

FOREWORD

## 50th Anniversary Commemorative Letter: The *Journal*'s Golden Jubilee

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I am especially pleased to introduce this anniversary issue of the *Virginia Journal of International Law* because both the *Journal* and I were born in the spring of 1960 and have a common forebear in the State Department.

The *Journal* is the oldest student-edited review of international law in the United States. It commenced as the *Journal of the John Bassett Moore Society of International Law*, an organization of University of Virginia law students created to promote “an awareness of the problems and opportunities found in international law.” John Bassett Moore was one of the founders of the study of international law in the United States and the first U.S. judge on the Permanent Court of International Justice, the precursor to today’s International Court of Justice. After graduating from the University of Virginia in 1880, Moore was hired in 1885 by then-Secretary of State Thomas Bayard as a law clerk in the State Department. In those days, the State Department did not have its own lawyers, and its legal affairs were handled by the Department of Justice, so it is fair to say that Moore was one of my earliest predecessors as the Legal Adviser to the Secretary of State. Moore went on to serve as the Assistant Secretary of State and then Counselor of the State Department, each the second-ranking position in the Department at the time. Although John Bassett Moore is no longer a household name, it is fitting that the *Journal* was first named for this distinguished American international lawyer and diplomat.

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Renamed the *Virginia Journal of International Law* in 1963, the *Journal* metamorphosed from (in the words of an early editor) “a mimeographed publication of strictly local circulation” containing a few student-written musings to a professionally produced review distributed in more than three dozen countries featuring the work of the world’s most distinguished international legal scholars and practitioners. I am especially pleased that the *Journal* has included numerous articles written by lawyers in the Office of the Legal Adviser as well as by University of Virginia law students who went on (like John Bassett Moore) to join the State Department.

The *Journal* has always maintained a timely mix of articles of interest to the scholar, private practitioner, and government international lawyer. During my eight years at the White House and the State Department, the *Journal* published numerous important articles on issues relevant to contemporary U.S. government policy, including articles about the laws of war, extraditions and renditions, weapons proliferation and terrorism, and international criminal justice. In the fall of 2005, shortly after I became Legal Adviser, the *Journal* devoted an entire issue to the past, present, and future of the Geneva Conventions. The *Journal* also regularly includes historical analyses of treaties and international conferences, which are invaluable to the government lawyer.

As the *Journal* and I both turn fifty, it is a particularly fascinating time to be studying and practicing international law. Almost all of the most prominent international issues involve international law in some way, and many front-page news stories are themselves about international law or international legal disputes. The International Court of Justice is as busy as it has ever been, and our own courts, including the Supreme Court, are currently grappling with myriad international legal issues. And yet it is sad that many Americans and many of their representatives in Congress see international law and treaties as contrary to U.S. national interests and a threat to U.S. sovereignty. For all these reasons, it will be important for the *Journal*—consistent with the goals of its student founders and of its original namesake, John Bassett Moore—to continue its fine tradition of publishing informative and balanced articles that contribute to the national and international discussion of the “problems and opportunities found in international law.”

Congratulations on the *Journal*’s Golden Jubilee. I wish it continued success in its second half-century.