Emmerich de Vattel was the first to make the now common association between barbarism and the wanton destruction of historic works art and architecture. His masterwork, *The Law of Nations or the Principles of Natural Law Applied to the Conduct and to the Affairs of Nations and of Sovereigns* (1758), enshrined him as one of the principal theorists of Enlightenment jurisprudence. Considered the foundation of modern theories of international law, *The Law of Nations* synthesized thinking on the rights and duties of sovereigns and citizens by philosophers Christian Wolff, Hugo Grotius and Gottfried Leibniz. De Vattel argued that armies had a responsibility to uphold universal human values, even as they fought for their country’s interest. For him, beautiful and historic works of art and architecture represented, not the cultural superiority of one country over the other, but the common achievements of the human race. As such, every effort had to be made to preserve them from destruction during war, and to return them to their original owners once the war was over. This idea was later absorbed into the Lieber Code (1863) of the Union Army during the American Civil War, and the Geneva Conventions (1864, 1906, 1929, 1949) of international law for the humanitarian treatment of war. De Vattel’s theory is at the origin of the modern concept of world heritage, which intellectually underpins international preservation organizations such as UNESCO, and is also the source of the idea that heritage appropriated and carried off as war loot should be repatriated to its country of origin. Born in Couvet, Switzerland, in 1714, he was the Saxon court's minister in Bern, Switzerland from 1746 to 1758. He was named a privy councilor in the Saxon court in Dresden in 1758. He died in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, in 1767.

Keywords: War, World Heritage, Repatriation, Vandalism