THE PRACTICE OF INTERPRETATION IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

Does a unified law of interpretation exist? Can it be applied to all legal rules, regardless of their source, interpreter, or subject matter? This volume offers a comprehensive exploration of how interpretation is practiced across the diverse landscape of international law. Drawing on contributions from leading scholars and practitioners, the book examines interpretation through the lenses of multiple actors, sources, and regimes, revealing three core themes. Unity emerges in shared interpretative methods, rooted in the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties and its customary counterparts. Diversity appears in the distinctive approaches found within specialised legal regimes. Evolution is seen in the growing range of materials considered during interpretation. Rich in comparative insights, this volume will be an essential reference for researchers, practitioners, and anyone interested in the dynamic processes that shape meaning in international law. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

SOTIRIOS-IOANNIS LEKKAS is Lecturer in International Law at the University of Sheffield. He was postdoctoral researcher for the ERC-funded TRICI-Law project at the University of Groningen. His DPhil thesis at the University of Oxford, 'Duality of Responsibility in International Law', won the 2019–21 Hellenic Society of International Law Georges Tenekides Prize.

NINA MILEVA is Assistant Professor of International Law at the University of Groningen. She completed her PhD (University of Groningen) in 2023 within the ERC-funded project TRICI-Law. Dr Mileva is a member of the Coordinating Committee of the Interest Group on International Legal Theory and Philosophy (IGILTP) of the European Society of International Law (ESIL).

PANOS MERKOURIS is Professor of International Law at the University of Groningen. His five-year project on The Rules of Interpretation of Customary International Law was awarded an ERC Starting Grant (ERC grant agreement no 759728). Professor Merkouris is a member of the editorial boards of the Netherlands Yearbook of International Law (NYIL) and the International Community Law Review (ICLR). He was also the co-rapporteur of the ILA Study Group on the Content and Evolution of Rules of Interpretation in International Law.

IVO TARIK DE VRIES ZOU has written a doctoral thesis on the use of soft law in treaty interpretation and the determination of customary rules at the University of Groningen. He has also published on issues of international dispute settlement and worked as an academic as well as for practitioners.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 09:11:07, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009599122

THE RULES OF INTERPRETATION OF
CUSTOMARY INTERNATIONAL LAW

Established in 2021, the *TRICI-Law Book Series* is a limited series that aims to publish monographs and edited volumes on topics that shed light on legal interpretation in international law, with a particular emphasis on the interpretation of customary international law. Titles appearing in the series examine the interpretation of customary international law from a theoretical and practical perspective, and compare the characteristics of legal interpretation in international law across courts, regimes and sources as they have evolved and continue to do so through time. The *TRICI-Law Book Series* is a joint initiative between Cambridge University Press, the European Research Council and the University of Groningen. The titles in this series are available as Open Access thanks to the generous funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme (Grant Agreement No 759728) and the University of Groningen.

General Editor
Panos Merkouris
University of Groningen

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 09:11:07, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009599122

THE PRACTICE OF INTERPRETATION IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

Unity, Diversity, and Evolution

Edited by

SOTIRIOS-IOANNIS LEKKAS
University of Sheffield

NINA MILEVA
University of Groningen

PANOS MERKOURIS
University of Groningen

In association with

IVO TARIK DE VRIES ZOU
University of Goningen

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 09:11:07, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009599122

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009599085

DOI: 10.1017/9781009599122

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, with the exception of the Creative Commons version the link for which is provided below, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

An online version of this work is published at doi.org/10.1017/9781009599122 under a Creative Commons Open Access license CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 which permits re-use, distribution and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial purposes providing appropriate credit to the original work is given. You may not distribute derivative works without permission. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009599122

First published 2026

Cover image: *Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth*, J. M. W. Turner, 1842. Image by Universal Images Group via Getty Images.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Merkouris, Panos editor | Lekkas, Sotirios Ioannis editor | Mileva, Nina, 1992- editor | Vries-Zou, Ivo Tarik de editor
Title: The practice of interpretation in international law : unity, diversity, and evolution / edited by Sotirios-Ioannis Lekkas, University of Sheffield; Nina Mileva, University of Groningen; Panos Merkouris, University of Groningen; Ivo Tarik de Vries Zou; University of Goningen.
Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2026. | Series: The rules of interpretation of customary international law (TRIC) | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2026013937 (print) | LCCN 2026013938 (ebook) | ISBN 9781009599085 hardback | ISBN 9781009599115 paperback | ISBN 9781009599122 epub
Subjects: LCSH: International law–Interpretation and construction
Classification: LCC KZ1285 .P73 2026 (print) | LCC KZ1285 (ebook)
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2026013937
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2026013938

ISBN 978-1-009-59908-5 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-009-59911-5 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

For EU product safety concerns, contact us at Calle de José Abascal, 56, 1°, 28003 Madrid, Spain, or email eugpsr@cambridge.org

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 09:11:07, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009599122