

*Los conflictos armados contemporáneos. Construcción de la paz y derechos humanos.* Edited by José A. VALLÉS CAVIA (Catarata, Madrid, 2015) 304 pp.

If one of the *Tercios* of Flanders, despite their bloodthirsty reputation, lifted his head today, he would not believe his eyes before the profile that adopt modern conflicts. Neither a Prussian soldier of the end of the XIX century or beginning of the XX century would be able to understand a current conflict. Conflicts have changed in the last 50 years more than in the last 500 years. We face conflicts where combatants are often the ones who are safer, because most of the victims are from the civil population. There are conflicts where the uniforms of those involved in the fight are often a cap and Ray-Ban sunglasses. Conflicts in which the enemy immolates in crowded places. Conflicts in which, by a simple click of a button, a region of the world could disappear from the Earth within seconds. Conflicts in which the defeat and disarmament of the enemy is not the goal but instead, a people's genocide. Many conflicts today are like that. The joint work edited by professor Jose Antonio Valles in 2013 and prefaced by professor Concepción Escobar entitled *Los conflictos armados contemporáneos* deepens, among others, in these aspects of the "new" types of conflicts. The book stems from the reflections made by a group of Spanish internationalists in the frame of the *Aula de Cooperación Internacional* of the University of Cantabria, specialized in International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, International Criminal Law and Disarmament. These experts are, apart from the editor, Rosario Ojinaga, Carmen Quesada, Julio Jorge Urbina, Yaelle Cacho, Teresa Marcos, Ruth Abril, Miguel Arenas, Carlos Teijo, Claribel de Castro y Fernando Val. These lecturers have been doing a follow-up of the international agenda and analysing, from very different standpoints, the link between armed conflicts and violations of human rights.

As professor Escobar reminds us, the Secretary General of the United Nations stated in 2005 in his Report *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all* that "No security agenda and no drive for development will be successful unless they are based on the sure foundation of respect for human dignity" (A/59/2005, par. 128). The triangle security-human rights-development is the keystone to solve contemporary armed conflicts. And it is from this starting point that the present volume focuses on the study of contemporary armed conflicts. In this context, each one of the authors of the different chapters deals, according to their fields of expertise and interests, with a different topic. Some of the contributions are more general in character and some are more specific but they include humanitarian action, occupation, the use of force, means of combat, victims' reparation, women in armed conflict, the situation of non-accompanied children, the crime of aggression, terrorism and the judicial action related to violations of human rights during armed conflicts.

We face a significant and up-dated intellectual work, whose lecture will be of interest both for newcomers and for specialists because its content is presented in a way that is sufficiently clear for anyone wanting to introduce himself in the field of today armed conflicts but is also

sufficiently developed so as to attract experts willing to up-date their knowledge and to know about late trends in armed conflicts on the ground. Given the existing confusion to understand the causes and characteristics of some recent conflicts (e.g., Syria, Libya, Yemen, DRC, or Ukraine) the publication of brave and bold books is appreciated, especially if they provide with a new approach and with reflections and possible answers to the challenges of these crisis.

In this collective book, Rosario Ojinaga studies the evolution of humanitarian action, the challenge of enforcing International Humanitarian Law and the respect of the so-called humanitarian space. Carmen Quesada analyses the relationship between International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law, and then she tests the application of both in cases of military occupation. In his chapter about the use of lethal force and the protection of human life in situations of violence, Julio Jorge Urbina also uses International Humanitarian Law, but this time as a parameter to protect the right to life in armed conflict. From her side, Yaelle Cacho deepens in the always thorny and shabby topic of the sexual abuses committed by the personnel of peace operations, and she classifies the measures adopted by the United Nations to eradicate this scourge. Teresa Marcos retakes International Humanitarian Law and applies it to the situation of non-accompanied children in armed conflicts, she also reviews the work of different organisms and international organizations, both intergovernmental and non-governmental, such as UNHCR, ICRC or UNICEF. Her chapter is followed by that of Ruth Abril, which is devoted to the need to adopt a holistic approach to the topic of women in armed conflicts so that women are not only considered as victims but also as actors of change and peace-building. Miguel Arenas devotes his chapter to the original —but not always effective— system of reparations used by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in case of human rights violations. After that, Carlos Teijo elaborates on the judicial immunity of State organs as a limit for the reparation of victims in cases of gross violations of human rights and humanitarian law, an immunity that is sometimes waived by States. Claribel de Castro devotes her chapter to the study of the limitations of the employment of the means of combat as a mechanism to protect civil population by using, as a case-study, the control of conventional weapons. Last but not one, Fernando Val studies the recent evolution of the crime of aggression as a potential new factor of conflict prevention. And lastly, the coordinator of this book, José Antonio Vallés, develops the theme, sadly always topical, of international terrorism and the new forms it adopts.

No doubt at all about the inclusive character of this collective work. It contributes to the advancement of the scientific doctrine not only because of the relevance of the topics that it includes but also because of their highly topical character. The monograph is composed of a wide spectrum of topics whose connection with armed conflicts is easier to see in some cases than in others. All the chapters are equally relevant but a more profound justification for the selection of topics would have been welcome. If the index had classified the contributions by subjects, or maybe if a final compiling chapter had been included to sum-up -in a harmonized and articulated way- the main findings of the authors, it would have helped to better understand the internal coherence of the different chapters. This is without prejudice to the

quality of the book, which presents a rigorous insight of some the challenges that we face today in armed conflicts and of the violations of human rights they produce. We can state that the diversified subjects that are dealt in this book show to what extent the lack of pattern and the complexity of today's armed conflicts raise concern among the academia. This collective book will certainly become a useful tool to complete the panorama of the study of the challenges that raise contemporary armed conflicts.

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