

Book Review

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Europe in the World: EU Geopolitics and the Making of European Space by Luiza Bialasiewicz (ed)

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The edited volume by Luiza Bialasiewicz offers an insightful contribution to the debates in critical geopolitics and EU external relations by taking innovative conceptual and empirical directions. The book can be considered as a befitting critique of 'distinct European geopolitical vision' that is based on self-declared civil, civilian and normative characterisations. The contributors in the volume adopt the lenses of critical geopolitics in order to analyse what the 'peculiarity' narrative of the EU's relations amounts to in practice. In this sense, the book aims at demonstrating the discrepancies between the ideal and desired role of the EU in the world and the actual geopolitical practices that ideologically construct spatial, political and cultural boundaries between the EU and the external world. The volume does not delve into deterministic conceptual and analytical definitions since critical geopolitics is interested in the very deconstruction of taken for granted definitions of space, visions, borders and identities. One example of this is the interchangeable use of 'European geopolitics' and 'the geopolitical vision of the European Union'. The authors rather chose to adopt the term 'EU'rope which refers to a more flexible space that is under constant construction and expansion. The volume also makes an important contribution to the empirical field of critical geopolitics which has so far lacked a comprehensive study of 'EU'ropean geopolitical practices. As stated by Bialasiewicz in the introductory chapter, the book aims at calling the reader's attention to the discrepancies between the EU's ideal and desired role in the world as proclaimed and its actual geopolitical practices.

The book is divided into two main parts. The first part focuses on various practices of generating geographical imaginations by the EU inside and outside of its territorial borders. The authors in the first part concur that usually the EU's geopolitical imaginations are reworked within their contextual settings and given a new meaning. The first chapter by Sami Moisio evaluates the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). The findings from the Baltic region suggest that the practice of supranational region building involves an attempt to turn less European regions within and beyond the territorial space of Europe into "denationalised mega-regions" (p. 36) in order to facilitate multiple economic integration zones. Nevertheless, the EU model is contested and reproduced by national and transnational expert groups and become a supplement to national policies. Richard C. Powell's analysis complements Moisio's conclusions. Powell delves into a relatively new geography for the Union -the expansion of EU geographical imaginary to the Arctic- by reflecting on inter-institutional and member state competition in generating spaces. Powell argues that in the middle of contesting approaches of the member states and the EU institutions the real concern for the EU is the extent to which indigenous people in the region should be given decision-

making power and how this devolution of power to the local level would affect centralised approach from Brussels (p. 122).

The chapters by Alun Jones and Alex Jeffrey in the first part can be read together in order to grasp how a purported normative, democratic ergo superior EU unfolds in two neighbouring regions: the Mediterranean and the Balkans through the case of Bosnia. The authors demonstrate how the Mediterranean region and Bosnia have been made “problematic” spaces by the EU so that the “EU’ropean order” can be projected into new geographical spaces through partnership discourse (Jones, p. 42). The authors also discuss that the EU endeavours are full of disorder and fragmentation, not least practices of ‘othering’ (Jones p. 56-57) and masking of power over the local actors through a “virtuous narrative of Europeanisation” (Jeffrey, p. 92). Veit Bachmann’s analysis offers more optimistic conclusions compared to the other chapters in the first part of the volume. His chapter demonstrates that Europe engages in an intensive region construction through a combination of development aid, intra and interregional cooperation in East Africa. Despite the evident perceptions of the EU’s neo-liberal economic policies as coercive and exploitative (p. 59), the EU proves to be a successful model for regional integration and prosperity (as seen in the examples of East African Community or African Union), and thereby “possesses substantial appeal and credibility as a normative actor” (p. 79).

The second part of the volume particularly focuses on the question of border practices, immigration and asylum. Adam Levy’s chapter discusses the border management mission EUBAM on the Moldova-Ukraine border. Presented as the best example of border management partnership by the Commission, EUBAM securitises the border; impose new restrictions for movement, while the normative and apolitical discourse masks the “attempt to re-scale border security and re-territorialise human mobility [by] using third countries as ‘spatial, i.e., territorial fixes” (p. 163). The chapters by Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen, Nick Vaughan-Williams and Shinya Kitingawa are complementary to Levy’s analysis since the authors extend the discussion on border control and monitoring through various practices of non-territorial and remote border security, such as agreements with third countries, border patrol assistance to external partners, pre-emptive bordering and temporary stay and assistance centres for refugees. Overall, the authors demonstrate that EU is not only turning into a ‘protection-lite’ (Gammeltoft-Hansen, p. 130) but also support illegal and immoral practices in third countries by externalisation of asylum, i.e. recruiting some undemocratic neighbouring countries into schemes to move the regulation of asylum and provision of protection away from Europe.

The authors demonstrate that both re-territorialisation and de-territorialisation are at work in bordering practices. Vaughan-Williams argues that virtual border security through European Border Surveillance System re-territorialises borders at another scale by identifying allegedly risky subjects electronically. On the other hand, Kitingawa’s detailed examination of Lampedusa Temporary Stay Centre exemplifies de-territorialisation of the EU’s borders by creating “camps” or “space[s] of exception ... where the law may be suspended” (p. 206) contrary to fundamental human rights. Overall, the authors in the second part agree that the ‘EU’ropean border practices are usually hidden behind some normative discursive devices (e.g. ring of friends, European neighbourhood) but constructs imaginary borders to protect the EU zone from illegal migration.

Overall, the contributors offer a very insightful reading of EUrope's perception of security and threat and addresses a variety of different readers interested in geopolitics, migration and area studies, EU foreign policy and external relations, and not least the EU grand strategy in the making. The contributors to the Bialasiewicz's volume demonstrates how the EU shifts borders further away from EUrope's territorial demarcations through detailed inspections on making spaces and regions as a geopolitical practice. The authors converge on the main point that spatiality is not limited to territoriality. Borders and regions are produced and maintained through narratives and represent power relations between the EU and those geopolitical spaces it creates.

What is really missing in the book is a comprehensive closing chapter that would bring the reader to a conclusion by bridging the wide variety of empirical contributions and analysing them in light of the key issues of concern in broader critical geopolitical studies. Yet, after reading the book, one gets the idea that the impenetrable territorial boundaries of the EU have been replaced with "fuzzy zones, frontiers and intermediary spaces of interaction and exchange" (Browning and Christou, 2010, p. 111). However, these new forms of borders impose macro-regional restrictions and become what Wesley Scott term as "re-scaling rather than a transcending of the state" (Wesley Scott, 2005, p. 434). The way in which third countries and regions are made EUropean spaces for the protection of the internal zone of peace as described and analysed in this book raises thought-provoking questions and novel research agendas to reflect on for all scholars who count themselves in the field of EUropean studies.

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Browning, C. S. and Christou, G. (2010). 'The constitutive power of outsiders: The European neighbourhood policy and the eastern dimension', *Political Geography*, 29 (2), pp. 109-118.

Wesley Scott, J. (2005). "'The EU and 'Wider Europe': Toward an Alternative Geopolitics of Regional Cooperation?", *Geopolitics*, 10 (3), pp. 429-454.