

Robert Kolb and Richard Hyde, *An Introduction to the International Law of Armed Conflicts* (Hart Publishing, Oxford, 2008, ISBN 9781841137995, £30.00, xxiv+348 pages)

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The law of armed conflict is one of the most comprehensively regulated areas of international law. Since the first international treaty on the subject, the *1864 Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field*,¹ States have adopted dozens of treaties regulating the conduct of armed conflicts, covering the conduct of hostilities, the treatment of civilians and captured combatants, permissible weapons and protection of cultural property.² A hallmark of nearly all of these treaties and conventions is the obligation of States that become parties to the treaty or convention to inform and educate their populations — both military and civilian — regarding the rights and obligations enshrined in the treaties in question. For example, the four *1949 Geneva Conventions* and their *1977 Additional Protocols* include provisions obligating the High Contracting Parties to the Conventions/Protocols to disseminate the Conventions/Protocols as widely as possible in times of both war and peace.³ In order to fulfil their obligations under this provision, States must ensure that the law of armed conflict is taught to both the military and the civilian populations. As such, courses should be included at universities and at military academies especially to ensure that the military and the wider civilian population are aware of State and individual responsibilities under the law of armed conflict. The idea behind such provisions is that ‘education [is] a better guarantee of respect for these rules [of the law of armed conflict] than any sanction could ever be’.⁴ The more aware the civilian and military populations are regarding the law of armed conflict, the more likely they are to abide by it and to prevent violations of the law or to react when violations occur.

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1 Opened for signature 22 August 1864, 129 ConTS 361 (entered into force 22 June 1865).

2 For a good history of the development of the law of armed conflict, see Leslie Green, *The Contemporary Law of Armed Conflict* (2008).

3 *Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field*, opened for signature 12 August 1949, 75 UNTS 31, art 47 (entered into force 21 October 1950); *Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of the Armed Forces at Sea*, opened for signature 12 August 1949, 75 UNTS 85, art 48 (entered into force 21 October 1950); *Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, opened for signature 12 August 1949, 75 UNTS 135, art 127 (entered into force 21 October 1950); *Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War*, opened for signature 12 August 1949, 75 UNTS 287, art 144 (entered into force 21 October 1950); *Protocol Addition to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts*, opened for signature 8 June 1977, 1125 UNTS 3, arts 83, 87(2), 89 (entered into force 7 December 1978); *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts*, opened for signature 8 June 1977, 1125 UNTS 609, art 19.

4 Yves Sandoz, Christophe Swinarski & Bruno Zimmerman (eds), *Commentary to the Additional Protocols of 8 June 1977 to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949* (1986) [3370].

State armed forces fulfil this obligation by the provision of training courses for their military, by the placement of trained military lawyers on frontline engagements, and through the production of military manuals to be used as instruction manuals during both training courses and in the field during conflicts. One such training manual is the focus of this review. Kolb and Hyde's text, *An Introduction to the International Law of Armed Conflicts*, began as a training guide, written by Kolb, for the Swiss Military. In collaboration with Hyde, the two turned the manual into an introductory monograph and, reading the work, one gets a sense of its origins as a basic instructive guide. However, this is not to dismiss the text outright. The authors have put together a very readable and accessible text, which provides a good primer on the fundamental rules relating to armed conflict.

The first part of the book contains a very basic introduction to the nature of public international law and the principles relevant to the international law of armed conflicts. Included in this introductory section is a chapter on the law relating to the resort to force — *jus ad bellum* — and the relationship between *jus ad bellum* and the law relating to the conduct of hostilities — *jus in bello*. The main part of the text concentrates on the law relating to the conduct of hostilities and starts with a brief history of the origins and evolution of the law of armed conflicts. It then details sources and the scope of application and continues with chapters that cover prohibited weapons, the rules relating to combatants and prisoners of war, the law of belligerent occupation and the specific rules relating to the law of non-international armed conflicts.

The book is written in a systematic and straightforward manner and outlines the relevant areas of the law succinctly. The text uses case law from the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and other international courts and tribunals, as well as domestic jurisdictions. Also included are 'real-life' examples to illustrate how the law is applied in practice. What the text lacks is any sort of analysis. There is no critical assessment of the law of armed conflict or any analysis of weaknesses in the law and potential solutions. The text includes a chapter on the interrelationship between the law of armed conflict and international human rights law, but does not attempt to explore some of the more contentious issues that are debated in regard to the law of armed conflict, such as the concept of humanitarian intervention and the issues surrounding the idea of 'the responsibility to protect'. There is also little on the topic of terrorism, which is remarkable considering that the September 11 attacks on the United States in 2001 sparked two large-scale armed conflicts and intense international debate about the current law of armed conflict and its applicability — or lack thereof — to the current 'War on Terror'. Each chapter averages about 12-15 pages, which allows only scant recitation of the law. However, the text does not pretend to be anything but a basic introduction, and as such, it is a good primer for anyone wishing to get an introduction to the area.