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Fair Trials? The Manual for Military Commissions in Light of Common Article 3 and Other International Law

David Weissbrod†
Andrea W. Templeton††

Introduction

The United States Department of Defense initiated military commissions as authorized by the Military Commissions Act ("MCA") of 2006 to try "unlawful enemy combatants" detained in the course of the War on Terror. Enacted on October 17, 2006, the MCA's specific purpose is "to try alien unlawful enemy combatants engaged in hostilities against the United States for violations of the law of war and other offenses triable by military commission." Congress passed the MCA as a renewed attempt at convening military commissions in response to the Supreme Court's ruling in Hamdan v. Rumsfeld, where the Court held that the President's initial attempt at trying detainees before military...
commissions was not authorized either by congressional power or the President's war powers.5

The Secretary of Defense published the Manual for Military Commissions of January 18, 2007 ("the Manual"), in accordance with the MCA, to govern the commissions' proceedings. The Manual sets forth guidelines6 for trials of detained "unlawful enemy combatants"7 at Guantánamo Bay and other U.S. detention


7. Under Rule 103(a)(24), "Unlawful Enemy Combatant" means:

(A) a person who has engaged in hostilities or who has purposefully and materially supported hostilities against the United States or its co-belligerents who is not a lawful enemy combatant (including a person who is part of the Taliban, Al Qaeda, or associated forces); or
(B) a person who, before, on, or after the date of the enactment of the Military Commissions Act of 2006, has been determined to be an unlawful enemy combatant by a Combatant Status Review Tribunal or another competent tribunal established under the authority of the President or the Secretary of Defense.

Id. pt. II, R. 103(a)(24). In June 2007, a military commission dismissed charges against a detainee because the prosecution had failed to show that the detainee, despite being an enemy combatant, was an unlawful enemy combatant. United States v. Khadr, Order on Jurisdiction (U.S. C.M. Comm'n, June 4, 2007), available at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/jun2007/khadrJudgesDismissalOrder/Jun07%20204).pdf. On appeal, the United States Court of Military Commission Review remanded the case to the original commission indicating that the trial judge had to
sites. Pursuant to these guidelines, U.S. military prosecutors renewed their effort to charge detainees and bring them to trial. Prosecutors now face the task of bringing the detainees to justice amidst their already prolonged detention and international pressure to comply with human rights and international humanitarian law obligations.

Intense political debate continues over which rules of U.S. and international law should apply to those detained in the course of hostilities in the War on Terror and how the detainees should be handled. Trying and convicting these detainees requires protection of the right to a fair trial for both political and legal reasons. The United States considers itself a leader in promoting human rights—to cease protection of fair trial rights would damage the United States’ reputation. Furthermore, human rights treaties obligate the United States to guarantee the right to a fair trial. If the United States fails to provide fair trial protections to current detainees, U.S. soldiers captured in future conflicts may be unfairly treated.

In light of these considerations, sources of international law, such as the Geneva Conventions and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (“Civil and Political Covenant”), can provide necessary guidance for military commissions to protect fair trial rights. This Article explores how international human rights law can assist in navigating fair trial issues raised in the application and interpretation of the Manual for Military

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8. See, e.g., Glaberson, supra note 7, at A1.
9. See Theodor Meron, The Humanization of Humanitarian Law, 94 AM. J. INT'L L. 239, 266 (2000) (stating that human rights law should be a part of the interpretation and application of international humanitarian law, specifically in the case of “regularly constituted courts” under Common Article 3); see also The Military Commissions Act and the Continued Use of Guantánamo Bay as a Detention Facility: Hearing Before the House Committee on Armed Services, 110th Cong. (2007) (written testimony of Elisa Massimino, Washington Director, Human Rights First) (discussing the negative effects of the manner and prolonged nature of the Guantánamo Bay detentions).
10. See supra note 4 and accompanying text.
Commissions. Part I of the Article looks at the different legal statuses of the defendants before military commissions and the international law applicable to their proceedings. Part II analyzes the judicial guarantees necessary for a regularly constituted court under international law and Common Article 3. Part III explores whether military commissions uphold judicial guarantees “recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.” Finally, Part IV considers the role for international law in interpreting the Manual and sets forth the consequences of failing to provide internationally recognized fair trial guarantees.

This Article demonstrates that the Manual fails to assure a regularly constituted court that protects the requisite judicial guarantees. In order to provide these guarantees, the Manual should be interpreted in light of U.S. treaty obligations. Interpreting the Manual in such a way will help satisfy the United States’ international obligations, preserve consistency in domestic and international law, protect those responsible for the trials from prosecution in other countries for human rights violations, and possibly protect U.S. soldiers captured in future conflicts.

I. Who the Detainees Are and What Law Applies to Them

A. The Legal Statuses of the Defendants and Applicable Law

The War on Terror encompasses a number of international and non-international conflicts—the primary conflicts being in Afghanistan and Iraq. Beginning on October 7, 2001, the United States bombed and sent troops to Afghanistan in response to the September 11, 2001 attacks by Al Qaeda on the United States. The scope of the War on Terror increased dramatically with the inception of the war in Iraq on March 20, 2003, when an international coalition led by the United States invaded Iraq in an effort “to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein’s support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people.” In both Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States

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13. See MARGUILES, supra note 4, at 3.
14. See id.
captured and detained enemy combatants; the United States now faces the dilemma of what to do with these detainees.\(^6\)

In order to try detainees, it is necessary to understand their status in international law. The specific rights of detainees depend on who they are and which international law applies to them. The first year of the Afghan conflict—October 7, 2001 to June 9, 2002—qualifies as an international armed conflict.\(^7\) Therefore, Taliban prisoners taken during the international armed conflict qualify as prisoners of war ("POWs") covered under the Third Geneva Convention.\(^8\) Individuals detained in Afghanistan following the close of this conflict were taken in the context of a non-international armed conflict and are thus covered under Article 3, common to all four Geneva Conventions.\(^9\) Individuals taken during the initial stages of the war on Iraq are either covered under the Third Geneva Convention ("POW Convention") if they are POWs\(^10\) or under the Fourth Geneva Convention if they are civilians.\(^11\) A 2005 United Nations Security Council decision declared the Iraq conflict to be officially over;\(^12\) thus defendants taken in the context of the Iraq war after 2005 are covered under Common Article 3,\(^13\) which deals with internationalized civil wars and other conflicts not falling within Common Article 2 of the Geneva Conventions. Further, some detainees who were initially detained outside of these conflicts, those detained in Bosnia for example,\(^14\) are now under United States' control and are thus


\(^{18}\) See Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War art. 4, Aug. 12, 1949, 6 U.S.T. 3316, 3318–20, 75 U.N.T.S. 135, 138–40 [hereinafter POW Convention]. Note, however, that this definition assumes the prisoner is part of the Taliban or regular army. The POW Convention would not apply to Al Qaeda or non-combatants, though Article 5 of the POW Convention gives them the same type of protection. Id. at 140–42.


\(^{20}\) POW Convention, supra note 18, at 138–40.

\(^{21}\) Fourth Geneva Convention, supra note 19, at 288–90.


\(^{23}\) Common Article 3, supra note 19.

\(^{24}\) See, e.g., Boudellaa v. Bosnia & Herzegovina, Decision on Admissibility and
covered under the Civil and Political Covenant and customary international law.

**B. Fair Trial Rights Apply Universally**

The defendants' differing legal statuses are irrelevant for the purposes of fair trial standards in international humanitarian and human rights law. The same standards for the purposes of fair trial rights apply in all cases: all defendants should receive a fair trial by a competent court. The U.S. Supreme Court decided in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* that Common Article 3's guarantees govern the relevant fair trial provisions for military commissions, and the Court did not exclude the consideration of other bodies of international law. *Hamdan'*s interpretation of Common Article 3

Merits, Case No. CH/02/8679, Human Rights Chamber for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Oct. 11, 2002, ¶ 333. Extraordinary rendition is one source of detention outside of these conflicts. The New York Times editorial board has referred to extraordinary rendition as "the morally and legally unsupportable United States practice of transporting foreign nationals to be interrogated in other countries known to use torture and lacking basic legal protections." Editorial, *Supreme Disgrace*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 11, 2007, at A30.

25. Civil and Political Covenant, *supra* note 11, at arts. 10(3), 14(4). The United States has argued that since Guantánamo Bay is not located within U.S. territory, the Civil and Political Covenant does not apply to its treatment of detainees. *See* Leslie C. Green, *Is There a "New" Law of Intervention and Occupation?*, in *INTERNATIONAL LAW CHALLENGES: HOMELAND SECURITY AND COMBATING TERRORISM, supra* note 4, at 174–75. Article 2(1) of the Covenant indicates that a State party is obligated to respect and ensure the rights of the Covenant "to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction." Civil and Political Covenant, *supra* note 11, at art. 2(1) (emphasis added); *see* U.N. Human Rights Comm., *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 40 of the Covenant: United States of America*, ¶ 130, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/USA/3 (Nov. 28, 2005). The Human Rights Committee has, however, determined that a person need not be located within the territory of a State party in order for that State party to have obligations to that person; the person must merely be "within the power or effective control" of the State party. U.N. Human Rights Comm., *General Comment No. 31, Nature of the General Legal Obligation on States Parties to the Covenant*, ¶ 10, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13 (May 26, 2004). While the United States does not concur with this interpretation, the Human Rights Committee made it clear in reviewing the U.S. report in July 2006 that "effective control" would be the authoritative standard for evaluating U.S. conduct in Guantánamo and elsewhere. *See* U.N. Human Rights Comm., *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee, United States of America*, ¶ 10, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/USA/CO/3/Rev.1 (Dec. 18, 2006).

26. Customary international law includes the right to a "fair trial affording all essential judicial guarantees" and is examined in detail by the International Red Cross in *1 CUSTOMARY INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW* 352 (Jean-Marie Henckaerts & Louise Doswald-Beck eds., 2005).

27. *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, 126 S. Ct. 2749, 2795–96 (2006); *see also* Curtis A. Bradley, *The Military Commissions Act, Habeas Corpus, and the Geneva Conventions*, 101 AM. J. INT'L L. 322, 343 (2007) (advocating deference to Congress and the President because "it is far from clear that the military commissions as
takes its foundation from Article 75 of the first Additional Protocol,\textsuperscript{28} the Civil and Political Covenant,\textsuperscript{29} and customary international law. Furthermore, the Court of Military Commissions Review declared that "[t]he United States is a signatory nation to all four Geneva Conventions. The Geneva Conventions are generally viewed as self-executing treaties, . . . form a part of American law, and are binding in federal courts under the Supremacy Clause."\textsuperscript{30} These sources of international law contain in-depth and interrelated fair trial standards.

The following provisions illustrate the similarity of fair trial standards in humanitarian and international human rights law: Common Article 3, which governs armed conflicts not of an international character;\textsuperscript{31} the POW Convention, which governs international armed conflicts;\textsuperscript{32} Article 75 of the First Additional

\textsuperscript{28} Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol 1), 1125 U.N.T.S. 3, June 8, 1977 [hereinafter Additional Protocol]. The Protocol has not been ratified by the United States, but this has not prevented the Supreme Court from relying on it to interpret the meaning of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. See Hamdan, 126 S. Ct. at 2796.

\textsuperscript{29} Hamdan, 126 S. Ct. at 2797 n.66 (Stevens, J., concurring) (citing the Civil and Political Covenant as an additional source of legal protections mirroring those under Article 75).

\textsuperscript{30} United States v. Khadr, No. 07-001, at 4 n.4 (U.S. Ct. Mil. Comm'n Rev. Sept. 24, 2007), available at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Sep2007/KHADR%20Decision%20(24%20Sep%202007)(25%20pages).pdf. For the difficulties found when defendants attempt to invoke treaty provisions that are not self-executing, see the U.S. Supreme Court Decision in Medellin v. Texas. No. 06-984, 2008 WL 762533 (Mar. 25, 2008) (holding that an International Court of Justice's ("ICJ's") decision that the United States had violated the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations was not directly enforceable domestic federal law that preempted state limitations on filing of successive habeas petitions and that a Presidential memo requiring state courts to give effect to the ICJ's decisions did not independently require states to reconsider and review the defendant's claims without regard to state procedural default rules).

\textsuperscript{31} Common Article 3, supra note 19.

\textsuperscript{32} POW Convention, supra note 18.
Protocol, which also governs international armed conflicts;\textsuperscript{33} and Article 14 of the Civil and Political Covenant, which governs civil and political rights in general.\textsuperscript{34} Common Article 3 to the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions requires:

In the case of an armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties, each Party to the conflict shall be bound to apply, as a minimum, the following provisions [prohibiting]:

. . . (d) the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized people.\textsuperscript{35}

Fair trial provisions also derive from Article 75(4) of Additional Protocol I, which states: “No sentence may be passed and no penalty may be executed on a person found guilty of a penal offence related to the armed conflict except pursuant to a conviction pronounced by an impartial and regularly constituted court respecting the generally recognized principles of regular judicial procedure . . . .”\textsuperscript{36} Article 75(4) then lists judicial guarantees considered fundamental to a fair trial under customary international law.\textsuperscript{37} Article 14 of the Civil and Political Covenant similarly guarantees the right “to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law.”\textsuperscript{38} Hence, countries that wish to prosecute anyone for war crimes must provide a “regularly constituted court” that affords “all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable

\textsuperscript{33} Additional Protocol, \textit{supra} note 28, at art. 75.

\textsuperscript{34} Civil and Political Covenant, \textit{supra} note 11, at art. 14.

\textsuperscript{35} Common Article 3, \textit{supra} note 19. Common Article 3 was considered by the drafters as proclaiming “the guiding principle common to all four Geneva Conventions, and from it each of them derives the essential provision around which it is built.” \textsc{Oscar M. Uhler et al., Int'l Comm. of the Red Cross, Commentary: IV Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War} 14 (Jean S. Pictet ed., 1958); \textit{see also} Derek Jinks, \textit{Protective Parity and the Laws of War}, 79 \textsc{Notre Dame L. Rev.} 1493, 1508 (2004) (outlining the purpose of Common Article 3 and arguing that the principles embodied therein “would pierce the veil of sovereignty”).


\textsuperscript{37} \textit{See} Additional Protocol, \textit{supra} note 28, at art. 75(4)(a)–(j).

by civilized peoples."  

C. Guidance from Courts-Martial

The practices of courts-martial may provide additional guidance for interpreting the Manual. The POW Convention requires POWs to be tried by court-martial; therefore, court-martial under the Uniform Code of Military Justice ("UCMJ") generally provide a regularly constituted court, affording judicial guarantees as directed by Common Article 3. It would benefit military commissions to draw on the fundamental principles of courts-martial when interpreting the Manual's provisions.

II. What Is a Regularly Constituted Court?

Under the Civil and Political Covenant, a regularly constituted court must at a minimum be independent and impartial. The requirement of independence protects a defendant's right to judges that are not subject to political influence. Impartiality requires judges to be free of "personal..."
bias or prejudice” and viewed as impartial based on a country's domestic statutes. In interpreting the Civil and Political Covenant, the Human Rights Committee notes that jurisdiction of military courts over civilians may raise serious problems regarding “the equitable, impartial and independent administration of justice.”

In the past, the United States vocally criticized military tribunals for their tendency towards bias and appearance of being subject to executive pressure. Aspects of the current military commissions that are likewise questionable under international law include the commissions' ability to try individuals for acts that may not have been illegal when they were committed, the creation of the commissions after the crimes were committed, the creation of the commissions for specific individuals, and the use of military officers to preside over commissions. Allowing military officers to prosecute and judge their enemies in the War on Terror raises a question of judicial impartiality heightened by the fact that Congress created these commissions specifically for that purpose.


45. Id.

46. Id. ¶ 22. See generally William W. Burke-White, A Community of Courts: Toward a System of International Criminal Law Enforcement, 24 MICH. J. INT'L L. 1, 22–23 (2002) (“Military tribunals, depending on their structure and rules, may well violate core principles of international law, such as the right—enshrined in numerous international conventions—to a fair trial before an independent arbiter.” (citation omitted)).

47. See Burke-White, supra note 46, at 23 (“The need for transparency, procedural regularity, and conformity with international obligations advises against the use of military tribunals.”); see also Human Rights Watch, Fact Sheet: Past U.S. Criticism of Military Tribunals (Nov. 28, 2001), http://www.hrw.org/press/2001/11/tribunals1128.htm (last visited Mar. 29, 2008). In fact, the former chief prosecutor for the military commissions resigned in October 2007, and among his criticisms of the system were that the Pentagon was asserting too much power over the prosecutor's office. William Glaberson, War Crimes Prosecutor Quits in Pentagon Clash, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 6, 2007, at A13.

48. Military commissions may punish individuals for offenses, such as conspiracy and “providing material support for terrorism,” that do not appear to have been criminal acts under U.S. law prior to the adoption of the MCA and were not considered war crimes under international humanitarian law. Military Commissions Act (MCA) of 2006, Pub. L. 109-366, sec. 3, § 950v(b)(25)(A), 120 Stat. 2601, 2630 (2007) (to be codified at 10 U.S.C. § 950v(b)(25)(A)). Article 15 of the Civil and Political Covenant provides: “No one shall be held guilty of any criminal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a criminal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed.” Civil and Political Covenant, supra note 11, at art. 15.

49. See generally Koh, supra note 4, at 338–42 (describing deficiencies in the new military commissions).
In addition, the military tries to take away civilian status from certain detainees by declaring them "unlawful enemy combatants." Unfortunately for the military, that status does not exist under international humanitarian law: either the detainees are POWs entitled to a trial by court-martial or they are civilians entitled to a civilian court. For these reasons, military commissions do not qualify as "regularly constituted court[s]" required by Common Article 3 or as "competent, independent and impartial tribunal[s] established by law" required by the Civil and Political Covenant.

In Hamdan v. Rumsfeld, a majority of the Supreme Court defined a "regularly constituted court" for purposes of Common Article 3 as one "established and organized in accordance with the laws and procedures already in force in a country." A "regularly constituted court" should therefore be understood as a tribunal employing the rules and procedures applicable in trial by court-martial absent some "practical need" justifying deviation from court-martial practice. Because the principal "need" justifying the procedures used by military commissions under the MCA is apparently the "need" to secure convictions using tainted evidence, military commissions do not constitute regularly constituted courts.

Military commissions are also not regularly constituted courts "established in accordance with laws and procedures

50. For a definition of "unlawful enemy combatants," see supra note 7.
51. Id.
52. See infra Part III.E.1.
53. Common Article 3, supra note 19.
54. See U.N. Human Rights Comm., Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee: Colombia, ¶ 18, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/79/Add.76 (May 3, 1997) (expressing concern that the broadened concept of service-related acts enabling the prosecution of civilians in military courts may result in human rights violations because of doubts about the independence and impartiality of military tribunals); see also U.N. Econ. & Soc. Council [ECOSOC], Issue of the Administration of Justice through Military Tribunals, ¶ 15, U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/2003/4 (June 27, 2003) (prepared by Emmanuel Decaux) (noting that, by removing civilians from ordinary courts and making them subject to special jurisdiction, "the equality of arms between the parties to the proceedings cannot be observed, nor can the principle of the impartiality of the tribunal be established"); Gen. Comm. 32, supra note 38, ¶ 22 (noting that jurisdiction of military courts over civilians may raise serious problems as far as the "equitable, impartial and independent administration of justice is concerned").
56. Id.
already in force in a country," as required by Hamdan, because
they are ex post facto. Some alleged offenses took place before
the MCA was adopted in 2006. Unlike the Nuremberg tribunals,
which were presaged by the Hague Convention of 1907, military
commissions under the MCA prosecute newly defined offenses
under newly defined jurisdiction over a new category of
individuals in a foreign country. Traditionally, military
commissions have prosecuted war crimes without triggering ex
post facto concerns, because the offenses tried were already known
under international law. In contrast, despite its claim that it
merely codifies existing offenses, the MCA adds new crimes to
those previously known in international law. This ex post facto
prosecution violates the U.S. Constitution, the Civil and Political
Covenant, the Additional Protocol, and Common Article 3.

Military commissions may also violate Common Article 3's
regularly constituted court requirement because they are newly
established and the judges/commission members are selected after
the accused has been detained and the government has indicated
its intent to prosecute. When a judge and/or finder of fact has
been selected under such circumstances, justice cannot be done or
at least cannot appear to be done. In defining a regularly

58. Hamdan, 126 S. Ct. at 2797.
that the inclusion of new war crimes in the MCA could pose an ex post facto
problem for U.S. officials under other countries' domestic legal systems); Mark A.
Drumbl, The Expressive Value of Prosecuting and Punishing Terrorists: Hamdan,
the Geneva Conventions, and International Criminal Law, 75 GEO. WASH. L. REV.
1165, 1192–93 (2007) (finding that the MCA's definition of grave breaches of
Common Article 3 "expands upon the preexisting content of substantive
international law, triggering ex post facto concerns"); Charles H. Rose III,
Criminal Conspiracy and the Military Commissions Act: Two Minds That May
facto problem with the MCA's changing of the definition of conspiracy). But see
Hamdan, 126 S. Ct. at 2764–65 (holding that merely changing the identity of a
tribunal after the fact does not pose a retroactivity problem).
60. See, e.g., Theodor Meron, Revival of Customary International Law, 99 AM.
J. INT’L L. 817–19 (noting that the Nuremberg Tribunals resulted in the acceptance
of the Hague Convention as customary international law).
61. Rose, supra note 59, at 326–27.
62. See Beard, supra note 59, at 61; Drumbl, supra note 59, at 1192–93; Sean
Riordan, Military Commissions in America? Domestic Liberty Implications of the
63. U.S. CONST. art. I, § 9, cl. 3.
64. Civil and Political Covenant, supra note 11, at art. 15. The prohibition of ex
post facto prosecution is non-derogable, in recognition of the fundamental nature of
this requirement for a regularly constituted court and a fair trial. Id. at art. 4.
65. Additional Protocol, supra note 28, at art. 75(4)(c).
constituted court, the Civil and Political Covenant requires that “everyone shall be entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law.”

Unlike courts-martial, the procedures of the military commissions were principally established to try detainees who were incarcerated prior to the adoption of the MCA. Judges in courts-martial are detailed to a bench and hear cases as they arise, regardless of the issue. They establish their independence and impartiality as they handle diverse cases. Such independence and impartiality cannot be established in the context of the military commissions.

III. Judicial Guarantees Under the Military Commissions

A. Required Judicial Guarantees Under Common Article 3

A regularly constituted court under Common Article 3 must accord “judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples” that reflect an “evolving standard” of fair trial norms based on customary international human rights law. Internationally recognized fair trial rights include:


72. Id. at 409 (“Article 75 requires, in all circumstances, trials by impartial and regularly constituted courts that, at a minimum, afford the presumption of innocence; the right to counsel before and during trial; the right of defendants to be present at proceedings, call witnesses, and examine witnesses against them; the right to be promptly informed of the charges or reasons for detention; the right to a public judgment; and the right of defendants not to testify against themselves or to confess their guilt, among other rights.”); see also William W. Burke-White, Regionalization of International Criminal Law Enforcement: A Preliminary Exploration, 38 TEX. INT’L L.J. 729, 760 (2003) (finding core judicial rights embedded in the Civil and Political Covenant, the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights, the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, and the European Human Rights Convention).
1. the presumption of innocence,\textsuperscript{73}
2. the right to counsel of choice before and after trial,\textsuperscript{74}
3. the right of defendants not to testify against themselves or to confess their guilt,\textsuperscript{75}
4. the right to a speedy trial, including the right to be promptly informed of charges or reasons for detention,\textsuperscript{76}
5. the defendant’s right to confront evidence and witnesses,\textsuperscript{77} including the defendant’s right
   a. to be present at proceedings,\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{73} See Additional Protocol, supra note 28, at art. 75(4)(d); Gen. Comm. No. 32, supra note 38, ¶ 30.


\textsuperscript{77} Gen. Comm. 32, supra note 38, ¶¶ 36, 39; see also Additional Protocol, supra note 28, at art. 75(4)(g); DAVID WEISSBRODT, THE RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL (forthcoming 2008) (manuscript at 53–57, on file with author) (revising DAVID WEISSBRODT, THE RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL (2001) and outlining other rights regarding witnesses).

\textsuperscript{78} Gen. Comm. 32, supra note 38, ¶ 36.
b. to call witnesses,\(^79\) and
c. to examine witnesses against him/herself,\(^80\)

6. the right to a public forum,\(^81\) most importantly a public judgment,\(^82\) and

7. the right to an appeal,\(^83\) in the form of
   a. a challenge to the legality of detention,\(^84\) and
   b. the right to review by a higher court.\(^85\)

In order to meet Common Article 3's requirement of a regularly constituted court, any court or tribunal must, at a minimum, provide for the above rights and judicial guarantees,\(^86\) the analogous requirements of the Civil and Political Covenant, or those of Article 75 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions.

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates demonstrably intended

\(^{79}\) Id. ¶ 39.

\(^{80}\) Id.


\(^{82}\) Additional Protocol, supra note 28, at art. 75(4)(i).


\(^{84}\) Id.

\(^{85}\) Id.

\(^{86}\) See Fitzpatrick, supra note 4, at 345, 352 (noting that judicial guarantees under the Civil and Political Covenant are non-derogable and that Human Rights Committee General Comment 29 indicates that "the military commissions under consideration here must comply with international humanitarian law and may not deny fair trial rights where not strictly required"); Melysa H. Spetber, John Walker Lindh and Yaser Esam Hamdi: Closing the Loophole in International Humanitarian Law for American Nationals Captured Abroad While Fighting with Enemy Forces, 40 AM. CRIM. L. REV. 159, 174–75 (2003) (commenting that the requirements established by Common Article 3 are minimum standards that must be met and should be viewed as inviting a greater level of protection); Luisa Vierucci, Prisoners of War or Protected Persons Qua Unlawful Combatants? The Judicial Safeguards to Which Guantanamo Bay Detainees Are Entitled, 1 J. INT’L CRIM. JUST. 284, 307, 314 (2003) (noting that Common Article 3 are minimum standards that must be met and should be viewed as inviting a greater level of protection); cf. Derek Jinks, The Applicability of the Geneva Conventions to the “Global War on Terrorism,” 46 VA. J. INT’L L. 165, 185 (2005) (“[The dual purposes of Common Article 3 are] the minimization of human suffering and the respect for state sovereignty.”). But see Curtis A. Bradley, Military Commissions and Terrorist Enemy Combatants, 2 STAN. J. CIV. RTS. & CIV. LIBERTIES 253, 256 (2006) (arguing that indispensable guarantees are presumably less than court-martial procedures and that the then current military commissions guarantee extensive rights).
His choice of words tracks the language of Common Article 3 in several places, including in the Executive Summary, which states: “[This Manual] is intended to ensure that alien unlawful enemy combatants who are suspected of war crimes and certain other offenses are prosecuted before regularly constituted courts affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized people.” The Manual also notes in the Preamble that the rules “extend to the accused all the ‘necessary judicial guarantees’ as required by [C]ommon Article 3.” Simply tracking the language, however, is not sufficient to make the commissions compliant. Compliance is achieved by constituting the commissions in a manner that follows the internationally accepted norms concerning regularly constituted courts.

While the Manual does protect certain rights, it contains several provisions which may not afford the procedural safeguards required for compliance with Common Article 3. Problematic provisions relate to the right to notice, the right to confront witnesses, the right to be present at trial, the right to a public trial, the right to review by a higher court, and the exclusion of evidence obtained through torture or ill-treatment.

**B. Protected Rights**

The Manual guarantees several rights necessary for the military commissions to conform to internationally accepted norms. Rule 920(e)(5)(A) of the Rules for Military Commissions (“R.M.C.”) establishes the proper standard for findings. “The accused must be presumed to be innocent until the accused’s guilt is established by legal and competent evidence beyond reasonable doubt . . . .” No definition of competent evidence is given in the Manual. This particularly raises concerns if the evidence is

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87. MMC, supra note 6 (Executive Summary).
88. Id.; see Common Article 3, supra note 19.
89. MMC, supra note 6, pt. I, § 2.
90. Common Article 3, supra note 19.
91. For example, the Manual protects the right to counsel. See infra Part III.B.
92. See infra Part III.C.
93. See infra Part III.D.1.
94. See infra Part III.D.2.
95. See infra Part III.D.3.
96. See infra Part III.E
97. See infra Part III.F.
98. See MMC, supra note 6, pt. II, R. 920(e)(5)(A).
R.M.C. 910(c) provides substantial protections regarding counsel for the defendant, including the right to be represented by counsel, though that right may be hindered by restrictions invoked under the national security privilege. Additionally, the new R.M.C. partially guarantee the defendant's right not to testify against him or herself through R.M.C. 910(a)(1), which allows the defendant to plead not guilty.

C. The Right to Notice

R.M.C. 308 addresses a defendant's right to notice and states: "Upon the swearing of the charges and specifications, the accused shall be informed of the charges against him as soon as practicable." The language "as soon as practicable" leaves leeway for service of charges, especially considering that many of the current detainees in U.S. custody have spent months, if not years, detained without charges. Once a defendant is charged, R.M.C. 707 provides adequate notice for pre-trial matters, ensuring arraignment for the defendant within thirty days of service of charges. Thirty days for arraignment does not take into account the days of detainment before charges are brought; thus, the time between initial detention and trial may constitute undue delay. The Human Rights Committee's interpretation of "undue delay" varies in cases before it, but generally detention without charges for over three years is found to violate international norms. Further, administrative difficulty has not

99. See infra Part III.F.
101. See infra Part III.D.
102. See MMC, supra note 6, pt. II, R. 910(a)(1).
103. Id. pt. II, R. 308.
104. See, e.g., Andrew Gray, Guantanamo Trials on Track for Summer: Pentagon, REUTERS, Feb. 28, 2007, http:www.reuters.com/articlePrint?articleId=USN281694962007070228; Stephen Labaton, Court Endorses Curbs on Appeal by U.S. Detainees, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 21, 2007, at A1. Under U.S. law, prolonged detention without trial or delayed trial is unconstitutional under the Sixth Amendment. U.S. CONST. amend. VI. The appropriate remedy for violations of the right to a speedy trial is the dismissal of charges. See Strunk v. United States, 412 U.S. 434 (1973); Barker v. Wingo, 407 U.S. 514 (1972). When a defendant is detained without notice of charges, the federal courts and some states follow the exclusionary rule of McNabb v. United States, 318 U.S. 332 (1943), and exclude any statement that has a reasonable relationship to the unnecessary delay in arraignment. The rule is not a constitutional one, and not all states adopt it. State v. Wiberg, 296 N.W.2d 388, 393 (Minn. 1980). Rather the courts will consider it as a factor in whether the evidence will be suppressed. Id.
105. See MMC, supra note 6, pt. II, R. 707.
106. See Morrison v. Jamaica, U.N. Human Rights Committee, Communication
been accepted as an excuse for failure to give prompt notice. The Appeals Chamber for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda held that holding a suspect longer than twenty days without notice of the charges was a violation of the suspect's rights, as was holding a suspect longer than ninety days without indictment.


108. Barayagwiza v. Prosecutor, Case No. ICTR-97-19, Decision, ¶ 109 (Nov. 3, 1999). Barayagwiza was held twenty-nine days without being notified of the charges—nine days longer than allowed by rule 40bis of the tribunal. Id. ¶ 43. He was also held for 233 days without being indicted—143 days longer than allowed by rule 62 of the tribunal. Id. ¶ 45. Additionally, the International Criminal Tribunal failed to provide the necessary review of his detention by not providing a habeas corpus hearing. Id. ¶ 90. The court initially held that the appropriate remedy for these violations of Barayagwiza's rights, especially the latter two, was his immediate release and the dismissal of charges with prejudice. Id. ¶ 106. Upon review, the prosecutor submitted new evidence which the court found "diminish[ed] the role played by the failings of the Prosecutor as well as the intensity of the violation of the rights of the Appellant." Prosecutor v. Barayagwiza, Case No. ICTR-97-19-AR72, Decision on Prosecutor's Request for Review or Reconsideration, ¶ 71 (Mar. 31, 2000). The remedy was reduced to commuting the sentence from life to thirty-five years imprisonment. Prosecutor v. Nahimana, Case No. ICTR-99-52-T, Judgment and Sentence, ¶ 1107 (Dec. 3, 2003) (sentencing Barayagwiza at the same time as other defendants).

109. See generally Joanna Dingwall, Unlawful Confinement as a War Crime: The Jurisprudence of the Yugoslav Tribunal and the Common Core of International
allows for detention during periods of international armed conflict,110 though the terms and limits of detention have been questioned in several international courts.111 The new R.M.C. 909(b) presumes that the defendant has the capacity to stand trial,112 establishing that a lack of mental capacity triggers a set of rules suspending trial and sentencing.113

D. National Security Privilege: Jeopardizing the Right to Confront, the Right to be Present, and the Right to a Public Trial

Two of the most troubling aspects of the new military commissions are R.M.C. 701(f) and its companion the Military Commissions Rules of Evidence ("M.C.R.E.") 505, which both concern national security and the treatment of classified information.114 Information becomes classified for the purposes of M.C.R.E. 505(b)(3) through an in camera proceeding, which may exclude the defendant at the trial counsel's request, or may be made ex parte, in writing, "outside the presence of the accused and defense counsel."115 National security may also be invoked under R.M.C. 806(b)(2)(A), which authorizes closure of a session for the

Humanitarian Law Applicable to Contemporary Armed Conflicts, 9 J. CONFLICT & SECURITY L. 133, 177 (2004) ("[T]he recognition that isolation may amount to cruel treatment [is] evidence that inclusion of unlawful confinement as a war crime in internal armed conflict has a basis in customary international law.").

110. See POW Convention, supra note 18, at arts. 17–20.


112. See MMC, supra note 6, pt. II, R. 909(b).

113. See id. pt. II, R. 706 (inquiring into the mental capacity or mental responsibility of the accused); id. pt. II, R. 906 (relating to mental capacity or responsibility of the accused); id. pt. II, R. 916 (providing for lack of mental responsibility as a defense); id. pt. II, R. 1102A (providing for post-trial hearing for verdict of not guilty as a result of mental incapacity).

114. Id. pt. II, R. 701(f) ("Classified information shall be protected and is privileged from disclosure if disclosure would be detrimental to the national security. This rule applies to all stages of proceedings in military commissions, including the discovery phase."); id. pt. III, R. 505.

115. MMC, supra note 6, pt. III, R. 505(b)(3). While the former chief prosecutor for the military commissions Morris Davis defended the Manual rules by arguing that "the [Military Commissions Act] gives the accused the right to be present for all open sessions of the trial," he neglected to address the denial of an accused's rights at the point where trial procedures are closed. See Morris D. Davis, In Defense of Guantanamo Bay, 117 YALE L.J. POCKET PART 21, 30 (2007), http://yalelawjournal.org/images/pdfs/579.pdf (last visited June 2, 2008).
purpose of "protecting information the disclosure of which could reasonably be expected to damage national security . . ."\(^{116}\) While generally a state possesses the right to exclude the press and public from portions of hearings under exceptional circumstances,\(^{117}\) these provisions, if taken to the extreme, threaten a defendant's rights to confront the witnesses and evidence against him, to be present at trial, and to have a public trial.

1. Right to Confront

The invocation of the national security privilege threatens a defendant's right to confront the evidence and witnesses against him.\(^{118}\) While R.M.C. 701(f)(5) requires the prosecution to provide the defense with an "adequate substitute"\(^{119}\) for classified information, there is no discussion of what an adequate substitute

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117. See Civil and Political Covenant, supra note 11, at art. 14 (allowing for the exclusion of the press and public for reasons of "public order (ordre public) or national security in a democratic society"); see also United States ex rel. Knauff v. Shaughnessy, 338 U.S. 537, 551 (1950) (Jackson, J., dissenting) ("In the name of security the police state justifies its arbitrary oppressions on evidence that is secret . . . ."). For more on accommodating national security via in camera inspection and the exclusion of the general public, see POW Convention, supra note 18, at art. 105 (stating that in camera review should only be used in exceptional cases in "the interest of State security"), Fourth Geneva Convention, supra note 19, at art. 74 ("[A]s an exceptional measure, to be held in camera."), Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court art. 68(2), July 17, 1998, 2187 U.N.T.S. 90 ("[T]o protect victims and witnesses or an accused, [the court may] conduct any part of the proceedings in camera."), and id. at art. 72 (regarding protection of national security information).


119. See MMC, supra note 6, pt. II, R. 701(f).
would entail. Presumably, it would be at the judge's discretion.

If the military judge decides not to grant classified status to the information at issue, R.M.C. 908 provides a complete and expedited procedure for appeal by the United States. A similar provision is not available to the defendant; this raises the question of whether these military commission procedures guarantee "equality of arms," the principle that prohibits any distinctions between parties in procedural rights unless those distinctions are "based on law and [can be justified] on objective and reasonable grounds."
The use of the national security privilege to infringe on a defendant's right to cross-examine witnesses also diverges from the adequate provisions guaranteed by courts-martial. In courts-martial, the accused has a broad right to cross-examine witnesses against him—a right that is derived from principles of the Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The right to cross-examine may be narrowed by concerns such as "harassment, prejudice, confusion of issues, witness safety, repetitiveness, or marginal relevancy." Courts-martial, despite dealing with cases involving classified information and danger to witnesses, have no provision for screening witnesses from the accused and defense counsel. Instead, the accused and defense counsel are aware of the identity of the witness and are able to cross-examine unhindered.

In short, the R.M.C. include a loophole that could prevent the defendant from knowing who and where evidence came from and by what means it was procured; this is problematic both under international law and in light of the court-martial procedures that could inform the process. Such information could well form the crux of the government's case and could be of questionable reliability, particularly if there is reason to believe that the evidence was procured by torture or ill-treatment.

The absence of such critical information would violate international fair trial norms. For example, the European Court
of Human Rights has interpreted the fair trial protections of the 
European Convention of Human Rights to provide that an accused 
should be given "an adequate and proper opportunity to challenge 
and question a witness against him, either at the time the witness 
was making his statement or at some later stage of the 
proceedings."¹³³

2. Right to be Present

The defendant's right to be present at trial is another right at 
risk.¹³⁴ Under court-martial procedures, "a military accused has 
both a constitutional and a statutory right to be present during the 
conduct of his trial."¹³⁵ The right to be present at one's trial is 
derived from the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and 
from UCMJ article 39, which directs that "[p]roceedings . . . shall 
be conducted in the presence of the accused."¹³⁶ Although the right 
is not unlimited, the Supreme Court in Hamdan described the 
right to be present as "one of the most fundamental protections 
afforded not just by the Manual for Courts-Martial but also by the 
UCMJ itself . . . ."¹³⁷ Military Rule of Evidence ("M.R.E.") 505(i) 
provides an example of the balance between the strong right to be 
present and the need for security in courts-martial. Under this

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¹³⁴ For more Human Rights Committee jurisprudence on the right to be 
present, see Wolf v. Panama, U.N., Human Rights Committee, Communication No. 
rights where the accused was not allowed to attend his trial or to give instructions 
to his counsel and where the absence of a duly motivated indictment violates the 
principle of the equality of arms) and Conteris v. Uruguay, U.N. Human Rights 
violation where the accused was denied any opportunity to appear in person before 
a judge and was subsequently convicted by a military tribunal in absentia). But see 
the accused was adequately represented by attorneys, though not physically 
present himself).
¹³⁶ UMCJ, 10 U.S.C. art. 39(a)(4) (2000). But see Boeving, supra note 120, at 
571–77 (arguing for a flexible approach to the right to be present and advocating 
for the use of military commissions as a possible forum for defendants who ought to 
be denied access to portions of their trial).
rule, trial counsel can move ex parte for an in camera review of classified information, but if such a hearing is granted, the defense has a right to be present and make arguments. Similarly, M.R.E. 505(g)(3) allows for an ex parte exclusion of classified evidence, but only if it is duplicative of statements already made in open court.

Generally, R.M.C. 804 guarantees the defendant’s right to be present at all pertinent stages of trial with exceptions for voluntary absence, express waiver, disruption of the court, and national security. R.M.C. 702 and 703 assure the defendant’s right to call and cross-examine witnesses, and R.M.C. 906(b)(1) allows the judge to grant a continuance should an essential witness be unavailable. These provisions could ensure a fair right to confront, but they are jeopardized by the national security privilege, through the same exclusions explained earlier.

3. Right to a Public Trial

A third fair trial right at risk from the national security privilege is the right to a public forum. In its first General Comment on Article 14, the Human Rights Committee stressed the significance of publicity of hearings as “an important safeguard in the interest of the individual and of society at large.” While acknowledging exceptional circumstances under

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138. MIL. R. EVID. 505(i); see also 10 U.S.C. art. 39(a), § 839.
139. MIL. R. EVID. 505(g)(3).
140. See MMC, supra note 6, pt. II, R. 804. Military judges are prohibited from consulting with the Commission except in the presence of the accused. Id. pt. II, R. 502(c)(2); see also id. pt. II, R. 701(f) (classifying information if disclosure would be detrimental to the national security).
141. Id. pt. II, R. 702, R. 703, R. 906(b)(1). R.M.C. 914A(a) also allows for the use of remote live testimony for witnesses “whose presence at trial cannot be procured by legal process.” Id. pt. II, R. 914A(a).
142. See supra Part III.D.1. See generally Jinks & Sloss, supra note 70, at 120 nn.117, 118 (analyzing provisions of the previous Department of Defense military commissions that raise similar issues of confrontation as the current military commissions).
which courts have the power to exclude the public, the Committee noted that hearings must be open to the public in general—journalists included—and must not be limited to a particular category of persons. In rare cases when the public is excluded, the Committee noted that the judgment must, except in strictly defined circumstances, be made public. While R.M.C. 806 provides for a “public trial” and R.M.C. 808 and 1103 concern the creation of a record of trial, both R.M.C. 806 and 1103 contain exceptions that limit a defendant’s public trial right. R.M.C. 806(a) notes that access to trials may be constrained by national security concerns, and 806(b)(2) provides for closure of the trial to the public in the interests of national security or to ensure the physical safety of individuals. R.M.C. 1103(c) provides for security classification of each page “on which classified material appears.” R.M.C. 1104(d)(B) requires the convening authority to delete any classified or government information from the defendant’s copy of the record of trial, and R.M.C. 1104(d)(C) requires the attachment of a certificate listing removed information. Hence, when combined with the blanket national security privileges of R.M.C. 701(f) and R.M.C.E. 505, the commission rules could serve to deprive the defendant of a public record that accurately represents the trial and that holds the government accountable for its case. The lack of an adequate record deprives the defendant of the right to appeal since a defendant cannot appeal from an inadequate record.


147. MMC, supra note 6, pt. II, R. 806, R. 808, R. 1103.

148. Id. pt. II, R. 806(a).

149. Id. pt. II, R. 806(b)(2).

150. Id. pt. II, R. 1103(c).

151. Id. pt. II, R. 1104(d)(B).

152. Id. pt. II, R. 1104(d)(C).

153. See supra Part III.D.1 (discussing the treatment of classified information under R.M.C. 701(f) and R.M.C.E. 505).

154. In examining cases under Article 14(1), the Human Rights Committee has held that a public opinion must be in writing. See, e.g., Touron v. Uruguay, U.N. Human Rights Committee, Communication No. R.7/32, ¶¶ 2.1, 12, U.N. Doc. A/36/40 (1981) (finding Article 14 violations in the case of a defendant who had not been allowed to attend the hearing of his case, whose trial was not held in public, and who had never received the texts of any court decisions).

155. See id. (finding that, in the absence of a judgment in writing, the Human
E. Right to Review

Another important fair trial guarantee necessary for a regularly constituted court is the right to review by a higher court. While the current military commissions contain improved appeal procedures as compared with the original 2002 commissions, they lack adequate protections for the right to appeal or explicit habeas corpus procedures.\(^{156}\)

1. Habeas Corpus

The Manual does not directly address habeas corpus considerations; they appear only once—in the discussion section following R.M.C. 202, which deals with “[p]ersons subject to the jurisdiction of the military commissions.”\(^{157}\) According to the Manual, military commissions only have personal jurisdiction over “alien unlawful enemy combatants.”\(^{158}\) The Combatant Status Review Tribunal (“C.S.R.T.”) process, which “provides detainees with the opportunity to challenge their status,” determines an individual’s status as an alien unlawful enemy combatant.\(^{159}\) The MCA deems that status dispositive for purposes of personal jurisdiction.\(^{160}\) Accordingly, in theory, a defendant will already

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156. See Fitzpatrick, supra note 4, at 345 & n.2 (outlining issues regarding the legality of the appeals process under the November 13, 2002 order, which negated the possibility of a review of the outcome of military commission proceedings).


158. See MMC, supra note 6, pt. II, R. 202(b) note (citing 10 U.S.C. § 948(c) (2006)). The limited use of military commissions solely for alien combatants may violate the POW Convention’s requirement that military commissions also be used or be able to be used to try U.S. soldiers. See Timothy C. MacDonnell, Military Commissions and Courts-Martial: A Brief Discussion of the Constitutional and Jurisdictional Distinctions Between the Two Courts, ARMY LAW., Mar. 2002, at 19, 32.

159. MMC, supra note 6, pt. II, R. 202(b) note.

have had the opportunity to challenge his or her detention prior to coming before a military commission. In fact, a defendant's status is questionable, as the C.S.R.T. process inherently violates the POW Convention. A larger problem is the deprivation of the right to habeas corpus for these detainees under the Detainee Treatment Act.

Article 9(4) of the Civil and Political Covenant guarantees detainees the right to habeas corpus. "Anyone who is deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings before a court, in order that that court may decide without delay on the lawfulness of his detention and order his release if the detention is not lawful." The Human Rights Committee notes:

The right of a person deprived of her liberty to take proceedings before a court to challenge the lawfulness of her detention is a substantive right, and entails more than the right to file a petition—it contemplates a right for a proper review by a court of the lawfulness of the detention.

A detainee must also be able to challenge a detention that violates the Covenant. Judicial review under Article 9(4) is "not limited to mere compliance of the detention with domestic law but must include the possibility to order release if the detention is

161. In determining a detainee's status, the C.S.R.T. review asks whether the detainee is an "unlawful enemy combatant" under 10 U.S.C. § 948a(1)(ii) (2006). See MMC, supra note 6, pt. II, R. 202(b) note. This is not the correct question under the POW Convention, which requires a review of a detainee's status under Article 4 of the POW Convention. See POW Convention, supra note 18, at arts. 4-5.

162. Detainee Treatment Act, Pub. L. No. 109-163, § 1405(e), 119 Stat. 3477 (2006) (codified as amended sections in 28 U.S.C. § 22401 (2005)) ("[N]o court, justice, or judge shall have jurisdiction to hear or consider—(1) an application for a writ of habeas filed by or on behalf of an alien detained . . . at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; or (2) any other action against the United States . . . relating to any aspect of the detention . . . of an alien at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, who—(A) is currently in military custody; or (B) has been determined . . . to have been properly detained as an enemy combatant."); see also Labaton, supra note 104, at A1, A17 (discussing the MCA's explicit elimination of federal court jurisdiction over habeas challenges by Guantánamo prisoners).

163. See Civil and Political Covenant, supra note 11, at art. 9(4).

164. Smirnova v. Russian Federation, U.N. Human Rights Committee, Communication No. 712/1996, ¶ 10.1, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/81/D/712/1996 (2004). In this case, the accused was detained on fraud charges and she challenged the lawfulness of her detention. Id. ¶ 2.2, 4. A judge received her petition for release on September 1, 1995 and rejected the petition in an ex parte decision on September 13, 1995. Id. ¶ 10.1. Because of the lack of proper review and the accused's lack of access to a court, the Committee found a violation of the right to be brought promptly before a judge under Article 9(3) of the Civil and Political Covenant. Id. ¶¶ 10.1, 10.2; see Civil and Political Covenant, supra note 11, at art. 9(3).
incompatible with the requirements of the Covenant."  

2. Right to Review by a Higher Court

The military commissions seem to guarantee the right to review by a regularly constituted court—the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit and, if necessary, the Supreme Court. Under R.M.C. 1201, the Court of Military Commission Review performs the initial review of decisions by military commissions; the military court's decisions can subsequently be appealed in regular U.S. courts. Unfortunately, R.M.C. 1201 provides that "[n]o relief may be granted unless an error of law prejudiced a substantial trial right of the accused." This limitation might be construed to restrict appeals to issues of law and would not permit challenges to convictions for insufficient evidence to support the conviction or review of sentences. That provision must be compared with the requirement in Article 14(5) of the Civil and Political Covenant, which states: "Everyone convicted of a crime shall have the right to his conviction and sentence being reviewed by a higher tribunal according to law." The Human Rights Committee has interpreted the Article 14(5) right to review by a higher tribunal to require complete review of factual determinations made by the trial court.

165. See Baban v. Australia, U.N. Human Rights Committee, Communication No. 1014/2001, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/78/D/1014/2001 (2003). In this case, an Iraqi national of Kurdish ethnicity was detained after arriving in Australia without travel documentation. Id. ¶¶ 1.1, 2.2. Although Australia permitted judicial review of his detention, the review was limited to whether Mr. Baban was in fact a non-citizen without valid entry documentation. Id. ¶¶ 6.1–6.8. The Committee found Australia to be in violation of Article 9(1), (4). Id. ¶ 7.2; see also Civil and Political Covenant, supra note 11, at art. 9(1), (4).

166. MMC, supra note 6, pt. II, R. 1205.


169. Civil and Political Covenant, supra note 11, at art. 14(5).

The D.C. Circuit Court also reviews interlocutory appeals “related to the protection of classified information, the closure of proceedings from the public, or the exclusion of the accused from certain proceedings.” The defendant may waive or withdraw appellate review for any military commission “except one in which the approved sentence includes death.”

F. Evidence Obtained Through Coercive Means

The use of evidence procured through torture constitutes a violation of Common Article 3, customary international law, the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (“Convention Against Torture”), and the Civil and Political Covenant. The use of evidence procured through coercive methods raises similar concerns because the definition of coercion may include impermissible methods that rise to the level of cruel, inhuman,


171. MMC, supra note 6, pt. II, R. 908(d).
172. Id. pt. II, R. 1110(d)(2).
175. Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, opened for signature Dec. 10, 1984, 1465 U.N.T.S. 85 [hereinafter Convention Against Torture]. Article 15 of the Convention Against Torture states: “Each State Party shall ensure that any statement which is established to have been made as a result of torture shall not be invoked as evidence in any proceedings, except against a person accused of torture as evidence that the statement was made.” Id. at art. 15. An additional burden of inquiry is placed on State Parties under Article 12 to investigate information that torture may have been used “in any territory under its jurisdiction,” a duty which the United States may not be upholding under these trials, as no provision in the R.M.C. requires such an investigation. Id. at art. 12.
176. The Human Rights Committee stated in Higginson v. Belarus that, “[i]rrespective of the nature of the crime that is to be punished or the permissibility of corporal punishment under domestic law, it is the consistent opinion of the Committee that corporal punishment constitutes cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment contrary to article 7 of the Covenant.” U.N. Human Rights Committee, Communication No. 792/1998, ¶ 4.6, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/74/D/792/1998 (2002).
and degrading treatment. With the recent debate over the United States' definition of these terms, the language of the new rules presents another concern about the legality of the commissions and their procedures.

1. The Manual for Military Commissions Allows Coerced Evidence

The Preamble to the Manual rightfully excludes statements obtained by torture but specifically allows for "statements ‘in which the degree of coercion is disputed’... if reliable, probative, and the admission would best serve the interests of justice" and "admission of an accused’s allegedly coerced statements if they comport with § 948r." R.M.C.E. 304 concerns “confessions, admissions, and other statements” and sets forth the overall standard for determining whether a statement is the product of coercion: the “totality of the circumstances under which the contested statement was produced.

177. See Rosemary Pattenden, Admissibility in Criminal Proceedings of Third Party and Real Evidence Obtained by Methods Prohibited by UNCAT, 10 INT’L J. OF EVID. & PROOF 6 (2006) (examining international standards of what constitutes torture and noting that “it is a grave crime to extract information from prisoners or civilians by torture or ill-treatment”); see also Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, supra note 117, at art. 8, § 2(a)(ii) (declaring that grave breaches of the Geneva Convention include torture or inhuman treatment); Fourth Geneva Convention, supra note 19, at arts 3, 31, 147; POW Convention, supra note 18, at arts. 3, 17, 130. Human Rights Committee jurisprudence further elucidates the parameters of what constitutes cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. In Conteris v. Uruguay, the Human Rights Committee found that a confession obtained after ill-treatment violated the accused’s right not to be compelled to confess guilt under Article 14(3)(g) of the Civil and Political Covenant. U.N. Human Rights Committee, Communication No. 139/1983, ¶ 10, U.N. Doc. A/40/40 (1995). Arrested by security police for crimes associated with subverting the constitution, the victim spent three months in incommunicado detention. Id. ¶ 1.4. Subjected to various forms of torture, he eventually signed a confession. Id. The Human Rights Committee held that he did not voluntarily sign the confession. Id. ¶ 9.2; see also El-Megreisi v. Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, U.N. Human Rights Committee, Communication No. 440/1990, ¶ 5.4, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/50/D/440/1990 (1994) (“[The detainee,] by being subjected to prolonged incommunicado detention in an unknown location, is the victim of torture and cruel and inhuman treatment, in violation of Articles 7 and 10 . . . .”).


179. MMC, supra note 6, pt. I, § (1)(g).

180. Id. (citing 10 U.S.C. § 948r(b)-(c) (2006)).

or obtained.

R.M.C.E. 304(c) further provides a dual standard for “statements allegedly produced by coercion,” creating one test for statements procured by interrogation methods that amount to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment before the enactment of the Detainee Treatment Act on December 30, 2005, and a stricter test for statements obtained thereafter.

The current U.S. administration has authorized “coercive” interrogation conduct “so brutal that it essentially amounts to torture.” The international prohibition applies to evidence procured through these means. In A v. Secretary of State for the Home Department, the United Kingdom House of Lords observed:

> It may well be that the conduct complained of in a . . . memorandum dated October 11, 2002 addressed to the Commander Joint Task Force 170 at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, (see The Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib, ed. K. Greenberg and J. Dratel, (2005), p. 227-228), would now be held to fall within the definition [of torture] in Art. 1 of the Torture Convention.

Even if evidence was not procured by torture, but rather by cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, the rationale for the exclusion of evidence adduced by torture is the same as the rule that makes evidence procured by other forms of ill-treatment inadmissible. Information obtained by either torture or ill-

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182. See id. pt. III, R. 304(a) note.


184. MMC, supra note 6, pt. III, R. 304(c)(1)-(2).

185. Memorandum from William J. Haynes II, Gen. Counsel, Dep't of Def., to Donald Rumsfeld, Sec'y of Def. (Nov. 27, 2002), available at http://www.slate.com/features/whatistorture/LegalMemos.html (discussing counter-resistance techniques).


188. Id. at 1285.

189. Sahadeo v. Republic of Guyana, U.N. Human Rights Committee, Communication No. 728/1996, ¶ 9.3, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/73/D/728/1996 (1996) (dictum) (“The Committee recalls the duty of the State party to ensure the protection against torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment as provided for in Article 7 of the Covenant. The Committee considers that it is important for the prevention of violations under Article 7 that the law must exclude the
treatment is unreliable since a witness will say whatever he or she believes may stop the infliction of pain—rather than telling the truth. There is an absolute prohibition of torture as well as cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. To admit information adduced by either torture or other ill-treatment outrages the values of civilization and could be perceived as an unacceptable incentive to engage in such severe abuse. Further, by admitting confessions that are uncorroborated and possibly adduced without warning, the Manual provides insufficient protection from self-incrimination. Admitting such information also undermines the right to a fair and impartial trial.

2. International Prohibitions on Evidence Obtained by Ill-Treatment

While the Convention Against Torture specifically prohibits the use of evidence adduced by torture, other international instruments and authoritative interpretations also forbid the use of evidence obtained by either torture or other ill-treatment. For example, Principle 16 of the Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors
When prosecutors come into possession of evidence against suspects that they know or believe on reasonable grounds was obtained through recourse to unlawful methods, which constitute a grave violation of the suspect's human rights, especially involving torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or other abuses of human rights, they shall refuse to use such evidence against anyone other than those who used such methods, or inform the Court accordingly, and shall take all necessary steps to ensure that those responsible for using such methods are brought to justice.  

Similarly, Article 12 of the U.N. Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment provides: "Any statement which is established to have been made as a result of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment may not be invoked as evidence against the person concerned or against any other person in any proceedings."

In 1982, the Human Rights Committee authoritatively interpreted the broad prohibition of Article 7 of the Civil and Political Covenant against torture and ill-treatment as incorporating the exclusionary rule.

The Committee notes that it is not sufficient for the implementation of this article to prohibit such treatment or punishment or to make it a crime. . . . Among the safeguards which may make control effective are provisions against detention incommunicado, granting, without prejudice to the investigation, persons such as doctors, lawyers and family members access to the detainees; provisions requiring that detainees should be held in places that are publicly recognized and that their names and places of detention should be entered in a central register available to persons concerned, such as relatives; provisions making confessions or other evidence obtained through torture or other treatment contrary to article 7 inadmissible in court; and measures of training and instruction of law enforcement officials not to apply such treatment.


195. “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” Civil and Political Covenant, supra note 11, at art. 7.

The Human Rights Committee repeated this interpretation of Article 7 of the Covenant when it replaced General Comment 7 with General Comment 20 in 1992. "It is important for the discouragement of violations under Article 7 that the law must prohibit the . . . admissibility in judicial proceedings of statements or confessions obtained through torture or other prohibited treatment."\(^{197}\)

Furthermore, Article 14(3)(g) of the Civil and Political Covenant provides that an accused may not be compelled to testify against himself/herself or to confess guilt.\(^{198}\) The Human Rights Committee stated in General Comment 32 that, under this provision, "it is unacceptable to treat an accused person in a manner contrary to Article 7 of the Covenant in order to extract a confession."\(^{199}\) State laws should therefore require that evidence provided through such methods or any other form of compulsion be entirely inadmissible.\(^{200}\)

In its jurisprudence, the Committee found coterminous violations of Articles 7 and 14(3)(g) in the case of a murder suspect forced under threats of death to sign a confession.\(^{201}\) The Committee recalled:

[T]he wording of Article 14, paragraph 3(g), namely that no

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199. Gen. Comm. 32, supra note 38, ¶ 41. Article 7 provides that "[n]o one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." Id.; see also U.N. Human Rights Comm., Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee: Georgia, ¶ 13, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/79/Add.75 (May 5, 1997) (deploiring the fact that capital sentences appeared to be imposed in Georgia cases where confessions were obtained under torture or duress).

200. The Human Rights Committee applied these principles in Khalilov v. Tajikistan, where the government accused Khalilov of being a member of an "anti-constitutional" gang. U.N. Human Rights Committee, Communication No. 973/2001, ¶ 2.1, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/83/D/973/2001 (2005). Khalilov claimed that he had been forced to join the gang. Id. Prior to his trial, the government compelled Khalilov—using beatings and threats to his family—to confess on national television to murder. Id. ¶¶ 2.5–2.6. He was later convicted of murder and a variety of other crimes and sentenced to death. Id. ¶ 2.8. The Committee found a number of fair trial violations, including that Tajikistan had violated the prohibition on forced confessions. Id. ¶ 8.

one shall 'be compelled to testify against himself or to confess guilt,' must be understood in terms of the absence of any direct or indirect physical or psychological pressure from the investigating authorities on the accused, with a view to obtaining a confession of guilt. 202

Similarly, the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia adopted Rule 95 of its Rules of Procedure and Evidence, which reads: "No evidence shall be admissible if obtained by methods which cast substantial doubt on its reliability or if its admission is antithetical to, and would seriously damage, the integrity of the proceedings." 203

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe called on the U.S. government

to respect its obligations under international law and the Constitution of the United States to exclude any statement established to have been made as a result of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment from any proceedings, except against a person accused of such ill-treatment as evidence that the statement was made. 204

In that resolution, the Parliamentary Assembly called on its Member States of the Council of Europe to do the same. 205 If the United States intends to portray its military commissions as being equal to or better than international tribunals in its protection of fair trial rights, it would do well to ensure that evidence gathered through the use of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment is likewise strictly excluded.

3. The Admissibility of Coerced Evidence Violates Internationally Recognized Fair Trial Protections

In addition to the national security privilege discussed above, other procedures prevent both defendants and the public from


204. PARL. ASS., RES. 1433, ¶ 8(vi) (Apr. 26, 2005).

205. Id. ¶ 10(iv).

206. See Davis, supra note 115, at 34 (challenging "anyone to review the MCA and MCC, compare them to the rules for . . . the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, . . . and then explain why military commissions provide an inferior standard of justice by comparison").
knowing what methods were used to extract the information for
the government's case. This situation makes the determination of
admissibility more difficult and places a nearly impossible burden
of proof on the defense. The government cannot put the burden on
the defendant to prove a confession was involuntary; it would
violate the prohibition against forced confessions under Article
14(3)(g) as well as the presumption of innocence under Article
14(2).207

Judge Neuberger of the United Kingdom Court of Appeals
explained the difficulty faced by the accused when the government
presents evidence about a statement extracted from an individual
other than the accused.

[The detainee will normally know of all the circumstances in
which the confession was extracted, and will be able to give
evidence in court to explain those circumstances, and possibly
to give other evidence to rebut the reliability of the confession.
However, it will be a very rare case where the detainee would
know very much about the circumstances in which the
statement was extracted from a third party, or where the
detainee would be able to arrange for evidence to be given
about those circumstances. Almost by definition, he will not
be able to call or cross-examine the third party with a view to
the third party explaining or rebutting the statement.]

Similarly, the procedures of the military commissions violate
the Civil and Political Covenant and Common Article 3.

On the whole, the judicial guarantees prescribed by the
Manual have the potential to go very much awry. There is a
significant risk that these proceedings will be used in a way that
flouts fundamental precepts of international law. The United
States recently denied habeas corpus protections to detainees, and

207. See Civil and Political Covenant, supra note 11, at art. 14. For example, in
Singarasa v. Sri Lanka, a Tamil man claimed he was forced to confess to causing
the death of army officers and engaging in other terrorist activities. See U.N.
CCPR/C/81/D/1033/2001 (2004). At trial, the government put the burden of proving
that the confession was involuntary on Mr. Singarasa. Id. ¶ 210. The confession
was admitted and Singarasa was convicted. Id. ¶¶ 2.10–12. Among other issues,
the Human Rights Committee considered whether the burden of proof could be
placed on Singarasa under the Civil and Political Covenant. Id. ¶ 7.4. The
Committee reasoned that it was implicit in Civil and Political Covenant Article
14(3)(g), which prohibits forced confessions, that the prosecution must prove the
confession was made without duress. Id.; see also Deolall v. Guyana, U.N.
(2004).

208. A v. Sec'y of State for the Home Dep't, [2004] EWCA (Civ.) 1123 [464],
[2005] 1 WLR 414, 548. The U.K. House of Lords reversed the Court of Appeals and
sustained the views expressed by Judge Neuberger. A v. Sec'y of State for the
courts have not extended constitutional protections to them. As written, the Manual might allow the following trial strategy for the prosecution: first, three days of uncontested prosecution witnesses describing a well-documented case about the crimes of the Al Qaeda organization; second, presentation of one witness tying the accused to Al Qaeda through a heavily redacted summary of information from unrevealed sources. That single witness might well take advantage of the national security privilege to deny the accused and his counsel any indication as to the identity of the source of the testimony, the context in which the information was collected, the treatment meted out to the source of the information, and the reliability of assurances that the information was not procured by the use of torture. Such a situation would deny the accused the following rights: the right to cross-examine, the right to confrontation, the right to be judged on the basis of the facts on the record, and the right to equality of arms. This situation would constitute an unfair trial.

IV. Interpreting the Manual for Military Commissions Using International Law Regarding the Right to a Fair Trial

To summarize the conclusions of this Article thus far: as set forth in the Manual for Military Commissions, the military commissions would not qualify as regularly constituted courts and could fail to afford the requisite judicial guarantees, unless the Manual is interpreted in a manner consistent with international law. For example, prosecutors could claim national security as a basis for denying confrontation and cross-examination and may use evidence procured through methods that amount to torture or forbidden ill-treatment unless the military commissions interpret the Manual to require the protections guaranteed by Common Article 3 and the Civil and Political Covenant.

One approach to dealing with the potential inadequacies of the fair trial guarantees in the Manual is to use international fair trial norms in evaluating and interpreting the broad federal statutory and regulatory provisions. International law and jurisprudence could assist the military commissions and reviewing courts in interpreting the Manual to protect fair trial rights.

210. See generally MMC, supra note 6, pt. II.
211. See supra Part II.
212. See infra Part IV.B.
Treaties and their authoritative interpretations provide guidance on how to guarantee the protections necessary for fair trials. U.S. courts have often relied on international standards and jurisprudence in resolving delicate legal issues and the military commissions should be no different, especially considering the international nature of the problems they confront.

A. Treaty Obligations

The United States ratified the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Civil and Political Covenant—all of which protect fair trial rights for detainees. The Constitution mandates respect for these treaties, which impose obligations on the United States and its courts. Article VI of the U.S. Constitution establishes:

This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.

A treaty ratified by the United States is part of the supreme law of the land, equal in dignity to federal statutes. Despite the Constitution's statement that treaties shall be the supreme law of the land, U.S. courts have developed a doctrine making only self-executing treaties judicially enforceable.

213. See infra Part IV.B.
214. See infra Part IV.B.
215. See supra Part I.B.
216. U.S. CONST. art. VI.
217. Conflicts between treaty clauses and existing law are resolved according to three rules. First, a treaty will not have domestic effect if it infringes certain clauses of the U.S. Constitution. Reid v. Covert, 354 U.S. 1, 16–17 (1957). Second, if a treaty and a federal statute conflict, the more recent prevails. Chinese Exclusion Case, 130 U.S. 581, 599–600 (1889). Third, if a treaty and state law conflict, the treaty controls. Zschernig v. Miller, 389 U.S. 429, 440–41 (1968); Clark v Allen, 331 U.S. 503, 508 (1947); Asakura v. City of Seattle, 265 U.S. 332, 341 (1924); see also Missouri v. Holland, 252 U.S. 416, 433–35 (1920) (stating that the validity of the treaty was not undermined by possible infringement on states' rights under the Tenth Amendment). Before applying a treaty, courts must: (1) determine whether certain treaty provisions are self-executing; (2) interpret the language of the treaty; and (3) consider the effect of reservations made when the treaty was adopted. See Frolova v. U.S.S.R., 761 F.2d 370, 373–76 (7th Cir. 1985).
218. The Supreme Court introduced the requirement of self-execution in Foster v. Neilson, 27 U.S. (2 Pet.) 253, 314 (1829). It declared that a treaty clause is self-executing and hence "equivalent to an act of the legislature, whenever it operates by itself without the aid of any legislative provision." Id. Foster held the treaty to be non-self-executing, on the assumption that the parties anticipated a need for
The District Court for the District of Columbia discussed congressional action regarding the Geneva Conventions in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*. The Senate articulated its advice and consent regarding the Geneva Conventions in 1955 without making an explicit statement about self-execution. In looking to the Senate's intent in consenting to the ratification of the Geneva Conventions, the court found that the 1955 Senate carefully considered what legislation would be required to give effect to the provisions of the conventions and determined that only four provisions—none relevant to a military commission—required implementing legislation. The court also noted that Congress enacted the War Crimes Act in response to a concurring opinion from the D.C. Circuit Court in 1984, which suggested that persons could not be prosecuted for grave violations of the Geneva Conventions. The court concluded that the legislative branch had confirmed that the Geneva Conventions were intended to be self-executing based upon a review of the Spanish text and the history of negotiations. See *United States v. Percheman*, 32 U.S. (7 Pet.) 51, 88 (1833). Subsequent decisions have focused on the intent of the parties. See, e.g., *Cook v. United States*, 288 U.S. 102, 119–20 (1933) (finding no evidence of congressional intent to abrogate the treaty). In *Frolova v. U.S.S.R.*, the court compiled a list of factors to be consulted in determining whether a treaty provision is self-executing, including:

1. the language and purposes of the agreement as a whole;
2. the circumstance surrounding its execution;
3. the nature of the obligations imposed by the agreement;
4. the availability and feasibility of alternative enforcement mechanisms;
5. the implications of permitting a private right of action; and
6. the capability of the judiciary to resolve the dispute.

761 F.2d at 373 (citations omitted). For a similar list, see *People of Saipan v. U.S. Department of Interior*, 502 F.2d 90, 97 (9th Cir. 1974). In *Jogi v. Voges*, the Seventh Circuit relied on the first three of these factors to hold that Article 36 of the Vienna Convention is self-executing and confers an individual right to consular notification. 425 F.3d 367, 377, 384 (7th Cir. 2005). But see *Medellín v. Texas*, No. 06-984, 2008 WL 762533 (Mar. 25, 2008) (holding that an International Court of Justice's decision finding a violation of U.S. obligations under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations is not automatically binding domestic law due to lack of implementing legislation and that the President cannot "unilaterally [convert a] non-self-executing treaty into a self-executing one"); *United States v. Emuegbunam*, 268 F.3d 377, 391 (6th Cir. 2001) ("[T]he Vienna Convention does not create rights individually enforceable in the federal courts."); *United States v. Jiminez-Nava*, 243 F.3d 192, 198 (5th Cir. 2001) (holding that the Vienna Convention does not create judicially enforceable rights).

221. *See id.*
222. *Id.* at 164–65.
the law of the land, enforceable by the courts.\textsuperscript{223} On appeal, the Supreme Court noted that, in as much as the Geneva Conventions are a part of the law of war, they do confer rights enforceable in U.S. courts.\textsuperscript{224} In contrast, with regard to the military commissions, the MCA includes a clause limiting the force of the Geneva Conventions.\textsuperscript{225}

In ratifying the Civil and Political Covenant, the Senate gave its advice and consent on the understanding "[t]hat the United States declares that the provisions of Articles 1 through 27 of the Covenant are not self-executing."\textsuperscript{226} In Sosa v. Alvarez-Machain,\textsuperscript{227} the Supreme Court addressed this declaration when it reviewed a suit brought by a Mexican national alleging violation of his rights under the Alien Tort Claims Act after he was abducted and transferred to the United States to stand trial.\textsuperscript{228} In dicta, the Court stated:

\begin{quote}
[Al]though the [Civil and Political] Covenant does bind the United States as a matter of international law, the United States ratified the Covenant on the express understanding that it was not self-executing and so did not itself create obligations enforceable in the federal courts. . . . Accordingly, Alvarez cannot say that the [Universal] Declaration [of Human Rights] and Covenant themselves establish the relevant and applicable rule of international law.\textsuperscript{229}
\end{quote}

While not essential to the Court's holding, this passage suggests that enforcement of a treaty in federal courts may be more difficult given an explicit Senate statement that a treaty is not self-executing.

It follows that directly enforcing the Geneva Conventions and the Civil and Political Covenant in U.S. courts may be challenging because of the uncertain self-executing nature of treaties. The language of the MCA further diminishes the binding force of the Geneva Conventions as it states that "[n]o alien unlawful enemy combatant subject to trial by military commission . . . may invoke the Geneva Conventions as a source of rights."\textsuperscript{230} These

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{223} Id. at 165.
\textsuperscript{224} Hamdan v. Rumsfeld, 126 S. Ct. 2749, 2845 (2006) (Thomas, J., dissenting) ("The Court concludes that petitioner may seek judicial enforcement of the provisions of the Geneva Conventions because 'they are . . . part of the law of war.'" (quoting the majority opinion)).
\textsuperscript{226} 138 CONG. REC. S4781, 4784 (1992).
\textsuperscript{227} 542 U.S. 692 (2004).
\textsuperscript{228} Id. at 692.
\textsuperscript{229} Id. at 735.
\textsuperscript{230} MCA, § 948b(g).
\end{footnotesize}
impediments do not, however, render the treaties useless since they do not exclude using the Geneva Conventions or the Covenant as a means of interpreting the Manual, rather than a "source of rights." Hence, a federal statute can be a "source of rights," and may make use of the Geneva Conventions and other international norms only as interpretive tools rather than as independent sources of rights. Article 75 of Additional Protocol I, the Civil and Political Covenant, and the interpretations of the Human Rights Committee could be relied upon as a way of interpreting federal statutes and regulations, such as the War Crimes Act and the Manual.

The MCA states that "[a] military commission established under this chapter is a regularly constituted court, affording all the necessary 'judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples' for purposes of [C]ommon Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions." Merely stating that it is compliant does not make it so. It does, however, support the likelihood that Congress intended the military commissions to provide the fair trial guarantees required in the Geneva Conventions by interpreting the Manual in light of Common Article 3.

B. Interpretive Approach

A treaty's relevance to interpretation of federal statutes, such as the MCA, is reflected in the long-standing rule of statutory construction known as the Charming Betsy rule of interpretation. Chief Justice Marshall first enunciated this rule, stating that "an act of Congress ought never to be construed to violate the law of nations if any other possible construction remains . . . ."

The Manual reiterates the principle that the commissions should accord with international law. The preamble states: "Just as importantly, [the Manual] provides procedural and evidentiary rules that not only comport with the [MCA] and ensure protection of classified information, but extend to the accused all the 'necessary judicial guarantees' as required by

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231. See id.
233. See Murray v. Schooner Charming Betsy, 6 U.S. (2 Cranch) 64 (1804).
234. Id. at 118.
235. See MMC, supra note 6, pt. 1.
This preamble indicates the authors' intent that the Manual should be interpreted in a manner that ensures protection of the fair trial guarantees required by Common Article 3.

The Defense Secretary's statements also track the language of Common Article 3 in several places in the Manual, including the Executive Summary, which states that "[this Manual] is intended to ensure that alien unlawful enemy combatants who are suspected of war crimes and certain other offenses are prosecuted before regularly constituted courts affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized people." In understanding the meaning of "regularly constituted court[s] affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable," the military commissions and courts should take into account the sources set forth in this Article, including Article 75 of Additional Protocol I, the Civil and Political Covenant, and the interpretations of the Human Rights Committee.

Interpreting the Manual in light of the human rights treaties and the related international law so as to ensure fair trial protections reflects the Supreme Court's approach in a number of landmark cases. In Lawrence v. Texas, the Court relied on the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights to assist in determining "the values we share with a wider civilization." As support for her concurrence in Grutter v. Bollinger, Justice Ginsburg cited the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. In examining the protections guaranteed by the Eighth Amendment, the Supreme Court looked to treaties and foreign law to assist in its determination of what constitutes cruel and unusual punishment in both Roper v. Simmons and Thompson v. Oklahoma. In

236. Id.
237. Id. (Executive Summary).
238. Common Article 3, supra note 19.
240. See id. at 576.
242. See id.
243. U.S. CONST. amend. VIII.
244. 543 U.S. 551, 578 (2005) ("It does not lessen our fidelity to the Constitution or our pride in its origins to acknowledge that the express affirmation of certain fundamental rights by other nations and peoples simply underscores the centrality of those same rights within our own heritage of freedom.").
Hamdan v. Rumsfeld, the Court relied upon the Geneva Conventions and the international law of war to analyze the authority of the President to convene the military commissions. The Court noted that the military commission could only try crimes acknowledged as an offense against the law of war and that "international sources confirm that the crime charged here is not a recognized violation of the law of war." The Court observed that the President's use of military commissions was conditioned upon compliance with "the rules and precepts of the law of nations."

C. Policy Considerations

Not only has international law been used to interpret U.S. law, but it can also be a very effective means of persuasion when considering national policy. As discussed by Judge Linde of the Oregon Supreme Court,

an advocate wishing to invoke international human rights norms reasonably could argue that an applicable domestic law already contains the protections that the claimant contends, but that, if the court were not to accept this view, then the court might well find itself running afoul of national policy as expressed by the United States government through its participation in international human rights activities and declarations.

Linde further noted that such an approach is most successful "where other countries and international agencies have had greater experience than has the United States. Examples may include ... the treatment of detained persons." Given the international nature of the capture and detention of "unlawful enemy combatants," it is especially important to interpret the Manual in light of relevant treaties when considering its possible impact on the officials responsible for commission proceedings, as well as U.S. soldiers captured in future conflicts.

Interpreting the Manual using Common Article 3 in a way that provides for a fair trial of the detainees will also help the
military commissions protect involved officials from prosecution by foreign courts and promote policies that may serve to protect U.S. soldiers in future conflicts.

1. Protecting Involved Officials from Prosecution in Foreign Countries

In deciding on the procedures to be followed in the military commissions, responsible officials should be aware that "[t]he passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples," would constitute a war crime and/or a crime against humanity.254

Post-World War II trials establish precedent for prosecuting judges and other government officials responsible for conducting unfair trials.255 The post-Nuremberg case of In re Alstotter256 involved the trial, sentencing, and imprisonment of a number of presiding judges and German officials who participated in show trials that resulted in executions.257 The officials and judges had supported or played a role in arbitrary judicial proceedings initiated by Hitler that resulted in thousands of executions.258 In the Pacific, Japanese military authorities were also convicted for their participation in show trials.259

Hence, failures to afford the judicial guarantees of Common Article 3 in a non-international armed conflict could also be the

254. See Common Article 3, supra note 19.

255. See Robert Cryer, Accountability of Armed Opposition Groups in International Law, by Liesbeth Zegveld, 53 INT'L & COMP. L.Q. 268, 270 (2004) (book review) (arguing that Zegveld makes "unsupported statements" when she implies that Common Article 3(d) "should not impose criminal responsibility on individuals" and makes no mention of "numerous trials in the Pacific sphere after the Second World War relating to the failure to grant minimal fair trial rights to defendants").


257. Id. at 278. These individuals were prosecuted for participation in genocide. Id.

258. Id.

basis for prosecution. Originally, the ad-hoc tribunals established by the United Nations for the former Yugoslavia did not include prosecutions under Common Article 3.\textsuperscript{260} They have since evolved to include Common Article 3 in the subject matter jurisdiction of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.\textsuperscript{261} Additionally, the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Court for the Former Yugoslavia held that a criminal prosecution could be founded upon conduct arising from the mixed international and internal conflict taking place in the former Yugoslavia,\textsuperscript{262} allowing prosecution under Common Article 3.\textsuperscript{263}

Should the Manual be found to violate the provisions of Common Article 3,\textsuperscript{264} prosecutors and other U.S. citizens responsible for the unfair military trials would be at risk of being prosecuted.\textsuperscript{265} The U.S. War Crimes Act of 1996 defined a war

\textsuperscript{260} In his 1993 report, the Secretary-General indicated that the principle of \textit{nullum crimen sine lege} demanded that the subject matter of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia ("ICTY") be limited to violations of international humanitarian law that were recognized under customary international law as it existed at that time. The Secretary-General, \textit{Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Paragraph 2 of Security Council Resolution 808 (1993)}, ¶ 35, delivered to the Security Council, U.N. Doc. S/25704 (May 3, 1993).


\textsuperscript{263} \textit{Id.} ¶¶ 89–93.

\textsuperscript{264} See Burke-White, \textit{supra} note 46, at 22–23 ("Military tribunals, depending on their structure and rules, may well violate core principles of international law, such as the right—enshrined in numerous international conventions—to a fair trial before an independent arbiter." (citation omitted)); Neal Kumar Katyal, Hamdan v. Rumsfeld: \textit{The Legal Academy Goes to Practice}, 120 HARV. L. REV. 65, 71 (2006) ("[Hamdan]'s practical meaning is clear: military trials have to take place with essential elements of military justice intact and must comply with the minimal protections enshrined in Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions."); Geoffrey S. Corn, Hamdan, \textit{Fundamental Fairness, and the Significance of Additional Protocol II}, ARMY LAW., Aug. 2006, at 1 ("[T]he message [in Hamdan] was clear: the military commissions are not 'full and fair' as the government has been asserting since their inception. In a rejection of the course of action chosen by President George W. Bush to provide criminal sanction to Al Qaeda operatives, the Court held that the procedural construct of the military commission violated both domestic constitutional limits on executive authority and the international law of war reflected in Common Article 3 of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949." (footnote omitted)); Posting of John Bellinger to Opinio Juris, \textit{The Meaning of Common Article Three}, http://www.opiniojuris.org/posts/1168814555.shtml (Jan. 16, 2007, 7:05 CST) (outlining the U.S. government's interpretation of Common Article 3 via U.S. domestic law). \textit{But see} Bradley, \textit{supra} note 86, at 255 (arguing that the military commissions originally set up at Guantánamo are not necessarily in conflict with the POW Convention).

\textsuperscript{265} See Christopher C. Burriss, \textit{Time for Congressional Action: The Necessity of Delineating the Jurisdictional Responsibilities of Federal District Courts, Courts-
crime to include "a violation of [C]ommon Article 3 of the international conventions signed at Geneva, 12 August 1949, or any protocol to such convention to which the United States is a party and which deals with non-international armed conflict . . . ." Accordingly, between 1996 and 2006, a trial in violation of Common Article 3 could have resulted in a criminal prosecution in U.S. courts for those officials responsible. The MCA, however, redefined "war crime" to exclude both lack of a fair trial and/or outrages upon personal dignity under Common Article 3. Even though the United States now limits its definition of "war crime," other countries continue to define "war crime" to include violations of Common Article 3; these countries also allow prosecution of U.S. nationals.

It may not be popular to suggest that the activities of military commission officials and prosecutors may one day result in criminal prosecutions somewhere in the world. In order to provide for their safety, however, the possibility of such prosecution should be considered. Former Secretary of State Colin Powell warned that failure to follow the requirements of the Geneva Conventions "may provoke some individual foreign prosecutors to investigate and prosecute our officials and troops." It would be an unfortunate result of fulfilling their duty to provide for the safety of these officials.

Martial, and Military Commissions to Try Violations of the Laws of War, 2005 FED. CTS. L. REV. 4, 29 ("It has also become generally accepted that the protections of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which applies during non-international armed conflicts, have become part of customary international law." (citing Prosecutor v. Tadic, Case No. IT-94-1, Decision on the Defence Motion for Interlocutory Appeal on Jurisdiction, ¶¶ 129–36 (Oct. 2, 1995), reprinted in 35 I.L.M. 32 (1996) (holding in paragraph 134 that "customary international law imposes criminal liability for serious violations of [C]ommon [A]rticle 3"); Jinks, supra note 70, at 409 ("The procedural rights recognized in the ICTY, ICTR, and the ICC—tribunals empowered to try persons for serious violations of humanitarian law, including war crimes—provide further evidence of a broad consensus as to the essential (or 'indispensable') attributes of fair trials.").


269. Id. § 6, 120 Stat. at 2632–35.


2. Protecting U.S. Soldiers in Future Conflicts

The impact of the military commissions on international law and practice must also be considered. It is an unfortunate reality that U.S. soldiers or citizens may be captured in future conflicts with foreign nations or armed opposition groups. Upon capture, their captors may cite current U.S. military commissions as support for criminal prosecutions and the use of unfair trial practices. The military commissions should strive to protect every judicial guarantee protected by Common Article 3 and the Civil and Political Covenant so that the military commissions cannot be used to justify the unlawful prosecution of U.S. soldiers.

In a 1999 Foreword to a collection of essays on comparative constitutional law, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court William H. Rehnquist wrote:

[For nearly a century and a half, courts of the United States exercising the power of judicial review [for constitutionality] had no precedents to turn to except their own, because our Court alone exercised this sort of authority. When many new constitutional courts were created after the Second World War, these courts naturally looked to decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States, among other sources, for developing their own law. But now that constitutional law is solidly grounded in so many countries . . . it [is] time the U.S. courts began looking to the decisions of other constitutional courts to aid in their own deliberative process.]

This passage underscores the importance of considering international law in judicial decision making and points out the importance of U.S. jurisprudence on developing international law and practice. For example, U.S. Supreme Court decisions played a fundamental role in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda’s decisions determining what constitutes a violation of a detainee’s rights. The military commissions and reviewing
courts must bear in mind the jurisprudential effect of their decision on case precedent, future U.S. military commissions, and commissions or tribunals convened by other countries. The United States must provide an example that promotes the fair and just treatment of future U.S. POWs. This goal can be accomplished by interpreting the Manual in a manner that accords with human rights treaties and international jurisprudence regarding fair trials.

Conclusion

Congress, in its pursuit of justice, created military commissions that compromise the very values Congress seeks to enforce. The Manual for Military Commissions, as literally read, may lack sufficient guarantees for fair trials by compromising the right to confront witnesses, the prohibition of evidence adduced by torture or ill-treatment, and access to review by higher courts, among other rights. Should the military commissions fail to protect these fair trial rights, the commissions will be an albatross around the neck of U.S. international relations and world image in the years to come. To avoid these unfortunate consequences, the military commissions and reviewing courts should construe the MCA and the Manual to require the fair trial guarantees prescribed by Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Article 75 of the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions. Interpreting the Manual in such a manner would be consistent with the requirements of the treaties as well as the Supreme Court's treatment of international law in its jurisprudence. In some cases, referencing the courts-martial procedures would be a good step towards interpreting the Manual consistently. Failure to implement proper fair trial protections may one day subject the officials involved to prosecution overseas, threaten the safety of U.S. soldiers in future conflicts, and damage the notion of justice the United States has fought so hard to develop, protect, and uphold.