Limitations on the right to use force are a key element among the principles by which international law secures the sovereign equality and independence of States against external threats. ‘Sovereignty inside the State’ examines the principles of international law that spell out in positive terms the content of that equality and independence. Each State has the sovereign right to decide upon its social and economic structures, and to lay down laws that will influence the national character of the State and of life within it. The legal concept of jurisdiction determines the reach and priority of those laws. That freedom is not unlimited: it is constrained by obligations of the State under international law.

Judicial independence is such a given in democratic countries that it tends to be taken for granted, but judicial independence is even more vulnerable in the context of military justice because of the inherently insular nature of such systems. ‘The military judiciary’ considers the issues that may affect judicial independence. A key issue is terms of office, or lack of them. Another aspect that can influence the independence of military trial judges is the fundamental question of who appoints them. Should they be appointed by the armed forces or the defense ministry or should they be appointed by civilians outside the defense establishment? The appellate review system is also discussed.
Secularism has always been controversial. But today both the official secularism of constitutional republics and the secular ethic of liberal democracies are also being rocked by rapid social changes, resurgent religious identities and nationalisms, increasing migration, and many other factors. Secularism is an idea under siege by its opponents at the same time as conflicts within secularism pit its different aspects against each other in new tensions. ‘Hard questions and new conflicts’ considers secularism in practice, education as a feature of secularism, blasphemy and criticism of religions, religious expression in a secular state, religious diversity in the West, and resurgent political religion.

International Law: A Very Short Introduction
Vaughan Lowe

Recently, interest in international law has increased greatly, largely because of its central place in discussions such as the Iraq War, the World Trade Organization, the Kyoto Convention, the situations in Palestine and Darfur, and the plights of refugees and illegal immigrants around the world. International Law: A Very Short Introduction explains what international law is, its role in international society, and how it operates. It examines what international law can and cannot do and what it is and isn’t doing to make the world a better place. It uses terrorism, environmental change, poverty, and international violence to demonstrate international law theories and practice, and how the principles can be used for international cooperation.

3. Implementing international law
Vaughan Lowe

States tend to comply with international law, but what happens if a State breaks a rule of international law? ‘Implementing international law’ considers the different ways in which international law is implemented—diplomatic protest through acts of retorsion, counter-measures, litigation, arbitration, and mediation. If litigation is necessary, most cases in which international law is applied arise in municipal courts and tribunals. Only a small proportion of cases that are decided by the application of rules of international law are taken to the International Court. Despite the increasing engagement between international law and individuals, the particular focus of international law remains fixed upon States and State responsibility.
4. Freedom from external interference

Vaughan Lowe

‘Freedom from external interference’ focuses on one aspect of the assurance of the sovereign equality and independence of States and the freedom that it entails for each of them: the freedom from external interference and from forcible coercion by other States. In what circumstances may force be used? What weapons and methods of waging war may be used? Who is entitled to use force? The rules of international law relating to war are traditionally divided into the jus in bello, which governs matters such as prohibitions on certain weapons and ways of waging war against other nations, and the jus ad bellum, which limits the circumstances on the right to go to war.