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International Law and Armed Conflict: Fundamental Principles and Contemporary Challenges in the Law of War (Laurie R. Blank, Gregory P. Noone, Law, Wolters Kluwer Series, 2013, 730 pages)

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International Law and Armed Conflict: Fundamental Principles and Contemporary Challenges in the Law of War (Laurie R. Blank, Gregory P. Noone, Law, Wolters Kluwer Series, 2013, 730 pages)

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Laurie R. Blank, Professor at Emory University School of Law, where she teaches the law of armed conflict and works directly with students to provide assistance to international tribunals, non-governmental organizations and militaries around the world², and Dr. Gregory P. Noone, the Director of the Fairmont State University National Security and Intelligence Program and an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Law, in their comprehensive 730-page research work have succeeded in the almost impossible task of offering an International Humanitarian Law (IHL) handbook which both practitioners and students will find very useful, taking into account that very few publications manage to address a broad public at once.

IHL represents a complex and evolving body of law, posing extremely complex problems related to its application in practice and thus relevance of IHL and information related to it varies upon the reader-academia, lawyers, judges, etc. Thus, with more than 30 years of combined experience and expertise teaching and working in the military and academia, Laurie R. Blank and Gregory P. Noone have succeeded in creating a comprehensive framework for understanding the law and policy applicable in times of

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² <http://law.emory.edu/faculty-and-scholarship/faculty-profiles/blank-profile.html> accessed at 21 June 2018

armed conflict, covering both the fields of human rights and national security law¹.

The handbook approaches the following issues: real-life stories, hypothetical scenarios related to day-to-day events, the basic legal principles, the protection of civilians, the contemporary weapons unmanned aerial vehicles and cyber operations, the situation of conflicts with terrorist groups and also integrated coverage of related fields, such as human rights and national security law like stated before. Taking all these into account, we appreciate that the textbook provides quite a complete picture of the legal aspects that apply to armed conflict.

The two authors discuss some of the issues currently present and debatable in international law and how these issues line up with the precedent that has been established over the last few hundred years. While obviously an America-centric book, it contains useful excerpts from the case law of a number of international courts and lays out in a clear manner the application of the rules of conflict. Moreover, every section is also accompanied by excerpts of relevant practice, which prove that IHL is very active branch of law and is not all about the Geneva Conventions and other relevant instruments, combining the theoretical approach with the practical one.

Thus, the readers will be able to acknowledge from the handbook the case law that undoubtedly contributed to the development of IHL², such as the decisions of the Trial and Appeals Chambers of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the famous Tadić case, the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) Wall case advisory opinion and the US Supreme Court's decision in Hamdan v. Rumsfeld.

When it comes to the structure of the book, we consider this as the big plus of the book, which is far from being a classical one: the typical chapter titles one could see in most IHL books, such as "Conflict Classification", "Protection of the Civilian Population" or "Means and Methods of Warfare", have been replaced by the intuitive "Why's and How's" structure: Why, What, When, Who, and How. Only the last chapter of the text book approaches the Implementation and Enforcements issues.

Sections in the handbook also approach the issue of cyber-operations and whether the conduct of people taking part in this kind of operations could ever amount to direct participation in hostilities resulting in a loss of

¹ http://www.aspenlawschool.com/books/armed_conflict/default.asp (accessed at 22 May, 2018)

² *International Review of the Red Cross* (2016), 97 (897/898), 477–481

protection against direct attack. The two authors address later on the question of the standards for detention in non-international armed conflict, within the chapter on battlefield status in NIAC.

Furthermore, another great plus of the text book is represented by the lists of “questions for discussion” included at the end of each section that provide a good opportunity to assess the theoretical knowledge just acquired and to apply it in practice, aspect extremely useful for the students, if we might say.

If I were to emphasize the so-called weak points, I could not help from noticing though the prevalence of documents emanating from US case law, legislation or practice like previously stated, and the fact that the book currently seems to focus more on aspects related to conduct of hostilities and on the treatment of war prisoners, but dedicates surprisingly few pages to the question of detention and internment. Finally a more structured presentation of the international case law would have been desirable.