1. The Main Legal Features of the International Community

This chapter introduces the main features of the international legal system, including the nature of international legal subjects, the lack of a central authority (and the resulting decentralization of legal ‘functions’), collective responsibility, the need for most international rules to be translated into national legislation, the range of States’ freedom of action, the overriding role of effectiveness, traditional and individualistic trends and emerging community obligations and rights, and the coexistence of the old and new patterns. These features provide a general preview of the more detailed and technical discussion of international legal rules and institutions undertaken in subsequent chapters.

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