The subtitle of „Modern Warfare“ tempts the inclined reader with the recent topic-fashion from International Relations and conflict research: „Armed Groups, Private Militaries, Humanitarian Organizations, and the Law“. The content, however, is focused on the last in the array: the law. The various contributions in this anthology are bound by the current debates concerning International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The different actors named in the subtitle are used to legitimate the differentiation of the so called „modern warfare“ from what was in place before. The book uses the assumption that the main actors of ’traditional‘ warfare were states, which then shaped the international legal frameworks accordingly. Today these frameworks struggle to be useful in an environment comprised by intra- rather than inter-state conflicts and dominated by non-state armed groups (NSAG).

The anthology, edited by Benjamin Perrin, is divided into four parts. Each part has one introductory chapter providing a scholarly overview of the respective topic. This is mostly followed by shorter chapters presenting a case study, a particular aspect or the corresponding pro and contra of a debate.

The first part explores ways of achieving adherence of non-state armed groups with IHL. The introductory chapter examines a core concept of international jurisdiction: ‘reciprocity’. Departing from the assumption that ‘modern’ warfare is essentially characterised by an asymmetry between state and non-state actors, some scholars argue reciprocity, and therefore a real commitment of conflicting parties to IHL, cannot be achieved. René Provost argues that reciprocity can be achieved without symmetry. He suggests a „legal pluralism“ in the sphere of IHL, binding different groups of actors by different legal frameworks. Sophie Rondeau argues for the inclusion of NSAG through „positive reciprocity“ (p. 62), granting them participati-
liver aid and assistance independently” (p. 8). Sylvain Beauchamp depicts the historical and conceptional background of the „humanitarian space debate“ and concludes that the controversy over the delivery of humanitarian assistance by military actors should not obstruct that the main importance is that this aid reaches its beneficiaries and not who delivers it. Michael Khambatta lays out the problems that arise for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), when „one or more parties [in a conflict] begin to use civilian means along with military forces to advance their political-military objectives.“ (p. 241). These „stability operations“ endanger the ICRC’s work, that is based on humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, by creating a confusion and the assumption that humanitarian assistance is associated with „political-military efforts“ (p. 241). Valerie Oosterveld looks at the situation of women in the „humanitarian space“. „Women often comprise a large percentage of any internally displaced or refugee population.“ (p. 247), yet their particular needs in such a situation are often overlooked by a largely male humanitarian assistance personnel and therefore creating an acute risk environment for them. This situation deteriorates if humanitarian staff is involved in (sexualised) abusive behaviour. This part is concluded by Emily Paddon and Taylor Owen highlighting the problems for humanitarian space caused by „Integrated Peacebuilding“ (p. 267), using post-2001 Afghanistan as a case study.

Part four addresses „endemic urban violence“. In the introductory chapter Carlos Iván Fuentes points to the limits of IHL, reasoning that even though „regular law enforcement […] has failed to stop the suffering of innocent victims“ (287), applying the legal framework of IHL to situations of urban violence would mean that society has passively accepted the insolvability of this issue.“ (p. 288). Robert Muggah and Oliver Jüterson-ke dismantle the current discourse on „fragility“ and „stabilization“ as „a renewed commitment by most wealthy countries to reassert the primacy and reach of the state“ (p. 311). Yet these debates do not contribute to relieving urban areas of widespread violence. In the next chapter Robert Muggah uses Haiti as an example to illustrate the material complexities which arise when stabilisation missions and humanitarian activity confront each other and engage. Eventually, Gurvinder Singh and Judi Fairholm, relate in chapter 17 the urban „public manifestations of violence“ against children to „the violence that occurs in private spaces“ (p. 352).

The book offers a good introduction to the current challenges of International Humanitarian Law and is therefore of value also for scholars from other disciplines with an interest in that topic. Besides the valuable insights form practitioners it also offers conceptual attempts to overcome the state non-state actor dichotomy. Still, the emphasis is on a discussion of legal implications.

Unfortunately only in chapter 15 the authors go beyond positivist reactionism, to acknowledge that „[t]he Western world’s current preoccupation with so-called ungoverned spaces can be traced back to the colonial epoch“ (p. 311). And further that „[t]he aspiration of creating progressive liberal democratic states in the Western model from poor and disorderly fragile states speaks to deeply rooted ideologies, assumptions, and interests within the aid and security communities“ (p. 313). Many of the chapters simply take the current discourses and materialities for granted without particular reflection on them. This may be caused by the intention of being relevant to policy makers and practitioners. Nevertheless, questioning the core assumptions guiding current activities should be one of the major qualities of academic enquiry.

The „discourse of newness“ regarding wartime practices is not fruitful to furthering the understanding of current conflict environments, but can be justified in the scope of this book. Many contributors make a strong point for the insufficiency of IHL to capture the current realities and advocate a revision of it. Departing from the assumption of a changed environment in warfare in this case is adequate.

The fourth part of the book focusing on urban violence, most likely stems from the close connection of many of the contributors to the Red Cross. It identified 2007 „endemic urban violence“ (p. 10) as one of the „great challenges facing the world today“ (p. 290). Endemic urban violence thus becomes an increa-
sing concern for humanitarian work. Still, joining this topic with the others under the title of „Modern Warfare“ seems implausible, especially when the contributors to this part reject the notion of urban violence as a warlike condition as well as the usefulness of IHL in this context.

This particularity of the book may be explained due to its organic development process. The anthology was initiated through a cooperation between the Liu Institute for Global Issues at the University of British Columbia and the Canadian Red Cross „to engage in the debate regarding the changing nature of armed conflict and to improve respect for the rule of law in complex security environments.“ (p. xi).

In short the book offers a good overview of the recent debates regarding IHL and its implications for non-state actors. It critically examines the usefulness of current legal frameworks and provides tangible recommendations for improvement. Therefore it will be particularly suitable for readers involved in this field.