

For the second time the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM), under the auspices of its Arctic Cooperation Program, has endorsed and financially supported the publication of a volume of the Polar Law Textbook, confirming Dr. Natalia Loukacheva as project leader, book editor and author of the introductory chapter, "Polar Law Developments and Major Trends".

The publication is intimately related to the Master's Programme in Polar Law (run by the University of Akureyri, Iceland), which had housed the initiative in 2012-2013, and the Polar Law Symposium, an annual conference which brings the major experts on Polar issues together and organized by the Polar Law Institute (also based in Akureyri).

Clearing forthwith the air, it must be first said that "Polar Law Textbook" may be a somewhat misleading title. Although the structure actually resembles a proper textbook specifically designed for students, with 15 chapters written in the form of intensive lectures (inclusive of suggestions for further reading and questions aimed to check on the understanding of the text), each contribution is an in-depth, up-to-date, and brilliant review of distinct Polar-Law-relevant issues, suitable therefore not only for students, but also for politicians, decision-makers, scientists and academics. Having said that, the reader must also know that the legal part, albeit being the main focus of the book, is here mostly explained in its social, environmental and historical perspectives, rather than being scrutinized in depth, making the reading feasible also for non-lawyers (just watch out for some "avoidable" difficulties, as for instance the alternation between "UNCLOS", used by Loukacheva and Heininen (Chapter 1 and 2), and "LOS Convention", used by McDorman (Chapter 5)).

Overall, the book is a wise balance between innovation and continuation of the first volume, published in 2010. The general concept broadly describing "Polar Law" used in the previous book is here re-proposed *verbatim* as "a developing field of law that deals with the international and domestic legal regimes that are applicable to the Arctic or the Antarctic, or both", including also legally non-binding instruments, commonly referred to as "soft law" (e.g., various Memorandums of Understanding concluded by Arctic stakeholders; declarations of the Arctic Council, etc). Furthermore, it has also been re-confirmed that Polar Law as a developing discipline, educational and practical tool, not only cross-cuts distinct branches of Law, e.g. Human Rights Law, Law of the Sea, Environmental Law, Resources Law, Wildlife Law, to name but a few, but also draws upon several areas of the social sciences and humanities, e.g. international studies and politics. Polar Law is indeed a highly multidisciplinary approach to the Arctic and Antarctic legal issues, involving in the debate not only legal experts but also scientists, politicians, practitioners and the indigenous peoples of the Arctic.

Apparently, a concrete necessity for a second volume was already disclosed in the first book, which, despite its comprehensiveness, left enough room for further research (Chapter 1, Loukacheva, 2010). In fact, each relevant area in the field of Polar Law may include in turn many different topics. For instance the discourse on indigenous people and governance has been here re-proposed, but focusing on the Sami of Norway and Nunavut instead of the Inuit of Alaska and Chukotka's indigenous people, while the common topic of Greenland has been analysed under the lens of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, instead of the legal processes leading to self-determination (2010).

An example of a refreshing new perspective on governance and autonomies in the Arctic is the

captivating chapter on "Faroese Governance" (chapter 13, Kari a Rogvi). A seemingly unusual choice at first glance, considering the relevance commonly accorded to indigenous people and autonomy by academics and media alike, the study has revealed itself to be nevertheless essential to introduce the reader to the compelling issue, whilst little studied so far, of the struggles of "small states" in achieving a satisfactory but functional autonomy (missing in the first volume). The author of the chapter suggests as a major outcome that a study on Faroese governance may outline a realistic model for achieving a feasible but high-level degree of autonomy notwithstanding marginal conditions and limited capacities, hopefully serving also as a "workable paradigm for other polar or marginal polities than, say, either Greenland or Iceland".

Understandably, an additional strong rationale for a new volume was the necessity to update the book with the newest developments occurred during the past three years. Indeed, all the articles were written between May 2012 and February 2013, and were requested to catch the most updated news and tendencies in both regions, as the case of the essay on "The International Legal Regime of the Continental Shelf with Special Reference to the Polar Regions" (Chapter 5, Ted L. McDorman). The author, anticipating that both Canada and Denmark will be submitting information to the Commission on its proposed continental shelf outer limit in the Arctic Ocean, respectively in December 2013 and sometime in 2014, has brilliantly contributed to tackling, with a realistic and expert insight in its legal features, a growing and rather alarmistic media attention on States' claims.

Although the textbook is undoubtedly rich of cutting-edge research aimed to cover a wide range of topics, some of the editor's choices may not please everybody. An awaited but unfortunately missing insight is probably an in-depth research on the role of non-Arctic States/actors in the rapidly evolving geopolitics of the Arctic. The topic was briefly hinted at in the first volume, while a brief mention is made also in the current one; however, nothing more is offered. Indeed, notwithstanding the fact that countries such as China, India and South Korea, among others, gained the observer status on the Arctic Council only at the last Arctic Council Ministerial meeting (held in Kiruna, Finland, in May 2013), the speculation on their potential role started way before, while the attention of the media and the interests of scholars have been increasing accordingly.

To conclude, the book is a wide selection of updated Polar law articles dealing with several topics, written in a clear but not superficial language, and truly stimulating. What makes the book even more enjoyable, if anything else was needed, is perhaps the fact that the possibility for its free download in electronic format has been maintained (as already done for the first volume, published in 2010). This is something that is highly appreciated considering the high level of each contribution and the often-prohibitive prices of Polar-issues related books. A hard copy can also be ordered on the same website for a reasonable price (338 DKK). Specifically, the volume can be downloaded in electronic format or/and ordered in hardcopy format at: <http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publikationer/2013-535/>

