

On Twenty-Five Years of Global Studies

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When people tell our story, it will not be about how we return to the moon, but how we pollute it.

Steve Mirimina, Georgetown Law Professor

This quote captured my attention during the Track 6 panel discussion on *Global Commons & International Law: A Matter of Triumph or Tragedy for Ocean & Outer Space* at the American Society of International Law (ASIL) 2026 Annual Meeting. It reflected a persistent tension within international law itself: that no achievement exists in isolation. Progress, innovation, and institutional milestones are so often celebrated as markers of collective advancement, yet they are accompanied by scrutiny, critique, and demands for accountability, especially where decisions produce lasting and irreversible harm and consequences for individuals, communities, and the global commons. In this respect, international law remains both aspirational and contested, shaped as much by its ambitions as by the limitations and inequities exposed through its application.

That tension is especially visible in the modern international legal landscape. Questions surrounding war, sovereignty, environmental degradation, technological development, migration, trade, and global governance increasingly transcend borders and resist purely domestic solutions. At the same time, confidence in international institutions and multilateral cooperation continues to face significant political and structural pressures. The result is a legal order in constant negotiation with itself: adapting to emerging challenges while simultaneously confronting critiques about legitimacy, effectiveness, representation, and enforcement. It is within this evolving context that scholars, practitioners, institutions, and students continue the work of examining what international law is, what it should become, and whom it ultimately serves.

Against the backdrop of scrutiny and responsibility, this journal has engaged for twenty-five years with the ever-evolving landscape of international and customary law across jurisdictions. Over that time, this

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work has required a holistic, comprehensive approach to addressing a wide range of global issues, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, intellectual property, arbitration, gender justice, and the governance of oceans and outer space. These subjects, though distinct, are united by a common recognition that legal developments in one part of the world inevitably reverberate across others. International law therefore demands not only technical analysis, but also sustained reflection on the human, political, and institutional consequences of legal ordering on a global scale.

The *Washington University Global Studies Law Review* (“Global Studies”) and the Whitney R. Harris Institute, through the 2026 Global Studies Symposium, mark twenty-five years of contributions to the international legal field. Over this period, both institutions have grown in their standing and impact within the global legal community. We are grateful to those who built this foundation and to those who came before us, as well as the speakers and students who joined in celebrating this milestone. What began as an effort to foster meaningful dialogue on international legal issues has developed into a sustained platform for scholarship, collaboration, and critical inquiry across jurisdictions and disciplines. This milestone therefore serves not only as a celebration of institutional longevity, but also as an opportunity to reflect on the continued relevance—and necessity—of rigorous international legal scholarship in periods of rapid global change.

We are deeply grateful to our founder, Whitney R. Harris and the first editors of volume 1 who laid the foundation upon which the journal has been built over the last 25 years. We are also thankful to those who sustained this foundation over the past quarter century: the editors, faculty advisors, symposium organizers, practitioners, scholars, and students whose efforts shaped the journal and its surrounding intellectual community. Their work made possible the conversations reflected in this symposium and in the pages that follow. We are equally thankful to the speakers and participants who joined in commemorating this milestone and who contributed their time, expertise, and perspectives to these discussions.

In addition to the 14 speakers at this symposium, it is important to recognize the efforts of thousands of individuals – scholars, advocates, judges, diplomats, policymakers, and practitioners – whose efforts continue to shape the development of international law and global governance. Much of this work occurs outside formal recognition or public attention, yet it remains essential to the continued pursuit of international cooperation, accountability, and justice. Beyond this symposium, these individuals contribute daily to the difficult and ongoing project of fostering a more cohesive and collaborative global community for present and future generations.

The scope of international law continues to expand, challenging practitioners and scholars alike to reassess whether existing legal frameworks remain sufficient to address emerging realities. Developments in technology, climate governance, armed conflict, and transnational regulation increasingly challenge inherited assumptions about jurisdiction, sovereignty, and institutional authority. In turn, this evolution creates space for rising scholars and practitioners to critically evaluate progress, limitations, and emerging developments in the rule of law. *Global Studies* has maintained a reputation as a journal unafraid to test the limits of international law by publishing scholarship from academics, professionals, and student editors.

Throughout this process, *Global Studies* has maintained a reputation as a journal willing to engage difficult and evolving questions in international law. By publishing scholarship from academics, practitioners, and student editors, the journal has consistently sought to examine not only the doctrinal dimensions of international law, but also its broader social, political, and global implications. From its foundation under the inaugural editorial board of Volume 1 through 24, this journal has steadily developed a reputation that extends beyond the Washington University community – reaching across states, countries, and continents. Through diverse perspectives and analysis on the law and its global impacts, *Global Studies* has established itself within the broader international legal discourse.

It has been an honor to continue the work set before me in this journal. Since joining the *Global Studies Law Review* in Fall 2024, I have developed a deep appreciation for both its mission and its role within the broader international legal community. With the support of both Managing Editors – Lauren and Glenn – my family and friends as well as the *Global Studies* editors, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve and lead this prestigious journal as Editor-in-Chief of Volume 25.

As this quarter century concludes and another begins, the journal remains committed to publishing scholarship that engages pressing questions in international law and global governance. In doing so, *Global Studies* hopes not only to contribute to academic discourse, but also to encourage deeper global understanding, critical engagement, and continued reflection on the role of law in shaping an increasingly interconnected world.