

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ARMED CONFLICT

By Janie L. Leatherman
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THE ISSUE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ARMED CONFLICT IS RECEIVING increased global attention because of widespread media coverage of abuses in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and elsewhere in the world. New measures to combat the realities of sexual violence are evident in expanding intergovernmental reporting requirements, such as Security Council Resolution 1960. Yet the academic community has lagged in offering a critical appraisal of the causes and nature of the problem as well as potential ways to combat it. Janie Leatherman's *Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict* presents a useful first step for understanding the complex dynamics that lead to rape and sexual abuse in war.

The book is divided into 6 chapters, beginning with an overview of the phenomenon and the prevailing theories that have attempted to explain it (essentialism, structuralism, and social constructivism). Chapter 2 puts forward the idea of sexual violence in conflict as a "runaway norm" based on type of violence, targets of violence, agency, and the erosion of neutrality and safe space in conflict. Chapters 3 and 4 trace the evolution of sexual violence from preconflict to postconflict, with attention to phases of active conflict and displacement.

In chapter 5, Leatherman offers a new framework for understanding sexual violence in armed conflict through an examination of the intersection of social construction of gender—which Leatherman terms "hegemonic masculinity"—and the global political economy of war. Chapter 6 concludes with an analysis of strategies of protection, accountability, and reconciliation.

Leatherman uses richly detailed case studies to explore the concepts she is attempting to elucidate. Drawing on examples from the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) in Uganda, to the former Yugoslavia, to the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) in Sri Lanka, the author discusses the concept of runaway norms as a special class of norms established during conflict that produce social harms or public ills. According to the author, these new wartime norms are created through the social construction of allied hegemonic masculinities that shape the power relations of economic opportunities in marginalized parts of the world. Much of the discussion focuses on how conflict has changed since the Cold War, with the author arguing that failed states in Africa and beyond are linked to the global political economy and have a primary goal of "wealth accumulation through criminal means." Rape and other forms of sexual violence are viewed by Leatherman as tools for solidifying the identity of militarized masculinity or hyper-masculinity and maintaining power over productive and reproductive economies.

Although the text is written in a relatively straightforward and concise manner, I have 2 main critiques. First, ample time is spent exploring how these theories of sexual violence in conflict apply to militarized rape, torture, and forced incest. Yet domestic violence and abuse has been shown to be one of the most prevalent—if not *the* most prevalent—types of sexual violence in conflict. While Leatherman touches on the increase in household violence following conflict, she neglects to adequately address how hegemonic masculinities created during conflict play out within the family structure.

Second, the intended audience for the book remains unclear. Although Leatherman writes that this book is her "contribution to the global effort [to combat sexual violence in conflict]," the theoretical discussions that form the foundation of the book are likely too abstract to be of immediate use to the majority of practitioners and policy makers combating the issue of sexual violence on a daily basis. Rather, the book seems targeted more toward academics and researchers. This is unfortunate, because there are potentially valuable lessons to be gleaned from Leatherman's examination of the intersections between gender, conflict, and global economies. Such study might encourage gender-based-violence practitioners and policy makers to engage with decision makers from sectors not generally enlisted to support the fight against sexual violence, such as those having power and control over global markets. The added value of this book could be to encourage different strategies for sexual violence prevention by engaging with these economic agents to consider their activities through a gender lens—yet the theoretical emphasis of the book is likely to limit its reach.

Despite these critiques, *Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict* offers an important examination of sexual violence in conflict and suggests new ways of conceptualizing and understanding the complex causes and implications of such violence.

Lindsay Stark, DrPH

Author Affiliation: Program in Forced Migration and Health, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, New York, New York (ls2302@columbia.edu).

Conflict of Interest Disclosures: The author has completed and submitted the ICMJE Form for Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest. Dr Stark reported that through her work at Columbia University, she is engaged in helping conflict-affected countries measure rates of sexual violence.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT: DIAGNOSIS, TREATMENT AND EVIDENCE

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SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF KEMPE AND COLLEAGUES' SEMINAL paper "The Battered-Child Syndrome" in 1962, greater understanding has accumulated of the devastating conse-

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