As other Edward Elgar Research Handbooks have noted, international law is on the move. It has increasingly become a framework that structures areas of law previously unregulated or regulated only at the domestic level. Some of this application to new areas has come about in specialized and potentially fragmented ways. The expansion of international law on Indigenous rights has occurred in a specialized area, and some have noted the need for careful integration with other areas of international law, but it has come about significantly through the agency and efforts of Indigenous peoples.

The development of the international law of Indigenous rights became a way of setting standards for states to meet, thus seeking to overcome some of the obstacles present to Indigenous rights within many domestic legal systems and, in effect, to see Indigenous peoples as international actors even after having been subsumed within the state system in recent centuries. The purpose of this Research Handbook is to explore this development through an examination of a range of specific topics within the international law of Indigenous rights.

In addition to ‘pure’ international law, though, the Research Handbook situates the international law of Indigenous rights in historical contexts and connects it to comparative approaches within domestic legal rights for Indigenous peoples. At the same time that this Research Handbook offers strong general coverage from leading scholars, relative to other recent collections discussing the international law of Indigenous rights, it has several distinguishing dimensions. First, this Research Handbook has a series of pieces engaging with Indigenous rights and economic issues like trade, investment, economic growth, and related matters. In that way, it speaks distinctively to the ongoing empowerment of Indigenous peoples in modern economic contexts. Second, this Research Handbook has an implicit but sustained engagement with questions related to the intersection of Indigenous rights with the claims of other communities, including perhaps especially in African contexts. A number of chapters implicitly raise complex questions related to the claims of minorities and local communities who are not part of the Indigenous rights framework but also warrant protection. Third, more generally, the Research Handbook attempts to cover a number of topics that have not received sufficient scholarly attention thus far, whether with calls to learn new things from Latin American contexts or attention to less discussed Indigenous rights and the interface of Indigenous rights with a number of cutting-edge issues.

As with other Edward Elgar Research Handbooks, the book seeks on the one hand to provide students and emerging practitioners with knowledge on the international law of Indigenous rights, and it thus covers a number of basic concepts and approaches. On the other hand, it will also be a valuable resource for expert audiences of academics and senior practitioners. It has chapters on the latest developments and most topical issues in an effort to provide a state-of-the-art discussion of the international law of Indigenous rights.

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