TREATY INTERPRETATION

SECOND EDITION

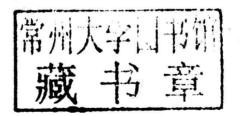
RICHARD GARDINER

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Second Edition

RICHARD K GARDINER





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This series features works on substantial topics in international law which provide authoritative statements of the chosen areas. Taken together they map out the whole of international law in a set of scholarly reference works and treatises intended to be of use to scholars, practitioners, and students.

Foreword to the First Edition

This is a book I should like to have written. The subject of treaty interpretation is one of great fascination and of great practical importance. I first heard of it in the pre-Vienna days when studying international law with Professor Clive Parry. My interest was further stimulated upon reading Yasseen's masterful (if brief, and now somewhat dated) introduction to articles 31–33 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties.

With the huge expansion of the volume and importance of treaties in recent times, an understanding of the rules for the interpretation of treaties becomes ever more important. Indeed, a proper understanding of the rules and processes of treaty interpretation is an essential tool for any international lawyer, whether in government, in private practice, or in the academic world. But it is not only public international lawyers who need to understand treaty interpretation, which is so different from interpretation of national laws and contracts. Questions of treaty interpretation arise more and more frequently in national courts, including in the UK.

On one level, it might be thought that there is not so much to be said on the subject. Interpretation is an art, not a science, and aside from the text of the rules set out in the Vienna Convention itself there is not much one needs beyond good sense and experience. Yet this is a mistaken approach. In the 40 years that have passed since the adoption of the Vienna Convention in 1969 a wealth of practice has developed, and it is chiefly through studying the practice that one learns the art.

There are different 'levels' of treaty interpretation. When a question of interpretation comes up in litigation, whether before an international court or a domestic one, it is usually examined in great depth, with full study by the parties—if not the court—of *travaux préparatoires* and context. When, on the other hand, a question of treaty interpretation has to be answered on the spot—often the case in the day-to-day work of a foreign ministry—it will, of necessity, be dealt with swiftly and even superficially. And there will be many situations between these two extremes.

The importance of treaty interpretation in modern international relations can be seen from the fact that almost all cases that have come before the International Court of Justice (and its predecessor the Permanent Court of International Justice), and most public international law arbitrations (including all investment treaty arbitrations) turn on the interpretation of treaties. All modern courts and tribunals take as their starting point (either expressly or implicitly) the rules set forth in articles 31–33 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (the 'Vienna rules'), which are well established as rules of customary international law and are nowadays applied to treaties old and new.

Richard Gardiner was for a number of years a legal adviser in the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office and with the Attorney General's Office. He has been a private practitioner as well as an academic, and is the author of a recent text-book

on international law. He has a particular interest in international aviation law, a field of international law dominated by bilateral and multilateral treaties and their interpretation. He is very well placed to write the present book analysing the Vienna rules, which is likely to become a classic in its field.

The merits of the book are manifold. Gardiner systematically analyses each element of the Vienna rules in detail, yet never loses sight of the overall approach to interpretation that is embodied in the Convention. It contains a meticulous, thorough, and sometimes critical study of the extensive case law that has developed on the Vienna rules. It contains enough theory to place the rules in context (explaining, for example, the heated debates in the International Law Commission and at the Vienna Conference), while remaining essentially a practical guide. And it contains a host of useful examples taken from real-life situations.

This book will be particularly useful for the practitioner, especially the practitioner involved in litigation or contemplating litigation. It will be consulted by judges and arbitrators, who may be moved to apply the Vienna rules more systematically as a result. And even (perhaps especially) the hurried interpreter, who needs to understand instinctively the process of treaty interpretation if he or she is to give good advice on the spot, will benefit greatly from Gardiner's exposition of the rules.

Sir Michael Wood, KCMG. London, February 2008

Preface to the Second Edition

The need for a user's guide to the rules of treaty interpretation has not greatly diminished in the years since the first edition of this book. The book's message remains the same: the rules on treaty interpretation in the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties are a starting point and guide for treaty interpretation and to use them properly requires being aware of their entirety. In the most visible instances of reasoned interpretation – the decisions of courts and tribunals – increased reference to these rules has nevertheless shown some continuing and quite widespread misunderstanding and misuse of them. The two most prominent misconceptions are that the opening reference in the Vienna Convention to the ordinary meaning of terms in a treaty constitutes the whole of the general rule and that in all cases any consideration of a treaty's preparatory work is subject to the same restrictive preconditions. There is, however, also much more in the rules which needs explanation and illustration.

The focus of the changes in this second edition is expansion of examples and of the explanations of practicalities of treaty interpretation. The number of cases in which specific mention is made of the Vienna rules on treaty interpretation has grown greatly. Likewise, there has been growth in the number of cases in which treaties have been interpreted without specific reference to the rules but which nevertheless illuminate understanding of them. Those included here are cases which illustrate particular points, but there are now countless others. Since the first edition there has also been much investigation of treaty interpretation, both of a general nature and in relation to particular areas. On topics such as the law of international trade, human rights, investment agreements, and international tax issues, valuable studies have been published making far more extensive analysis of cases in those particular areas than is possible here, but providing great assistance in illustrating the rules by extensive examples.

Further, there is the work of the International Law Commission which has completed its Guide to Practice on Reservations to Treaties. This includes guidelines and commentaries on interpretative declarations, a topic inadequately addressed in the Vienna rules. Some notice has also been taken in this edition of the Commission's work on subsequent agreements and subsequent practice in relation to interpretation of treaties; but the Commission's conclusions remain in draft and those seeking more detail on these topics would do well to consult the extensive reports and draft commentaries already produced and, in due course, the completed work.

In response to the helpful suggestions of reviewers, concluding summaries have been added to each of the analytical chapters in Part II and a new chapter has been added to give some pointers to particular trends and issues in treaty interpretation, and to provide some conclusion to the whole work.

Thanks are due to those who have provided ideas, indications of material, and other aid and assistance for this and the previous edition. These include Rukhsana Ali,

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Richard Gardiner 28 February 2015

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Abbreviations

AJIL American Journal of International Law

ATNIF Australian Treaties not in Force

ATS Australian Treaty Series
B C Int'l & Comp L Boston College Internation

Boston College International and Comparative Law Review

BITs Bilateral Investment Treaties

BYBIL British Year Book of International Law

CJEU Court of Justice of the European Union
DSB Dispute Settlement Body of the WTO
ECHR European Convention on Human Rights

ECtHR European Court of Human Rights

ECJ European Court of Justice ECT Energy Charter Treaty

EJIL European Journal of International Law

EL Rev European Law Review

EPC European Patent Convention

GATS General Agreement on Trade in Services 1994
GATT General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

ICC International Criminal Court

ICJ International Court of Justice

ICLQ International and Comparative Law Quarterly

ICSID International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes

ILC International Law Commission
ILDC International Law in Domestic Courts

IMCO Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization

J Church & St Journal of Church and State
LDA London Debt Agreement
MFN Most Favoured Nation

Mich J Int'l L

Michigan Journal of International Law

MOU

Memorandum of Understanding

NAFTA North American Free Trade Association/Agreement

NILR Netherlands International Law Review

OECD Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development

OED Oxford English Dictionary

OSPAR Convention Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of

the North-East Atlantic

PCIJ Permanent Court of International Justice

TRIPS Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Right

UKTS UK Treaty Series

UNHCR UN High Commissioner for Refugees

UNTS UN Treaty Series

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Abbreviations

Va J Int'l L VCLT

WHO WTO

Virginia Journal of International Law Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, 1969 World Health Organization World Trade Organization

Note on Citations

Citations follow OSCOLA (Oxford Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities) (4th Edn, 2012), with modifications, at: http://www.law.ox.ac.uk/publications/oscola.php.

Where the same work is cited in an uninterrupted succession of footnotes on the same page only the name of the author is repeated.

Where recent cases are cited, these may be available only (or most conveniently) via the Internet, but with the caution that web addresses (URLs) often change. The URLs for common websites are not repeated in the footnotes where sufficient particulars are given to enable location of reports at the appropriate URL. The following are URLs of websites providing reports of many of the cases cited:

International Court of Justice: www.icj-cij.org

European Court of Human Rights:

http://www.echr.coe.int/ECHR/EN/Header/Case-Law/HUDOC/HUDOC+database/

World Trade Organisation Dispute Settlement Body: http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/dispu_e.htm

International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes: https://icsid.worldbank.org/

North American Free Trade Agreement: http://www.state.gov/s/l/c3439.htm

Treaties are accessible in the UN's electronic collection: https://treaties.un.org/. This is very cumbersome to search. Preference is therefore given here to citation in the Australian Treaty Series (ATS) or Australian Treaties not in Force (ATNIF): http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/

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