

Editorial #13: Beyond the Written Word

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2022-01-03T12:40:08

It is this time of the year again – as always in the past years, we would like to begin the new year on *Völkerrechtsblog* looking back on the previous year and sharing some insights from our backend with you, our readers. Given that the “most clicked” articles only represent a fraction of all the content published on *Völkerrechtsblog*, we have decided this time to widen our scope and also give you a small overview of other interesting topics that have been discussed on our blog. We hope that this will encourage you to submit your articles and approach us with your ideas and suggestions!

But we couldn't start this overview without sharing with you that just this weekend, our podcast series “[Völkerrechtspodcast](#)” (in German), which went live exactly one year ago with its first episode, has been awarded the [JURios prize](#) for the second best podcast in legal matters (in the category “other podcasts”). We are extremely happy to start another year on *Völkerrechtsblog* on such positive notice and would like to congratulate our podcast team and thank you, our readers and listeners, for your support.

Most Read 2021

Turning to the most read articles of last year, it is interesting to see that certain patterns of previous years are consolidating. Like in the last years, the list contains some surprises – and other more expected results. To begin with, we already knew from past years that the most clicked articles are not necessarily the ones published in the same year. Also, the “most read” list again features articles that were already on last year's list, like the article by Michelle Krech on the role of gender in sport and Valentin Schatz' and Dmytro Koval's article on the maritime order in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. Some of them might even be said to have become “all time classics” by now. This is the case for the texts by Brian D. Lepard on customary international law and Carrie Menkel-Meadow on alternative dispute resolution from 2019 and 2016, respectively.

Another article that keeps on gathering clicks is Cristian van Eijk's analysis on the activities of Elon Musk's company SpaceX on Mars. Considering the fact that this article hit all the records in 2020, this might not come as a big surprise. With a new article on space law published last year, the very same author made it onto our list twice – space law is definitely not a fanciful topic of the future anymore, but rather a matter of current concern (see also the [article](#) on IP protection in outer space, the [text](#) on space debris, and this [podcast episode](#) on space law, all equally from last year).

As the pandemic was once again the all-dominating topic last year, we already expected a few COVID-related posts to feature on our most-read list. The article that received the most clicks overall last year (nearly 20'000!) – and that could not

be timelier – is the text by our managing editor Spyridoula (Sissy) Katsoni on the compatibility of compulsory vaccinations with the ECHR. Sissy even made it into the top ten with another article on the right to abortion and the ECHR, and also features on #11 with another COVID-related analysis of the *Vav#i#ka and others v. the Czech Republic* judgement. You really seem to have a good feeling for pressing questions in human rights law, dear Sissy – congratulations! The third COVID-related post that made it onto our list is the post by Tobias Ackermann in which he looks at Brazil's health policy through the lens of international criminal law. Ranked fourth in 2020, this article even found its way into the top three in 2021.

Other texts that drew a lot of attention mainly dealt with further current developments, thus reflecting some important international legal developments of the last months. This includes the text by Camilla Schloss on climate migrants, Kanstantsin Dzehtsiarou's comment on the ECtHR inter-state judgment in *Russia v. Georgia*, our editor Lukas Kleinert's overview of the practice and law of recognition of governments after the taking of power of the Taliban government in Afghanistan as well as Alexander Dünkelsbühler, Alexander Suttor and Lea Borger's take on the Al Khatib trial in Koblenz (stay tuned for a follow-up on this soon!).

Finally, we are very pleased that a post that represents a novel format on our blog concludes our list, namely the video interview with former and current ICJ justices Bruno Simma and Georg Nolte. For us, this confirms that it was the right choice to open our blog to new and more multimedia-type of formats and we hope to further develop the presence of such content on our blog in the future.

1. Spyridoula Katsoni, [Do compulsory vaccinations against COVID-19 violate human rights? An assessment of the measure's compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights](#) (2 December 2020)
2. Cristian van Eijk, [Sorry, Elon: Mars is not a legal vacuum – and it's not yours, either](#) (5 November 2020)
3. Tobias Ackermann, [COVID-19 at the International Criminal Court: Brazil's health policy as a crime against humanity?](#) (14 August 2020)
4. Brian D. Lepard, [Why customary international law matters in protecting human rights](#) (25 February 2019)
5. Carrie Menkel-Meadow, [The History and Development of "A" DR \(alternative/appropriate dispute resolution\)](#) (1 July 2016)
6. Camilla Schloss, [Climate migrants – How German courts take the environment into account when considering non-refoulement](#) (3 March 2021)
7. Philip Leach, [Enhancing Fact-finding in Inter-State Cases: A Critical Challenge for the European Court of Human Rights](#) (29 April 2021)
8. Spyridoula Katsoni, [The Right to Abortion and the European Convention on Human Rights: In Search of Consensus among Member-States](#) (19 March 2021)
9. Konrad Lachmayer, [Constitutional authoritarianism, not authoritarian constitutionalism!](#) (31 August 2017)
10. Kanstantsin Dzehtsiarou, [The Judgement of Solomon that went wrong: Georgia v. Russia \(II\) by the European Court of Human Rights](#) (26 January 2021)

11. Spyridoula Katsoni, [What Does the Vav#i#ka Judgement Tell Us About the Compatibility of Compulsory COVID-19 Vaccinations with the ECHR?](#) (21 April 2021)
12. Lukas Kleinert, [Recognition of a Taliban Government? A Short Overview on the Recognition of Governments in International Law](#) (8 September 2021)
13. Lea Wisken, [Legal dilemmas: the first step towards a solution is to acknowledge the problem](#), 1 July 2019
14. Valentin J. Schatz and Dmytro Koval, [Ukraine v. Russia: Passage through Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov \(Part I\)](#) (10 January 2018)
15. Nula Frei, [On 'cyber trafficking' and the protection of its victims](#) (26 July 2017)
16. Doris Liebscher, [Sind Juden weiß? Wie Antidiskriminierungsrecht am Antisemitismus scheitert](#) (14 February 2018)
17. Michele Krech, [The problem of 'sport sex'. Reflections on de-essentialising gender and globalising law](#) (9 January 2020)
18. Alexander Dünkelsbühler, Alexander Suttor & Lea Borger, [Universal jurisdiction without universal outreach? The Al Khatib trial in Koblenz and the limits of domestic criminal procedure in the adjudication of international crimes](#) (13 January 2021)
19. Cristian van Eijk, [International Lawyers, Look to the Heavens – Before We Lose Them](#) (7 April 2021)
20. ['The ICJ then and now' – interview with Professor Bruno Simma and Professor Georg Nolte](#) (18 March 2021)

Beyond Numbers – Other Interesting Content in 2021

Among the rich content published on the blog last year, we would like to highlight one category in particular – the so-called symposia. This format gathers different posts under one main guiding topic or idea. Last year we have organized a so-far unprecedented number of such symposia – 17!

Five out of the 17 symposia were discussing recently published books touching upon international legal matters. Let us just mention the symposium reviewing [Matti Koskeniemi's latest book](#) "To the Uttermost Parts of the World". From the lively debates taking place on Twitter, we take that this discussion has been particularly well-received in the scholarly community.

The symposium format is a great way to address pressing current issues in the discipline. We therefore think that it is not surprising that the COVID-related symposia "[New Human Rights](#)" and "[Dialing into Jessup](#)", the latter evaluating chances and challenges of the digital staging of the Jessup moot court competition, fueled quite some discussion.

Besides our traditional one-week deep dive format, the multidisciplinary "70 Years of UNHCR and Refugee Convention" symposium, jointly organized by *Völkerrechtsblog* and the Forced Migrations Study Blog (FluchtforschungsBlog), [explored](#) different aspects roughly once a week from Mid-March to Mid-July, ranging from colonial effects on the founding of the 1951 Convention to the situation of UNHCR in 2021.

In line with the strengthening of our media section, video interviews (for example as part of our [Ecocide](#) symposium) and conference livestreams (in our symposium [accompanying](#) the AjV-DGIR conference on “Jurisdiction: Who Speaks International Law?”) increasingly made their way into our symposia. The potential synergies between conferences and blogposts were also nicely illustrated in the symposium reflecting on the role of [inter-State cases](#) under the European Convention on Human Rights, which was based on a [conference](#) held in April.

If this has made you want to immerse yourself into a current topic or even contribute to a symposium yourself, we got you covered! A joint symposium by *Völkerrechtsblog* and *Verfassungsblog* on comparative climate litigation in a North-South perspective is already [awaiting](#) you in February. Moreover, we would like to draw your attention to our current [Call for Contributions](#) for an upcoming symposium on a new proposal to regulating business in the field of human rights. And finally, we will ourselves be organizing a conference this year – more information will follow very soon.

We wish you an excellent new year and are looking forward to many brilliant, thought-provoking blogposts in 2022!

