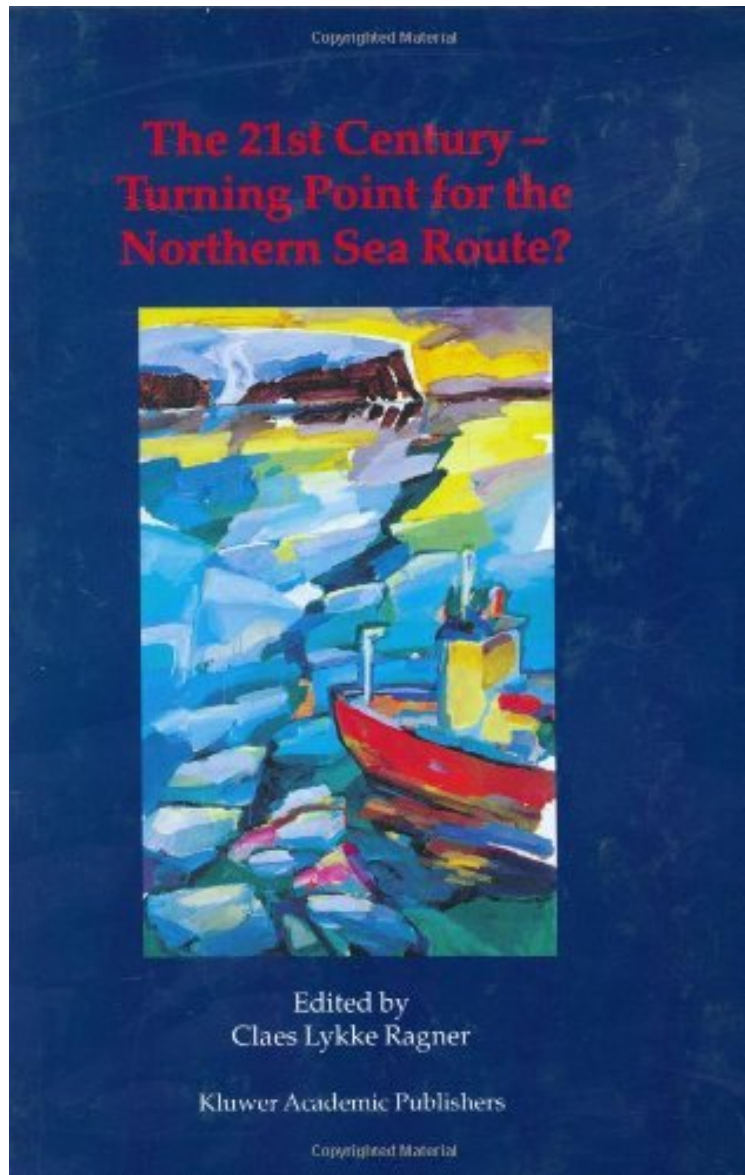


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by Claes Lykke Ragner, The Fridtjof Nansen Institute Marking the end of the International Northern Sea Route Programme (INSROP), the Northern Sea Route User Conference was organized in Oslo on 18-20 November 1999. The purpose of the Conference was two-fold. First, it was the intention of the organizers to present to the potential users of the Northern Sea Route - i. e. the international shipping industry and relevant cargo owners - the results of six years of multidisciplinary INSROP research. Second, it was the organizers' intention to create a unique meeting place for the different Northern Sea Route stakeholders - a forum where users, the Russian NSR administrators, the researchers and other interested parties could discuss the status and future of the route. In these Conference Proceedings, you will find the manuscripts of the speeches presented during the Conference: The manuscripts can roughly be divided into three groups with widely different focuses: On one hand, you will find the representatives of shipping and other commercial interests, focusing on the NSR's potential for profit in the short term, and on the shortcomings of the route. On the other hand, you will find representatives of different levels of Russian authorities, presenting the possibilities offered by the route, and emphasizing Russia's long experience in using and administrating it. In between these two groups stand the researchers, presenting a multi-faceted and hopefully balanced picture of the NSR and its possibilities vs.