Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization
ISSN 2224-3240 (Paper) ISSN 2224-3259 (Online)
Vol.41, 2015 

# Making a Career in International Law

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**Abstract**
The study of international law in the 21st century has acquired a new dimension due to its rapid development due to different levels of and changes in international transactions. This rapid growth however, brought with it certain challenges both to the teachers and students of international law. On the part of the students, they tend to be confused at the number of branches of international law and whether there is actually a career pact which they can follow.This paper is meant to make an excursion into the various opportunities available to students of international in their endeavours to become international lawyers. We have decided to approach the topic by following an arrangement that will refresh your memory on what public international law is; its origin and development; sources; specific development in contemporary international law and then we shall consider some career pact in international law.
**Keywords:** Public International, International Lawyer, career opportunities, development

## 1. Introduction

It is our opinion that any lawyer aspiring to be an international lawyer should at one point or the other have come across public international law as a course in his formal studies in the university or privately on his own. We discover however, that most aspirants did not study public international law, but may have picked interest in one or two of the branches and then make a career in it. For a proper understanding of what we are going to discuss, it is very pertinent to discuss public international law as the hub of the various branches of international law and then make a foray into some of these branches.

## 2. Nature, Origin and development of International law

International Law may be defined as the rules and principles that govern states in their relations inter se.[1] Although, states are the primary subjects of international law, the development of international relations in recent times, especially the setting up of a great number of international institutions and the international recognition of the rights and duties of groups and the individuals have to that extent brought these entities within its purview.[2]
The system of public international law may be described as 'consisting of a body of laws, rules and legal principles that are based on custom, treaties or legislation and define, control, constrain or affect the rights and duties of states in their relations with each other'. Public international law has increased in use and importance vastly over the twentieth century, due to the increase in global trade, armed conflict, environmental deterioration on a worldwide scale, awareness of human rights violations, rapid and vast increases in international transportation and a boom in global communications.[3]

The history of public international law examines the evolution and development of public international law in both state practice and conceptual understanding. Modern international law developed out of Renaissance Europe and is strongly entwined with the development of western political organisation at that time. The development of European notions of sovereignty and nation states would necessitate the development of methods for interstate relations and standards of behaviour, and these would lay the foundations of what would become international law. However, while the origins of the modern system of international law can be traced back 400 years, the development of the concepts and practises that would underpin that system can be traced back to ancient historical politics and relationships thousands of years old.[4] Important concepts are derived from the practice between Greek city-states and the Roman law concept of ius gentium (which regulated contacts between Roman citizens and non-Roman people). These principles were not universal however. In East Asia, political theory was based not on the equality of states, but rather the cosmological supremacy of the Emperor of China.[5]

Basic concepts of international law such as treaties can be traced back thousands of years.[6] Early

[1] Umozurike U.O., Introduction to International law, (1993) (Spectrum Law Series) p.1
[2] Ibid
[3]http://law-tanmay.blogspot.com/2011/07/nature-and-origin-of-public.html accessed 11/12.2014
[4] Malcolm N. Shaw, International Law, (4th Ed)(London: Cambridge University Press) p.12.
[5]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_public_international_law accessed 11/12/2014
[6] Bederman, David J. (2002). International Law in antiquity (Repr.ed.). Cambridge: Cmbridge Univ. Press. ISBN 0-521-79197-9. Ibid.

 

examples of treaties include around 2100BC an agreement between the rulers of the city-states of Lagash and Umma in Mesopotamia, inscribed on a stone block, setting a proscribed boundary between their two states.[1]Around 1000BC, an agreement was signed between Ramses II of Egypt and the king of the Hittites establishing "eternal peace and brotherhood" between their two nations: dealing with respect for each other's territory and establishing a form of defensive alliance.[2] The ancient Greeks before Alexander the Great formed many small states that constantly interacted. In peace and in war, an inter-state culture evolved that prescribed certain rules for how these states would interact. These rules did not apply to interactions with non-Greek states, but among themselves the Greek inter-state community resembled in some respects the modern international community.[3]

The Roman Empire did not develop an international law, as it acted without regard to any external rules in its dealings with those territories that were not already part of the empire. The Romans did, however, form municipal laws governing the interactions between private Roman citizens and foreigners. These laws, called the jus gentium (as opposed to the jus civile governing interactions between citizens) codified some ideas of basic fairness, and attributed some rules to an objective, independent "natural law." These jus gentium ideas of fairness and natural law have survived and are reflected in modern international law.

### 2.1 Nation-states

After the fall of the Roman Empire and the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire into independent cities, principalities, kingdoms and nations, for the first time there was a real need for rules of conduct between large international communities. Without an empire or a dominant religious leadership to moderate and direct international dealings, most of Europe looked to Justinian's code of law from the Roman Empire, and the canon law of the Catholic Church for inspiration.

International trade was the real catalyst for the development of objective rules of behavior between states. Without a code of conduct, there was little to guarantee trade or protect the merchants of one state from the actions of another. Economic self-interest drove the evolution of common international trade rules, and most importantly the rules and customs of maritime law.[4]

As international trade, exploration and warfare became more involved and complex, the need for common international customs and practices became even more important. The Hanseatic League of the more than 150 entities in what is now Germany, Scandinavia, and the Baltic States developed many useful international customs, which facilitated trade and communication among other things. The Italian city-states, developed diplomatic rules as they began sending ambassadors to foreign capitals. Treaties-agreements between governments intended to be binding-became a useful tool to protect commerce. The horrors of the thirty years' war, meanwhile, created an outcry for rules of combat that would protect civilian communities.[5]

### 2.2 Hugo Grotius

International practices, customs, rules and treaties proliferated to the point of complexity. Several scholars sought to compile them all into organized treatises. The most important of these was Hugo Grotius, whose treatise, De Jure Belli Ac Pacis Libri Tres is considered the starting point for modern international law. Unlike the earlier thinkers, who believed that the natural law was imposed by a deity, Grotius believed that the natural law came from an essential universal reason, common to all men.[6]

This rationalist perspective enabled, Grotius to posit several rational principles underlying law. Law was not imposed from above but rather derived from principles. Foundation principles included the axiom that promises must be kept –Pacta Sunt Servanda, and that harming another requires restitution. These two principles have served as the basis for much of subsequent international law. Apart from natural law, Grotius also dealt with international custom, or voluntary law. Grotius emphasized the importance of actual practices, customs and treaties-what 'is' done-as opposed to normative rules of what 'ought' to be done.[7]

### 2.3 Treaty of Westphalia

The Westphalian treaties of 1648 were a turning point in establishing the principle of state sovereignty as a cornerstone of the international order.

After World War 1, an attempt was made to establish such a new international law of peace, of which the League of Nations was considered to be one of the cornerstones, but this attempt failed unfortunately. The

[1] Nussbaum, Arthur (1954). A concise history of the law of nations, pp. 1-2.Ibid.
[2] Ibid
[3] Ibid
[4] Ibid
[5] Ibid
[6] Ibid
[7] Ibid

 

Charter of the United Nations (1945) in fact reflects the fact that the traditional notion of sovereignty remains the key concept in the law of nations.[1]

2.4 The League of Nations

Following World War 1, as after the thirty years' war, there was an outcry for rules of Warfare to protect civilian populations, as well as a desire to curb invasion. The League of Nations, established after the war, attempted to curb invasions by enacting a treaty agreement providing for economic and military sanctions against member states that used "external aggression "to invade or conquer other member states. An international court was established, the Permanent Court of International Justice, to arbitrate disputes between nations without resorting to war. Meanwhile, many nations signed treaties agreeing to use international arbitration rather than warfare to settle differences. International crises, however, demonstrated that nations were not yet committed to the idea of giving external authorities a say in how nations conducted their affairs. Aggression on the part of Germany, Italy and Japan went unchecked by international law, and it took a second world war to end it.

2.5 The post war era

After World War II, there was a strong desire to never again endure the horrors of war experienced by civilian populations. The League of Nations was re-attempted through another treaty organization, The United Nations.
The post war era has been highly successful one for international law. International cooperation has become far more common place, though of course not universal. Importantly, nearly 200 nations are now members of the United Nations, and have voluntarily bound themselves to its Charter. Even the most powerful nations have recognized the need for international cooperation and supports, and have routinely sought international agreement and consent before engaging in acts of war.[2] Apart from consent in warfare, there are also many civil rules that nations readily obeyed because they make life easy for all.

2.6 Sources

Under this head, we do not wish to discuss the sources except to just mention them in passing and in accordance with Article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice as follows:
1. The court whose function is to decide in accordance with international law such disputes as are submitted to it, shall apply:
(a) International conventions, whether general or particular, establishing rules expressly recognized by the contesting states;
(b) international custom, as evidence of general practice accepted as law;
(c) the general principles of law recognized by civilized nations;
(d) subject to the provisions of Article 59, judicial decisions and the teachings of the most qualified publicists of the various nations, as subsidiary means for the determination of the rules of law.
2. This provision shall not prejudice the power of the court to decide a case ex aequo et bono, if the parties agree thereto.

## 3. Some Specific Developments in International Law

There has been a lot of fragmentation in international law. By this fragmentation, we mean that many branches of international law have emerged over the years. Some of those branches are Law of the Sea, of outer space, of international institutions, Humanitarian law, human rights law, International Environmental Law, International Boundaries and Immigration Law, International Criminal law, International Trade and Investment, etc.[3]In this segment of our discussion, we intend to look at a few examples of these by looking at the basic principles and laws in terms of international treaties and conventions governing them. We do not intend to do an in-depth study here.

3.1 International Environmental Law

Environmental law is a complex and interlocking body of treaties, conventions, statutes, regulations, and common law that operates to regulate the interaction of humanity and the natural environment, towards the purpose of reducing the impacts of human activity. The topic may be divided into two major subjects: (1) pollution control and remediation, (2) resource conservation and management. Laws dealing with pollution are often media-limited - i.e., pertain only to a single environmental medium, such as air, water (whether surface water, groundwater or oceans), soil, etc. - and control both emissions of pollutants into the medium, as well as

[1] Ibid
[2] Ibid
[3] See a more comprehensive list in the Appendix attached to this paper. I acknowledge the help and support of Professor Ademola Popoola who helped in the compilation of the list.

 

liability for exceeding permitted emissions and responsibility for cleanup. Laws regarding resource conservation and management generally focus on a single resource - e.g., natural resources such as forests, mineral deposits or animal species, or more intangible resources such as especially scenic areas or sites of high archeological value - and provide guidelines for and limitations on the conservation, disturbance and use of those resources. These areas are not mutually exclusive - for example, laws governing water pollution in lakes and rivers may also conserve the recreational value of such water bodies. Furthermore, many laws that are not exclusively "environmental" nonetheless include significant environmental components and integrate environmental policy decisions. Municipal, state and national laws regarding development, land use and infrastructure are examples.[1]
Environmental law draws from and is influenced by principles of environmentalism, including ecology, conservation, stewardship, responsibility and sustainability. Pollution control laws generally are intended to protect and preserve both the natural environment and human health. Resource conservation and management laws generally balance the benefits of preservation and economic exploitation of resources. From an economic perspective environmental laws may be understood as concerned with the prevention of present and future externalities, and preservation of common resources from individual exhaustion. The limitations and expenses that such laws may impose on commerce, and the often unquantifiable (non-monetized) benefit of environmental protection, have generated and continue to generate significant controversy.

Given the broad scope of environmental law, no fully definitive list of environmental laws is possible. The following discussion and resources give an indication of the breadth of law that falls within the "environmental" metric. [2]

3.1.1 International

Pollution does not respect political boundaries, making international law an important aspect of environmental law. Numerous legally binding international agreements now encompass a wide variety of issue-areas, from terrestrial, marine and atmospheric pollution through to wildlife and biodiversity protection.

While the bodies that proposed, argued, agreed upon and ultimately adopted existing international agreements vary according to each agreement, certain conferences - including 1972's United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 1983's World Commission on Environment and Development, 1992's United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and 2002's World Summit on Sustainable Development have been particularly important.

3.1.2 Organizing principles

International environmental law's development has included the statement and adoption of a number of important guiding principles. As with all international law, international environmental law brings up questions of sovereignty and legal reciprocity ("comity"). Other guiding principles include the polluter pays principle, the precautionary principle, the principle of sustainable development, environmental procedural rights, common but differentiated responsibilities, intra-generational and inter-generational equity, "common concern of humankind", and common heritage.[3]

3.1.3 Sources

Treaties, protocols, conventions, etc.

International environmental agreements are generally multilateral (or sometimes bilateral) treaties (i.e. convention, agreement, protocol, etc.). The majority of such conventions deal directly with specific environmental issues. There are also some general treaties with one or two clauses referring to environmental issues but these are rarer. There are about 1000 environmental law treaties in existence today; no other area of law has generated such a large body of conventions on a specific topic.

Protocols are subsidiary agreements built from a primary treaty. They exist in many areas of international law but are especially useful in the environmental field, where they may be used to regularly incorporate recent scientific knowledge. They also permit countries to reach agreement on a framework that would be contentious if every detail were to be agreed upon in advance. The most widely known protocol in international environmental law is the Kyoto Protocol, which followed from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.[4]

3.1.4 Customary international law

Customary international law is an important source of international environmental law. These are the norms and rules that countries follow as a matter of custom and they are so prevalent that they bind all states in the world. When a principle becomes customary law is not clear cut and many arguments are put forward by states not wishing to be bound. Examples of customary international law relevant to the environment include the duty to warn other states promptly about icons of an environmental nature and environmental damages to which another

[1] 'Environmental Law'http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_law accessed on 11/12/2014
[2] Ibid
[3] Ibid
[4] Ibid

 

state or states may be exposed, and Principle 21 of the Stockholm Declaration ('good neighbourliness' or sic utere).

3.1.5 Judicial decisions

International environmental law also includes the opinions of international courts and tribunals. While there are few and they have limited authority, the decisions carry much weight with legal commentators and are quite influential on the development of international environmental law. One of the biggest challenges in international decisions is to determine an adequate compensation for environmental damages.[1]

The courts include: the International Court of Justice (ICJ); the international Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS); the European Court of Justice; European Court of Human Rights[2]9 and other regional treaty tribunals. Arguably the World Trade Organisation's Dispute Settlement Board (DSB) is getting a say on environmental law also.

## 4. International humanitarian law

International humanitarian law (IHL), often referred to as the laws of war, the laws and customs of war or the law of armed conflict, is the legal corpus that comprises "the Geneva Conventions and the Hague Conventions, as well as subsequent treaties, case law, and customary international law."[3] It defines the conduct and responsibilities of belligerent nations, neutral nations and individuals engaged in warfare, in relation to each other and to protected persons, usually meaning civilians.

The law is mandatory for nations bound by the appropriate treaties. There are also other customary unwritten rules of war, many of which were explored at the Nuremberg War Trials. By extension, they also define both the permissive rights of these powers as well as prohibitions on their conduct when dealing with irregular forces and non-signatories.

### 4.1 The Law of Geneva and the Law of The Hague

Modern International Humanitarian Law is made up of two historical streams: the law of The Hague referred to in the past as the law of war proper and the law of Geneva or humanitarian law.[4] The two streams take their names from a number of international conferences which drew up treaties relating to war and conflict, in particular The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, and the Geneva Conventions, the first which was drawn up in 1863. Both are branches of jus in bello, international law regarding acceptable practices while engaged in war and armed conflict.[5]

The Law of The Hague, or the Laws of War proper, “determines the rights and duties of belligerents in the conduct of operations and limits the choice of means in doing harm."[6] In particular, it concerns itself with the definition of combatants, establishes rules relating to the means and methods of warfare, and examines the issue of military objectives.[7]

4.1.2 Laws of War

Systematic attempts to limit the savagery of warfare only began to develop in the 19th century. Such concerns were able to build on the changing view of warfare by states influenced by the Age of Enlightenment. The purpose of warfare was to overcome the enemy state and this was obtainable by disabling the enemy combatants. Thus, "the distinction between combatants and civilians, the requirement that wounded and captured enemy combatants must be treated humanely, and that quarter must be given, some of the pillars of modern humanitarian law, all follow from this principle."[8]

4.1.3 The Law of Geneva

The massacre of civilians in the midst of armed conflict has a long and dark history. Selected examples include: Moses, speaking for the God of the Israelites, ordering the killing of all the Midianite women and male children;[9]

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[1]Hardman Reis, T., Compensation for Environmental Damages under International Law, Kluwer Law International, The Hague, 2011, ISBN 978-90-411-3437-0. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_law, ibid

[2] ECtHR case-law factsheet on environment: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_law op.cit

[3] ICRC What is international humanitarian law? : http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_humanitarian_law, accessed on 7/72011

[4]Pictet, Jean (1975). Humanitarian law and the protection of war victims. Leyden: Sijthoff. ISBN 90-286-0305-0. pp. 16-17: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_humanitarian_law ,ibid

[5] The Program for Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University, "Brief Primer on IHL," Accessed at IHL.ihlresearch.or ,ibid.

[6] Pictet, Jean (1985). Development and Principles of International Law. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff. ISBN 9024731992.p.2, ibid.

[7] Kalshoven, Frits and Liesbeth Zegveld (March 2001). Constraints on the waging of war: An introduction to international humanitarian law. Geneva: ICRC. p.40 , ibid

[8] Christopher Greenwood in: Fleck, Dieter, ed. (2008). The Handbook of Humanitarian Law in Armed Conflicts. Oxford University Press, USA. ISBN 0-19-923250-4.p. 20., ibid.

[9] Numbers 31: 17-18,ibid.

 

the massacres of the Kalingas by Ashoka in India, the massacre of some 100,000 Hindus by the Muslim troops of Timur (Tamerlane) or the Crusader massacres of Jews and Muslims in the Siege of Jerusalem (1099), to name a few examples drawn from a long list in history. Fritz Munch sums up historical military practice before 1800: "The essential points seem to be these: In battle and in towns taken by force, combatants and non-combatants were killed and property was destroyed or looted.[1] In the 17th century, the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius wrote, "Wars, for the attainment of their objects, it cannot be denied, must employ force and terror as their most proper agents."[2]

However, even in the midst of the carnage of history, there were expressions of humanitarian norms to protect the victims of armed conflicts, i.e. the wounded, the sick and the shipwrecked which date back to ancient times.[3]

In ancient India there are records, for example the Laws of Manu, describing the types of weapons that should not be used. "When he fights with his foes in battle, let him not strike with weapons concealed (in wood), nor with (such as are) barbed, poisoned, or the points of which are blazing with fire.[4] There is also the command not to strike a eunuch nor the enemy "who folds his hands in supplication....Nor one who sleeps, nor one who has lost his coat of mail, nor one who is naked, nor one who is disarmed, nor one who looks on without taking part in the fight...".[5]

Islamic law indicates that "noncombatants who did not take part in fighting such as women, children, monks and hermits, the aged, blind, and insane" were not to be molested.[6] The first Caliph, Abu Bakr, proclaimed "Do not mutilate. Do not kill little children or old men or women. Do not cut off the heads of palm trees or burn them. Do not cut down fruit trees. Do not slaughter livestock except for food."[7]Islamic jurists have held that a prisoner should not be killed as he "cannot be held responsible for mere acts of belligerency."[8] Islamic law did not spare all non-combatants. In the case of those who refused to convert to Islam or pay an alternative tax, "were allowed in principle to kill any one of them, combatants or noncombatants, provided they were not killed treacherously and with mutilation."[9]

### 4.2 Codification of Humanitarian Norms

However, it was not till the second half of the 19th century that a more systematic approach was initiated. In the United States, a German immigrant, Francis Lieber, drew up a code of conduct in 1863, which came to be called the Lieber Code in his honour, for the Northern army. The Lieber Code included the humane treatment of civilian populations in the areas of conflict, and also forbade the execution of POWs. At the same time, the involvement of a number of individuals such as Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War and Henry Dunant, a Genevese businessman who had worked with wounded soldiers at the Battle of Solferino, led to more systematic efforts to try and prevent the suffering of war victims. Dunant wrote a book, which he titled A Memory of Solferino, and in which he described the horrors he had witnessed. His reports were so shocking that they led to the founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1863 and the convening of a conference in Geneva in 1864 which drew up the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field.[10]26

The Law of Geneva is directly inspired by the principle of humanity. It relates to those who are not participating in the conflict as well as military personnel hors de combat. It provides the legal basis for protection and humanitarian assistance carried out by impartial humanitarian organizations such as the ICRC.[11] This focus

[1] Fritz Munch , History of the Laws of War, in: R. Bernhardt (ed.), Encyclopedia of Public International Law Volume IV (2000), pp. 1386-8, ibid
[2] Grotius, Book 3, Chapter 1:VI, ibid
[3] Bernhardt, Rudolf (1992). Encyclopedia of public international law. Amsterdam: North-Holland. ISBN 0-444-86245-5., Volume 2, pp. 933-936, ibid
[4] The Laws of Manu VII.90, ibid
[5] The Laws of Manu VII.91-92 See also, Singh, Nagendra: "Armed conflicts and humanitarian laws of ancient India," in C. Swinarski (1985). Studies and Essays on International Humanitarian Law and Red Cross Principles. The Hague: Kluwer Law International. pp. 531–536. ISBN 90-247-3079-1, ibid.
[6] Khadduri, Majid (2006). War And Peace in the Law of Islam. New York, NY: Lawbook Exchange. ISBN 1-58477-695-1.pp. 103-4, ibid
[7] Hashmi, Sohail H. (2002). Islamic political ethics: civil society, pluralism, and conflict. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press. ISBN 0-691-11310-6. p. 211, ibid
[8] McCoubrey, Hilaire (1999). International Humanitarian Law. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing. ISBN 1840140127.pp. 8-13, ibid.
[9] Khadduri, Majid (2006). War And Peace in the Law of Islam. New York, NY: Lawbook Exchange. ISBN 1-58477-695-1.pp. 105-106, ibid.
[10] Christopher Greenwood in: Fleck, Dieter, ed. (2008). The Handbook of Humanitarian Law in Armed Conflicts. Oxford University Press, USA. ISBN 0-19-923250-4.p. 22, ibid.
[11] Pictet (1985) p.2, op.cit

 

can be found in the Geneva Conventions.

4.2.1 Geneva Conventions

The Geneva Conventions are the result of a process that developed in a number of stages between 1864 and 1949 which focused on the protection of civilians and those who can no longer fight in an armed conflict. As a result of World War II, all four conventions were revised based on previous revisions and partly on some of the 1907 Hague Conventions and readopted by the international community in 1949. Later conferences have added provisions prohibiting certain methods of warfare and addressing issues of civil wars.

The Geneva Conventions are:

1. First Geneva Convention "for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field" (first adopted in 1864, last revision in 1949)
2. Second Geneva Convention "for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea" (first adopted in 1949, successor of the 1907 Hague Convention X)
3. Third Geneva Convention "relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War" (first adopted in 1929, last revision in 1949)
4. Fourth Geneva Convention "relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War" (first adopted in 1949, based on parts of the 1907 Hague Convention IV)

In addition, there are three additional amendment protocols to the Geneva Convention:

1. Protocol I (1977): Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts. As of 12 January 2007 it had been ratified by 167 countries.
2. Protocol II (1977): Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts. As of 12 January 2007 it had been ratified by 163 countries.
3. Protocol III (2005): Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Adoption of an Additional Distinctive Emblem. As of June 2007 it had been ratified by 17 countries and signed but not yet ratified by an additional 68 countries.

While the Geneva Conventions of 1949 can be seen as the result of a process which began in 1864, today, they have "achieved universal participation with 194 parties." This means that they apply to almost any international armed conflict.[1]28

With the adoption of the 1977 Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions, the two strains of law began to converge, although provisions focusing on humanity could already be found in the Hague law (i.e. the protection of certain prisoners of war and civilians in occupied territories). However the 1977 Additional Protocols relating to the protection of victims in both international and internal conflict not only incorporated aspects of both the Law of The Hague and the Law of Geneva, but also important human rights provisions.[2]

Basic rules of IHL

1. Persons hors de combat (outside of combat) and those not taking part in hostilities shall be protected and treated humanely.
2. It is forbidden to kill or injure an enemy who surrenders or who is hors de combat.
3. The wounded and sick shall be cared for and protected by the party to the conflict which has them in its power. The emblem of the "Red Cross," or of the "Red Crescent," shall be required to be respected as the sign of protection.
4. Captured combatants and civilians must be protected against acts of violence and reprisals. They shall have the right to correspond with their families and to receive relief.
5. No one shall be subjected to torture, corporal punishment or cruel or degrading treatment.
6. Parties to a conflict and members of their armed forces do not have an unlimited choice of methods and means of warfare.
7. Parties to a conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants. Attacks shall be directed solely against military objectives.[3]

Well-known examples of such rules include the prohibition on attacking doctors or ambulances displaying a Red Cross. It is also prohibited to fire at a person or vehicle bearing a white flag, since that, being considered the flag of truce, indicates intent to surrender or a desire to communicate. In either case, the persons protected by the Red Cross or the white flag are expected to maintain neutrality, and they may not engage in warlike acts themselves; in fact, engaging in war activities under a white flag or a red cross is itself a violation of

[1] Christopher Greenwood in: Fleck, Dieter, ed. (2008). The Handbook of Humanitarian Law in Armed Conflicts. Oxford University Press, USA. ISBN 0-19-923250-4.pp. 27-28,ibid.
[2] Kalshoven+Zegveld (2001) p. 34, op.cit
[3]de Preux (1988). Basic rules of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, 2nd edition. Geneva: ICRC. p. 1.Ibid.

 

the laws of war.

These examples of the laws of war address declaration of war, (the UN charter (1945) Art 2, and some other Articles in the charter curtail the right of member states to declare war; as does the older and toothless Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 for those nations who ratified it but used against Germany in the Nuremberg War Trials), acceptance of surrender and the treatment of prisoners of war; the avoidance of atrocities; the prohibition on deliberately attacking civilians; and the prohibition of certain inhumane weapons. It is a violation of the laws of war to engage in combat without meeting certain requirements, among them the wearing of a distinctive uniform or other easily identifiable badge and the carrying of weapons openly. Impersonating soldiers of the other side by wearing the enemy's uniform, and fighting in that uniform, is forbidden, as is the taking of hostages.

## 5. International criminal law

International criminal law is a body of international law designed to prohibit certain categories of conduct commonly viewed as serious atrocities and to make perpetrators of such conduct criminally accountable for their perpetration. Principally, it deals with genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity as well as the War of aggression.

"Classical" international law governs the relationships, rights, and responsibilities of states. Criminal law generally deals with prohibitions addressed to individuals, and penal sanctions for violation of those prohibition imposed by individual states. International criminal law comprises elements of both in that although its sources are those of international law, its consequences are penal sanctions imposed on individuals.[1]

### 5.1 History

Some precedents in international criminal law can be found in the time before the First World War. However, it was only after the war that a truly international criminal tribunal was envisaged to try perpetrators of crimes committed in this period. Thus, the Treaty of Versailles stated that an international tribunal was to be set up to try Wilhelm II of Germany. In the event however, the Kaiser was granted asylum in the Netherlands. After the Second World War, the Allied powers set up an international tribunal to try not only war crimes, but crimes against humanity committed under the Nazi regime. The Nuremberg Tribunal held its first session in 1945 and pronounced judgments on 30 September / 1 October 1946. A similar tribunal was established for Japanese war crimes (The International Military Tribunal for the Far East). It operated from 1946 to 1948.

After the beginning of the war in Bosnia, the United Nations Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in 1993 and, after the genocide in Rwanda, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in 1994. The International Law Commission had commenced preparatory work for the establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court in 1993; in 1998, at a Diplomatic Conference in Rome, the Rome Statute establishing the ICC was signed. The ICC issued its first arrest warrants in 2005.

### 5.2Sources of International Criminal Law

International criminal law is a subset of international law. As such, its sources are the same as those that comprise international law. The classical enumeration of those sources is in Article 38(1) of the 1946 Statute of the International Court of Justice and comprises: treaties, customary international law, general principles of law (and as subsidiary measure, judicial decisions and the most highly qualified juristic writings.) The ICC statute contains an analogous, though not identical, set of sources that the ICC may rely on.

The importance of prosecuting international crimes

The prosecution of severe international crimes—including genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes—is necessary to enforce international criminal law and deliver justice to victims.

This is an important component of transitional justice, or the process of transforming societies into rights-respecting democracies and addressing past human rights violations.

Investigations and trials of leaders who have committed crimes and caused mass political or military atrocities is a key demand of victims of human rights abuses. Prosecution of such criminals can play a key role in restoring dignity to victims, and restoring trusting relationships in society.[2]

The International Criminal Court can play an important role in prosecuting international crimes in cases where domestic courts are unwilling or unable to do so.

### 5.3 Institutions of international criminal law

Today, the most important institution is the International Criminal Court (ICC), as well as several ad hoc tribunals, i.e. International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and International Criminal Tribunal for

[1] International Criminal Law, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_humanitarian_law, accessed on 7/7/2011
[2] "Criminal Justice", International Center for Transitional Justice

 

Rwanda

Apart from these institutions, some 'hybrid' courts and tribunals exist—judicial bodies with both international and national judges. They are:

1. Special Court for Sierra Leone, (investigating the crimes committed during Sierra Leone Civil War)
2. Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, (investigating the crimes of the Red Khmer era)
3. Special Tribunal for Lebanon, (investigating the assassination of Rafik Hariri)
4. The War Crimes Court at Kosovo.

International Criminal Court

The International Criminal Court (French: Cour Pénale Internationale; commonly referred to as the ICC or ICCt)[1]33 is a permanent tribunal to prosecute individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression (although it cannot currently exercise jurisdiction over the crime of aggression).[2]

The court's creation perhaps constitutes the most significant reform of international law since 1945. It gives authority to the two bodies of international law that deal with treatment of individuals: human rights and humanitarian law.

It came into being on 1 July 2002—the date its founding treaty, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, entered into force[3]—and it can only prosecute crimes committed on or after that date.[4] The court's official seat is in The Hague, Netherlands, but its proceedings may take place anywhere.[5]

As of June 2011, 114 states are members of the court, including all of South America, nearly all of Europe and roughly half the countries in Africa.[6] For Grenada, the 115th state party, the Statute will enter into force on 1 August 2011;[7] for Tunisia, the 116th state party, the Statute will enter into force on 1 September 2011.[8]A further 34 countries, including Russia, have signed but not ratified the Rome Statute; one of them, Côte d'Ivoire, has accepted the Court's jurisdiction.[9] The law of treaties obliges these states to refrain from "acts which would defeat the object and purpose" of the treaty.[10] Three of these states—Israel, Sudan and the United States—have "unsigned" the Rome Statute, indicating that they no longer intend to become states parties and, as such, they have no legal obligations arising from their former representatives' signature of the statute.[11]43 United Nations member states have neither signed nor ratified or acceded to the Rome Statute; some of them, including China and India, are critical of the court.[12] The Palestinian National Authority, which neither is nor represents a United Nations member state, has formally accepted the jurisdiction of the Court.[13] It is unclear, however, if this acceptance is legally valid.[14]

The court can generally exercise jurisdiction only in cases where the accused is a national of a state party, the alleged crime took place on the territory of a state party, or a situation is referred to the court by the United Nations Security Council.[15] It is designed to complement existing national judicial systems: it can exercise its jurisdiction only when national courts are unwilling or unable to investigate or prosecute such crimes.[16] Primary responsibility to investigate and punish crimes is therefore left to individual states.[17]

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[1] International Criminal Court is sometimes abbreviated as ICCt to distinguish it from several other organisations abbreviated as ICC. However, the more common abbreviation ICC is used in this article.

[2]Article 5 of the Rome Statute.

[3] Amnesty International (11 April 2002). "The International Criminal Court – A Historic Development in the Fight for Justice".

[4] Article 11 of the Rome Statute

[5]Article 3 of the Rome Statute.

[6]United Nations Treaty Database entry regarding the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

[7] "Global NGO Coalition Welcomes Grenada's Accession to the Rome Statute" (PDF). Coalition for the International Criminal Court. http://www.iccnow.org/documents/CICC_11_05_Grenada_Accession_PR_FINAL.pdf. Retrieved 2011-05-20.

[8] "Tunisia becomes the 116th State to join the ICC's governing treaty, the Rome Statute" (HTML). International Criminal Court. http://www.icc-cpi.int/NR/exeres/415C6300-58BF-4245-9BB7-F8A317966E35.htm. Retrieved 2011-06-24.

[9]ICC press release on Côte d'Ivoire's acception of jurisdiction.Retrieved 6 April 2011.

[10] The 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, Article 18. Accessed 23 November 2006.

[11] John R Bolton, 6 May 2002. International Criminal Court: Letter to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. US Department of State.Accessed 23 November 2006.

[12] "China's Attitude Towards the ICC", Lu Jianping and Wang Zhixiang, Journal of International Criminal Justice, 2005-07-06; India and the ICC, Usha Ramanathan, Journal of International Criminal Law, 2005.

[13] "Declaration by the Palestinian National Authority Accepting the Jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court" (PDF). International Criminal Court.2009-01-21. http://www.icc-cpi.int/NR/rdonlyres/74EEE201-0FED-4481-95D4-C8071087102C/279777/20090122PalestinianDeclaration2.pdf.Retrieved 2011-04-06.

[14] Simons, Marlise (2009-02-10). "War court asked to examine Gaza war". The New York Times. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/10/world/africa/10iht-hague.4.20086185.html. Retrieved 2011-04-06.

[15]Articles 12 & 13 of the Rome Statute.Accessed 20 March 2008.

[16]Article 17 of the "Rome Statute". Retrieved 20 March 2008; Article 20 of the "Rome Statute". Retrieved 20 March 2008.

[17]International Criminal Court.Office of the Prosecutor.Accessed 21 July 2007.

 

## 6. Careers in international law

International Law is one of the fastest growing legal fields. The type of public service work and practice setting vary widely. Many countries for example, hire attorneys to work on international issues in many of their agencies including the departments of state, department of commerce and the Environmental Protection Agency, to name just a few. Hundreds of lawyers also work at the United Nations, the World Bank, and the Organization of American States, the European and African counterparts, international tribunals, the international criminal court and other intergovernmental organizations. Finally, there are thousands of non-governmental organizations throughout the world that focus on international issues, including but not limited to development, human rights, the environment law, energy, trade, arms control and transitional justice.[1]

### 6.1 Entering the profession of international public interest law

The world of international public interest law is vast and the settings and practices are diverse. The decision to embark on an international career comes from a variety of experiences, including prior work, undergraduate or post graduate education, foreign exchange programmes, knowledge of the foreign language or culture, an international law course, membership in an international organization, international research, writing for an international journal, clinical placement, summer internship and /or volunteer work for an international organization. Like any job search, there are two components: a personal assessment and a survey of the field.[2]

### 6.2 Skill building for international legal careers

Just as there is no easy way to define international law, it is just as difficult to define the skills required for an international practitioner of public interest law. In an effort to begin thinking about an international career, summarized below are a few useful skill areas that one can develop while in law school and through other forms of internship.[3]

There are a variety of international courses offered in Nigerian Universities. In Obafemi Awolowo University for example, we have many international law courses especially at the post graduate level. Your course load at the undergraduate level should also reflect a general background in Public International Law, conflict of laws, comparative laws in addition to more specialized international topics.

If your interests are in international trade and investment, courses in international business transactions, international trade and export finance, intellectual property law, and international tax can be particularly helpful. Careers in international finance and development may benefit from basic courses in taxation, securities, and corporate law.

There are also human rights courses including international humanitarian law, refugee and immigration law, international philanthropy, human rights clinical courses.

For those students desiring a career in the Foreign Service or foreign relations, particularly valuable courses include public international law, conflict management, comparative constitutional law and international negotiations, political systems and international relations. Other related courses are international childhood rights and globalization, war crimes prosecution, the law of bill of rights and topics in Islamic law.[4]

International law degree recipients can work in a wide variety of careers, from diplomatic posts, political appointments for non- profit agencies, international business or trade for governmental agencies. Many graduates find themselves taking a number of different types of jobs in the field, acquiring a broad range of skills and contacts along the way to finding the ideal job in international law.

### 6.3 Law Practice

While this writer knows of no law firms or barristers' chambers doing exclusively public international law, there are several whose practices have a strong international law component, and the list is growing.[5]

Private practice nowadays has grown from the erstwhile municipal practice to include international practice. Some firms in Lagos, like Aluko and Oyebode, Aelex Associates, Bamwo and Ighodalo, Wale Babalakin and Co and some others are involved in international legal practice. Firms like these normally would start municipal practice and then an international client may approach them with a case that has international law flavor, and then the lightning will strike, as they say. They then start to build on experience and get recognized as international legal practitioners.

Again, there is hardly any area of municipal practice that international law cannot be applied now.

[1] www.law.harvard.edu/../index.html accessed 14/12/2014 this has however been altered and adapted to suit our lecture
[2] Ibid
[3] Ibid
[4] Ibid
[5] "A Guide to International Law Careers" https://books.google.com.ng/books?id=LIgtc92u2tUC&pg=PA1&lpg=PA1&dq=careers+in+international+law+NGOs+as+employer&source=bl&ots=Ru2C496KOl&sig=KOF-dc accessed 14/12/2014

 

Lawyers like Femi Falana, Agbakoba and the likes, have brought Human rights into employment and labour relations; more lucratively, corporate practice also involves international trade, investment, banking, finance, maritime practice, aviation and telecommunications. Furthermore, lawyers may practice international criminal litigation where they appear before international criminal tribunals like the International Criminal Court (ICC); International Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR); International Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL). Relating to this also, lawyers do engage in general international litigation. When you have built your legal practice to the level where you have acquired so much experience and gained recognition in your country, you could be required to represent your country before the international court of justice or a client before the Ecowas Community Court of Justice or the African Court of Justice.

6.3.1 International Bench

International Judicial Bodies recruit lawyers and academics that are well versed in international law to fill vacancies on the international bench. Lawyers like Bola Ajibola and Taslim Elias had served in the International Court of Justice; Professor Nwoke of the University of Jos has recently been appointed Judge of ECOWAS Community Court of Justice; many more lawyers of different nationality are serving as judges in the ICC, International Tribunal on Law of the Sea, ECOWAS court and the African Court of Justice.

6.3.2 Foreign Service Relations

One of the major career fields international law degree graduates consider is the Foreign Service, working as diplomats. Countries have embassies overseas and international law students could be employed by their countries foreign or home offices to work in these embassies. In recent years, interest in international government service has increased dramatically with applicants seeking opportunities in greater numbers than ever before, both at home and abroad. It had become clear that the primary motivation for the increased interest in government opportunities is not only the desire to serve the public and their countries, but also to improve the standard of living for millions of citizens around the world.

Legal works in this field involves working on current public policy issues of the day and developing strategies for implementing programmes, legislations and executive orders that will impact the nation and its future direction.

A major advantage of working with the government is the opportunity to advance relatively early in your career and gain primary responsibility for major litigation and the development and management of important public policy issues that one rarely has exposure to in private sector.

6.3.3 International non-profits

Non- profit groups number in the hundreds and focus on various particular regions or interests. While international degree graduates working for these agencies may not receive the highest salaries, a person may experience a great deal of satisfaction in being part of making a difference in the world.

Some examples of non-profit organizations employing those with international law degrees would include amnesty international, humanitarian rights group, or groups that work to relieve hunger, or improve health or living conditions in different parts of the world. International adoption agencies also require lawyers well versed in various countries laws regarding adoption.

Any non- profit organization doing work overseas needs legal counsel to operate in another country.

NGOs range from small organizations, operating at a purely local level, to large transnational organizations such as Amnesty International or Friends of the Earth. NGOs form the core of what is known as ‘civil society’ and are crucial element of a healthy and rule of law oriented society. Of course, not all NGOs are involved with international law, but those that are have been increasingly active in recent years in monitoring state compliance with international law, and indeed seeking to change the law itself, through activism and lobbying.

Volunteers are often at the heart of an NGOs activities, but most also rely on paid employees including staff lawyers. So yes, the NGO is definitely a place to look for work in international law.[1]

6.3.4 Transnational Corporations

International business companies employ those with international law degrees to help negotiate the legal maze of doing business in another country. Some countries may require international attorneys to live at least, part of the time in a foreign country while other companies may only require attorneys to take occasional trips.

So many corporations do business overseas that the potential career opportunities for those with international law degrees are strong.[2]

Dealings with foreign governments, foreign legal systems, choice of law problems, and question of sovereign immunity, certainly can arise when one’s client is a multinational corporation. Additionally, the attorney will be dealing with foreign attorneys and foreign bar associations. A variety of individual issues facing employees of the corporation will also arise including: the validity of marriage abroad, adoptions, immigration

[1]Ibid.
[2]www.ehow.com/careers and works accessed on 11/12/14

 

and emigration, passports, visas, false arrests and detentions, and civil liberties in foreign countries. Finally, corporation A might have operation in areas that directly come under international law: the oceans of the world (fishing, seabed mining, conservation, and navigation), international rivers, harbors and straits, the polar regions, or even outer space technology. There can be some success story in the legal department of the right corporation.[1]

6.3.5 Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs)

The term inter-governmental organization refers to an entity created by treaty involving two or more nations to work in good faith, on issues of common interest. In the absence of a treaty, an IGO does not exist in the legal sense. For example, the G8 is a group of eight nations that have annual economics and political summits. IGOs that are formed by treaties are more advantageous than a mere grouping of nations because they are subject to international law and have the ability to enter into enforceable agreements among themselves or with states.

The main purposes of IGOs were to create a mechanism for the world's inhabitants to work more successfully together in the areas of peace and security, and also to deal with economic and social questions. In this current era of increasing globalization and interdependence of nations, IGOs have come to play a very significant role in international political system and global governance.

IGOs cover multiple issues and involve governments from every region of the world. Among the oldest IGOs are the United Nations, which replaced the League of Nations, the Universal Postal Unionand the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Universal Postal Union founded in 1874 is currently a specialized agency of the UN. Other well-known IGOs are the European Union (EU), the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the African Development Bank (ADB), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), UNESCO, International Telecommunications Union (ITU), World Health Organization (WHO), International Maritime Organisation (IMO), International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) AND World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (even though this has a duality of character of being an IGO and national flavor).

Since the creation of the UN and NATO, IGOs have become essential actors in the international community. Additionally, as many IGOs, such as the UN and the EU, have the ability to make rules and exercise power within their member countries their global impact continues to increase.

6.3.6 Domestic employment

Under domestic or national jurisdictions, the Federal Ministry of Justice may do have international and comparative law departments and lawyers with international law experience are more likely to gain employment with such departments. In addition, national corporate bodies may also have international law department or simply a legal department that takes care of issues involving or international companies and lawyers in such department may gain international exposure thereby building a career.

6.3.7 Teaching

Another broad category of career opportunity is to teach public international law in a law school. This field is obviously where yours sincerely has pitched his tent. On the last count, there are about three hundred and fifty Universities and all of them, except for few specialized ones, would aspire to have a law faculty sometime in the future and so they may teach public international law, an certainly would require the services of a teacher in that subject. By research and writing, teachers of public international law can build an international reputation which can lead to employment as an attorney on important international law cases. So long as this practical work coincides with the professor's research and teaching interests and does not interfere with class preparation, experience as counsel in this kind of case may enhance and enrich the professor's knowledge of the field.[2]

International legal academics also engage in consulting for governments, international organizations, and NGOs and some senior international law academics are much sought after as advocates before international courts. Some Judges of the ICJ and some who had served on the ICJ were academic practitioners prior to their appointment to the bench.

Among the advantages of doing international law from the academy, and there are several including relative flexibility over time, is the ability to take unpopular opinions. Unlike lawyers working for other public sector employers, academics do not have their writings vetted by their superiors, unless out of courtesy and to seek their opinion on issues. Academic freedom also includes the freedom to tackle 'big issues' and challenge the activities of powerful actors.[3]

[1]Anthony D'Amato, "Public International as a Career" 1 American University Journal of International Law and Policy 5 (1986) Code A86b.
[2] Ibid.
[3] A guide to international law careers op.cit.

 

## 7. Conclusion

We have attempted in this work to highlight the many branches of international law, at least those we have access to at the time of writing this paper. There will however be a continuous growth of international law depending on new situations that presents itself on the global scene at any point in time. In such situations lawyers will still be required to work in those fields and develop international law around it. With this constant growth, it may then be difficult for lawyers to describe themselves as an all-inclusive international lawyer.

It is important to at this juncture also to warn our colleagues to be that, the road to your international law Career may not be too smooth at first because 'there is no international law career ladder to climb or road to follow'. You may not have an international job to start your career with but by experience gained from constant practice or by employment in one or the other of the above highlighted field may put you on the path to a career and or fortune in international law.

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