
The inclusion of sex and gender-based crimes into international criminal and humanitarian law signifies a global shift from historical impunity to the recognition of the gravity of international sex crimes. Understanding and Proving International Sex Crimes outlines the development of sex crimes in international law, utilizing three perspectives: historical, legal/evidentiary, and sociological. The authors challenge scholars to go beyond the exceptional nature of violence captured by the International Criminal Tribunals of Yugoslavia and Rwanda (ICTY and ICTR) in order to develop a more nuanced understanding of the perceived ‘widespread or systematic’ use of sexual violence in armed conflict. The anthology also includes a comprehensive digest of sex crime cases from the ICTY, ICTR, and the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which will prove to be an invaluable tool for researchers. From a sociological perspective, Elisabeth J Wood emphasizes the variation of wartime sexual violence, highlighting cases in which the prevalence of sexual violence is relatively low, and suggesting a re-evaluation of current approaches to sexual violence research. Moreover, Alejandra Azuero Quijano and Jocelyn Kelly provide a further example of such variation, comparing the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Colombia. Quijano and Kelly argue that even though DRC and Colombia have two different profiles of violence, the same meta-narrative is used to describe sexual violence in each armed conflict: that brutal male combatants perpetrate widespread and systematic forms of sexual violence against helpless women and girls (pp. 457–458). Going forward, the challenge for researchers and prosecutors will be to better assess gendered patterns of violence and variation of perpetration, instead of merely showcasing the violence against women and girls during armed conflict.

Amanda H Blair


Do democracies win a large proportion of wars they fight against autocracies? This edited volume deals with this puzzle by stimulating a vigorous debate between proponents and critics of the ‘democratic victory’ proposition. Scholars on both sides present their arguments pointedly with debates covering conceptual argument, evidence, logic, data, and methodology. Advocates of the democratic victory theory offer five explanations for why democracies seem disproportionately more likely to win the wars they fight: first, democracies initiate wars when they are likely to win; second, their militaries are more