
Editorial

1 *EJIL* at Twenty: A Family Affair

I am both the most and least qualified person to mark the 20th anniversary of the *European Journal of International Law*. In its organizational aspects, social scientists would probably comment – *à titre juste* – that *EJIL* demonstrates a low degree of institutionalization. It has, from its inception, been a family affair and to a surprising degree has remained so till this day. Make no mistake! Our editorial Board today is quite different from the original Founding Editors, but a certain familial, enterprising, at times iconoclastic, even mischievous spirit remains. In writing about *EJIL* I am, thus, in the mode of a proud parent. *Caveat Lector!*

In these days of easy travel and exotic holidays, children (at least of the European affluent) are often conceived in venues quite distant from their place of birth. Not only in biological life does conception precede gestation and birth. *EJIL* was conceived in the Fall of 1987 in, well, the Quadrangle of the Michigan Law School in a conversation between Bruno Simma and myself. Maybe it is not all that surprising. Not infrequently distance provides both perspective and clarity. It was time, we both agreed, that there was a *European Journal of International Law*. I am sure that, at least in my mind, part of the motivation was a certain rebellion at the dominance of the *American Journal of International Law* and dissatisfaction with the national context of the many (excellent) European international legal journals. As a life-long student of European integration I had only recently moved from Europe to the USA to take up Eric Stein's Chair and having an *EJIL* seemed, well, so self-obvious it did not in fact require too much justification.

We became, shortly afterwards a *Ménage à Cinq* – joined as we were by Nino Cassese and Pierre-Marie Dupuy and our hard-working original Managing Editor, Renaud Dehousse. Philip Alston, an adopted *EJIL* child, became soon after an organic member of that original family. Gestation and birth quickly moved to Florence – where the European University Institute has provided a home to *EJIL* ever since.

Self-obvious or not, to launch the *EJIL* we had to draft a Statement of Intent (today, no doubt, it would have been called a Mission Statement). Rereading it today, as well as rereading the original Editorial which made liberal use of that Statement (<http://ejil.org/issue.php?issue=71>) produces predictably ambivalent feelings and reactions. Be that as it may, publisher interest was keen and the Journal was launched to a rather sceptical world, not least the world of established national European International Law journals.

Some of the features 'intended' in that Statement flourished, others did not come to fruition and yet others shrivelled on the branch and dropped. *EJIL* started its life with two issues a year. It then moved to four issues and then even five. Starting with this

issue, although we will maintain the overall annual number of pages printed, we will go back to four issues a year. We discovered in short order that the publication world does not like bilingual journals; we discovered, too, that our original idea of translating pieces was not only prohibitively expensive but unsatisfactory to author, translator and reader. Although French was dropped as the second language of the Journal, we have made great efforts over the years to help submissions written in English by non-native speakers. I think the results speak for themselves. We are very proud of our occasional series *The European Tradition in International Law* and you may expect more instalments. By contrast we have phased out most of the ‘Services’ that we originally contemplated. In part, the practical difficulties of systematically maintaining surveys with a skeletal staff and unpaid Editors defeated us. But with the advent of the internet we ourselves have phased out some of these. As I have written in an earlier Editorial, the dynamics of ‘staying current’ and debating recent developments have changed. It is not self-evident that the paper version of a journal is the best place to fulfil that function and maintain that conversation. I find myself increasingly writing to impatient authors: ‘If your piece will be dated in two years, it fits uneasily the present editorial policy of *EJIL*.’

One of our most fateful decisions was not to cede ownership of the Journal to any publishing house. This, for example, enabled us to change our original publishers when we were not happy with their performance. It enables us to maintain an identity which is distinct from the large stables of publisher-owned journals. Our autonomously run website, www.ejil.org, was a pioneer in the field, and the availability free-of-charge of the entire *EJIL* on line, one year after publication, is another benefit of this independence. Of course, the family grows: we enjoy now a very vibrant Scientific Advisory Board whose members will, in intervals of three years, rotate through the Editorial Board. *ESIL* was conceived in the bosom of *EJIL* – a rib from its chest (www.esil-sedi.eu) – and so of course is *EJIL:Talk!* our new Blog (www.ejiltalk.org). (The recent string on events in Gaza is particularly worth a visit – sober and judicious in content and tone.)

In our very first Editorial we wrote:

Naturally, it is not the purpose of the *Journal* to revive a new ‘Eurocentric’ tradition in international law. Whether a genuinely European approach does exist or what contours it may eventually take, remains to be seen. The *Journal* will not engage in any engineering in that direction. Contributions from scholars world-wide, gravitating towards the concerns of the *Journal* will be welcome.

I would be much less emphatic than I was 20 years ago in trying to describe, let alone define, a European approach to International Law. I suppose at that time we had to convince people about the need and utility of establishing this new Journal. I hope, even if I am a very biased ‘parent’, that by now no one regrets our Chutzpah of 20 years ago.

This is a time for celebration: We celebrate *EJIL*, its staff, contributors, subscribers and readers. But we are also acutely aware that we suffer from many shortcomings. We will be inviting suggestions for improvement from our readers on our blog,

www.ejiltalk.org, and we will award a free subscription for one year to those whose suggestions are adopted.

2 *EJIL* at Twenty: The Anniversary Volume

We will be marking our birthday with this special Anniversary Volume. You will, of course, have noticed the design change to our cover. A little bit like the design change to the Editorial Board – new fresh elements grafted on to the old and established...! In each issue we will publish an ‘Anniversary Article’ and an Anniversary Symposium. In conversation with the Board of Editors and Scientific Advisory Board, we decided to focus on some central themes where we think international law, and the study of international law, has seen some significant changes over the last 20 years. International law and science is one such area and will feature in Issue 4, International law and globalization is another and will feature in Issue 3. If we had suggested these topics for a symposium 20 years ago, they would have seemed avant-garde. Today they are central. The symposium for Issue 2 will focus on aspects of the use of force. When *EJIL* was conceived we were still in the Cold War era! In this issue our symposium will examine some changing paradigms, in the law itself, in the world and in the scholarship of international law. We believe these symposia are a nice way to mark our anniversary. We also believe that every issue of *EJIL* is academically superb and intellectually exciting. There is, after all, a birthday every year, is there not?!

JHHW

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