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Introduction to Swiss Law- Legal History (2 Part - Ideas in Context)

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Overview Lecture

- Natural Law and Law of Nations in Switzerland (17th-18 Century)
- Emer de Vattel and his *Le Droit des gens* (1758)
- International humanitarian law and Swiss (19th century)
- Swiss Jurists and the codification of international law (19th century)



The *École romande du droit naturel*

French speaking part of Switzerland

- ❖ Jean Barbeyrac (1674-1744)
- ❖ Louis Bourguet (1678-1742)
- ❖ Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui (1694-1748)
- ❖ Fortunato Bartolomeo de Felice (1723-1789)
- ❖ Emer de Vattel (1714-1767)



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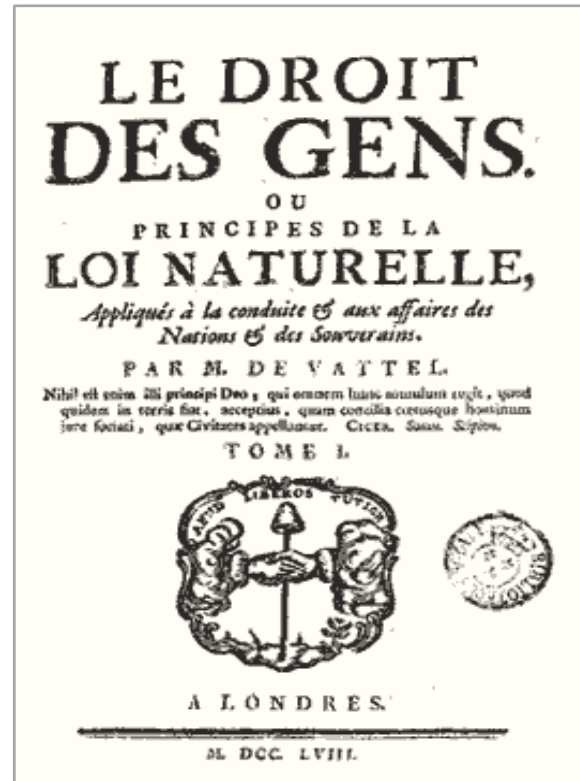
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Emer de Vattel (1714-1767)





1758, the publication of his masterpiece



Le Droit des gens was published four years before *Le contrat social* of Rousseau and ten years after *Esprit de Loïs* of Montesquieu.



“I was born in a country of which liberty is the soul, the treasure, and the fundamental law; and my birth qualifies me to be the friend of all nations”



Central Points of Vattel's Legal Thought

- Law of Nations
- Resolution of disputes between nations
- War in due form
- *Ius in bello*
- Enemies of mankind



What is the constitution of a State?

“The fundamental regulation that determines the manner in which the public authority is to be executed, is what forms the constitution of the state. In this is seen the form in which the nation acts in quality of a body-politic,—how and by whom the people are to be governed,— and what are the rights and duties of the governors. This constitution is in fact nothing more than the establishment of the order in which a nation proposes to labour in common for obtaining those advantages with a view to which the political society was established.

The perfection of a state, and its aptitude to attain the ends of society, must then depend on its constitution: consequently the most important concern of a nation that forms a political society, and its first and most essential duty towards itself, is to chuse the best constitution possible, and that most suitable to its circumstances. When it makes this choice, it lays the foundation of its own preservation, safety, perfection, and happiness:—it cannot take too much care in placing these on a solid basis”.



What is the Law of Nations?

“The Law of Nations, though so noble and important a subject, has not hitherto been treated of with all the care it deserves. The greater part of mankind have therefore only a vague, a very incomplete, and often even a false notion of it. The generality of writers, and even celebrated authors, almost exclusively confine the name of the Law of Nations to certain maxims and customs which have been adopted by different nations, and which the mutual consent of the parties has alone rendered obligatory on them. This is confining within very narrow bounds a law so extensive in its own nature, and in which the whole human race are so intimately concerned; it is at the same time a degradation of that law, in consequence of a misconception of its real origin”.



“The law of nations is the law of sovereigns. It is principally for them and for their ministers that it ought to be written. All mankind are indeed interested in it; and, in a free country, the study of its maxims is a proper employment for every citizen: but it would be of little consequence to impart the knowledge of it only to private individuals, who are not called to the councils of nations, and who have no influence in directing the public measures. If the conductors of states, if all those who are employed in public affairs, condescended to apply seriously to the study of a science which ought to be their law, and, as it were, the compass by which to steer their course, what happy effects might we not expect from a good treatise on the law of nations! We every day feel the advantages of a good body of laws in civil society:—the law of nations is, in point of importance, as much superior to the civil law, as the proceedings of nations and sovereigns are more momentous in their consequences than those of private persons”



Nations: free, independent and equal

“Since nations are free, independent, and equal,—and since each possesses the right of judging, according to the dictates of her conscience, what conduct she is to pursue in order to fulfil her duties,—the effect of the whole is, to produce, at least externally and in the eyes of mankind, a perfect equality of rights between nations, in the administration of their affairs and the pursuit of their pretensions, without regard to the intrinsic justice of their conduct, of which others have no right to form a definitive judgment; so that whatever may be done by any one nation, may be done by any other; and they ought, in human society, to be considered as possessing equal rights”



Independence

“Nations being free and independent of each other, in the same manner as men are naturally free and independent, the *second* general law of their society is, *that each nation should be left in the peaceable enjoyment of that liberty which she inherits from nature*. The natural society of nations cannot subsist, unless the natural rights of each be duly respected”



Equality

“Since men are naturally equal, and a perfect equality prevails in their rights and obligations, as equally proceeding from nature – *Nations composed of men, and considered as so many free persons living together in a State of nature, are naturally equal, and inherit from nature the same obligations and rights.* Power or weakness does not in this respect produce any difference. A dwarf is as much a man as a giant; a small republic is no less a sovereign State than the most powerful kingdom”



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Henry Dunant (1828-1910)





From his *A Memory of Solferino*

“Oh, how valuable it would have been [... to have had a hundred experienced and qualified voluntary orderlies and nurses! Such a group would have formed a nucleus around which could have been rallied the scanty help and dispersed efforts which needed competent guidance”.

Creation of the International Red Cross (1863)



First Geneva Convention, 22 August 1864

- ❖ relief to the wounded without any distinction as to nationality;
- ❖ neutrality (inviolability) of medical personnel and medical establishments and units;
- ❖ the distinctive sign of the red cross on a white ground

So called: Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field



Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field. Geneva, 22 August 1864

Art. 1. Ambulances and military hospitals shall be recognized as neutral, and as such, protected and respected by the belligerents as long as they accommodate wounded and sick. Neutrality shall end if the said ambulances or hospitals should be held by a military force.

Art. 2. Hospital and ambulance personnel, including the quarter-master's staff, the medical, administrative and transport services, and the chaplains, shall have the benefit of the same neutrality when on duty, and while there remain any wounded to be brought in or assisted.

Art. 3. The persons designated in the preceding Article may, even after enemy occupation, continue to discharge their functions in the hospital or ambulance with which they serve, or may withdraw to rejoin the units to which they belong. When in these circumstances they cease from their functions, such persons shall be delivered to the enemy outposts by the occupying forces.

Art. 4. The material of military hospitals being subject to the laws of war, the persons attached to such hospitals may take with them, on withdrawing, only the articles which are their own personal property. Ambulances, on the contrary, under similar circumstances, shall retain their equipment.



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Art. 5. Inhabitants of the country who bring help to the wounded shall be respected and shall remain free. Generals of the belligerent Powers shall make it their duty to notify the inhabitants of the appeal made to their humanity, and of the neutrality which humane conduct will confer. The presence of any wounded combatant receiving shelter and care in a house shall ensure its protection. An inhabitant who has given shelter to the wounded shall be exempted from billeting and from a portion of such war contributions as may be levied.

Art. 6. Wounded or sick combatants, to whatever nation they may belong, shall be collected and cared for. Commanders-in-Chief may hand over immediately to the enemy outposts enemy combatants wounded during an engagement, when circumstances allow and subject to the agreement of both parties. Those who, after their recovery, are recognized as being unfit for further service, shall be repatriated. The others may likewise be sent back, on condition that they shall not again, for the duration of hostilities, take up arms. Evacuation parties, and the personnel conducting them, shall be considered as being absolutely neutral.

Art. 7. A distinctive and uniform flag shall be adopted for hospitals, ambulances and evacuation parties. It should in all circumstances be accompanied by the national flag. An armlet may also be worn by personnel enjoying neutrality but its issue shall be left to the military authorities. Both flag and armlet shall bear a red cross on a white ground.

Art. 8. The implementing of the present Convention shall be arranged by the Commanders-in-Chief of the belligerent armies following the instructions of their respective Governments and in accordance with the general principles set forth in this Convention.



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Swiss Jurists and the codification of international law (19th century)

Ghent, 8 September 1873:

Institut de Droit International

The main objective of the Institute expressed in its *Statute* is to contribute to the progress of international law, its codification and its progressive development



Article 1

1. The Institute of International Law is an exclusively learned society, without any official nature.
2. Its purpose is to promote the progress of international law:
 - a) by striving to formulate the general principles of the subject, in such a way as to correspond to the legal conscience of the civilized world;
 - b) by lending its co-operation in any serious endeavour for the gradual and progressive codification of international law;
 - c) by seeking official endorsement of the principles recognized as in harmony with the needs of modern societies;
 - d) by contributing, within the limits of its competence, either to the maintenance of peace, or to the observance of the laws of war;
 - e) by studying the difficulties which may arise in the interpretation or application of the law, and where necessary issuing reasoned legal opinions in doubtful or controversial cases;
 - f) by affording its co-operation, through publications, public teaching and all other means, in ensuring that those principles of justice and humanity which should govern the mutual relations of peoples shall prevail.



Founders

- Pascal Mancini (from Rome)
- Emile de Laveleye (from Liege)
- Tobie Michel Charles Asser (from Amsterdam)
- James Lorimer (from Edinburgh)
- Wladimir Besobrossof (from Saint-Petersburg)
- Gustave Moynier (from Geneva)
- Johann Caspar Bluntschli (from Heidelberg)
- Augusto Pierantoni (from Naples)
- Charles Calvo (from Buenos Aires)
- Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns (from Ghent)
- David Dudley Field (from New York)



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Gustave Moynier (1826-1910)





Gustave Moynier (1826-1910)

Moynier took a very active role in shaping the Red Cross

He proposed the creation of an international tribunal to sanction breaches of the Geneva Convention (for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field)

[idea of a permanent international criminal court]



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Johann Caspar Bluntschli (1808-1881)





«It is substantially the same work as that which I early attempted with success at Zürich [...] with reference to private law. The principles of that work were now only transferred to the broader field of civilised states in general, and were applied to the moving stream of international relations and legal opinions».



Johann Caspar Bluntschli (1808-1881)

Important work:

- *Das moderne Kriegsrecht* (1866)- *The modern law of war*

The modern law of war influenced the Hague conferences of 1899 and 1907.



- *Das moderne Völkerrecht der zivilisierten Staaten* (1868)- *The Modern International Law of Civilized States*

presented a comprehensive code that was translated into several languages and became a widely used reference book for diplomatists

Bluntschli's code consisted in 862 articles:

- 1) The law of peace (1-509)
- 2) The law of war (510-741)
- 3) The law of neutrality (742-862)



Conclusion

- Ideas in the Swiss Context
- Influence of Swiss Legal Thoughts
- Central Role of Switzerland for the History of International Law

