Shirley V Scott, *International Law in World Politics: An Introduction* • Boulder Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2010 • ISBN 978-1-58826-745-0 • 324 + x pp

Conway W Henderson, *Understanding International Law* • West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010 • ISBN 978-1-4051-9765-6 • 468 + xviii pp

I must confess to a weakness in being attracted to introductory texts on international law. This weakness can probably be traced back my undergraduate days when I was desperately cramming for my international law examinations. Desperate for a simple yet rigorous text on the subject, I bought a copy of the 5th edition of the late Michael Akehurst's *MODERN INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL LAW* (1984). I could not have chosen better for as we all know, that book – or at least its 6th edition – has become a classic, to be spoken of in the same breath as James Brierly's *LAW OF NATIONS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LAW OF PEACE*. Ah ... if only all scholars could write like Akehurst!

Since then, I have made it a habit to pick up every new introductory text on the subject for two related reasons: First to see how much better we can simplify an inherently difficult subject; and second, to see how the complexities of international law can be conveyed to both a legal and non-legal audience. The second object is a matter of professional self-interest since I have to teach international law to non-law students and I have always found it a big challenge to prescribe an appropriate text or set of readings. In this respect, these two new books are to be welcomed.

Both books are written by political scientists with an interest in international law for a non-legal audience. However, this is the extent of any similarity between the two volumes. Shirley V Scott is an Associate Professor of International Relations at the School of Social Sciences and International Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of New South Wales. She wrote this book 'to introduce international law to those who have no prior training in law' and 'to provide the reader with a framework within which to understand international legal developments in their political context.' The first edition of the book appeared in 2004 and contained 12 chapters. This new version adds a 13th chapter on the use of force in international law.

Scott's *INTERNATIONAL LAW IN WORLD POLITICS: AN INTRODUCTION* starts off by situating international law in the world of politics or in world politics, and then describing and briefly discussing the key institutions in international law: the state, international organizations, and non-state actors in three successive chapters. Although Scott does not divide her book up into parts, the first four chapters – “International Law and World Politics Entwined”, “States in International Law”, “Intergovernmental Organizations in International Law” and “Nonstate Actors in International Law” – logically come together as one part. In Chapter 5, which is entitled ‘The Logical Structure of International Law’ deals with the theoretical and structural questions in international law. To do this, Scott presents us with her pyramidal structure of international law logic. At the base of the pyramid (Level 1) is the “underlying philosophy” or theory of the system. Level 2 contains the “rules about the operation of the legal system itself” (akin to Hart’s rules of recognition) while the substantive rules of international law are dealt with at Level 3. So far so good. Anyone reading the first five chapters of the book at one quick go will very quickly gain a pithy but clear understanding of the nature of international law and its operations.

The newly-included Chapter 6 “International law and the Use of Force” rudely interrupts the flow of Scott’s scheme of argument. No one can deny the importance of the topic given the increased use of armed force all over the world, but this chapter must surely have been slotted into the wrong part of the book. Chapter 7, which deals with “Legal Argument as Political Maneuvering” flows much more naturally from the discussion in Chapter 5. Here Scott discusses the various approaches to international law and the politics behind the rules and the gap between law in the “rule book” and law in action.

Chapters 8 and 9 deal with treaties – in particular multilateral treaties – with one chapter on “Reading a Multilateral Treaty” and another on “The Evolution of a Multilateral Treaty Regime”. These are well-written and coherent chapters giving the reader an excellent idea of the treaty-making process and the politics behind the creation of international law through multilateral treaties. Scott would have done well to have kept the original flow of chapter 1 through to 9 and bring in the chapter on the use of force right at the end of the book with comprises the other discrete and substantive areas of international law: “International Law and Arms Control” (Chapter 10); “International Human Rights Law” (Chapter 11);

“International Humanitarian Law (Chapter 12); and “International Law and the Environment” (Chapter 13). The chapter on the use of force should have been added to the end of this list of substantive topics.

Scott ends her book with a chapter on “The Future Role of International Law in World Politics” in which she offers five themes concerning the operation of the international legal system: (a) law as a system of interrelated ideas; (b) international law as a state-based system of law; (c) international law is entwined with world politics; (d) law is an autonomous system of interrelated rules, principles and concepts; and (e) international law’s rapid expansion in the post-1945 era. She concludes by posing several questions to reader and offering some observations: (a) Will the rapid growth of international law led to its fragmentation? (b) How useful is constitutional language in analyzing developments in international law; (c) Can international law save the world from catastrophic climate change? (d) What the rise of China and India will mean for international law; and (e) Whether international law can provide for peaceful change in the international order?

As an introductory text, I found Scott’s book a enjoyable read. She covers a remarkable amount of detail and issues in a very tight space although I was left wondering if the book might not have benefitted from better organization and greater coverage on important topics like state responsibility and customary international law. Scott’s use of tables and “box stories” is helpful providing a lot of useful information in easily-digestible bits, but the reading list (comprising mostly general works) at the back of the book is not terribly helpful. It would have been better for selected further readings to be embedded within each chapter so the reader can instantly relate them to the topic at hand. The index is poorly organized and does not offer the reader a quick way to navigate the book.

Although Conway Henderson’s *UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL LAW* is pitched as an introductory text, it is fairly hefty and detailed. Henderson is clear about his objectives: “to write the book that students need but will enjoy reading.” And although Henderson is an Emeritus Professor of Political Science, his textbook “aims to give proper coverage to the scope of international law with appropriate length, but also to better balance political and legal perspectives.” The book’s 13 chapters are divided into four distinct parts.

Part I, "Making the World More Lawful" has five chapters covering "The Rise of International Law"; "A World of Actors: A Question of Legal Standing"; "The Sources of International Law: Creating Law Without Government"; "The Efficacy of International Law" and "Jurisdiction: Domain Over Places and Persons." Part II is entitled "Making the World Safer" and its four chapters cover "Diplomacy in Pursuit of Peace"; "Arms Limitations for a Less Violent World"; "Law to Constrain Force"; and "Core International Crimes: Atrocities that Shock the Conscience of Humankind". There are only three chapters in Part III "Making the World Better" and they cover "Human Rights: Freedom and Protection for Humankind"; "The Global Environment in Jeopardy"; and "Rules for Sharing the World's Wealth". Part IV "Making the Future" has only one chapter dealing with "The Problems and Prospects of International Law".

I must say I was most intrigued by Henderson's approach and organization of topics. A number of his chapters read like typical chapters from international law books written by and for lawyers, but he organizes them in a functional and issue-driven fashion. Legal rules are important, but they are contextualized and the reader quickly gets a clear idea of what these rules can be used for.

Henderson's text is lucid and easy to read, and each chapter is excellently organised. He offers a chapter summary at the end of each chapter poses a number of discussion questions, and references and lists for further reading, including useful weblinks. Scattered throughout the text are text and diagram boxes that provide the reader with a quick look at key concepts, cases or institutions – for example "The Special Case of Kosovo" when discussing statehood and recognition; or "The Career of Hugo Grotius" when explaining the development of international law.

Conway Henderson has written an excellent introductory textbook on international law that will appeal both to non-lawyers trying understanding the subject, and to lawyers who want to understand how the international system works and the place of law within that system. The text is organised and written in exemplary fashion and the reader never tires of the little nuggets Henderson throws out in every chapter. Anyone reading this book will not only understand international law, but learn a lot more besides. An excellent volume all round.

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