Anthony Arnnull

European Law: A Very Short Introduction considers the laws and legal system of the European Union and discusses the range of issues that the European Union has been given the power to regulate, including the free movement of goods and people. It considers why an organization based on international treaties has proved capable of having far-reaching effects on both its Member States and on countries that lie beyond its borders, and discusses the effectiveness of its law and legal system in ensuring that Member States respect the commitments they made when they signed the Treaties.

Introduction
Anthony Arnnull

The Introduction outlines the questions that this VSI attempts to answer. Why does the EU arouse such strong passions? As an organization based on international treaties, why has it proved capable of having such far-reaching effects on its Member States and their citizens and on countries that lie beyond its borders? Part of the explanation lies in its law and legal system, which have proved remarkably effective in ensuring that Member States respect the commitments made when they signed those treaties. But what exactly is EU law about? And how has it become part of the legal DNA of its Member States so much more effectively than other treaty-based regimes?

2. Where does international law come from?
Vaughan Lowe

The rules of international law come from two main sources: treaties and customary international law, both of which are created by States. States are bound by the rules with
which they have chosen to bind themselves—rules to which they have consented. ‘Where does international law come from?’ explains how international law works and considers the nature of customary international law and of treaties. Systems of customary law, including customary international law, are rooted in the regularity of an identified practice, whereas a treaty is an agreement between States that is legally binding. Often the broad principles set out in laws have to be mediated through detailed technical rules and standards.

1. Nations under law

Vaughan Lowe

The most basic function of international law is to secure the coexistence of the world’s almost 200 sovereign States. ‘Nations under law’ explains the essential conditions of statehood under international law: having a permanent population; an effective government; a physical territory; the capacity to enter into relations with other States; and legitimacy as an independent State. International law provides for the security of States’ borders, and for their right to be free from invasion and coercion by neighbouring States. It underpins the right of each State to choose its political, economic, and social structures.

3. The problem of war

Christopher S. Browning

‘The problem of war’ explains the idea of the security dilemma, which is characterized by a situation whereby a state, fearful for its security, begins arming itself. Other states may respond in kind, in turn legitimizing the first state's concerns and causing a spiral of insecurity, with war an ever present possibility. One way of mitigating the effects of the security dilemma is by creating ‘security regimes’, which establish standards and rules of behaviour against which different states can be judged and even punished. Some suggest in this way it might even be possible to exclude the security dilemma, and therefore the likelihood of war, from international politics altogether.

International Law: A Very Short Introduction

Vaughan Lowe

Recently, interest in international law has increased greatly, largely because of its central place in discussions such as the Iraq War, the World Trade Organization, the Kyoto
Convention, the situations in Palestine and Darfur, and the plights of refugees and illegal immigrants around the world. International Law: A Very Short Introduction explains what international law is, its role in international society, and how it operates. It examines what international law can and cannot do and what it is and isn’t doing to make the world a better place. It uses terrorism, environmental change, poverty, and international violence to demonstrate international law theories and practice, and how the principles can be used for international cooperation.

4. The practice of bordering
Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen

Borders are important to the process of territorialization. They symbolically perpetuate meaning and physically shape the mobilities of people. ‘The practice of bordering’ considers alternative dimensions of boundaries, bounded space, and the process of ‘bordering’ in the modern world. Recent scholarly attention focuses on understanding borders and bordering as processes rather than physical things. Globalization has changed the function of borders. It refers to a number of political, economic, social, and environmental processes which cross international borders. Are borders impediments to international cooperation? Will state sovereignty continue to be prioritized over national independence? Is a borderless world possible, or even desirable?

1. The best hope of mankind? A brief history of the UN
Jussi M. Hanhimäki

The International Peace Conference in 1899 established the Permanent Court of Arbitration as the first medium for international disputes, but it was the League of Nations, established in 1919 after World War I, which formed the framework of the system of international organizations seen today. The United Nations was created to manage the world's transformation in the aftermath of World War II. ‘The best hope of mankind? A brief history of the UN’ shows how the UN has grown from the 51 nations that signed the UN Charter in 1945 to 193 nations in 2015. The UN’s first seven decades have seen many challenges with a mixture of success and failure.

3. Facing wars, confronting threats: the UN Security Council in action
Jussi M. Hanhimäki
There has not been a World War III, so has the United Nations been successful? Alternatively, no day has gone by since 1945 without a military conflict somewhere around the world, so has the UN been unsuccessful? ‘Facing wars, confronting threats: the UN Security Council in action’ considers whether the existence and proliferation of nuclear weapons has acted as a deterrent against a direct military confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Security Council is not irrelevant, but it can only be effective when the five permanent members (China, France, Great Britain, Russia, and the United States) are in agreement. Despite this, the UN has been remarkably successful and active.