

The Law of Treaties: An Introduction. By Robert Kolb. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016. Pp. x, 296. ISBN: 978-1-78536-014-5. US\$135.00.

When I first learned of treaties in an undergraduate international law course, they seemed quite exotic: drafted, adopted, and implemented through processes mostly separate from the legislative paths I had learned previously. Then there was customary international law, which was legally binding, but not written down, *per se*. And then peremptory norms and *jus cogens* rules by which states could not avoid being bound. It made my mind, which at that time just barely grasped federalism and separation of powers, spin. Since then, through law school and my experience doing research into international law sources, there have been some basic aspects of treaties that have not quite made sense.

Finally, over ten years since I first learned about treaties, Robert Kolb's *The Law of Treaties: An Introduction* has brought me understanding of the foundational concepts in the law of treaties. Kolb's work is a worthy addition to any academic library with a strong research focus on international law.

Kolb is a law professor at the University of Geneva, and understandably the book draws many examples of state practice from the Swiss Foreign Ministry. The book is organized by stages of a treaty's lifecycle, for instance, adoption, implementation, and termination. This has the curious result of Chapters 3 and 13 both being titled "Conclusion" (Chapter 3 on the conclusion of treaties, and Chapter 13 concluding the book).

Kolb consistently emphasizes the basic principles on international law regarding treaties—state consent, the duty of good faith negotiation and implementation, and stability of treaty obligations. Looking to these principles helps the reader understand how conflicts over the interpretation of a treaty provision, breaches of treaty obligations, and contradictory provisions of two treaties should be resolved.

The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties has been adopted by most states and is reflective of customary international law, so Kolb frequently refers to and expounds upon its provisions. Kolb seems to presume the reader has basic familiarity with this convention. The book contains many examples of state practice, judicial decisions, and arbitral awards interpreting treaties and resolving disagreements over treaty obligations. Perhaps to keep the book from becoming too long, Kolb tends to summarize each example in one to three sentences. Readers wanting any more description than such skeletal summaries will want to follow the citations to original decisions.

After reading the book, I feel much better informed about the basics of treaty adoption, interpretation, implementation, termination, and the interactions between treaties and customary norms. I advise students seeking binding customary law to look to established scholars, and for customs regarding treaties, Kolb's book is a solid source.

The only notable difficulty I had with this book is that Kolb frequently refers to principles of international law by their Latin formulations (for instance, *pact sunt servanda*, agreements must be kept), often without an English articulation. My Latin is minimal, and while I could infer the content of most principles through context, an English version, perhaps just on first appearance, would have been very helpful.

This book will be useful for researchers seeking a succinct and authoritative discussion of the international law of treaties and for teachers introducing treaties to students in courses on international law.

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