

Abstract

The present study describes the nature, scope and application of universal jurisdiction as an important tool against impunity in international criminal law, in a straight forward manner, where inquiry into the recent developments of universal jurisdiction is undertaken. Forthwith, the formation of the principle of universal jurisdiction - especially its practical application - must be guided by international consensus, not through advocacy action of states with short term and narrow objectives. The thesis seeks to identify and observe how far the law of universal jurisdiction has actually evolved and how far we should expect it to evolve in the near future, considering its restraints and challenges. It is argued that the concept of state sovereignty, which constitutes the greatest impediment on the exercise of universal jurisdiction, has seen various changes to its fundamentals elements in the 21st Century. The aim is to look at the universality principle, not as an isolated part, but as part of a broader framework in modern international law and thus special attention is given to the relationship between universal jurisdiction and the principle of *aut dedere aut judicare*. These principles are interrelated, yet distinct, parallels in deterring commission of the most heinous offences of international concern and should be studied together. In addition, the recently emerging notion of subsidiarity in the context of universal jurisdiction is introduced; hence using subsidiarity as a modality to enhance the exercise and foreseeability in the application of universal jurisdiction within the modern jurisdictional regime.