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Introduction

1. The modern law of war

The various international treaties governing armed conflicts date from different periods: the main Hague Conventions from 1907, the most recent Geneva Conventions and the Hague cultural property Convention from 1949 and 1954, the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions and the Convention on certain conventional weapons from 1977 and 1980. These various law of war treaties thus reflect the needs, concepts, circumstances and the language of their time.

As a consequence of the growing complexity of modern armed conflicts, the law of war is also becoming more and more complicated. The military find it difficult to distinguish what is of importance to them.

2. State responsibility

States which have accepted international treaties on the law of war are bound "to respect and to ensure respect for these treaties in all circumstances".

Since the law of war cannot establish detailed provisions for all eventualities, precisions are to be made. This can only be done and must be done at national level according to the particular situation and needs of each State.

Thus, within each State, the modern law of war must be considered with a strategic approach. The strategic situation (geographic, demographic, economic, political, military) of the State is determinant for the internal clarifications and precisions which are indispensable to achieve effective respect of the law of war.