

BOOK REVIEW

Lung-Chu Chen, *An Introduction to Contemporary International Law*, 2nd ed. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 2001. xiv + 493pp.

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Professor Chen is a distinguished American international lawyer of Taiwanese origin, who sits on the Board of Editors of the American Journal of Comparative Law. This work is avowedly organised and structured in terms of the decision making process in the international community and is thus an attempt at a comprehensive introduction to the approach to international law taken by Myers McDougal and his colleagues at the Yale Law School. It is perhaps fortunate that this approach does not appear to be used in a rigorously systematic way. However, most of the headings of the different parts of the book, and many of the chapter headings, make of McDougallian terminology.

The book is pitched at a fairly elementary level and does not contain much systematic analysis. However, it has considerable merits, although postgraduate and undergraduate students and persons working in the foreign service who wish to obtain a grasp of international law as a principled normative structure (whatever its underlying weaknesses and however individual its characteristics may be), will have to supplement their study of this work by one adopting a more conventional and rule-based approach to the study of the international legal system. The work fails to give a coherent account of the sources of international law, which are not dealt with in one chapter. The accounts given of the laws of the sea and of the acquisition of title to territory are somewhat brief and not specially original. The work does not appear to contain sufficient material on the United Nations and other important international institutions, including those having an economic function. It does, however, make some reference to new powers enjoyed by the Security Council.

Despite the above criticisms, the work does appear to have considerable merits. It is written in a lucid style, and illustrates the process of decision in the international arena by making reference to a number of historical examples and recent events. These include the Iranian hostage seizure incident, the Nicaraguan complaint against the United States of America before the International Court of Justice, and the ongoing dispute concerning the legal status of Taiwan. It also deals with international criminal law, albeit rather sketchily, and contains a succinct account of international human rights instruments. Some readers will note

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the interesting expatiation of the McDougallian account of 'base values' (pp. 2-2-3). Others will overlook it, as no doubt many Soviet scholars used to overlook the obligatory account of the works of Marx and Lenin in Soviet textbooks of international law.

Unfortunately there seem to be certain minor errors in the index to the book. Thus, for example, nothing is said on p. 232 of the book about an international criminal court: this matter is actually dealt with on p. 233.

Students who already have some background in international law will no doubt benefit from this attempt at a systematic, policy oriented account of this subject, and they will also benefit from the copious references to relevant literature and the table of international treaties which it contains.