

J. CRAIG BAKER,
THE PROTECTION OF DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL,
(ALDERSHOT, ENGLAND: ASHGATE, 2006)

*By Anna Léa Scollan**

The Protection of Diplomatic Personnel is not the first book on diplomatic immunities by Professor Craig Baker, of the University of Sussex Law School, nor is it the first he has contributed on matters of international law, having published, namely, the second edition of the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of International Law*, with John P. Grant.¹

This new book by Baker offers a good overview for those interested by the specific question of the protection of diplomatic personnel and particularly on how it plays out on the international field.

The issues raised by the author are of particular interest in the present political circumstances. Although the diplomatic situation has always been fragile, the recent changes in international terrorism have had an impact on the components of the question regarding the security of diplomatic personnel. These changes have meant that the public has been more affected by terrorist attacks, but also that diplomatic immunity, although maybe a bit less than in the past century, is still at stake. Under the impression that this may be an underestimated and underdeveloped angle, we come to understand that diplomatic personnel are still very much at risk, and in spite of recent developments, the implementation of their protection remains strewn with obstacles. While this book gives us more of a western perspective, by analyzing discussions between states in the process of adopting measures, the author manages to present the reader with other concerns that are felt throughout the world.

Barker stays mainly in the international domain of diplomatic protection, giving us a comprehensive study of the evolution of measures and philosophical currents and analyzing in depth the more recent conventions, such as the *Vienna convention on Diplomatic Relations* of

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¹ (New York: Oceana, 2003).

1961² and the United Nations *Convention on the Punishment of Crimes Against Internationally Protected Persons including Diplomatic Agents* of 1973³. By examining the procedures leading to the adoption of these conventions, the problems brought to the table, the dissensions, and the realities and short-comings faced by the implementation of these documents, Barker helps the reader grasp the subject at hand. The author examines more practical aspects of the problem as well, going in depth of some of the most important attacks that have taken place on diplomatic personnel and infrastructures, such as the Tehran hostage case of 1979 and the East African U.S. embassy bombings of 1998. He uses these examples to demonstrate the forces and flaws of most measures taken on by the international community. The author allows himself to analyze more deeply the questions surrounding the United States' situation. Being so present across the world, and the most important actor in international relations, the specifics of the legal and infrastructural solutions the U.S. has taken on provide a very particular, if not very interesting, case study.

In exposing his argument, Barker guides the reader smoothly from one point to the next, making the historical and theoretical comprehension easy to grasp. Although the annexes only concern specific questions concerning the United States, they supplement the reading very well by giving the reader, for example, a model report to the United Nations on attacks upon diplomatic personnel. The very thorough bibliography and table of authorities are also very helpful tools for any reader wishing to go further in their study of the matter.

As Baker sums it up in his concluding chapter, the problem does not lie within “the question of protection, in particular those relating to inviolability and the special duty of protection”⁴, on which the international community seems to agree, but rather on the day-to-day, political crisis to political crisis, observance of diplomatic protection.

² 18 April 1961, 500 U.N.T.S. 95. See also, *Vienna Convention on Consular Relations*, 24 April 1963, 596 U.N.T.S. 261 and *Convention on Special Missions*, 8 December 1969, 1400 U.N.T.S. 231.

³ 14 December 1974, 1035 U.N.T.S. 167.

⁴ J. Craig Baker, *The Protection of Diplomatic Personnel* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006) at 147.