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FOREWORD

Climate change is affecting the whole planet, but the dramatic effects in the Arctic are deeper than anywhere else. As ice melts, new sea routes open for navigation, while fishing stocks change both in quantity and quality. Huge and rich underground resources come within reach, attracting the interest not only by the Arctic States, but also by countries and private companies far removed from the region, striving to obtain exploitation licences. Therefore, unprecedented perspectives of economic development for the region are coming into view.

However, exploitation of new resources will have an enormous impact both on the environment and on the life of the traditional communities that have been living in the Arctic region since centuries. On the one hand, the challenge lies in the “paradoxical spiral” – Lorenzoni, p. 62 – that Arctic gas and oil resources could ease the increasing problems of energy supply, but their extraction and exploitation would just aggravate the global warming, that the same fossil fuels have been causing since the last century.

On the other hand, the negative impact would be experienced, first of all, by the Arctic population still consisting mostly of indigenous Inuit peoples, living in the different States that presently incorporate and rule Inuit’s ancestral land. The way in which indigenous Arctic peoples’ rights are recognized may be quite different from State to State, but a common feature is of high concern: traditional lifestyle and culture are endangered by the on-going new economic activities. This means that the same survival of the indigenous communities as such is put at risk.

To learn more about such issues, an international conference, hosting distinguished experts in different fields, was held at the University of Padova in 2019. Some of the articles in this book do reproduce the contents of the presentations brought at the time – duly updated – but further contributions have been added, containing new developments of the on-going research project. Publication took far more than expected, due to a number of reasons, including the difficulties brought by the pandemic. In the meanwhile, the effects of global warming have become more and more evident, adding further relevance to Arctic studies: actually, the region can be seen now as a proper testing ground for the appropriateness of goals and perspectives in different fields.

Like the conference, the book is meant to be multidisciplinary, trying to

provide a larger perception of the complexity of the issues involved. The first part contains political and economic studies, while the second one deals with international law aspects.

The first part opens with the contribution of Marie-Anne-Coninx, former EU Ambassador at large for the Arctic, presenting the complexity of the Arctic issues at the European diplomatic level. Ambassador Giorgio Novello wrote his 10 theses on the Arctic, revealing his deep knowledge and personal affection for the region and highlighting the relations between the Arctic States and Italy in the past. On the same line of personal affection, Marzio G. Mian writes about his 10 yearlong enquiries, as a journalist, in the Arctic States, dealing with the impact of the on-going changes both for the countries in general, and for the people he met on his way. Arturo Lorenzoni clearly explains how the exploitation of Arctic fossil resources should be carefully considered as the side effects might definitely overcome economic benefits.

As for legal studies, Aslan Abashidze presents the newest developments in the Russian posture concerning Arctic lands, and the related international law aspects. Yugina Mishota discusses how the Russian Government's resource exploitation policy is severely affecting the fundamental human rights and living conditions of the Russian "small peoples of the Arctic". Enrico Zamuner considers the new issues in the field of the law of the sea, especially those concerning the potentially controversial legal status of the route of the Northwestern passage. Cristiana Fioravanti illustrates how the changing composition of the fishing stocks and maritime conditions impacts on the existing international law rules and on the EU fishing policy. Sergio Marchisio, bringing attention to space law, shows how it could be of relevance in Arctic matters, not only because space technologies can provide means to secure sustainable development, but also because States' commitment to cooperation and environmental protection – that are cornerstones of space law – should provide a proper legal model to face similar Arctic issues. As for my part, I took into consideration the legal systems of Canada and Greenland, whose comparison can highlight the different legal conception of the relation of each State with its indigenous Inuit community and their participation in the decision concerning exploitation of mineral resources.

Rather obviously, any attempt to provide an overall knowledge of the multifaceted issues posed by the rapidly changing situation in the Arctic would be unrealistic. The purpose of this book is to focus on some of the new problems, to raise a larger interest on Arctic studies, even by universities and scholars in non-Arctic States.

At the beginning of the war in Ukraine, this book was already in press. Nevertheless, to take the new situation into account, brief amendments of the contributions have been possible, while the consequences of the current events on Arctic issues remain unpredictable.

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