter to each other today not just because of history and topographical proximity (which he suggests have limited purchase in arguing for a role for the UK in regional governance today), but because extensive connections continue to exist. He writes:

It does not really matter to shape the present day commercial interests in the Arctic that Britain was once a major whaling, sealing and fishing power that regularly travelled Arctic waters. Nor does it really matter that the City of London is relatively close to the Arctic topographically...because the City’s

importance to the Arctic is not based on...physical proximity to region, but on the ability to connect flows of finance and information (Depledge, 2018, p. 92).

The detailed insight on British Arctic history is, however, wonderfully written and of interest to any reader seeking greater knowledge about British foreign and international industrial policies as they have been manifested in Arctic spaces.

Perhaps of widest possible interest is Depledge’s contribution of a study of ‘circumpolarisation’ (a handy term that I believe may be coined by the author) of Arctic politics and how that looked from the UK. This is presented in detail in chapter 3, which explores how a logic of proximity evolved from an uncertainty as to what extent circumpolar adjacency should matter at all through to Gorbachev’s early preference for a focus on the Arctic coastal states and growing back to encompass the Arctic ‘8’ with which we are familiar today. Depledge argues that a lack of strategy and certainty about how to proceed in the Arctic in the 1990s and 2000s meant that the UK did not interject in or shape the emerging practice of circumpolarity. Subsequent chapters also illustrate how Britain continues to shape (or seeks to shape), both strategically and in a more scattered way, Arctic outcomes and pursue Arctic opportunities across a variety of actors and sectors.

In *Asian Foreign Policy in a Changing Arctic* (Palgrave, 2016), Aki Tonami takes a comprehensive yet concise look at the Arctic policies and interests of China, India, Japan, Singapore and South Korea. The country-level chapters are rigorously compared in an interesting concluding chapter.

The introductory chapter provides a take on the drivers directing the increased attention of these countries to the Arctic region, including concern for the impact of climate change within their own immediate geographical areas, the emergence of regional governance in the region since the end of the Cold War, and the changing, increasingly ice-free Arctic and associated environmental risks and new shipping and commercial opportunities. Tonami reviews existing literature and points to the fact that most analysts conclude (or start from) the argument that the Asian states’ interest in the region is primarily driven by an economic logic or by concern for and wish to do scientific research on climate change. The book aims, however, to plumb deeper to illustrate how the full range of factors/interests/actors is complex and specific to each country and how the changing landscapes of world politics matter as well.

She begins with China, and this chapter will be useful reading for anyone seeking to better understand and have an overview of the different factors and interests that likely played into China’s more recently published White Paper on the Arctic. Amongst the familiar energy and shipping, as well as other economic reasons, Tonami also discusses how the growth in Arctic interest has coincided with a broader policy shift towards China as a world power rather than just a regional power. The chapter on Japan’s Arctic policy likewise covers a range of factors and interests, and brings to the forefront some of the long historical lines of Japan as a maritime nation. Tonami’s take on South Korea also brings a new level of insight, by including some narratives important to the country that have yet to get much attention but have shaped

the political backdrop against which South Korea has articulated its Arctic interests. This includes the tragic sinking of the MV Sewol in 2014 and its subsequent effects on Korean maritime policy. Singapore's Arctic politics are also covered, followed by a brief final chapter on India, in which rivalry with China's global role seems to have been an important factor shaping domestic policy circles.

While not every chapter has its own summary or conclusion, the threads are brought together in the book's final chapter. Against the backdrop of the numerous and fascinating examples of key country-specific moments/actors/processes shaping Asian states' attention to the Arctic that Tonami has unearthed, she concludes that probably the strongest commonality between all the states studied is their status as 'developmental states' with a

strong element of state-led economic diplomacy when it comes to the Arctic region. (Elana Wilson Rowe, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, CJ Hambros Plass 2D, 0033 Oslo, Norway (ew@nupi.no))

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Source-to-sink fluxes in undisturbed cold environments. Achim A. Beylich, John C. Dixon and Zbigniew Zwoliński (editors). 2016. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 419 p, hardcover. ISBN 978-1-107-06822-3. £112. doi: [10.1017/CBO9781107705791](https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107705791)
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This edited volume summarises and synthesises the achievements of the International Association of Geomorphologists' (I.A.G./A.I.G.) Working Group SEDIBUD (Sediment Budgets in Cold Environments), which has been active for more than 10 years since 2005 (<http://www.geomorph.org/wg/wgsb.html>).

This book is mostly a collection of research and review papers that provides a geographical overview of sediment transfer processes throughout cold environments, which are grouped geographically into Arctic environments (part III), sub-Antarctic and Antarctic environments (part IV) and alpine/mountain environments (part V). Most of the chapters deal with regional sediment and solute budget phenomena. There are few very important issues underlying the conceptual idea of the book, in particular related to the necessity for quantitative studies of all three main components of fluvial transport (solute, suspended and bedload), as well as a coordinated effort to unify the methods and techniques of field-based research.

The individual and independent nature of the chapters results in huge variability in content and scientific value. Some chapters have enormous potential and present considerable research outcomes. In particular, Chapter 9, *Sediment and solute transport from Greenland*, by B. Hashholt includes a huge and unique dataset on sediment load formation in Greenland, and Chapter 10, *Measurements of bedload flux in a high Arctic environment*, by M. Kociuba contains unique measurements of bedload transport in Svalbard. Standing alone from the other chapters is the comparative summary of fluvial transport monitoring results from six case studies in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland (Chapter 27 by A. Beylich, in part VI), which provides the first spatially distributed estimate of total annual fluvial yield (39% for solute yield, 46% for suspended sediment yield and 15% for bedload yield). The reported results are not in line with reported values for Greenland (Chapter 10), which illustrates the complexity of the problem and emphasises the

main achievement of the book as the largest collection of novel datasets.

Some of the papers provide significant contributions to the knowledge of sediment budget and sources of solute and sediment transport. Chapters 7, 21, 23 and 24 provide detailed empirical and numerical data on the role of dominant hillslopes versus in-channel processes in sediment transfer in the valleys of Swedish Lapland, Norway, the Himalaya and the Bavarian Alps.

Nonetheless, the quality of several contributions is low, especially in terms of scientific novelty. Some chapters present a very limited amount of data from field studies using simple methods in local rivers (e.g. Chapter 12), and some do not really address the concept of source-to-sink fluxes (e.g. Chapter 18). Furthermore, some chapters are not in the appropriate sections of the book, which could mislead the reader. For example, Chapter 20, *Chemical denudation in partly glacierized mountain catchments of the fjord landscape in western Norway: contemporary rates, environmental controls and possible effects of climate change*, better fits the structure of part III on the Arctic environment.

Although the editors aimed to integrate the various contributions, the book is still a collection of independent chapters. Attempts to make links between different case studies are evident in the summary chapters 13 (for the Arctic environment, part III) and 26 (for alpine/mountain environments, part V), and also in the final chapter 28, but they do not provide a contextually successful narrative for the book. These summaries contain many vague statements and, based on my professional experience, such summaries should contain more quantitative data.

Nevertheless, the book provides a large amount of novel information. Ultimately, it is worthwhile to bring this information to international audiences, particularly considering that some of the papers report outstanding scientific advances, with the first global synthesis and integrated analysis of sediment and solute transport in Greenland, Antarctica and the Himalaya. This book could provide great supplementary reading for hydrology science course at university level and will certainly be of special interest to experts and professionals (Sergey Chalov, Faculty of Geography, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Leninskie Gory 1, 119991, Moscow, Russia (srchalov@geogr.msu.ru)).