
This intellectual biography sheds new light on Lemkin's philosophy as well as the experiences that shaped his coining of the word "genocide" and his distinctive conceptualization. Irvin-Erickson (George Mason) incorporated previously unpublished sources in his well-crafted, readable study. Lemkin was an optimist about global progress, clearly influenced by natural law theory and constant in his philosophical underpinnings. But he was repeatedly frustrated in lobbying efforts before and after the Genocide Convention was finalized. He was willing to compromise on the wording of the UN Convention draft to secure its approval. Later, he failed to convince governments such as the US to ratify and implement the document. Lemkin's comparisons of numerous genocides are revelatory. Incidentally, during the 1950s Lemkin alienated civil rights advocates who described US policies as genocidal. His views on race evolved. Martin Luther King's views of genocide were quite compatible with his own. The overall analysis shows how Lemkin's thinking about the law and global justice is "troubling," yet still inspiring to those who would avoid overly legalistic approaches. Irvin-Erickson concludes with a succinct summary of Lemkin's theory and its increased relevance in recent decades

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Summing Up: Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty.