Such minor quibbles apart, this is a fine and eminently useful book. It is joint winner (along with Geoffrey Best’s no less admirable War and Law since 1945) of the 1996 Paul Reuter Prize, awarded by the International Committee of the Red Cross. The two works are very different: Best is sceptical, reflective, a digger in archives worrying away about murky issues such as guerrilla warfare, and questioning the foundations while still respecting much of the edifice. Rogers is much more of a straight-down-the-line exposition of where the law stands on particular issues. Yet both authors agree on the need not just to expound treaty law, but to see how it works in practice; both emphasise the importance of customary rules; and both write in plain English. Best memorably wrote of his own book that anyone using it in preparation for an examination in the law of war would be asking for trouble. Of Rogers’s book one can safely say that it is a useful primer for an examination—or, if necessary, for an international war.

ADAM ROBERTS


In 1913 the Institute of International Law adopted a Manual on the Laws of Naval War Governing the Relations Between Belligerents. Although one could not claim that international law has left the subject untouched since then, there is no doubt that a modern reappraisal and codification of the law applicable to armed conflict at sea was necessary. This manual, the product of Round Table meetings, the work of rapporteurs and much informal consultation, contains a six-part, section-by-section, statement of the substantive law. Some provisions are de lege ferenda, but the majority state in contemporary style existing customary law. The bare bones of these provisions are then fleshed out with an illuminating commentary that explains both the thinking behind each part and the difficulties encountered by the drafters.

The comprehensive nature of the manual is impressive and many thorny issues are addressed. The impact of major developments in treaty law is incorporated in the text, not least the impact of the jus ad bellum of the UN Charter on such concepts as belligerency and neutrality. Clearly, this was not a unanimous view, but the manual would have been poorer without it. In substantive terms, the conclusion that the outlawry of war and force should not necessarily remove the “aggressor” State from the protective envelope of the laws of war must be correct, as is the way in which the enforcement powers of the Security Council and the relevance of self-defence are woven into the text. Sometimes the manual does overstretch itself, practically and legally—as where the parties to a conflict are urged to agree not to wage warfare in environmentally sensitive marine areas—but these are the exceptions rather than the rule.

Clearly, the intention is that this manual will endure at least as long as its predecessor. The diversity of the contributors, geographically and occupationally, the depth of their scholarship and the sheer breadth of their understanding of this branch of international law mean that it almost certainly will.

M. J. DIXON


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