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Although sexual violence in armed conflict has been a problem "from time immemorial," it has been hidden under a "veil of silence." Janie L. Leatherman's *Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict* provides an important and engaging contribution to a growing literature which increases awareness and understanding of this critical issue. Drawing on evidence from conflicts after the Cold War, Leatherman develops a strong framework which explores sexual violence as a tool in the political economy of war, and develops practical proposals for challenging its roots.

Because of its clear and accessible style, gripping content, and intersectional focus, this book should be required reading for scholars and policy-makers as well as students in a number of different areas. While it seems targeted at peace and conflict courses, it would also be excellent in gender studies (clearly introducing gender in the context of armed conflict), human rights (highlighting women's human rights), and international relations generally, (addressing the "new wars"). It could also contribute strongly to international ethics (comparing an ethics of care with the responsibility to protect) and international political economy (introducing the "plunder/profit" model). This book is exceptional on two major accounts: (1) for integrating a wealth of field information within a strong theoretical framework, despite varying information available, and (2) for consistently and vividly recognizing women's agency, despite victimization, and concomitantly indicating the severe limitations on policies which ignore these complexities.

The first two chapters contextualize and develop an innovative typology to guide the rest of the book. Chapter 1 highlights the challenges of finding answers to questions about sexual violence, outlines three major approaches to the study of sexual violence in armed conflict (essentialism, structuralism, and constructivism), and highlights recent international legal efforts to end impunity. Chapter 2 develops the idea of sexual violence as a "runaway norm" which causes social harms or "public bads." Leatherman identifies four major thresholds on sexual violence: (1) type of violence, (2) target of violence (involving victims with "taboo" status), (3) agency (forcing others to commit sexual violence), and (4) loss of neutrality or safe space (from religious buildings to women's bodies).

The next three chapters explore how and why these thresholds are overturned, drawing on evidence especially from the "new wars" in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Sierra Leone, the Balkans, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Chapter 3 discusses the social construction of gender as structural violence during nonviolent conflict, and as the predisposing context for direct sexual violence during violent conflict. Chapter 4 delves into how safe space is eliminated in armed conflict, highlighting how the line between victim and perpetrator often blurs as people are forced to cope in terrible situations. Chapter 5 draws on a case study from the DRC dealing with "conflict minerals" to develop a framework for understanding the multiple interrelated factors leading to sexual violence. Leatherman concludes by assessing strategies used to address sexual violence in armed conflict, and argues for integrating an ethic of care into policies and practices on the ground.

The framework which Leatherman develops builds on feminist scholarship which suggests that violence is rooted in a gendered world order, which organizes power hierarchically in a way that gives elite men – rather than women, girls, and marginalized men and boys –

primary access to power and privilege. Consistently, Leatherman argues that the enabling structure for sexual violence is hegemonic masculinity, which supports a “plunder and profit” economic model central to the global political economy. Within this context, sexual violence is “a low-cost, imminently available and highly efficient tool of war” which can be used “to destroy reproductive economies in order to profit from plunder” in intersecting formal and violent markets (153, 182).

Leatherman breaks this down in two major ways. First, she argues that during nonviolent conflict, “non-catastrophic” hegemonic and allied masculinities particularly support gendered *structural* violence especially for women and girls, as well as marginalized men and boys. Second, she argues that during violent conflict, “catastrophic” hypermasculinity particularly supports *direct* sexual violence.

Critical to this switch is the precarious position of marginalized masculinities. Leatherman argues that in conditions of nonviolent conflict, marginalized masculinities ally with hegemonic masculinity to support male dominance, even while marginalized men are subordinated on other axes of identity (e.g., race, class). However, during crises, marginalized masculinities become particularly threatened, and hyper-masculinity (ala the “Rambo” warrior) “provides men with an alternative role model to regain their lost status and aspiration to the power of hegemonic males” (20). Escalating sexual violence occurs as perpetrators seek to sustain shock value and power of control by crossing one threshold of violence after another.

Leatherman draws primarily on a critical and feminist interpretation of constructivism, focusing on how people who rape reproduce and reinforce, rather than transform, the broader male-centered order. Her interpretation of constructivism as taking an intermediary stance between primarily taking a perpetrator’s perspective (essentialism) and a victim’s perspective (structuralism) puts a new and interesting take on debates over to what extent agents are shaped by structures. However, her discussion of particular agents and structures could use clarification. On one hand, she is consistently excellent in demonstrating women’s agency, despite being victimized. For example, she repeatedly discusses people like “Bintu”, whose roles included being a soldier’s girlfriend, rebel abductee, sex slave, prostitute, rebel fighter, and cab worker (96). On the other hand, although her discussion of the concepts of gender, masculinity, and feminization are quite sophisticated, she sometimes uses these concepts interchangeably with the agents they refer to (e.g., men/women and masculinized or feminized groups). For example, she refers to masculinities which “subjugate others” (116), have “strategies” (132), and which include multinational corporations and private security groups (137). Future scholars may revisit these concepts to assess the distinction between agents and structures.

While other feminist scholarship has made similar claims, Leatherman breaks new ground in organizing *how* and *when* different kinds of masculinities are likely to become dominant, and how different kinds of masculinities (“catastrophic” or “noncatastrophic”) are linked to different kinds of (direct or structural) violence. Although this dichotomous framing may put off postmodern, poststructural or postcolonial feminist scholars, she positions these categories as dynamic and evolving. This creates space for future scholars to assess these categories and how they are related.

In *Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict*, Janie L. Leatherman provides a clear and engaging introduction to students, scholars, and policymakers trying to understand the context and implications of sexual violence in armed conflict. She is successful in part because she effectively shows how exploitative social structures can restrict individual agency by closing off other available options, making it so that choices are not free. Her integration of a wealth of

varying information allows her to draw out general patterns while also recognizing particular variability. Her insistence on understanding acts committed by individual perpetrators within their global political economic context means that students, scholars, and practitioners who study sexual violence in conflict can move past overly simplistic solutions toward more complex responses which recognize how situations and roles of particular actors are constrained by coercive gendered global structures. In doing so, *Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict* is a primer on the hurdles that must be overcome for those seeking more just change.