

'ARMED ATTACK' AND ARTICLE 51 OF THE UN CHARTER

This book examines to what extent the right of self-defence, as laid down in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, permits States to launch military operations against other States. In particular, it focuses on the occurrence of an 'armed attack' – the crucial trigger for the activation of this right. In light of the developments since 9/11, the author analyses relevant physical and verbal customary practice, ranging from the 1974 Definition of Aggression to recent incidents such as the 2001 US intervention in Afghanistan and the 2006 Israeli intervention in Lebanon. The notion of 'armed attack' is examined from a threefold perspective. What acts can be regarded as an 'armed attack'? When can an 'armed attack' be considered to take place? And from whom must an 'armed attack' emanate? By way of conclusion, the different findings are brought together in a draft 'Definition of Armed Attack'.

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'ARMED ATTACK' AND ARTICLE 51 OF THE UN CHARTER: EVOLUTIONS IN CUSTOMARY LAW AND PRACTICE

TOM RUYS





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> "POWER ALONE CANNOT PROTECT US, NOR DOES IT ENTITLE US TO DO AS WE PLEASE."

Barack Obama, 44th President of the United States, Inaugural Speech, Washington DC, 20 January 2009



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TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ABBREVIATED CITATIONS

1. Abbreviations

ADF Allied Democratic Forces ASIL American Society of International Law AU African Union CNA Computer Network Attack DASR International Law Commission Draft Articles on State Responsibility (2001) Democratic Republic of the Congo DRC **ECtHR** European Court of Human Rights ESS European Security Strategy Euskadi Ta Askatasuna ETA European Union EU Forces armées rwandaises (ex-)FAR Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia **FARC** G8 Group of Eight IAEA International Atomic Energy Agency International Civil Aviation Organization **ICAO** International Criminal Court ICC International Court of Justice ICI International Criminal Tribunal for **ICTY** the former Yugoslavia Israeli Defence Forces IDF Institut de Droit International IDI Intergovernmental Authority on **IGAD** Development IHL International Humanitarian Law International Law Association ILA International Law Commission **ILC** International Organization IO

Irish Republican Army

Kurdistan Regional Government

International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

IRA

ITLOS

KRG



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LRA Lord's Resistance Army

LTTE Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

MONUC United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic

of the Congo

NAFTA North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEO Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation
NSS National Security Strategy of the United States

OAS Organization of American States
OAU Organization of African Unity

(now African Union)

ODA Official Development Assistance

OECS Organization of Eastern Caribbean States

OPT Occupied Palestinian Territories

OSCE Organization for Security and Cooperation

in Europe

P-5 Permanent Members of the United Nations

Security Council

PCA Permanent Court of Arbitration

PCIJ Permanent Court of International Justice

PKK Kurdistan Workers' Party

PLO Palestine Liberation Organization

ROE Rules of Engagement SOFA Status of Forces Agreement

SWAPO South West Africa People's Organization
TFG Transitional Federal Government (Somalia)

UAR United Arab Republic
UIC Union of Islamic Courts

UN United Nations

UNCIO United Nations Conference on International Organization (San Francisco Conference)

UNCLOS United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

UNEF United Nations Emergency Force
UNGA United Nations General Assembly

UNMOVIC United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspections

Commission

UNSC United Nations Security Council
UNSG United Nations Secretary-General

UNTSO United Nations Truce Supervision Organization VCLT Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969)

WMD Weapons of Mass Destruction WTO World Trade Organization



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ABBREVIATED CITATIONS

2. Journals and related materials

AASL Annals of Air and Space Law

ABNYC Rec Record of the Association of the Bar of the City

of New York

ADI Anuario de Derecho Internacional

AdV Archiv des Völkerrechts

AFDI Annuaire français de Droit International

AFP Agence France Press

AFRelI Annuaire Français de Relations Internationales

African YBIL African Yearbook of International Law

Air Force L Rev Air Force Law Review

AJIL American Journal of International Law

Alberta L Rev Alberta Law Review

American Un IL Rev American University International Law

Review

American Un JILP American University Journal of International

Law and Policy

American Un L Rev American University Law Review

Ann IDI Annuaire de L'Institut de Droit International
ARIEL Austrian Review of International and European

Law

Arizona JICL Arizona Journal of International and

Comparative Law

ASDI Annuaire Suisse de Droit International
ASIL Proc Proceedings of the American Society of

International Law

Australian YBIL Australian Yearbook of International Law
Baltic YBIL Baltic Yearbook of International Law
Berkeley JIL Berkeley Journal of International Law
BFSP British and Foreign State Papers

Boston College ICL Rev Boston College International and Comparative

Law Review

Brooklyn JIL Brooklyn Journal of International Law
BYBIL British Yearbook of International Law

California Western ILJ California Western International Law Journal

California Western L Rev California Western Law Review

Cal L Rev California Law Review
Cambridge LJ Cambridge Law Journal
Cambridge Student L Rev. Cambridge Student Law E

Cambridge Student L Rev Cambridge Student Law Review

Can YBIL Canadian Yearbook of International Law
Case Western JIL Case Western Journal of International Law

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Customary Law and Practice

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More information

XIV ABBREVIATIONS AND ABBREVIATED CITATIONS

Chinese JIL Chinese Journal of International Law
Columbia JTL Columbia Journal of Transnational Law

Col L Rev Columbia Law Review

Cornell ILJ Cornell International Law Journal

Cornell L Rev Cornell Law Review

Denver JILP Denver Journal of International Law

and Policy

Denver LJ Denver Law Journal
Dickinson L Rev Dickinson Law Review

Duke JCIL Duke Journal of Comparative and International

Law

EJIL European Journal of International Law
EJIRel European Journal of International Relations

EPIL Max Planck Encyclopaedia of Public

International Law

EuGRZ Europäische Grundrechte-Zeitschrift
Finnish YBIL Finnish Yearbook of International Law
Georgia JICL Georgia Journal of International and

Comparative Law

Georgetown LJ Georgetown Law Journal
German LJ German Law Journal

GYBIL German Yearbook of International Law Hastings ICL Rev Hastings International and Comparative Law

Review

HJL Public Policy Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy
HILJ Harvard International Law Journal

HL Rev Harvard Law Review

ICJ Reports

ICLQ International and Comparative Law

Quarterly

ICL Rev International Community Law Review

IHTInternational Herald TribuneILFInternational Law ForumILMInternational Legal MaterialsILRInternational Law Reports

ILSA JICL ILSA Journal of International and Comparative

Law

Indian JIL Indian Journal of International Law

Indiana ICL Rev Indiana International and Comparative Law

Review

IO International Organization

Iowa L Rev Iowa Law Review



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ITLP

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ABBREVIATED CITATIONS

ΧV

IRRC International Review of the Red Cross

Israeli L Rev Israeli Law Review

Israeli YBHR Israeli Yearbook of Human Rights Italian YBIL Italian Yearbook of International Law Journal of Armed Conflict Law **JACL** Journal of Air Law and Commerce **IALC** Japanese Annual IL Japanese Annual of International Law **ICSL** Journal of Conflict and Security Law IICI Journal of International Criminal Justice Journal of International Law and Economics J Int'l L & Economics

Journal of Transnational Law and Policy Keesing's Keesing's Contemporary Archives/Keesing's

Record of World Events

LNTS League of Nations Treaty series Leiden IIL Leiden Journal of International Law Melbourne IIL Melbourne Journal of International Law

Mercer Law Review Mercer L Rev

Michigan Journal of International Law Michigan JIL

Michigan L Rev Michigan Law Review Modern L Rev Modern Law Review

MPYBUNI. Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law

Naval L Rev Naval Law Review

Netherlands International Law Review **NILR** North Carolina Journal of International Law North Carolina JIL Comm Reg.

and Commercial Regulation

Northwestern UNL Rev Northwestern University Law Review Netherlands Yearbook of International Law NYBII. NYL School JICL New York Law School Journal of International

and Comparative Law

NY Times New York Times

NYUJILP New York University Journal of International

Law and Politics

OI Official Journal of the European Union

Ottawa L Rev Ottawa Law Review

Pace IL Rev Pace International Law Review Penn State IL Rev Penn State International Law Review RBDI Revue Belge de Droit International

RdCRecueil des Cours

Revue de Droit Militaire et de Droit de **RDMDG**

la Guerre

REDI Revista Española de Derecho Internacional

Regent Journal of International Law Regent JIL



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XVI ABBREVIATIONS AND ABBREVIATED CITATIONS

RGDIP Revue Générale de Droit International Public
RHDI Revue Hellénique de Droit International
RIAA Reports of International Arbitral Awards
RQDI Revue québécoise de Droit International
RSDI Revue Suisse de Droit International
San Diego ILJ San Diego International Law Journal

San Diego L Rev San Diego Law Review

Singapore YBIL Singapore Yearbook of International Law

South African LJ South African Law Journal

South African YBIL South African Yearbook of International Law
Stanford IIL Stanford Journal of International Law

Stanford L Rev Stanford Law Review

Stat United States Statutes at Large

Syracuse L Rev Syracuse Law Review

SZIER Schweizerisches Zeitschrift für internationales

und europäisches Recht

Temple ICLJ Temple International and Comparative Law

Journal

Texas JIL Texas Journal of International Law

Texas L Rev Texas Law Review

Tilburg Foreign L Rev Tilburg Foreign Law Review

UCLA JILFA UCLA Journal of International Law and Foreign

Affairs

Un Chicago L Rev University of Chicago Law Review

UNCIO United Nations Conference on International

Organization

Un Pittsburgh L Rev University of Pittsburgh Law Review

UNTS United Nations Treaty Series UNYB United Nations Yearbook

UST United States Treaties and Other International

Agreements

Valparaiso Un L Rev Valparaiso University Law Review

Vanderbilt L Rev Vanderbilt Law Review

Vanderbilt JTL Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law

Villanova L Rev Villanova Law Review

Virginia JIL Virginia Journal of International Law

Washington L Rev Washington Law Review
West Virginia L Rev West Virginia Law Review
Whittier L Rev Whittier Law Review

Yale HRDev LJ Yale Human Rights and Development Law

Journal

Yale LJ Yale Law Journal



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ABBREVIATED CITATIONS XVII

YBIHC Yearbook of International Human

Rights Law

YBILC Yearbook of the International Law Commission

YJIL Yale Journal of International Law

ZaöRV Zeitschrift für ausländisches öffentliches Recht

und Völkerrecht

ZöR Zeitschrift für öffentliches Recht



SELECTED CASE LAW, LEGISLATION AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

1. International Case Law (ordered chronologically)

ICI

- ICJ, Corfu Channel (United Kingdom v. Albania), Judgment of 9 April 1949, (1949) ICJ Rep 4–38
- ICJ, Case concerning United States diplomatic and consular staff in Tehran (United States of America v. Islamic Republic of Iran), Judgment of 24 May 1980, (1980) ICJ Rep 3–46
- ICJ, Case concerning military and paramilitary activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America) (Admissibility), Judgment of 26 November 1984 on the jurisdiction of the Court, (1984) ICJ Rep 392
- ICJ, Case concerning military and paramilitary activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America) (Merits), Judgment of 27 June 1986, (1986) ICJ Rep 14–150
- ICJ, Legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, Advisory opinion of 8 July 1996, (1996) ICJ Rep 226–67
- ICJ, Case concerning the aerial incident of 10 August 1999 (Pakistan v. India), Judgment of 21 June 2000, (2000) ICJ Rep 12–35
- ICJ, Case concerning the land and maritime boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria (Cameroon v. Nigeria; Equatorial Guinea intervening), Judgment of 10 October 2002, (2002) ICJ Rep 303–458
- ICJ, Case concerning oil platforms (Islamic Republic of Iran v. United States of America), Judgment of 6 November 2003, (2003) ICJ Rep 161–219
- ICJ, Legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004, (2004) ICJ Rep 163
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ICJ, Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro), Judgment of 26 February 2007, reprinted in (2007) 46 ILM 188–310

Arbitration (ordered chronologically)

I'm Alone case (Canada v. United States of America), (1935) 3 RIAA 1609 Red Crusader case (Commission of Enquiry, Denmark v. United Kingdom), (1962) 35 ICR 485

Ethiopia–Eritrea Claims Commission, Partial Award *Jus ad Bellum*, Ethiopia Claims 1–8, 19 December 2005, reprinted in (2006) 45 ILM 430 *Guyana* v. *Suriname*, Arbitral award of 17 September 2007, available at www.pca-cpa.org/upload/files/Guyana-Suriname%20Award.pdf

Other (ordered chronologically)

Judgment of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, (1946) 1 Trial of German Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, 208 (1947)

ICTY Appeals Chamber, *Prosecutor* v. *Dusko Tadić*, Decision on the defence motion for interlocutory appeal on jurisdiction, 2 October 1995, reprinted in (1996) 35 ILM 32

ICTY Appeals Chamber, *Prosecutor* v. *Dusko Tadić*, Case No. IT-94-1-A, Judgment of 15 July 1999

ICTY Trial Chamber, *Prosecutor* v. *Furundžija*, Judgment of 10 December 1998, reprinted in (1999) 38 ILM 349

ITLOS, The M/V 'Saiga' Case (No.2) (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines v. Guinea), Judgment of 1 July 1999, (1999) 38 ILM 1323-64

2. Selected practice of the UN bodies

Security Council (ordered chronologically)

SC Res. 38 (1948) of 17 January 1948 (India-Pakistan)

SC Res. 39 (1948) of 20 January 1948 (India-Pakistan)

SC Res. 47 (1948) of 21 April 1948 (India-Pakistan)

SC Res. 51 (1948) of 3 June 1948 (India–Pakistan) SC Res. 82 (1950) of 25 June 1950 (Korean War)

SC Res. 83 (1950) of 27 June 1950 (Korean War)



SELECTED CASE LAW, LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

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SC Res. 84 (1950) of 7 July 1950 (Korean War)
SC Res. 95 (1951) of 1 September 1951 (Israel–Egypt)
SC Res. 101 (1953) of 24 November 1953 (Middle East)
SC Res. 111 (1956) of 19 January 1956 (Lake Tiberias incident)
SC Res. 128 (1958) of 11 June 1958 (Lebanon)
SC Res. 129 (1958) of 7 August 1958 (Middle East)
SC Res. 143 (1960) of 13 July 1960 (Congo)
SC Res. 145 (1960) of 22 July 1960 (Congo)
SC Res. 178 (1963) of 24 April 1963 (Portugal)
SC Res. 188 (1964) of 9 April 1964 (Harib Fort; UK-Yemen)
SC Res. 204 (1965) of 19 May 1965 (Portugal)
SC Res. 233 (1967) of 6 June 1967 (Six Day War)
SC Res. 234 (1967) of 7 June 1967 (Six Day War)
SC Res. 235 (1967) of 9 June 1967 (Six Day War)
SC Res. 236 (1967) of 11 June 1967 (Six Day War)
SC Res. 239 (1967) of 10 July 1967 (Democratic Republic of the
Congo)
SC Res. 241 (1967) of 15 November 1967 (Democratic Republic of
the Congo)
SC Res. 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967 (Middle East)
SC Res. 248 (1968) of 23 March 1968 (Israel)
SC Res. 252 (1968) of 21 May 1968 (Middle East)
SC Res. 256 (1968) of 16 August 1968 (Israel)
SC Res. 262 (1968) of 31 December 1968 (Israel)
SC Res. 267 (1969) of 3 July 1969 (Middle East)
SC Res. 268 (1969) of 28 July 1969 (Portugal)
SC Res. 273 (1969) of 9 December 1969 (Portugal)
SC Res. 275 (1969) of 22 December 1969 (Portugal)
SC Res. 280 (1970) of 12 May 1970 (Israel)
SC Res. 316 (1972) of 26 June 1972 (Israel)
SC Res. 332 (1973) of 19 April 1973 (Israel)
SC Res. 360 (1974) of 16 August 1974 (Turkey-Cyprus)
SC Res. 393 (1976) of 30 July 1976 (South Africa-Zambia)
SC Res. 403 (1977) of 14 January 1977 (Botswana-Southern
Rhodesia)
SC Res. 405 (1977) of 14 April 1977 (Mercenary attacks against Benin)
SC Res. 418 (1977) of 4 November 1977 (South Africa-neighbouring
States)
SC Res. 419 (1977) of 24 November 1977 (Benin)
SC Res. 447 (1979) of 28 March 1979 (Angola-South Africa)
SC Res. 450 (1979) of 14 June 1979 (Israel)
SC Res. 454 (1979) of 2 November 1979 (Angola–South Africa)
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SC Res. 466 (1980) of 11 April 1980 (South Africa–Zambia)
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SC Res. 475 (1980) of 27 June 1980 (Angola–South Africa)
SC Res. 479 (1980) of 28 September 1980 (Iran–Iraq War)
SC Res. 487(1981) of 19 June 1981 (Osiraq raid)
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SC Res. 502 (1982) of 3 April 1982 (Falklands War)
SC Res. 507 (1982) of 28 May 1982 (Seychelles)
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SC Res. 509 (1982) of 6 June 1982 (Israel-Lebanon)
SC Res. 527 (1982) of 15 December 1982 (Lesotho-South Africa)
SC Res. 545 (1983) of 20 December 1983 (Angola–South Africa)
SC Res. 546 (1984) of 6 January 1984 (Angola-South Africa)
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SC Res. 568 (1985) of 21 June 1985 (South Africa-neighbouring States)
SC Res. 571 (1985) of 20 September 1985 (Angola-South Africa)
SC Res. 572 (1985) of 30 September 1985 (Botswana–South Africa)
SC Res. 573 (1985) of 4 October 1985 (Israel)
SC. Res. 574 (1985) of 7 October 1985 (Angola–South Africa)
SC Res. 577 (1985) of 6 December 1985 (Angola–South Africa)
SC Res. 580 (1985) of 30 December 1985 (Lesotho-South Africa)
SC Res. 581 (1986) of 13 February 1986 (South Africa)
SC Res. 598 (1987) of 20 July 1987 (Iran–Iraq War)
SC Res. 602 (1987) of 25 November 1987 (Angola–South Africa)
SC Res. 606 (1987) of 22 December 1987 (Angola–South Africa)
SC Res. 660 (1990) of 2 August 1990 (Iraq-Kuwait)
SC Res. 661 (1990) of 6 August 1990 (Iraq-Kuwait)
SC Res. 662 (1990) of 9 August 1990 (Iraq-Kuwait)
SC Res. 664 (1990) of 18 August 1990 (Iraq-Kuwait)
SC Res. 665 (1990) of 25 August 1990 (Iraq-Kuwait)
SC Res. 670 (1990) of 25 September 1990 (Iraq–Kuwait)
SC Res. 678 (1990) of 29 November 1990 (Iraq–Kuwait)
SC Res. 1177 (1998) of 26 June 1998 (Ethiopia–Eritrea)
SC Res. 1189 (1998) of 13 August 1998 (International terrorism)
SC Res. 1193 (1998) of 28 August 1998 (Afghanistan)
SC Res. 1214 (1998) of 8 December 1998 (Afghanistan)
SC Res. 1226 (1999) of 29 January 1999 (Ethiopia–Eritrea)
SC Res. 1234 (1999) of 9 April 1999 (DRC)
SC Res. 1267 (1999) of 15 October 1999 (Afghanistan)
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SC Res. 1304 (2000) of 16 June 2000 (DRC)

SC Res. 1333 (2000) of 19 December 2000 (Afghanistan)



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SC Res. 1373 (2001) of 28 September 2001 (9/11 attacks and inter-
national terrorism)
SC Res. 1438 (2002) of 14 October 2002 (terrorist attacks)
SC Res. 1440 (2002) of 24 October 2002 (terrorist attacks)
SC Res. 1441 (2002) of 8 November 2002 (Iraq)
SC Res. 1450 (2002) of 13 December 2002 (Terrorist attacks)
SC Res. 1465 (2003) of 13 February 2003 (Terrorist attacks)
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SC Res. 1530 (2004) of 11 March 2004 (Terrorist attacks)
SC Res. 1540 (2004) of 28 April 2004 (WMD proliferation)
SC Res. 1566 (2004) of 8 October 2004 (Terrorist attacks)
SC Res. 1559 (2004) of 2 September 2004 (Lebanon)
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