

Chapter V contemplates the agency of scientific and indigenous stakeholders within the Arctic cross-border cooperation. By applying the concept of civic epistemology as a “framework of indicators that helps us think comprehensively about different ways in which authority can be articulated or challenged” (p. 129), the author seeks to address the uneasy question “whose knowledge matters?” and outline the ways non-state actors negotiate and establish their authority in collecting, representing, and applying knowledge in policy-making. Drawing on the year-long research observations of the author and scrupulous analysis, *Arctic Governance* can be seen as a handbook on Arctic governance. For newcomers to the Arctic, it is an excellent starting point for familiarizing oneself with international relations and developing a critical perspective on the matter. For professionals, this book is a brilliant collection of case studies on high-level power dynamics in the Arctic, which not only advocates new ways of conceptualizing Arctic actors but also serves as a practical guide for researchers keen on grasping and investigating the fugitive, tacit mechanisms of Arctic governance and diplomacy.

Élise Féron / Jyrki Kähkönen / Gabriel Rached (eds.): Revisiting Regionalism and the Contemporary World Order. Perspectives from the BRICS and beyond, Berlin / Toronto: Opladen / Barbara Budrich, 2019, 302 pp.

Reviewed by
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Ten years after the first summit of the BRICS grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) the editors of this book have taken the opportunity to reflect on the role of this grouping and its participating states in what they (and many other observers) call a changing world order. Identifying the BRICS as potential challengers of one or several Western-centric international orders (IO) (p. 22), the volume’s declared interest is in specifying what exactly is changing when new stable forms of international cooperation are emerging and what responses these propose to current challenges (p. 21). Aiming at a critical study from a multidisciplinary and pluralist perspective (p. 25), the volume comprises an introduction and 11 chapters, organized into 3 parts: “Emergence and Challenges of Regionalism” (4 chapters), “Contemporary Regionalism in Practice” (4 chapters), and “Theoretical Perspectives on the Changing World Order” (3 chapters). The authors of these chapters hail from “around the world” (p. 25); however, most of them are associated with a research project titled “Regional Challenges to Multilateralism”,

based at Tampere University (Finland) and funded by the Finnish Kone Foundation. As the subtitle of the edited volume may already suggest, most chapters of the volume (except for two) focus on one of the BRICS countries, mostly as unitary state actors rather than the grouping as such, and their visions and involvement in regional projects. China receives the most attention (3 dedicated chapters). Russia and South Africa are the subject of one chapter each. In contrast, Brazil and India are hardly mentioned in any of the chapters. Interestingly, yet unexplained, the volume also includes contributions that deal with countries that are not part of the BRICS grouping. Chapter 1, by Tuomo Melasuo, offers a rather general account of regionalization processes in Africa since colonial times; chapter 5, by Karim Maiche, reflects upon regionalism in the Maghreb; and chapter 11, by Jyrki Käkönen, tries to offer new insights about a potential post-Westphalian order from a mythic Finnish national epos. Consequently, the volume does not offer much new information about the BRICS grouping as such, as the two chapters that deal with it (chapters 2 and 3, written by Shraddha Naik and Gabriel Rached respectively) are largely based on secondary academic literature, offering already established academic arguments rather than new empirical or analytical insights.

Overall, the volume is mostly couched in the mainstream narrative about the erosion of a US-dominated IO, which, despite the US remaining a leading power, also sees other states rising, in particular China, challenging a “liberal international order”, as well as norms and rules of regional and global governance, and trying

to resist Western dominance and increase the weight of the “non-Western world” (p. 24). The introduction of the volume, by Élise Féron and Jyrki Käkönen, tries to distinguish between at least three overlapping Western-centric IOs – a US-led post-World War II rule-based IO, a state-centric Westphalian IO, and a “colonial order” (p. 22) – and an underlying “international system” (identified as capitalist modes of production and markets, pp. 21–22), which the authors argue may (or may not) be affected very differently by the target of change at all. However, this distinction and the related questions are not picked up again at any point in the edited volume. Most chapters simply refer to a “liberal international order” that is being contested and potentially changed.

Moreover, while the volume explicitly aims to direct attention at the phenomenon of regionalism, as a strategy used by the “South” to resist Western dominance (p. 24), the introduction (and most chapters) refers to existing academic literature on new regionalisms and comparative regionalism only in passing, failing to formulate a clear gap that is being filled or to state what new insights are being produced in relation to that literature. Furthermore, the volume’s introduction and several chapters join in the call for a “Global IR [international relations]”, most prominently formulated by Amitav Acharya and colleagues, to overcome shortcomings of Western IR theories, looking beyond Europe and beyond states as the only relevant actors (p. 25). However, while the volume successfully directs attention beyond Europe, it largely remains centred on states as unitary actors. In addition, though identifying the need to look beyond state

interests, including issues such as the environment, climate change, as well as indigenous people's rights (p. 25), the volume focuses exclusively on economics and politics.

Although many chapters in this volume remain very general, presenting more or less established academic arguments, largely based on secondary literature, a few chapters stand out with regard to the empirical detail and new analytical insights that they provide. Chapter 4, by Bianca Naude, drawing on research undertaken for her PhD thesis, offers an interesting perspective on the role of historical experiences and political imagination in the repositioning of South Africa (here decidedly portrayed as a unitary actor) in the world, towards negative and positive "Others". However, she convincingly argues that South Africa is not only trying to reposition itself internationally but also trying to "regain control over destinies denied by colonialism" (p. 107). Taking this seriously, Naude investigates why "South Africa" experienced the world as "fundamentally unjust and violent" (p. 106) and what an imagined reordered world would look like (p. 107).

Similarly, chapter 6, by Ekaterina Mikhaylenko, drawing on her previous publications, offers an interesting account of Russian efforts to cope with a changing world order, responding to challenges posed by a rise of Western interregionalism by generating its own regional projects. What makes the chapter particularly interesting is that Mikhaylenko does not focus on a unitary state actor, but instead analyses the role of Russian scientists, and an influential Russian think tank in particular,

in generating new ideas and visions for region-building in Eurasia.

The three chapters dedicated to China also offer some interesting perspectives. Chapter 8, written by Terry McDonald and Benjamin Klasche, brings together secondary literature that facilitates understanding China's efforts to gain access to the Arctic region. However, while hinting at it, the chapter stops short of a critical geopolitical analysis of China's efforts to reorganize spaces through a discourse of redistributing "global" or, in this case, "Arctic commons" (pp. 208–209). It also largely equates "China" with Western powers, something that contrasts with chapters 9 and 10, by Giovanni Barbieri and Matti Puranen respectively. The two informative and complementary, though partly overlapping, chapters juxtapose a Western rigid, rule-based, and "win-lose" governance model with a Chinese foreign policy, built around loose, inclusive, and "win-win" network governance (p. 231), which is linked to a Chinese school of IR (pp. 236ff.) and a "discursive offensive" by Chinese scholars to redefine international politics and refute the universality of Western ideas (p. 255), all the while remaining a "stakeholder" of order based on the United Nations charter, even though a "revisionist" one (p. 260).

In this way, at least these chapters indicate answers to some of the questions raised in the introduction of the edited volume, offering some new empirical and analytical insights about what exactly might be changing in the contemporary world order and, at least to some extent, moving beyond conventional IR accounts centred on unitary state actors.