

demics and practitioners to clarify the meaning, importance, and implications of culture in social sciences should be welcomed. Paul Meerts' *Culture and International Law*, based on the annual Conference of the Hague Academic Coalition held on 16 and 17 April 2007 in The Hague, is such a book.

It is a marvellous idea and a fascinating and innovative topic for lawyers as well as for international relations scholars. Many contributions are refreshing by their novelty, precision, and originality. Nevertheless the main flaw of the book appears as soon as one reads the preface by editor Paul Meerts. Very briefly it touches upon several important and interesting debates. Unfortunately, the volume fails to link these debates or identify a logical thread.

The first part of the book on 'culture and international law' contains two very abstract articles which are related neither to law nor international relations – one by Geert Hofstede about 'La culture et l'esprit des lois', and another one by A. Muller entitled 'The Triple Helix of Culture, International Law and the Development of International Law'. The article by Catherine Kessedjian ('Culture et droit, l'influence de la culture sur le droit international et ses développements') is more lucid and more interesting but falls short of being the much needed theoretical introduction to the rest of the book.

The second part, 'International Law: culture and context' is as vague as the very term 'context' it uses. It is the most varied part of this heterogeneous book. The first article, written by Vesselin Popovski about 'cultural diversity and freedom of expression', does not go beyond superficial considerations. It is by no means a useful academic article. Continuing, Eva Brems writes about diversity and human rights, while Annette Froehlich writes about the UNESCO convention on the diversity of cultural expressions. Froehlich remarkably contrasts the objectives of UNESCO and of the WTO, objectives which could soon clash, she warns. She cautions that the WTO will be likely to prevail since it is the only one to have a strong dispute settlement mechanism, something worrying for

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Although not often explicitly mentioned, culture is always at the centre of law and politics. Furthermore, it is certainly a study area which is steadily growing in international relations too. Thus any book which aims to help aca-

those who care about the cultural diversity. The article could have been better included in the third part, while Brems' very technical article could, if broadened, have constituted a good theoretical base for the two following contributions. These are articles about the attitude of Chinese or Muslim persons towards law (Guy Olivier Faure on 'La culture et l'Etat de Droit' and Maurits Berger on 'Islamic Views on International Law'). Both articles constitute an interesting effort to understand the particular perception of law in these two important parts of the world. The first deals with law in general, the second with international law. Neither of them refers to the two previous interesting articles, about cultural diversity and human rights, two fascinating topics which would have gained by being concretized through two examples. Moreover, why choose only these two regions and not the Indian, Anglo-Saxon, African, or Russian conceptions of law in general (Faure) or international law (Berger)? How are they related to the previous more theoretical reflections? The book certainly has the merit to record the results of an important conference. Nevertheless, it seems to be no more than such a record; a collection of papers from the panelists, cut and pasted, without an effort to connect the papers or to distill certain theses or arguments, or at least to offer some conclusions to the reader. Specialists will be disappointed and beginners will certainly not find enough tools to have a clear idea about culture and international law.

Culture is an ambiguous concept and needs to be addressed even more rigorously than more distinct or traditional topics. Admittedly UNESCO and official institutions avoid defining it in detail, but one could expect some definitions or at least an introduction to some of the debates on this question in an academic publication on this subject. Catherine Kesedjian in her essay on 'Culture et Droit' is the only one to hint at these debates. The editor's negligence is certainly problematic. The articles are not only heterogeneous in language, which after all is a good thing for a book dedicated to cultural diversity, but they also are uneven in length, focus, and quality. Some

of the theoretical texts are so general in their assumptions that they cannot serve as a basis for case studies. Their bibliographies are insufficient, in some cases non-existent, and they do not refer to important scholars and thinkers, while there are so many who deal with that issue. Worse, they are plagued with prejudices and clichés which we precisely try to avoid when we deal with culture. It is admissible and sometimes refreshing for the reader to have an essay without too many specialized references and footnotes. But in that case, the essay must be deep, quoting important thought currents, philosophers, writers, lawyers. Neither Hofstede nor Popovski, to cite but two essays, the most general ones, contains such references.

The last section is certainly the most useful, concrete, and innovative. It deals with the new protocol added in 1999 to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Historic Buildings and Works of Art in Times of War, its history, meaning, and application. Jiri Toman's article ('The Control System under the 1954 Hague Convention and its 1999 Second Protocol') is descriptive and didactic, as well as Jan Hladik's about the 'activities of the UNESCO related to the implementation of this second protocol'. Two case studies follow, one by Nout van Woudeenberg about the 'Dutch involvement for the Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention', and one by Joris Kilka, which describes field experiences to implement this protocol in a very concrete, detailed, and lively article, taking as an example the saving of Uruk in Iraq, utilizing Dutch military experts. This section offers four particularly insightful and original perspectives, from a scholar, an international organization, a government, and a military alliance. These four essays will certainly awake some vocations among the law or international relations student or even some thinking of a military career, taking into account not the sheer use of force but also the soft power that culture entails. It must be added that there is a fifth essay by Nelke Galema about 'Rules and Risks' (a title which does not explain much) about a card game simulation which fits neither for its quality and precision, nor for its topic into

that third part and reminds us again at the end of the book (there is no conclusion by Meerts) of the major flaws of this original and useful initiative.

Some of the essays are very useful in providing new insights into the question, mainly in the third part, about culture and conflict. Others will certainly deserve to be developed in greater length and precision in the future. However, some certainly do not go beyond what they were intended to be in the first place, an interesting, and possibly challenging, discussion during a conference but did not deserve to be printed and certainly cannot serve as a useful reference for readers some months later.

Individual Contributions

Geert Hofstede, La culture et l'esprit des loi;

Catherine Kessedjian, Culture et Droit – L'influence de la culture sur le droit international;

A.S. Muller, The Triple Helix of Culture, International Law, and the Development of International Law;

Vesselin Popovski, Cultural Diversity and Freedom of Expression,

Eva Brems, Accomodating Diversity in International Human Rights: Legal Techniques;

Annette Froehlich, L'enjeu de la culture dans son contexte économique international – A l'exemple de la Convention UNESCO sur la protection et la promotion de la diversité des expressions culturelles;

Guy Olivier Faure, La Chine et la culture du droit;

Maurits Berger, Islamic Views on International Law;

Jiří Toman, The Control System under the 1954 Hague Convention and its 1999 Second Protocol;

Jan Hladík, The Main Activities of the UNESCO Secretariat Related to the Implementation of the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954;

Nout van Woudenberg, Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention – Dutch Involvement;

Joris D. Kila, Utilizing Military Cultural Experts in Times of War and Peace: An introduction – Cultural Property Protection within the Military, Experiences in Theatre, Different Perceptions of Culture and Practical Problems;

Nelke Golema, Rules and Risks

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