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In the editorial in the very first issue of this Journal in 1999, Ronald St. John Macdonald wrote that “the history of international law [has] been neglected for many years and that the time [has] come to dedicate a new journal to the study and promotion of the subject”.1 He went on to state that “the aim of the Journal is to open fields of inquiry, to enable new questions to be asked, to be awake to and always aware of the plurality of human civilizations and cultures, past and present, and an appreciation of patterns of cultural flow and interaction that centrally affect international law and development”. It seems to us that this pioneering effort to create a journal that was so innovative in this sense both for international law and for history has been largely rewarded because since 1999 issue upon issue has been published to meet the ever greater demand for the historiography of international law. May the original members of the Journal be thanked here now that a new team is about to head the Editorial Board. It is a team that stands for both continuity and renewal, as is reflected by its composition. Many thanks to those who are remaining on board and to those who are now embarking for this new editorial adventure.

A Renaissance of Studies in the History of International Law

Corresponding to Ronald St. John Macdonald's hope in 1999, the history of international law has now achieved a vitality and a position within our intellectual universe that contrasts starkly with the virtually moribund state in which it had languished since the 1950s. Where once it furnished material for the odd book, it is now a thriving field of research. Recent years have seen the

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emergence of a wealth of studies which have rescued it from the state of abeyance and even illegitimacy in which it had been maintained. It is fascinating besides to observe that this resurgence of interest for the history of international law has revived with it a way of thinking about international law; and it has triggered a new dynamic, especially since the early 1990s, which a number of commentators have picked up on.

Most observers agree that this renaissance of historical studies in international law is associated with the new configuration of the world arising out of the end of the Cold War, which froze, as it were, inquiries into international law, but also with the recurrent fact that at the end of each crisis, internationalists have invariably returned to the history of their discipline to draw new strength and inspiration from its original historical impetus or, on the contrary, to move beyond it and not remain petrified in the forms of the past. In this respect, it is obvious that the context of the end of the Cold War and the spread of globalization have prompted a passionate and impassioned debate as to whether or not we had entered into a new era of post-Westphalian international law, forcing everyone to look to the past of international law to understand what it had been and whether it really had changed.

It should not be overlooked that these incontrovertible points about the transformation of the global landscape are compounded by other intellectual, cultural and epistemological factors. For example, we might cite the current prevalence of the discourse on human rights and the historical revisiting of mass crimes that are prompting keen debate in international law about memory and history.2 There is also a certain decline in the methodological primacy of technicism (doctrinalism) and pragmatism in international legal scholarship. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the various technicist and pragmatist strands of all persuasions, whether positivist, formalist, de-formalist, sociological or realist had come to dominate the field, and this led to technicizing, trivializing, sociologizing and professionalizing international law as a discipline. From most of these perspectives, internationalists should be specialists, where possible practitioners, and preferably no longer resemble those overly theoretical, overly systematic and abstract theorists, and even adherents of natural law, who had made up the profession in the inter-war years. This new impetus spread worldwide. By the same token, many scholars and practitioners of

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2 See only European Court of Human Rights, Perinçek v. Suïsse, No. 27510/08, judgment of 17 December 2013 (Grand Chamber pending), finding that the penalization of denials of the Armenian genocide under Swiss criminal law amounted to a violation of the right to free speech under Art. 10 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.