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Hugo Slim. *Killing Civilians: Method, Madness, and Morality in War.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2008. viii + 319 pp. \$29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-231-70036-8.

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Promoting Pro-civilian Ideologies

The idea that there are certain groups of people who should be spared the harm of war has been a persistent one in human consciousness. However, political and military leaders have not respected it in practice. “Normally,” Hugo Slim points out bluntly in this book, “they have rejected it” (p. 2). This observation sets the scene for an overview of the reasons why civilians are killed in war. Backed by numerous historical cases, Slim rejects “the strange idea ... that civilians only really began to suffer massively in war during the last century ... when they were killed in large numbers by bombing” (p. 71). He puts the record straight with many examples (almost too many) from all continents and all eras of human history, showing how, in war, civilians have suffered killing, rape, forced movement, impoverishment, famine, disease, and distress—the “seven spheres of civilian suffering,” as he terms them (p. 39). The harm done to civilians in war is immense. “In the destruction of war,” he observes, “people can lose their identity, their sense of stability and certainty, routine and order. In many ways, they may also lose themselves. Socially and personally, they are no longer the people they were” (pp. 109-110). Why is such harm inflicted on civilians? Civilians may be killed and harmed in war as an end (extermination, subjugation, revenge, or collective punishment), as a means (military utility, asymmetric necessity, economic profit and plunder, or eradication of potential combatants), or as neither (including through recklessness, overkill policies, coincidence, accident, crime, and sacrifice). Coinci-

dence is how Slim describes collateral killing, in which the death of civilians is a foreseen side effect of a military operation. Accidents are not foreseen but are genuine mistakes and forgivable human errors (due perhaps to fatigue, extreme fear, sensory overload, loss of control of weaponry, intelligence errors, misheard coordinates, or mistaken markings). Sacrifice occurs when “previous acts of violence and the anger they inspire ... rise to such levels that they need a victim” (p. 177). Violence can be deflected onto whole groups to divert the danger of rising violence within the perpetrator society. “Tragically,” Slim observes, “sacrifice may in some mysterious sense still be the way we humans work.... We find solutions through the suffering of others or through our own self-suffering” (p. 178).

The claim that many civilians do not merit immunity in war cannot be dismissed out of hand. Civilian identity is made less than clear-cut by civilians’ economic ambiguity (civilians contribute to the war effort, including through provision of food and shelter to combatants, often their family members), their military ambiguity (civilians are used as messengers, information gatherers, weapons porters, and contractors to supply food and fuel to the military), social ambiguity (kinship and social relationships provide morale, support, and sympathy for combatants), and political ambiguity (civilians have a political and ideological stake in the conflict, and may actively and effectively encourage militancy).

To counter such anti-civilian policies and constructions, Slim advocates promoting pro-civilian ideologies. Pro-civilian campaigns based on outrage and shaming those responsible for killing civilians are too narrow to succeed alone. Self-interest and power, as well as reason and emotional appeal, must be harnessed to encourage pro-civilian ideals and behavior. Respect for life, mercy, fair play, and innocence are the bases for arguments against killing civilians, but civilian status is nonetheless often ambiguous and problematic in practice. Such civilian ambiguity must be seen as inevitable, mutual, understandable, and tolerable; and fighters must be taught to tolerate civilians' ambiguous identity and to give them the benefit of the doubt. Ever the realist, Slim asks only that fighters spit on enemy civilians rather than shoot them, and hate them rather than harm them. Self-interest can lead a warlord to refrain from killing and displacing civilians and thereby becoming master only of a depopulated, unproductive, and untaxable wasteland. Authority, organizational culture, peer pressure, law, and punishment must be harnessed, too. The International Criminal Court can contribute a genuine risk of punishment and imprisonment for anti-civilian policies and strategies. Civilians must be taught their obligations ("If it is wrong to attack those who cannot harm you, it is also wrong to attack people when you are pretending that you cannot harm them" [p. 267]), but can also be empowered to argue their own case and to organize to promote their rights. A rights-based view of civilian protection is beginning to mobilize a global civilian protection movement. It is not yet a genuine people's movement but it soon could be, and it could utilize such technologies as

photos and video clips spread by mobile phone and the Internet.

Slim's well-written and engaging work is an essay within the philosophy of limited war. His motivation and intentions are clearly stated at the start of the book. He promotes the principle of civilian immunity as one of the ideals of the philosophy of limited war but admits that it does not sit easily with that philosophy's acceptance of the notion of military necessity and its appreciation of unintended consequence and coincidence in war. He provides a comprehensive overview of the many issues, problems, pressures, and arguments surrounding the topic of civilians in war. Slim's contribution to the academic debate is not a legal or philosophic argument but a set of practical recommendations. These he makes as a humanitarian practitioner with a rich experience of the horrors visited on civilians by war (though, of the many historical examples and cases to which he refers, few are firsthand accounts; and some gory examples seem gratuitous and some of dubious authenticity [was the murder of Kitty Genovese really witnessed by thirty-eight apathetic New Yorkers, as claimed on page 222?]). He calls for a broad campaign to boost the rights of civilians in war. The lessening of civilian deaths in war will be achieved not through a neat line of legal or philosophic argument but through broad and multilevel campaigns of the types that Slim advocates. And, it is not only civilians who will benefit from greater respect in practice for the civilian ethic: "Many soldiers know deep down that loving their enemies in some small way during war may prove crucial to their ability to love themselves and be loved by others when the war is over" (p. 286).

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