

**Arctic Doom, Arctic Boom. The Geopolitics of Climate Change in the Arctic, by Barry S. Zellen**

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ARCTIC DOOM, ARCTIC BOOM. THE GEOPOLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE ARCTIC. By Barry S. Zellen. Santa Barbara, California: ABC Clio, 2009. 232 pp. \$49.95 (hardback). ISBN 978-0-313-38012-9.

This is a timely and topical book addressing the geopolitical future of the Arctic in a time of dramatic climate change. Already on page 2 Zellen cites the record low sea ice summers of 2007 and 2008 as reported by the National Snow and Ice Data Center and the risks of thawing permafrost. Suitably impressed, I read on!

There are two Forewords: one by Walter Hickel, former Governor of Alaska—"The day of the Arctic is upon us" addresses sustainability and the 'commons' in Alaska; one by Daniel Moran, Professor of Security Affairs at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School—"From Ultima Thule to the Midnight Sea" notes old ideas on the Arctic Ocean and the prospect of it becoming open in the future. The author is Director of the Arctic Security Project at the Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Contemporary Conflict.

Chapter 1 points out issues of the Arctic as remote and outside the mainstream of life, contrasting with its centrality during the Cold War. It is compared with the role of the Mediterranean in ancient times.

In Chapter 2, "The Geopolitics of Snow and Ice," these issues are elaborated and Zellen concludes that the Arctic is more like the large deserts of the world that act as barriers to contacts. He discusses military and strategic concerns relating to Alaska and the Aleutians during World War II and the Defense Early Warning (DEW) line and missile threats during the Cold War. At the peak of the Cold War, the military made up a fifth of Alaska's

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population. The demise of the Soviet Union allowed local and regional centers of power to develop.

Zellen discusses Halford Mackinder's 1943 geopolitical concept of a Eurasian "Heartland," which excluded the Lena Valley region of Siberia, and notes the similarity of the latter region to Nunavut, Alaska, and Greenland.

Chapter 3, "An Arctic Imperative?" derives its title from a book by J. Honderich (1987) that asks whether Canada is losing the North. The 'Arctic imperative' concerns the projected 'Age of the Arctic' as its resources are developed. However, Thomas Berger's 1977 report rejecting the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline project led to a new phase of northern realities. The history of indigenous peoples' land claims by the Alaskan natives (1971 settlement), and the Inuvialuit of western Canada (1984 settlement) are covered, as well as the new structures of self-government for the native corporations of Alaska (1971), the Inuit of northeastern Canada (1993), and the Labrador Inuit (2004). The differing political histories of these four regions makes interesting reading, but there is nothing about the Sakha Republic of Yakutia or the Nenets; Greenland is treated only briefly. Zellen examines the evolution of Nunavut and the issue of sovereignty beyond Nunavut. The chapter closes with mention of the warming Arctic and the strong economic position of the native peoples.

Chapter 4, "From Cold War to Warming Earth," opens by revisiting strategic issues from WWII, the Cold War, the collapse of the USSR, and the subsequent re-emergence of Russia. It then proceeds to examine the nature of Arctic climate change and notes the work of Al Gore and the IPCC, but not the Arctic Climate Impacts Assessment (ACIA) study. There is discussion of Russian-Canadian military actions following the planting of a Russian flag on the seabed at the North Pole in August 2007.

Chapter 5, "Polar Uncertainties," reports on the May 2008 meeting of five Arctic rim states that endorsed the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea as the means to resolve Arctic sovereignty disputes. The main current uncertainty is over the territorial boundaries on the Arctic seafloor, where major oil and gas resources are likely to be found, and the international or Canadian internal waterway view of the Northwest Passage. The U.S. National Security directive of January 2009 on the Arctic is comprehensively reviewed and initial negative reaction to it in Canada. Zellen emphasizes the positive multilateral nature of its positions on environment, indigenous rights, and international

scientific cooperation. The last section considers winners and losers from climatic change. The coverage is mainly a high-level global one, apart from the problems facing the polar bear, and it seems that the opportunity to address local and regional Arctic issues arising from the loss of summer Arctic sea ice within decades, was missed. The opening of Arctic shipping routes, including the Northeast Passage, are also not discussed

Chapter 6, "The End of the Arctic," addresses in general terms the impacts on land of vegetation changes and thawing permafrost, especially the release of methane that may accompany the latter process. Sea ice reductions in 2007 and 2008, and changes on Greenland's ice sheet are discussed, but the citations are to media reports and not to the scientific literature behind them. The greening of the tundra and the possibilities for Arctic agriculture are noted, along with the changes to ocean circulations and sea level rise due to the melting in Greenland. Finally, the book returns to its title "Arctic doom or boom?" While noting the stresses that rapid climate change is imposing on the Arctic environment and its peoples, the concluding section is mostly upbeat on the opportunities that a more open polar sea will afford. Extensive notes, references cited, and an index round out the book.

Who is the book intended for? It is a mixture of information about climate change and environmental responses, military and geopolitical history, and futurism. In places the themes seems a little repetitive, but overall it is an easy read. It will be useful to residents of the north and scientists who work there, policy makers, and businesses with Arctic activities.

### Reference Cited

Honderich, J., 1987: *Arctic Imperative. Is Canada Losing the North?* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

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