Foreword

International humanitarian law has received vast scholarly attention in the past 20 years. Noam Zamir’s book focuses on a distinctive and crucial aspect of the subject – the classification of armed conflicts which involve civil wars with foreign intervention.

It is something of a paradox that as the number of overtly interstate armed conflicts has declined, the need for the application of that part of international humanitarian law designed to deal with such conflicts has increased. Sadly, modern history is full of civil wars grossly exacerbated by foreign interventions, as the ongoing armed conflicts in Syria and Yemen exemplify. Civil wars with foreign intervention deserve special focus because, as highlighted by Zamir, they raise complex legal issues and reveal that the field of conflict classification still contains important questions that need to be further analysed.

Zamir provides a lucid and concise analysis of these issues as well as a good presentation of the normative framework of conflict classification. Notably, he relies on various aspects of public international law, such as the rules of attribution under state responsibility and the rules regarding recognition of governments, while nonetheless taking into account the special features of international humanitarian law, in order to fill the various lacunas in conflict classification. Though this reliance is not novel, it is nonetheless well argued.

For these reasons, this is an important contribution to the growing scholarly discourse of international humanitarian law, one that also offers practical guidance on an important issue within that field.

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