

Book Review: Europe in the World: EU Geopolitics and the Making of European Space

by Blog Admin

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*This edited volume provides an innovative contribution to the debate on contemporary European geopolitics by tracing some of the new political geographies and geographical imaginations emergent within the EU's actions in the international arena. Drawing on case studies that range from the Arctic to East Africa, the chapters aim to provide a critical geopolitical reading of the ways in which particular places, countries, and regions are brought into the EU's orbit and the ways in which they are made to work for 'EU'rope. **Carlos A. Arrébola** recommends the text for political geographers interested in the European region.*



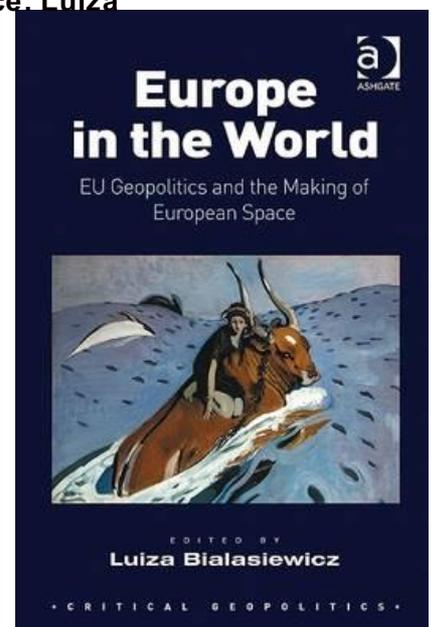
Europe in the World: EU Geopolitics and the Making of European Space. Luiza Bialasiewicz. Ashgate. October 2011.

In 2013, four decades will have gone by since the first enlargement of the European Union (EU). In spite of the political controversies about membership on-going in some states, the accomplishment of moving from 6 to 27 Member states has been extraordinary. In that time, the EU has roughly tripled its territory and, considering the upcoming entry of the Republic of Croatia to the Union, it seems like an open-ended process. This has obviously affected the role of Europe in the world. The efforts to speak with a single voice, such as the Common Foreign and Security Policy or the appointment of a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security, have also strengthened the international position of this territory.

This position is precisely what [Luiza Bialasiewicz](#) attempts to describe in the collective work *Europe in the World*, published in 2011. Throughout this book reference is made to “EU”rope to note that it is the impact of the institutional framework of the EU itself that is being assessed, rather than the continent as a geographical entity. The text is divided into two parts, both of which have a clear focus on political geography. The first part tackles the action of the EU pertaining to other world regions, such as the Mediterranean, East Africa, Bosnia and Herzegovina, or the Arctic. The second part addresses in great detail the behaviour of the Union as a (b)ordering actor, in particular, the off-shore and outsource of its frontiers. Readers can observe three recurring themes in almost every chapter: extraterritoriality, the promotion of European shared values, and the economic underpinning of the Union’s actions.

The first theme, extraterritoriality, is visible in several discussions of how the Union extends its powers beyond its territorial scope. Border management control through outsourcing and off-shore management is discussed by [Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen](#) in the chapter on asylum, in which he emphasizes how EU countries find a way not to breach their legal obligations to protect those seeking asylum by outsourcing the responsibility to transit or origin countries. By applying the “Safe Third Country” rule, whereby as long as the asylum seeker is “safe” in their transit or origin countries, there is no need to deal with their application for asylum. As Gammeltoft-Hansen asserts, this may result on a lower standard in the quality of the refugee’s protection.

Another situation that highlights off-shore management and outsourcing practices is the Libyan-Italian



agreement of re-admission of immigrants. This helps to deport immigrants arriving to *Schengenland* via the small island of Lampedusa, thus creating a networked geography expulsion. The implications of this agreement might simply mean that the concept of “border” has to be reconsidered. However, leaving those theoretical considerations aside, the truth is that the limits of the territorial power of the EU are rather hazy.

The second theme discussed by most of the authors is the use of the EU international position to promote European values such as democracy, the rule of law, and human rights; this mandate comes right from article 21 of the Treaty of the European Union. In the chapter *Making Regions for EU Action*, [Alun Jones](#) depicts how this holds especially true for the Mediterranean region when dealing with Arab states. This process of Europeanisation has encountered different levels of success in different countries of the Mediterranean, as this chapter shows.

Thirdly, the economic rationale under EU’s external action can be seen in many of the contributions. Richard C. Powell provides an appropriate example in his chapter on the Arctic. He shows the increasing preoccupation of the EU institutions with this region, while remarking on their wariness about the competition for the natural resources that might be available in the Arctic. Conscious of this, the EU seeks to increase its presence in the Arctic Council.

Luiza Bialasiewicz has very successfully brought together in one text some of the most currently discussed topics on EU geopolitics, and she has accomplished that in a very coherent manner. This is a must-read for political geographers interested in the European region. Nevertheless, because of the year of its publication, this book has consciously left behind two now relevant aspects: how this whole picture is affected by the implementation of the [European External Action Service](#), and how the prospective changes in budget for the [European Neighbourhood Policy](#) may affect the EU influence in the world.

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