**Three Types of Wartime Sexual Violence: The Recruitment, Strategies, and Tactics of Armed Combatants in Civil War**

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**Introduction**

Archives of wartime sexual violence have been situated in histories of reticence and suppression. Long dismissed as the inevitable acts of renegade soldiers in civil war, sexual violence has, until recently, remained the invisible pandemic of modern conflict. While contemporary stories of gang rape, sexual slavery and forced impregnation in Bosnia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) proliferated in international media outlets, engendering a “hyper-awareness” in the policy community, the issue has been comparatively absent in social science research.[[1]](#footnote--1) However, with the formalization of the June 2008 United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1820, recognizing sexual violence as a strategy of war linked to the maintenance of international peace and security,[[2]](#footnote-0) the subject has finally emerged from its disciplinary “blind spot.”

Previously, studies of violence in civil war focused almost exclusively on *lethal* violence against civilians, emphasizing the strategies and recruitment profiles of armed groups.[[3]](#footnote-1) Jeremy Weinstein, for instance, posits that the presence of material resources predicts the class of participants that organizations attract and the programs of violence that they employ.[[4]](#footnote-2) He finds that groups that have high resource endowments and low social endowments tend to commit greater indiscriminate abuses, exercising violence on a haphazard basis. Coupled with the “collective action problem” of insurgent mobilization, wherein private selective incentives are extended to overcome the opportunity costs of combat, the inaugural conditions and the emergent recruitment profiles of armed groups are understood to influence the magnitude of violence and targeting of civilians in civil war.

With the widespread recognition of the inadequacy of past theories on the break down of state institutions and the indiscriminate sexual opportunism that it produces, studies of wartime sexual violence have elaborated on the above insights. Stressing the role of acts such as gang rape as one way in which commanders override individual preferences and private interests, Elisabeth Wood, Dara Cohen and others have started to concentrate their attention on the function of sexual violence as a both a tool of war and a mechanism for fostering internal cohesion. Dara Cohen, for example, argues that sexual violence serves a utilitarian purpose, facilitating bonding between members of a combatant group, which is particularly accurate of those organizations with low in group cohesion.

While such insights have irrefutably furthered our comprehension of wartime sexual violence, they have directed our focus towards the absence or presence of which within and across conflicts. As such, seldom little is known about what types of armed groups will engage in which characteristic forms of sexual violence. By ‘form’ or ‘mode’ of sexual violence, I mean to refer to its use as either a function of male opportunism in combat situations – i.e. the “rape and pillage” argument; a mechanism of internal socialization and discipline; or an instrument for threatening and intimidating a population. Furthermore, by “sexual violence” I do not merely mean rape. Following Elisabeth Wood and others, I conceptualize sexual violence as an extensive classification of offenses, encompassing rape; sexual torture and mutilation; sexual slavery; enforced prostitution and marriage; and imposed sterilization and pregnancy.[[5]](#footnote-3)

Accordingly, I argue that by looking at the initial conditions – i.e. the presence of material and ideational resources and recruitment profiles of armed groups one can forecast the ‘form’ or ‘mode’ of sexual violence that combatants are likely to exercise in conflict. Groups with high levels of material resources and low levels of social resources that use short-term tangible rewards to motivate participation are likely to engage in sexual violence on either an opportunistic basis or for the objective of instigating internal cohesion. This, itself, will be contingent on whether or not the members of the armed groups are composed of forcible recruits or voluntaristic participants.

Groups comprised of various identities, favorable resource endowments and volunteers will be anticipated to “rape and pillage” so-to-speak, indiscriminately targeting local populations. This is because material rich movements attract low committed individuals, or “consumers,” interested in only the short-term rewards that insurgency provides.[[6]](#footnote-4) Commanders, from this perspective, will consent to a certain level of indiscipline in order to retain participation.[[7]](#footnote-5) On the other hand, groups comprised of various identities, favorable resource endowments and forcibly recruited conscripts would be expected to exercise sexual violence for the intention of fostering in-group cohesion. When rebels are abducted and compelled into engaging in combat, commanders will attempt to encourage social coherence amongst members vis-à-vis the use of sexual violence for socializing recruits, usually carried out in or close to the community or village where they have been abducted from. These acts of sexual violence serve to sever rebels bonds with their community and village and generate modes of attachment to the combatant group.

Alternatively, groups with strong social unities, like shared cultural or ideological goals, but low material resources will expectantly utilize sexual violence selectively, as a weapon of war against so-called out-groups. Since these groups can call on established norms and networks they can preserve internal discipline[[8]](#footnote-6) and will only use sexual violence when it is in the groups best interest. Furthermore, because groups with low material resources rest on the logistical and material support of local populations, they will constrain excessive levels of sexual violence, which would inevitably undermine vital civilian support.[[9]](#footnote-7) Groups with *both* powerful social and resource endowments would actually exhibit remarkably analogous behaviors, also engaging in the use of sexual violence as an instrument of coercion against out-groups. However, because they do *not* rely on the perceived legitimacy of their movement in the eyes of the civilian population, sexual violence will often be carried out on massive and systemic levels.

The inverse of these characteristics in an armed group – i.e. both low social endowments and low resource endowments present a more ambiguous situation. They would undoubtedly depend on local populations for logistical and material support; however, in the absence of low internal cohesion they have no disciplinary mechanism for reining in on the sexual violence’s enacted by their combatants. Here, again the recruitment profile is integral to comprehending what form or mode of sexual violence will be employed. In most instances, voluntaristic participation in these sorts of movements is implausible, however, integrated armed units like the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) in the DRC encompass “volunteers” from varying militias, which coupled with the lack of donor funding have precipitated unprecedented levels of “male opportunism” in the region as soldiers search for un-delivered promised rewards. Conversely, organizations such as the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda, comprised of mostly abducted youth will endeavor to engender in-group cohesion through the same socialization measures mentioned above.

It must be noted from the outset that what I establish here is an agenda for future research and probabilistic framework for predicting what types of armed groups will engage in which of the three categories of sexual violence I have delineated above. As Stathis Kalyvas notes, conflicts “are not binary…but complex and ambiguous processes that foster an apparently massive, though variable, mix of identities and actions.”[[10]](#footnote-8) The initial conditions, recruitment profiles of armed groups, and the violence’s that they employ are by no means static and are often subject to enormous change. My intention here is to analyze these features of armed groups in relation to the kind of wartime sexual violence that they are *likely* to exercise. As such, this paper will proceed by first, assessing the theoretical contributions on the logic of violence against non-combatants in civil war, followed by an analysis of the existing frameworks on wartime sexual violence. Developing on these insights, I will then outline a framework for investigating what types of armed groups will engage in what forms of sexual violence. Detailing the observable implications of which by building on a number of cases from secondary academic literature, human rights reports and the documents of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and other multilateral bodies.

**Methodological Constraints of Studies on Wartime Sexual Violence**

Prior to introducing the theoretical and conceptual insights that informed this study, it is necessary to preface with a discussion on the methodological limitations of analyses on wartime sexual violence. First, because there have been few efforts to systematically collect data on the issue, explorations of sexual violence, including this one here, are usually confined to the victim narratives amassed by human rights workers, journalistic accounts, legal proceedings and hospital records.[[11]](#footnote-9) All of which are susceptible to misrepresentation and underreporting.[[12]](#footnote-10) Furthermore, it is tremendously difficult to infer the particular characteristics and qualities of wartime sexual violence from these sources, as they are often shaped by institutional biases and constraints.[[13]](#footnote-11)

Second, as Elisabeth Wood notes that there are also sub-methodological challenges to data collection that are prevalent even with the well-developed infrastructure and liberal values of the West.[[14]](#footnote-12) What qualifies as rape, for instance, fluctuates depending on the context and can be conceptualized narrowly as forced penetration of the vagina or anus by the penis, or more generally to incorporate penetration with other objects, forcible compulsion, or lack of consent.[[15]](#footnote-13) Finally, data collection will reflect whether women and men are amenable or able to report incidents of rape and other acts of sexual violence. Stigmatization, shame and the perceived impunity of perpetrators severely obstructs’ the capacity to interpret the extent of violations occurring in a given conflict.[[16]](#footnote-14) Together with the scarcity of household surveys and disruption in health services that accompany civil war, only survivors with the most severe injuries or the best access to facilities seek clinical care.[[17]](#footnote-15)

Studies of wartime sexual violence are, therefore, immensely limited in what they can provide. The methodological and sub-methodological challenges of data collection not only distort the realities of sexual violence by underreporting its prevalence and operating within narrow definitional constraints, but the institutional prejudices of the various domestic and international organizations monitoring incidents can skew its particular characteristics. Depicting women as a generalized category of victims of large-scale rape, for example, presents these actions as detached from their wider contexts, reinforcing the “self-serving myth of [the] inevitability”[[18]](#footnote-16) of wartime sexual violence. Nevertheless, as the so-called “hidden epidemic” of modern conflict, wartime rape and other related offenses necessitate more meaningful analyses of not only the variations in patterns of sexual violence, but also the probable perpetrators of those patterns.[[19]](#footnote-17)

**‘The Logic Of Violence in Civil War’**

As indicated in the introduction, previous studies of violence in civil war focused exclusively on lethal violence against civilians, emphasizing the strategies and recruitment profiles of armed groups. Jeremy Weinstein, as mentioned above, examines the factors that determine membership in a given insurgent organization, arguing that divergences in how groups exercise violence is a consequence of variation in the initial conditions that leaders confront.[[20]](#footnote-18) Leaders of armed groups have to acquire capital, coordinate the logistics of a military campaign, conscript soldiers and generate support, food, and information regarding the location of their adversaries.[[21]](#footnote-19) To execute these functions, they will draw on either social endowments – i.e. cultural, ethnic and religious affinities, or material endowments – i.e. natural resources, lootable goods such as alluvial diamonds or external patronage.[[22]](#footnote-20) Any given mixture of these initial endowments will constrain a leaders recruitment strategy and alter the costs and benefits of participating in armed insurgency.[[23]](#footnote-21)

As Stathis Kalyvas notes, “…[insurgency] is a full time commitment and it is dangerous.”[[24]](#footnote-22) Collective action generally occurs to secure or obtain some sort of public good like democracy, rule of law or economic prosperity.[[25]](#footnote-23) Perceptibly, the benefits of collective action will be public, while the costs will be borne privately. Resource endowed leaders will, therefore, offer private selective incentives such as “loot” to override the costs of participation.[[26]](#footnote-24) Because of these incentives, however, material rich movements will attract low committed individuals, what Jeremy Weinstein refers to as “consumers,” interested in only the short-term rewards that insurgency provides.[[27]](#footnote-25) Along these lines, leaders with few resources who draw on purely social endowments will attract high committed individuals, or “investors,” devoted to the cause of the organization and likely to make costly investments today in return for the assurances of future rewards tomorrow.[[28]](#footnote-26) In contrast to these “activist” movements that preserve internal discipline by calling on established norms and networks, “opportunistic” movements with high levels of material wealth will consent to indiscipline in order to retain participation.[[29]](#footnote-27) Together with their reliance on local populaces, armed groups with shared communal aspirations that organize into relatively homogenous units and have a hierarchical command structure are less aggressive towards civilians, utilizing violence on a selective and strategic basis.[[30]](#footnote-28) Alternatively, armed groups consisting of particularistic interests that organize into comparatively heterogeneous groupings and lack the requisite disciplinary mechanisms are likely to engage in more indiscriminate violence, targeting civilians opportunistically.[[31]](#footnote-29)

The application of this framework to wartime sexual violence is seemingly uncomplicated, but it explains just two of its wartime roles: as a function of male opportunism in combat situations or an instrument for threatening and intimidating a population, ordinarily an out-group. However, when you move beyond viewing violence as generalized category, you can begin to distinguish how its various forms can be employed to overcome the private interests that characterize these “opportunistic” movements. This is where inquiries into wartime sexual violence have proven incredibly valuable. Dara Cohen, for example, highlights how certain acts of sexual violence such as gang rape can be exercised to override individual preferences and instigate bonds between members of armed groups with low social endowments.[[32]](#footnote-30) Moreover, once you disaggregate violence, you can start to differentiate how patterns of recruitment including abduction can bear on the exercise of sexual violence.

**‘Repertoires’ of Wartime Sexual Violence**

Before, theories of wartime sexual violence were usually parsed into the same prevailing perceptions that informed the interpretative frames of civil war, most notably the so-called “greed” model. Based on Hobbesian inspirations, emphasizing the ontology of civil war as characterized by the breakdown of authority, scholars attributed the perceivably arbitrary motivations in a war of “all against all”[[33]](#footnote-31) to the frequency of sexual violence. In the same way that this “new wars” paradigm saw generalized violence as a consequence of its privatized and haphazard natures,[[34]](#footnote-32) sexual violence was surmised to the unfortunate result of the chaos and disorder of civil war.

Expressions of sexual aggression were, therefore, alleged to be related to the breakdown of regulatory mechanisms, such as law enforcement or the normative values attached to patriarchal practices.[[35]](#footnote-33) Hence, the distinct impact of conflict on these systems was seen to explain the discrepancies in sexual violence across groups of combatants.[[36]](#footnote-34) Such arguments, however, relied heavily on assertions regarding militarized masculinities. Joshua Goldstein, for instance, holds that, in order to persuade men to fight and endure the hardships of war, societies had to turn them into soldiers and warriors.[[37]](#footnote-35) And a near universal way in which this was accomplished was to draw sharp divisions between the genders, establishing common wartime gender tropes, such as “men as takers of life” and “women as makers of life.[[38]](#footnote-36) Men were, thus, conditioned to represent domination of the “other,” often in a very gendered way, culminating in colossal levels of sexual opportunism amongst male combatants.[[39]](#footnote-37) While the militarized masculinities argument is an unquestionably meaningful tool for looking at the socialization of males for particular modes of violence, wartime rape and other related offenses are nothing more than the outcome of men’s expected gender roles. Which, furthermore, presumes that these behaviors will dissolve and vanish once the war is over.

With the widespread recognition of the limitations of these frameworks, scholars have begun to look at the “repertoires of violence” of armed groups in conjuncture with their internal organization and characteristics. Drawing on what Charles Tilly refers to as the repertoires of contention, or the set of violent practices that an armed group routinely engages in as it makes claims on other political and social actors,[[40]](#footnote-38) Amelia Hoover Green and others have started to look at institutional differentiation between insurgent organizations to explain variation in wartime sexual violence. Amelia Hoover Green, for example, contends that group leaders confront what she calls a “commanders dilemma” wherein they have to recruit and train combatants to use violence in a mechanized manner, while also retaining operational control.[[41]](#footnote-39) Conventional disciplinary mechanisms, she says, are not enough to restrict the violence’s enacted by combatants, and unless leaders make strong efforts to control the actions of their soldiers, the “repertoires of violence” that ensue will be opportunistic and unsystematic.[[42]](#footnote-40) To reconcile this “commanders dilemma,” group leaders will try to institutionalize programs that change preferences, creating intrinsic rewards for controlled behavior.[[43]](#footnote-41) Groups that implement political education and encourage regulated violence are, therefore, able to overcome the problems presented by attracting low-committed “consumers” to certain movements. In this way it is not a given that resource endowed groups will permit indiscipline in order to retain membership, and would more probably try and facilitate control and coherence with in an organization. And whether and how they endeavor to do this can assist in ascertaining the types of sexual violence’s that they will exercise.

In most contexts, sexual violence is counterproductive to the objectives of an organization. On the one hand, it compromises the sometimes-critical support of local populations and on the other; it subjects soldiers to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) that jeopardize their effectiveness in combat situations.[[44]](#footnote-42) Echoing Amelia Hoover Green, Elisabeth Wood argues that whether group leaders can enforce controlled violence will be contingent on the strength of the groups hierarchy and whether information regarding infractions can flow up the chain of command.[[45]](#footnote-43) Military commanders seek to constrain the levels of violence exercised by their recruits, not least because most fear reprisal.[[46]](#footnote-44) Their considerations include the aforementioned consequences of sexual violence, such as military tactics and the implications for the continuous reserve of conscripts, intelligence and the requisite inputs for the war effort.[[47]](#footnote-45) Logically, if group leaders regard sexual violence as working against their interests *and* if the hierarchy is powerful enough to enforce its diktats, sexual violence will be infrequent.[[48]](#footnote-46) Which of course is adjoined with the caveat that if a strong organization considers sexual violence to be in its best interests, it will be effectively implemented.[[49]](#footnote-47)

The circumscribed emphasis on command structure alone, however, directs focus towards the presence or absence of wartime sexual violence, as opposed to the specified conditions under which its different forms will be perpetrated. Indeed, sexual violence is costly and most leaders would rather not engage in counterproductive activities and behaviors, but as Dara Cohen points out, sexual violence is also an “unusually successful” mechanism for encouraging social cohesion. As mentioned in reference to Jeremy Weinstein and Stathis Kalyvas, resource endowed commanders will capitalize on private selective incentives in order to entice participation.[[50]](#footnote-48) Such short-term rewards, however, attract low-committed recruits or “consumers,” with interests in the individual benefits that violence in civil war provides.[[51]](#footnote-49) One way that group leaders can try to override these private interests is to facilitate bonding amongst otherwise culturally and ideologically incoherent recruits. To do this, there are various psychological processes that can be employed, including the socialization of an armed groups membership through the habituation of sexual violence.[[52]](#footnote-50)

For Dara Cohen, this idea is best conceived of as the interactive process through which members in an armed faction establish their position in relation to one another.[[53]](#footnote-51) Sexual violence, particularly gang rape, enables armed groups to generate bonds of loyalty and esteem, which plays a significant role in groups with low social cohesion, in which the members are essentially a “collection of strangers.”[[54]](#footnote-52) As referenced in the preceding section, organizations with low-in group coherence lack the established norms and networks necessary to generate discipline in an armed unit and, hence, lack the faculty to restrict sexual violence. Where these groups are comprised of voluntaristic recruits I would agree with Jeremy Weinstein in his contention that they will consent to indiscipline in order to retain participation. Where these groups consist of forcible recruits, however, Dara Cohn’s “combat socialization” will be a necessary part of precipitating modes of attachment to the organization and preserving the abductees involvement in the movement.

**Three Types of Sexual Violence in Civil War**

1. ***Male Opportunism –“ Rape and Pillage”***

In sum, sexual violence serves a variety of functions in civil war. As mentioned above, previous theories on wartime sexual violence focused on its role as a tool of ***male opportunism***. While far from a universal occurrence in civil war, the indiscriminate and un-methodological rape of men, women and children as some sort of “war booty” was subsumed to be the product of the mayhem and turmoil of civil war. Beneath these accounts as Maria Baaz and Maria Stern note, is the conclusion that men’s sexuality is a driving force, unleashed in a climate of warring where all institutional and societal regulations are suspended.[[55]](#footnote-53) From this perspective wartime sexual violence is saturated with inevitability, which casts “all men as potential rapists” waiting for the requisite circumstances to “rape and pillage.”[[56]](#footnote-54)

1. ***Instrument of coercion and intimidation – “Weapon of War”***

While such assumptions unquestionably distinguish the actions of some combatants, group leaders also endorse sexual aggression when they believe that it will be effective in the pursuit of their overall objectives.[[57]](#footnote-55) This is the case with armed groups who choose to use sexual violence as a ***weapon of war*** to disrupt the social fabric of an out-group through acts like enforced impregnation or sterilization, or alternatively the humiliation of families by “press-ganging” fathers and brothers to engage in the rape of their daughters and sisters.[[58]](#footnote-56) When widely employed against out-groups where sexual violence against women is recognized to be a gross violation of the family and community’s honor, the humiliation of male and female relatives can be an effective tactic for either forcible compliance or the demoralization of an adversary’s supporters.[[59]](#footnote-57) Aside from wartime sexual violence as a tool of male opportunism, rape and other related offenses can, therefore, serve a utilitarian function, vanquishing the enemy’s population, instilling terror, curtailing movement and economic activity, stigmatizing women and disrupting familial and community structures.[[60]](#footnote-58)

1. ***Tool for Internal Cohesion – “Combat Socialization”***

Yet, as Dara Cohen demonstrates practices of wartime sexual violence for the purposes of military ***socialization*** mark another discrete way in which actions including gang rape can facilitate control and coherence within an insurgent organization.[[61]](#footnote-59) While groups with high social cohesion can construct strong hierarchical structures, and so, rein over the actions of their combatants, groups with low social cohesion cannot. This is where leaders will try to implement some sort of socialization practice, which can only take place through an immersion experience, such as the habituation of sexual violence.[[62]](#footnote-60) This, as indicated in the previous section, empowers these groups by fostering concrete and subjective ties between members. And while the functional objective of these actions is incredibly deliberate, the targeting would predictably be less so. In the absence of shared cultural or ideological unities, targeting would likely be indiscriminate, at least in comparison to the use of rape as a weapon of war. The process of “othering” in selection would, therefore, likely occur along very gendered lines, singling out women and girls as one available out-group.

**Recruitment, Strategies and Tactics of Armed Combatants**

In excess of the lack of internal cohesion increasing the prospects for the use of sexual violence to instigate bonds between members of an insurgent organization, however, we still know little about what types of armed groups will engage in which of these three categories of wartime sexual violence. Notwithstanding the utility of analyzing the command structures of combatant groups to extrapolate the probable causes behind the absence or presence of wartime sexual violence, we need a more meaningful framework for examining what kinds of armed groups will employ what kinds of sexual violence. I posit that by looking at the initial conditions facing group leaders – i.e. the existence of material and ideational resources, ensuing internal organization and recruitment profiles of armed groups, studies of wartime sexual violence can come closer to understanding how the properties of armed groups influence their use of sexual violence. Grounded in these assorted qualities I, therefore, suggest the following qualitative framework, the observable implications of which will be outlined in relation to a select number of cases from secondary academic literature, human rights reports and the documents from INGOs and other multilateral bodies.

1. ***High Resource Endowments Low Social Endowments***

*H1: High Resource Endowments + Low Social Endowments + Voluntaristic Participants 🡪 Male Opportunism*

As disclosed in the preceding sections, commanders that face initial constraints relating to high material endowments and low social endowments will extend private selective incentives in order to provoke participation in their movement and overcome the collective action problem.[[63]](#footnote-61) When these private rewards flood the movement with “opportunistic” recruits interested in only the individual gains that violence in civil war provides, these groups would be anticipated to exercise sexual violence indiscriminately, engaging in rape and other related offenses for the purposes of so-called male opportunism. Furthermore, the lack of internal cohesion and particularlistic interests could reasonably be assumed to make a clear military hierarchy, especially at the micro-level difficult to discern.

The Sri Lankan Armed Forces (SLAF) and its paramilitary agencies reflected these expectations through their use of opportunistic sexual violence in the civil war against insurgent organization - Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eealm (LTTE). Although the Tamil population constituted a recognizable out-group for which to target, the lack of coherence within the unit and the prevalence of crosscutting modes of attachment entails that this group could feasibly fall within the high resource endowments low social endowments categorization. Notwithstanding a cultural composition of predominantly Sinhalese males, the promises of a starting salary of 9,720.00 rupees in 2003, provided Sri Lankan men with the possibility of economic mobility through entrance into the armed forces, attracting otherwise ambivalent individuals.[[64]](#footnote-62) Furthermore, in contrast to the LTTE who interdicted sexual violence on the basis that it would undermine vital civilian support, using tightly controlled disciplinary mechanisms; the SLAF is cited as being in complete absence of any jurisdiction over their soldiers on the ground.[[65]](#footnote-63) The consequences for women and girls in the final years of the civil war were severe. The sexual violence carried out against females at checkpoints or during military and police operations, for example, were characterized by rape with plantain flowers soaked in chilies, bottles or other objects.[[66]](#footnote-64) In police custody in Amparai district, one women was reported to have been repeatedly raped, following which a grenade was placed in her vagina, “erasing all evidence,” and setting the stage for what Elisabeth Wood refers to as “semi-custodial…[sites] of opportunity.”[[67]](#footnote-65) One officer made the point quite poignantly, “it’s crazy; it’s completely crazy. I can’t control my troops. It’s awful up there…they just go wild.”[[68]](#footnote-66)

The case of the SLAF confirms the premises above. As a relatively heterogeneous grouping with high material wealth incentives for potential combatants, the SLAF attracted what Jeremy Weinstein calls “consumers.” In the absence of social endowments to precipitate discipline within the armed unit, especially at the micro-level, the SLAF volunteers were able to go “wild.”

*H2: High Resource Endowments + Low Social Endowments + Forcible Recruits 🡪 Combat Socialization*

Group leaders confronted with identical initial conditions, but have forcibly recruited or abducted combatants, on the other hand, will use socialization processes, such as the habituation of sexual violence to encourage in-group cohesion amongst a diverse collection of recruits. For this I draw on the well-cited case of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone. While the RUF was initially able to galvanize voluntaristic recruits by extracting resources from the alluvial diamond sector,[[69]](#footnote-67) as the war carried on the came to rely much more heavily on forcibly recruited conscripts, depending on forcible instruments of conscription, kidnapping and abducting men and boys of all ages.[[70]](#footnote-68) These were individuals as Dara Cohen notes, that did not have much information regarding one another’s preferences and who did not feel particularly “congenial” towards each other.[[71]](#footnote-69) In order to generate coherence and control amongst this heterogeneous and militarily inexperienced group of recruits, RUF commanders relied on gang rape close to the areas of recruitment or rather abduction in order to facilitate cohesion.[[72]](#footnote-70) Frequently, carried out against very young victims, rebels would line up to take turns raping individual women.[[73]](#footnote-71) While the functional purpose of these actions was incredibly deliberate, as mentioned above, the targeting was less so, occurring along gendered lines, targeting women and girls specifically. As Elisabeth Wood notes, the only existing targeting strategy was the selection of women and girls, which took place across all ages, groups and social classes.[[74]](#footnote-72)

1. ***Low Resource Endowments and High Social Endowments***

*H3: Low Resource Endowments + High Social Endowments 🡪 Weapon of War*

Discernibly, the pattern of sexual violence exercised by armed groups with high levels of material endowments and low levels of social endowments will be determined not only by the initial conditions and related disciplinary capacities of armed units, but those units recruitment profile as well. Groups with forcibly recruited conscripts will strive for coherence through socialization processes, which was the case with gang rape in the RUF. On the other hand, groups comprised of voluntaristic recruits will consent to indiscipline in order to retain participation, leading to indiscriminate acts of sexual violence in “semi-custodial sites of opportunity,” as was the case with the SLAF.

Organizations with high social endowments and low resource endowments face an entirely disparate situation. Unlike the above examples, these organizations can call on established norms and networks to maintain discipline within their given units. Together with their reliance on local populaces, groups with shared communal aspirations that organize into homogenous groupings will utilize violence along selective and strategic grounds. This was the case with Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d’Ivoire (MPCI) in the Ivory Coast. The MPCI was comprised of primarily of northern ethnicities and was said to be the “most organized, disciplined and ideological rebel group”[[75]](#footnote-73) in the region. In contrast to the other rebel factions in the area, namely the Mouvement pour la justice et la paix (MJP) and the Mouvement populaire ivoirien du Grand Ouest (MPIGO), MPCI is considered to have incited fewer atrocities.[[76]](#footnote-74) Sexual violence was carried out strategically against the daughters, sisters and mothers of members of the ruling Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI) party and pro-government security forces.[[77]](#footnote-75) Several rape survivors in an interview with Human Rights Watch (HRW), for instance, described how rebels had singled them out in a group of other women because of their relation to policemen or other pro-government bodies.[[78]](#footnote-76) Danane a young women from the west recalls, “my father was in the gendarmerie, so we were hunted…[one day] I saw six guys coming to the house…the entered the house…and they dragged [my] daddy outside…shot him in front of me [then] four of them raped me in front of my fathers body.”[[79]](#footnote-77) As an under-resourced insurgent organization, the MPCI could not afford to commit erratic egregious abuses against the civilian population, instead instilling terror in government backers and demoralizing the state’s supporters through tactical and targeted acts like the one mentioned here.

1. ***High Resource Endowments and High Social Endowments***

*H4: High Resource Endowments + High Social Endowments 🡪 Weapon of War*

As I indicated in the introduction, organizations with *both* powerful social and material wealth endowments would exhibit remarkably analogous behaviors, engaging in the use of sexual violence as an instrument of coercion against out-groups. In addition to their bellicose patterns of identification, resource rich groups do not have to depend on the perceived legitimacy of their movement. Along with being strategic and selective in their targeting of populations these groups would, therefore, predictably exercise sexual violence on massive and oftentimes genocidal scales. The case of the Bosnian-Serb Forces in the Bosnian Civil War showed such behaviors. Predominately operating under the auspices of the well-funded and highly resourced Army of Reblika Srpska (VRS), sexual violence, particularly rape, followed a discrete pattern of targeting against Bosnian-Muslim women and girls. In the county of Foca southeastern Bosnia, for example, women and girls were subjected to rape in detention centers such as the local high school, a gymnasium and a nearby hydroelectric plant.[[80]](#footnote-78)

In these well-documented “rape camps” women and girls were not only raped, but also exposed to imposed impregnation and would be detained for a weeks at a time to guarantee that they would not abort the fetus.[[81]](#footnote-79) The women and girls who survived these “rape camps” were vastly stigmatized, and many unmarried females were no longer able to return to their respective communities, creating what Carolyn Kennedy-Pipe and Penny Stanley refer to as a “hierarchy of humiliation” with respect to rape.[[82]](#footnote-80) This type of sexual violence against populations of an out-group facing a coherent, controlled and resourced organization such as the VRS, will likely occur along the large-scale and ordered logic of “ethnic cleansing.”

1. ***Low Resource Endowments and Low Social Endowments***

*H6: Low Resource Endowments + Low Social Endowments + Forcible Recruits* 🡪 *Combat Socialization*

Groups with *both* low resource endowments and low social endowments present a slightly more ambiguous than the aforementioned scenarios. Since there is no clear out-group for which to target directly for logistical and material support, they would presumably be reliant on local populations. Furthermore, without established norms and networks to draw on for internal discipline, it is difficult to control the actions of combatants. As I have suggested, whether or not they opportunistically “rape and pillage” to procure those resources will be contingent on their recruitment profiles. The LRA in Northern Uganda has few material resources to draw on and consists of mostly abducted youth from Acholiland. And while the LRA has committed innumerable indiscriminate abuses against non-combatants, sexual violence has not typically been one of them. This is because, as Sophie Kramer notes, forced marriage was organized by the top leadership in order to placate abducted conscripts and generate ties to the group, rather than their own villages and communities.[[83]](#footnote-81) Women and girls were distributed as compensation and status markers for soldiers in the absence of material goods, which created networks of dependency amongst the combatants.[[84]](#footnote-82) The LRA leadership was, therefore, better able to prohibit rape outside of these forced marriages, which was perceived by its top commanders to not be instrumental to the rebel’s success.[[85]](#footnote-83) Thus, all though the specific action of sexual violence differed from the gang rape exercised by the RUF in Sierra Leone, forced marriage in the case of the LRA was tactically exercised in order to generate in-group cohesion amongst forcibly recruited youth, as some sort of socialization measure.

*H5: Low Resource Endowments + Low Social Endowments + Voluntaristic Participants 🡪 Male Opportunism*

Recognizing that “volunteers” will be onerous to conscript in situations that are characterized by both low social endowments and low resource endowments, a situation like this can actually transpire as the result of international efforts to disarm and demobilize individual militias and create a single armed force. Once again, without shared conventions and webs of common affinities, discipline within these groups is difficult and when there is no material wealth to distribute as compensation, “volunteers” within these movement would be anticipated to rape and pillage. Such has been the case with FARDC, the integrated armed unit currently operating in the DRC. FARDC demonstrates the same transient characteristics as the LRA, however, “[sexual violence] is not depicted as a bonding mechanism among members of the group…but as part of the soldiers duty and a man’s right.”[[86]](#footnote-84) FARDC was established after the instillation of the transitional government in June 2003, brining together soldiers from the main surrendering militias and the former armed forces, and while contested, these soldiers are most often depicted as “volunteers.” The soldiers themselves viewed poverty as the enduring condition motivating acts of sexual violence, but, generalized neglect by superiors in the command structure were another often-noted factor.[[87]](#footnote-85) One soldier remarked, “It is our leaders/superiors that are bad. They don’t care about us…They are Bad and if there is one rotten orange in a bag, it will make all oranges in the sack rot.”[[88]](#footnote-86) Civilians were seen as a source of income and exploitable resource and the rape of women was seen to be a warranted spoil of war. Another combatant comments, “maybe I have a bandits thought…I see a woman passing by, and I begin to desire her, than I come and I jump in her *phoof*.”[[89]](#footnote-87)

The lack of material incentives coupled with both the disorganization of the integrated armed unit and “voluntaristic” recruits who remained poor despite promised material rewards, engendered male opportunism. With a large and geographically disaggregated group of volunteers, the socialization of combatants through sexual violence, as was the case with the LRA were not only encumbered, but likely not a major concern.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***High Social Endowments*** | ***Low Social Endowments*** |
| ***High Resource Endowments*** | *Weapon of War (H4)* | *Male Opportunism or Combat Socialization (H1 vs. H2)* |
| ***Low Resource Endowments*** | *Weapon of War (H5)* | *Male Opportunism or Combat Socialization (H6 vs. H7)* |

Table 1.

**Conclusions**

The empirical implications of the preceding cases for the study of wartime sexual violence reveal the need for a more meaningful framework for evaluating what types of armed groups will engage in which of the three classifications of sexual violence I have presented in this paper. The above is an effort to move beyond pointing to the association between group characteristics and the absence or presence of wartime sexual violence, assessing differentiation in the initial conditions and recruitment profiles of armed groups as a way of predicting behaviors related to the use of sexual violence during civil war. And although this study faced major constraints in appropriate case selection and data availability, it has tried to evaluate how variation in the initial conditions and recruitment profiles of insurgent organization is correlated with variation in the types of wartime sexual violence exercised by combatants. As illustrated by the Bosnian Serb Forces and the MPCI in Côte d’Ivoire, the wartime sexual conduct of groups with high social cohesion will occur along strategic and selective lines, regardless of their resource endowments. Although MPCI’s reliance on local populaces for material and logistical support meant that group leaders were able to, and had to constrain and limit the use of sexual violence amongst combatants, given the presence of high resource endowments and a well funded operation like the Bosnian Serb forces, we could expect that what would differ in these groups is the scale to which sexual violence is committed.

As noted in Table 1, however, groups with low social endowments will not always engage in one form of sexual violence over the other. The behaviors of these groups will depend on their recruitment profiles. As demonstrated by the case of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces and to a lesser degree by FARDC, groups with “voluntaristic” recruits will likely “rape and pillage,” despite their varying motivations for doing so. On the other hand, groups that have forcibly recruited conscripts, including child soldiers, will use Dara Cohn’s “combat socialization” in order to foster ties between heterogeneous groupings of young and inexperienced men. This immersion experience through sexual violence simultaneously severs a combatants ties with his village or community life and foments both concrete and subjective ties between the members of the group, as was the case with both the RUF in the later years of the war, and the LRA. Since it is hard to imagine a group with both low social endowments and low resource endowments emerging organically a few things must be noted. In organizations with low levels of internal coherence, resources will matter in determining whether they can accrue volunteers or have forcibly conscripted recruits. Whether they are composed of volunteers or forcible recruits will then determine whether or not they utilize sexual violence for socialization measures or whether sexual violence is used as a function of male opportunism. That beings said, it is also feasible that where there are low resource endowments and low social endowments commanders will attract recruits to their movement by utilizing sexual violence as a material incentive or “spoil of war” for engaging in combat, which would precipitate the use of sexual violence for the same purposes of male-opportunism. The later [where resources attract volunteers and low resources compel commanders to rely on forcibly recruited conscripts] can apply to both to differentiation between armed groups, as well as differentiation within various periods in the life of an insurgent organization. So, with the case of the RUF, initially they extracted from the alluvial diamond sector in order to attract volunteers to the movement, as the conflict was prolonged, the same material resources were no longer available and they had to rely on abducted recruits; periods that were distinguished by first, male opportunism and second by, “combat socialization.” Finally, the case of FARDC should serve as a cautionary tale for international peacebuilding efforts. When integrating surrendering militias into a unified armed force responsible for the provision of security to civilians, donors and practitioners should be aware of the need to strike and intricate balance of funding. Too much funding could lead to male opportunism amongst groups of volunteers; too little funding will also lead to the same thing. Which leads to a second point, measures need to be take in order precipitate some sort of shared ideological or moral goals amongst the combatants so it is easier to retain discipline, even in a geographically disaggregated circumstance.

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    NB: *Phoof* is in often used in connote a females genitalia. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)