Why do some rebel groups commit acts of sexual violence, while others do not?

A qualitative study on the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

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Abstract

Why do some rebel groups commit acts of sexual violence, while others do not? This thesis investigates the variation in the strategic use of sexual violence by rebel groups in armed conflict. The main argument is that strategic sexual violence should be less prevalent in legitimacy-seeking rebel groups’ repertoire of violence, as such groups aim to gain legitimacy from international and national communities. Through a structured and focused comparison study, the two cases under investigation are FARC, who showcases a high prevalence of strategic use of sexual violence, and LTTE, who does not. The independent variable is thus legitimacy-seeking characteristics, which more specifically is examined through observation of the rebel groups’ engagement in political affairs, whether the group has secessionist goals and the groups’ relations to compliance-positive actors. The dependent variable is strategic use of sexual violence, operationalised by examining how the forms of sexual abuses and the targeting of victims varies. The findings support some aspects of the theoretical framework and hypothesis. The most significant findings concern whether a rebel groups has secessionist goals, as well as their engagement in political affairs, and these specific aspects deserve further enquiry. LTTE displays medium-strong legitimacy-seeking characteristics, significantly as the group has clear secessionist goals, an influential political wing and a coherent political vision. FARC displays weak-medium legitimacy-seeking characteristics. The thesis contributes with novel insight on the variation across rebel groups regarding the use of sexual violence, and also combines the research on rebel compliance and sexual violence. This thesis calls for more research on the strategic motivations of rebel groups in armed conflict. Lastly, this thesis underscores the necessity for practitioners and the international community to urge rebel groups to comply with the norms of international law.
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1. Introduction

The occurrence of sexual violence during wartime has, under the past few decades, received an increased attention in social science research, in both qualitative and quantitative studies (See for example Cohen, Nordås, 2014; Wood, 2009). Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) refers abuses such as rape, sexual torture and forced abortion/sterilization, that occur in relation to an armed conflict (Cohen and Nordås, 2014). The state of research shows that there is a large variation in CRSV when examining when, how, where and why sexual violence occurs (Wood, 2009). Many myths regarding the occurrence of CRSV have been debunked, and we know today that CRSV is not an inevitable by-product of war (Schneider, Banholzer and Albarracin, 2015). Some conflicts experience high levels of CRSV, others do not. Both men and women can be perpetrators as well as victims of sexual violence, and it occurs across all types of armed conflicts (Cohen, Wood and Hoover Green, 2013). Sometimes government troops use sexual violence on a massive scale, sometimes rebel groups do, and sometimes none, some or one of the warring parties do (Wood, 2014; Cohen et al., 2013). This variation shows that CRSV is not inevitable and therefore, as argued by Cohen et al (2013), it remains even more crucial to investigate the causes of why CRSV sometimes occurs, and sometimes does not.

Following this, the research question of this thesis is as follows: Why do some rebel groups commit acts of sexual violence, while others do not?

The focus in this thesis is on rebel groups who commit acts of sexual violence, and those who do not. Previous research on the subject have pointed to both opportunistic and strategic perspectives when describing how CRSV varies across rebel groups. CRSV is sometimes described as a weapon of war, that actors use in order to pursue political goals (Cohen, Hoover Green and Wood, 2013). Other scholars argue that sexual violence occurs in conflict when there is low group cohesion and combatants commit acts of sexual violence for their own gratification (Schneider, Banholzer and Albarracin, 2015; Humphreys and Weinstein, 2006). Some scholars (for example Wood, 2009, 2018) point to more comprehensive approaches to the issue and look at the internal structures of how rebel groups work in order to understand why CRSV occurs. A significant body of research highlight that some rebel groups choose to actively prohibit the use of sexual violence, whereas others use it strategically to achieve some type of goal (Muvumba Sellström, 2019; Wood, 2009). It is within this area of research that this thesis is situated. There is still unexplained variation across rebel groups, and more research is needed regarding the strategic motivations that drive some rebel groups to use sexual violence strategically in armed
conflict. In other words; “literature on sexual violence have yet to produce an adequate explanation for its variation across wars, armed groups and units” (Wood, 2010:135).

My theoretical argument is that strategic sexual violence can be traced back to whether a rebel group is seeking legitimacy from the international or domestic community. As such, I claim that legitimacy-seeking characteristics of a rebel group is related to whether a rebel group uses sexual violence strategically. Legitimacy-seeking characteristics may be defined as specific attributes of a rebel group that indicate that said group is seeking legitimacy from domestic or international constituencies (Jo, 2015:67). When seeking legitimacy, the rebel group thus chooses to not use sexual violence, as this would violate international or humanitarian law, and thus weaken their reputation. My thesis extends and builds upon the logic previously formulated by Jo (2015), and I delve into the different legitimacy-seeking characteristics of each rebel group by looking at three aspects; their engagement in political affairs, the secessionist goals, and their relations to compliance-positive actors.

To answer my research question, I conduct a structured and focused comparison (SFC) study, and choose two cases that differ on the dependent variable, strategic use of sexual violence, measured as the form of abuses and type of targeting that occurs within the rebel group’s repertoire of sexual violence. I examine the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (henceforth referred to as FARC, after its Spanish initials) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka. These two rebel groups are similar in many ways, and crucially on factors that previous scholars have considered important when it comes to the occurrence of CRSV, and yet, FARC showcases significantly higher levels of strategic use of sexual violence than LTTE (see section 3.5). The findings support some aspects of the theoretical framework and the hypothesis of this thesis. LTTE showcases medium-strong levels of legitimacy-seeking characteristics, whereas FARC showcases weak-medium levels. The most significant difference is that LTTE has secessionist goals, whereas FARC does not. Both groups have engaged in political affairs, although in different ways. LTTE has a clearly formulated political vision, and an influential political wing, whereas FARC’s General Secretariat has its focus on military tactics. Conclusively, the findings on the groups’ secessionist goals and their engagement in political affairs are the clearest differences between LTTE and FARC, and this deserves further research.

With this thesis, I contribute with new insight on the issue of sexual violence in several ways. Importantly, I underscore the need for increased efforts to understand how sexual violence works, and why some groups use it. Furthermore, I contribute with combining two different strands of literature; the research on CRSV as well as studies on legitimacy and rebel
compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL). Previous studies have pointed to how there might be a connection between CRSV and legitimacy-seeking rebel groups (Jo, 2015; Wood, 2010), but this is a preliminary attempt to study this qualitatively. Lastly, an important policy implication is the necessity of the international community to recognise and see rebel groups as political actors, in order to understand why they use certain tactics to achieve their goals.

The thesis is structured as follows. In the next theory section, a conceptualisation of variables, overview of the previous research on the subject and the theoretical framework is presented. In the third chapter, the research design and case study method are detailed, including the operationalisation of key variables, case selection and data collection, and a brief background on the cases. I also present the alternative explanations and my findings on those variables. In the fourth section, the findings of the SFC-analysis are presented and analysed. Fifth, the thesis concludes with a discussion on the findings and its relation to the theoretical framework, and the implications for future research.

2. Theory Section

The theoretical framework that guides this thesis builds on past research on sexual violence and rebels’ compliance with international norms (Wood, 2009; Jo, 2015; Jo and Thomson, 2014). This chapter begins with a conceptualisation of the key variables, followed by an overview of past research on sexual violence in conflict. Thereafter, a more detailed explanation of the theoretical framework ensues.

2.1 Conceptualisation of the independent and dependent variables

2.1.1 Dependent variable: Strategic use of Sexual Violence

This section presents the definition I use for my dependent variable and discuss the aspects that are relevant for understanding the variation when it comes to rebel groups’ strategic use of sexual violence. Conflict-related sexual violence is defined as a variety of sexual abuses, such as rape, forced sterilization/abortion, sexual slavery, sexual torture, that occurs in relation to armed conflict (Cohen and Nordås, 2014:419). I define strategic use of sexual violence as a tactic where sexual violence is used to undermine the opponent, which is in line with previous explanations by scholars such as Skjelbaek (2001a:75). A clear variation can be seen between those rebel groups who use sexual violence strategically and those who do not (Cohen and Nordås, 2014), and it is this variation that is examined in this thesis. Two aspects shall be evaluated; form of abuse and targeting of victims, that will clarify whether the observed sexual violence was strategic or not.
This categorisation bears resemblance to how Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood (2017:21-22) disentangle “patterns of political violence”, and divide it up by repertoire, technique, targeting and frequency.

2.1.2 Independent Variable: Legitimacy-seeking Characteristics

Building upon Jo (2015:238-9), legitimacy-seeking characteristics refers to specific attributes of a rebel group that indicate their willingness to comply with laws and norms of the international community. Jo identifies three main legitimacy-seeking indicators; secessionist goals, the existence of a political wing, and dependence on a foreign donor who values human rights. I extend upon this logic, by delving deeper into each characteristic. First, the group’s engagement in political affairs, which refers to how they engage in politics through their political wing and how they formulate and spread their political vision. Second, I look at whether the group has secessionist goals, namely whether the group seeks to form an independent state/region. Lastly, I examine the group’s relations to compliance-positive actors, which refers to actors that care about human rights.

2.2 Previous research on the variation of sexual violence during armed conflict

This section concerns previous research on the variation of sexual violence during wartime. Three lines of thought within this research are identified; the opportunistic and the strategic approach, as well as the more all-encompassing perspective that includes more nuanced approaches to CRSV. First, the opportunistic perspective explains CRSV by looking at individual motivations and micro-level group dynamics. The principal-agent analysis builds on the assumption that sexual violence occurs because it is opportunistic, and that it stems from a situation of anarchy in which individuals carry out violent acts of sexual violence without the knowledge of their supervisor (Schneider et al., 2015). In such contexts, individual motivations may create a culture in which sexual violence is generally accepted, and combatants pursue such actions, due to motivations such as sexual gratification (Davies and True, 2015). Such anarchic situations emerge when fighting units lack strong internal structures (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2006; Cohen et al., 2013). In sum, this line of thought posits that weak internal structures enable combatants to commit acts of sexual violence, as there is a lack of leadership structures, and that sexual violence thus generates individual gains and bonding between combatants in a situation that is violent.

Secondly, another trend within the field of CRSV research describes sexual violence as a weapon of war, which implies that it is “used as part of a systematic political campaign which has strategic military purposes” (Skjelsbaek, 2001b:213; see also Eriksson Baaz
and Stern, 2013). CRSV is used to weaken the opponent and can under certain circumstances be part of a strategy of ethnic cleansing or genocide (Davies and True, 2015; Leiby, 2009:450). Sexual violence creates severe physical and psychological injuries to the victims, and can in certain communities stigmatize the victim, which ultimately destroys the communal bonds, and CRSV can in that way “undermine the social fabric of a community” (Leiby, 2009:451). In other words, “sexual violence can serve multiple functions in different contexts and at different points in time”(Leiby, 2009:450). This line of research argues that commanders sometimes choose to promote the use sexual violence, and thus use it as a weapon. However, even if it is used as weapon, that does not mean it has to occur on a massive scale (Cohen et al., 2013).

Third, we can approach sexual violence from a more comprehensive perspective from which we perceive that sexual violence may be opportunistic and/or strategic and can be used in a variety of ways. Wood (2009) argues that the internal structures, normative dynamics and the strategic decisions that leaders make are significant for whether sexual violence occurs. Several different factors are at play, and Wood (ibid) claims that leadership strategies, military hierarchy, individual combatants and small-group dynamics, are essential explanatory factors that explain when and why sexual violence occurs. Furthermore, leadership units in armed groups can promote the use of sexual violence in several ways, in order to achieve the previously mentioned goals of using sexual violence against the opponent. For example, Schneider et al (2015) create an alternative principal-agent framework and argue that commanders can manipulate their soldiers to commit acts of CRSV by either giving them drugs or creating an atmosphere where the soldiers fear punishment. Similarly, Cohen (2013:461) argues that rebel groups who use forced abduction as a recruitment mechanism use sexual violence as a type of “socialization” and peer integration method with the aim of increasing group cohesion. At the same time, abduction as a recruitment method may increase the risk of opportunistic sexual violence, as group cohesion is low (Cohen et al., 2013). In a different vein, Muvumba Sellström (2019) shows how some rebel leaders restrict their combatants to commit acts of sexual violence, and indeed make such actions punishable.

When examining the previous research, it becomes apparent that we do know about some of the causes and effects of CRSV, what enabling factors exist and the goals that leaders pursue by using sexual violence (Cohen et al., 2013). However, it is unclear why leaders of armed units sometimes choose to use sexual violence strategically, while others do not. If using CRSV as a weapon is beneficial in military terms, why do some commanders and leaders tolerate it or even order it, while others take strong measures to prohibit it (Wood, 2009; Hoover Green,
2016)? Some point to religious or cultural beliefs of leaders (Muvumba Sellström, 2019; Ahram, 2019), as reasons as to why leaders do think sexual violence is acceptable while some prohibit it. However, in absence of a clear religious agenda in many rebel groups, such explanations fall short of explaining the variation as to why some rebel groups commit acts of sexual violence while others do not.

Wood (2010:141) argues that some groups may choose to prohibit sexual violence due to dependence on a foreign actor who value human rights, normative ideology or high levels of female combatants. Wood (2010:141) claims that another reason could concern whether the rebels intend to govern the civilians in the future or create a new state, which would make them reliant on the support of the civilians. Jo (2015:234-6) suggests that preliminary statistical studies on correlation indicate that legitimacy-seeking groups may be more likely to abstain from using sexual violence, as does Fazal and Konaev (2019:165). However, we have yet to see any studies extensively researching this relationship, and I therefore aim to contribute with new insight on the strategic motivations and group characteristics of rebel groups and the connection to CRSV. This thesis delves into the strategic perspective on sexual violence, and I attempt to disentangle what factors play are at play when rebel groups choose to not use sexual violence strategically, in comparison to when they do.

2.3 Theoretical framework: Legitimacy as the driver of compliance

The theoretical framework that guides this thesis builds upon previous research on sexual violence and legitimacy. I argue, building on previous studies, that legitimacy-seeking rebel groups think that the perceived gains of complying with IHL regarding sexual violence are higher than the expected costs of abstaining from it (See for example Fazal, 2018:67; Jo, 2015). Legitimacy is in this thesis considered the driver of compliance for rebel groups. I argue that it is the will to gain legitimacy that drives legitimacy-seeking rebel groups to comply with international norms, and thus abstain from using sexual violence strategically during armed conflict. By complying, the rebels showcase legitimacy, both to domestic and international audiences, and frame themselves as a valid political authority. Thus, this decision comes from the decision-making unit in the rebel group that rationally decides that abstaining from using sexual violence as weapon of war is most beneficial.

However, before I specify the causal mechanism, a clarification regarding the concept of legitimacy is in order, and why it is relevant to this theoretical framework. Legitimacy is a contested and often-used concept in social sciences. We may adopt the following definition, that legitimacy is the “perception that an entity is a viable political entity” (Jo, 2015:27) However,
in this thesis, the concept of legitimacy stretches beyond simply “beliefs” and thus can be illustrated in material and more apparent support, as per Jo’s example (2015:27). In sum, in this thesis, legitimacy is considered the level of authority of and trust for a specific governing body (in this thesis rebel group) according to a particular audience (citizens or even international community, including other states and organisations). Specifying a concept is crucial in order to strengthen the utility and coherence of the concept (Gerring, 1999:373).

2.3.1 Causal mechanism

My main claim is that legitimacy-seeking rebel groups should be less likely to use sexual violence strategically during armed conflict. The causal story is as follows; legitimacy-seeking rebel groups aim to gain international legitimacy from the international community and domestic population. Thus, by complying with international norms and laws, the rebel group shows that they are serious about protecting civilians and abiding to laws that normally apply to states. Therefore, the legitimacy-seeking rebel group estimates that the predicted gains of complying are higher than the expected costs. This precise logic is what drives legitimacy-seeking rebel groups to abstain from using sexual violence as a weapon of war.

2.3.1.1 Cost-benefit analysis

The cost-benefit analysis is what decides whether a rebel group chooses to use sexual violence as a weapon of war. Some may argue that it is difficult to comply with international norms due to “the strong incentives to violate the laws of war in civil war” (Jo, 2015:58). For example, some groups with extreme ideologies may see non-compliance as a demonstration of power (ibid:59). Furthermore, compliance may require training of combatants and certain structural changes, that some rebel groups find too costly (ibid). Recent studies claim that groups only acknowledge the existence of IHL when they think that they can get something out of complying with them, for example recognition and thereby political authority (Fazal, 2018; Jo and Thomson, 2014). However, as argued by Fazal (2018:63-64, 67), for rebel groups the costs of compliance are usually lower than the potential benefits. In comparison with governments whom need to comply with IHL, rebel groups can usually change their policies easier and bureaucratic and military costs of compliance are in general low (ibid). Non-compliance can, on the other hand, have very high costs; for example, reputational costs and loss of national, as well as international, support. In other words, “compliance is a net-benefit” for rebel groups (Fazal, 2018:67).

The audiences with the largest impact on rebel groups’ compliance behaviour, in other words their “compliance constituencies” (Jo, 2015:63), can provide both military, financial and political benefits. The constituencies may include domestic populations, international
organisations, UN agencies, human rights groups and countries who value human rights. By reaching out to these audiences and complying with international norms, legitimacy-seeking rebel groups hope for something in return. These assumptions about how “all individuals are rational utility maximisers” (Kellstedt and Whitten, 2013:35), is a common line of thought within the social sciences, and more specifically within the thinking usually associated with rational choice theory (ibid).

2.3.2 Assumptions

This argument builds on several assumptions. I assume that the use of sexual violence is a practice of war (Wood, 2009), and that for it to be used strategically, the decision-making unit in a rebel group must have sufficient command and control structures. This assumption thus relates to the scope conditions of my theoretical framework. Groups must be capable enough to be able to enforce the policies they wish, which points to internal structures and a central command (Wood, 2009). Thus, I assume that the leaders have sufficient commanding control over their combatants, in order to enforce or prohibit the use of sexual violence (Wood, 2014). However, the strength can both contribute to compliance and non-compliance, depending on the political motivations of the group (ibid). Furthermore, I assume that sexual violence would damage the reputation of a rebel group, due to the international laws and the obvious denouncement of the use of sexual violence by international bodies such as the UN and the International Criminal Court (Gaggioli, 2015). Hence, the argument that rebel groups who seek legitimacy would rationally decide to not use sexual violence in armed conflict rests on the assumption that sexual violence would cause significant damage to their reputation.

3. Research Design

In this qualitative comparative case study, the unit of analysis is rebel group that is active in an armed conflict. In this following chapter, I describe the chosen qualitative method; structured and focused comparison. Next, an overview of the operationalisation of the key variables is presented. This is followed by descriptions on the data collections and case selections methods. Lastly, I present the chosen cases, LTTE and FARC, and present the findings on the alternative explanations.

3.1 Research method: Structured and focused comparison

In order to answer the research question of this thesis, a qualitative comparative case-study is conducted. The method of choice is the structured and focused comparison method, as described by George and Bennett (2004:67). The SFC-method is structured because the scholar
asks the same questions to each case, which ensures “systematic comparison” (ibid). It is necessary to use this systematic approach in order to find data that is genuinely comparable (ibid:70). The method is focused as it only deals with relevant aspects of each chosen case. It is important to remember that a “single study cannot address all the interesting aspects of an historical event” (George and Bennett, 2004:70). The questions should be grounded and related to the theoretical framework, to ensure that only the significant questions are being asked (ibid).

When choosing an appropriate method and constructing a research design, it is important to examine whether a qualitative or a quantitative approach is most beneficial to investigate the research question at hand (Morse et al., 2002:18; Brady, Collier and Seawright, 2006). Qualitative comparative case studies allow for a thick conceptualisation of key variables, as well as “the development of thick theory: richly specified, complex models that are sensitive to variations by time and place” (Coppedge, 1999:468). Further, one may argue that this focus on richness and complexity is more in line with our “intuitive understanding of how the political world really works” (Coppedge, 1999:475). For example, the complexity and richness of the concept ‘legitimacy-seeking characteristics’ and theoretical framework that I work with arguably benefits from an in-depth approach, which is enabled through a qualitative study.

Moving forward, when operationalising the key variables in a qualitative study, it is crucial to think about the validity of the measurements. Valid measurements are achieved when “scores meaningfully capture the ideas contained in the corresponding concept” (Adcock and Collier, 2001:530). However, there is a tension between internal and external validity (Slater and Ziblatt, 2013:1307). External validity refers to how certain we can be that our findings can be applied to the larger population outside of our study (Kellstedt and Whitten, 2013:89). Internal validity refers to how our study “produces high levels of confidence about whether the independent variables causes the dependent variable” (ibid). When we have high internal validity, we know more details about the causal relationship between an independent and dependent variable (Slater and Ziblatt, 2013; Gerring, 2007:217). In order to achieve high internal validity, we thus need to work with detailed and multidimensional concepts. In this thesis, this is applicable as I work with thick and multifaceted concepts and theory. However, the issue with this approach is the weaker level of external validity (Slater and Ziblatt, 2013:1307). In general, qualitative studies have higher internal than external validity, whereas quantitative studies have higher external validity, and thus potential to generalize beyond the cases under study, (Gerring, 2007:43). Thus, the potential of generalization based upon this study is limited, and I therefore encourage more studies on this subject.
3.2 Operationalisation of key variables

In the following chapter, the operationalisation of the key variables is presented. An overview of the SFC-questions is found in Appendix A and B, section 7.

3.2.1 Dependent variable: Strategic use of sexual violence

The dependent variable, strategic use of sexual violence, can be defined as the sexual violence that rebel groups use when attempting to achieve a political/military goal (Leiby, 2009). By examining how the forms of sexual abuses, and the targeting varies, we can see how and if a rebel group is using sexual violence strategically, or whether the CRSV is more sporadic and opportunistic. This operationalisation bears resemblance to how Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood (2017:21-22) define patterns of political violence but is altered in order to capture what I argue to be the two most prominent indicators of strategic use of sexual violence.

3.2.1.1 Form

If a rebel group commits acts of sexual violence, the form of abuse can indicate whether the use of sexual violence was strategic or not. Cohen and Nordås (2014) have created a dataset that covers the intensity and the forms of sexual violence across conflicts, and I use the same specification of forms of abuse: “(1) rape, (2) sexual slavery, (3) forced prostitution, (4) forced pregnancy, and (5) forced sterilization/abortion”. The dataset builds on Wood (2009) as well and thus includes: “(6) sexual mutilation, and (7) sexual torture.” (Cohen and Nordås, 2014:419).

Arguably, if a rebel group has used these different forms of violence, the notion that the rebel group is using it as a weapon of war becomes more likely. More specifically, the abuses (2) – (7), indicate that there is more planning behind the act. For example, forced sterilization/abortion clearly weakens the ability for the victim to procreate, and thus humiliates the victim. Forced pregnancy and rape, could be used strategically against the opponent, in order to change the ethnic identity of the offspring, or to spread disease, as could be seen in Rwanda when HIV-positive combatants raped women from the opposite ethnic group (Skjelsbæk, 2001a:73-74). We can never be entirely certain behind the intention behind a sexual crime. Therefore, reports of different types of abuses are necessary to showcase the width and scope of the sexual violence, and whether it all seems strategically organised.

3.2.1.2 Targeting

Three different types of targeting are usually mentioned when we speak of targeting of civilians in civil wars; indiscriminate, selective and collective targeting. Selective targeting can be aimed at certain individual who are believed to work for/support the opponent, it is thus the specific attributes of the individual that is targeted (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood, 2017:21). Collective
targeting refers to targeting of a specific group, possibly ethnic, social and/or religious, and victims are thus “chosen” based on their belonging to a certain group (ibid; Sjöberg, 2014:72-79; Skjelbaek, 2001b:241). Indiscriminate targeting, which can be aimed at anyone, can be strategic in the sense that it aims to spread fear, and causes the population to question the government’s ability to protect its citizens (Maedl, 2011; Wood, 2014). All these three types of targeting can be considered strategic, as they provide different gains for the rebel group. However, collective and selective targeting are considered the most strategic, as they are explicitly aimed at the opponent.

3.2.2 Independent variable: Legitimacy-seeking characteristics

Legitimacy-seeking characteristics can be defined as features of a rebel group that signals that the group aims to seek legitimacy (Jo, 2015:67). In this section I specify what elements are examined, in order to investigate whether these elements can explain the variation in my dependent variable.

3.2.2.1 First characteristic: Engagement in political affairs

The first legitimacy-seeking characteristic concerns the rebel groups’ engagement in political affairs. The operationalisation of the first relevant characteristic, engagement in political affairs, includes several relevant aspects. Firstly, I examine how the group engages in political affairs. The observable indicators for this would be that the group has a political wing with influence, and that it engages in governance activities, such as holding elections or providing services (Jo, 2015). The second aspect that I investigate is whether the rebel group has a clear and formulated political vision, with specific goals and ideological foundations. I also look at how the group spreads its political vision to the national and international audiences. These aspects capture if and how the rebel group engages with political matters, and whether this engagement has any effect on the military endeavours. Moreover, a politically active group is more aware about international norms and should thus be more likely to comply with norms of the international community, such as the laws regarding sexual violence in war.

3.2.2.2 Second characteristic: Secessionist goals

Another group characteristic concerns the existence of secessionist goals, a group characteristic that Jo (2015:95), among others (Lasley and Thyne, 2015; Wood, 2009), claim is significant in shaping a rebel group’s behaviour and strategy. The different aspects that I wish to investigate regarding secessionist goals covers the specificity and the coherence of the goals. The first aspect covers whether there is a will to create an independent state, or whether the group seeks independence over a certain region. The second aspect covers who is to be included in the new state/region, and whether there is consensus in the rebel group regarding this vision. Past research has shown that rebel groups with secessionist goals tend to be less likely to target
civilians and use child soldiers (Lasley and Thyne, 2015), and that they are more likely to strife towards international legitimacy and recognition, which may thus be an indication that compliance may be more likely when it comes to sexual violence.

3.2.2.3 Third characteristic: Relations to compliance-positive actors

The last characteristic that I investigate is rebel groups’ relations to compliance-positive actors. Building upon Jo (2015:98), who argues that rebel groups who seek support from countries, international organisations, NGOs or other actors whom are aware of human rights are legitimacy-seeking, I intend to look at how the rebel group interacts with and depends on its compliance constituency. I look at how the rebel group is dependent on military or political support from an external state who are positive towards compliance behaviour – which more specifically means actors who value human rights, democracy and international humanitarian law. Though direct support from an NGO or international organisations is rare (Jo, 2015:98-100), interactions and relationships, such as meetings and training, with such actors may indicate that the group is seeking legitimacy. Previous research has shown that some rebel groups actively work on their diplomatic ties with other states, specifically those who seek recognition, and thus this perspective is taken into account (Huang, 2016:124). If a rebel group is conscious and interested, dependent on and/or maintaining relations with foreign actors who would only support groups who comply with international law, this should indicate that the group is seeking legitimacy.

3.3 Data collection

The data used for this thesis is based on secondary sources, primarily reports from international organisations, governments, peer-reviewed journal articles, news sources and acclaimed databases. When assessing reliability of sources, I deploy source criticism such as assessing the bias, dependence, proximity and identity of each source (Öberg and Sollenberg, 2011:187-190). I have used the method of triangulation in order to gather information, which refers to the process of finding and comparing multiple sources “to improve construct validity and to detect bias”(ibid:191), and to use a variation of sources for different purposes and to enhance the nuances of information (ibid). Research on sexual violence is problematic due to the underreporting, stigmatisation and the sensitivity of the subject (Campbell, 2018). In general, information from conflict-ridden areas is hard to obtain, as information may include bias or propaganda, and it is thus important to be aware of and acknowledge these challenges throughout the data collection process (Öberg and Sollenberg, 2011:185, 198).
3.4 Case selection: Most similar method

In this small-\(n\) case study, the most similar case method is used, and the cases are chosen on the dependent variable to ensure variation. In this method, cases are chosen to be as similar as possible on all relevant variables apart from the phenomenon of interest, the dependent variable (Bennett, 2004:30-32). In qualitative comparative case-studies, the case selection process is fundamental when establishing covariation, which refers to whether one variable covaries with another, and isolation, meaning that other confounding variables do not affect our dependent variable (Kellstedt and Whitten, 2013:54). To meet the criteria of covariation and isolation, I firstly, choose cases that vary on the dependent variable to see whether my independent variable covaries with my dependent variable, and secondly, ensure that all of my control variables, the alternative explanations, are held similar across both cases, in order to make sure that no confounding variables are affecting the results. However, it is important to remember that we can never be entirely sure that we have controlled for all possible alternative explanations, and it is impossible to find completely identical cases (Bennett, 2004:30-32).

As argued by George and Bennett (2004:69), identifying the “universe of cases”, is crucial when conducting a comparative case study. This case population is tied to the scope conditions of the theoretical framework. The population of cases in this thesis is all rebel groups with strong and sufficient command and control structures. A preliminary assessment of cases was done using the Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict-dataset (SVAC-dataset, presented in Cohen and Nordås, 2014). This dataset is based upon reports from Amnesty, Human Rights Watch and the US government, and covers sexual violence, in intensity and form, between 1989 to 2019. Cases that are either assessed to showcase high prevalence of strategic use of sexual violence, and low prevalence of strategic use of sexual violence, are considered. Out of the population of cases, several alternative explanations were considered and controlled for, in order to choose as similar cases as possible, and in the end, LTTE in Sri Lanka was chosen as a case of low prevalence of strategic sexual violence, and FARC was chosen as a case of high prevalence of strategic sexual violence.

The time-periods for the analysis are as follows. For FARC, I focus on the period 2000-2015. This time period allows me to study FARC’s use of strategic sexual violence over an extended period of time. In the late 1990’s and early 2000’s, FARC was growing vastly and going through peace negotiations, and the following decade proved to be turbulent for the group as they lost military strength, and in the early 2010’s, new peace negotiations were initiated (UCDP, 2019a). After 2015, FARC changed as it was turning into a political party, and that period is thus
beyond the scope of this study (ibid). The LTTE will be studied between 1990 until their defeat in 2009 (UCDP, 2019b). During these time periods both LTTE and FARC became more established and firstly grew in strength and then lost it, thus going through similar trends in warfare (UCDP, 2019a, 2019b).

3.4.1 Case background: LTTE
LTTE emerged in the 1970’s, following decades of growing grievances within Sri Lanka’s Tamil population due to the rise of discriminatory policies enforced by the political leadership, that consisted of a Sinhalese majority (Yass, 2014:67-68). The LTTE was established in 1976 by Velupillai Prabhakaran, as a military insurgency, and the goal was to achieve Tamil independence in provinces located in northern and eastern Sri Lanka by using violent methods (UCDP, 2019b). In the 1980s and 1990s, more Tamil insurgencies, as well as other paramilitaries, emerged, further intensifying the fighting (ibid.). During this time, LTTE defeated all other Tamil insurgencies, and became known internationally for its brutal suicide attacks and civilian targeting, but also for its organization structure, with its own well-equipped army, air and naval force and hierarchical commanding units, as well as administrative offices (CISAC, 2019a; Al Jazeera, 2009). The Tamil diaspora became an important asset to the LTTE, as the diaspora helped provide resources, financial and material, to the insurgency (Becker, 2006). LTTE established an extensive international network and engaged in various international illicit businesses to fund the insurgency, and established ties with other insurgencies in India (Becker, 2006; UCDP, 2019b).

Several rounds of peace negotiations were initiated during the 1990’s (Mampilly, 2001:95-109). However, these attempts were unsuccessful, and the 1990’s saw an increase in fighting and strength on LTTE’s part as they gained territorial control over provinces in the northern and eastern areas of the country, including the Jaffna peninsula (Stokke, 2006:1022-1025). Another peace process was initiated in the early 2000s between LTTE and the Wickremasinghe administration, with Norway as main consolidator, and several peace agreements and initiatives were made, and the fighting decreased during this period (ibid.). Eventually, the peace process broke down in the mid-2000s, and at the same time the new President Mahinda Rajapaksa took a more hostile approach towards the rebel group, and intense fighting followed, with many civilian casualties noted (Mampilly, 2011:95-109). The LTTE was weakened, experienced internal fighting, lost most of its core leadership and eventually announced its own defeat in May 2009 (Mampilly, 2011:25; Podder, 2014:220-221). Thus, the war terminated at this point, but some foreign offices are still believed to be active, in UK, US and Norway (UCDP, 2019b).
3.4.2 Case background: FARC
The roots of the conflict between FARC and the government of Colombia, alongside a number of other armed insurgencies and paramilitaries, can be traced back to the period known as ‘La Violencia’, a brutal civil war during the 1940s and 1950s, that pitted the two government parties, the liberals and the conservatives, against each other (Norman, 2018:639-640). Inequalities between different groups in Colombia, especially between rural and urban communities, and historical differences regarding land rights and reforms, are explanatory factors to the longevity of the civil war (Flores, 2014). Inspired by a surge of leftist and Marxist movements around the world, FARC was founded by a group of peasant revolutionaries (Metelits, 2010:90). FARC became known for its engagement in the drug trade, and its use of extortion and kidnappings to fund its insurgency (ibid:90-110).

However, it was not until the 1970’s when the coca trade took off and became a crucial part of FARC’s survival (Norman, 2018). FARC gained territorial control in primarily the southern area of Colombia, and expanded throughout the 1980s and 1990’s, and at the same time right-wing paramilitaries grew in strength, which contributed to an increase in the severity of the fighting (Cunningham et al., 2013). During the mid-2000s, FARC suffered a number of setbacks as prominent leaders were captured or killed, and the more hostile approach by President Uribe significantly weakened the group’s strength, and the popular support for the group vastly decreased (Lee, 2012:28-29; Bruce-Jones and Smith, 2019). FARC’s loss of power, the decreasing number of combatants, negotiations with the new President Santos, and a general shift in attitude lead to the signing of a peace agreement in 2016 (Bruce-Jones and Smith, 2019:2-6).

3.5 Alternative explanations
In this section, I specify the alternative explanations for the variation of sexual violence. The operationalisation is illustrated in Table 1, where I specify the indicators and questions. I present the results in this section. The two chosen cases, LTTE and FARC, are similar across all these alternative explanations, which contributes to a higher level of isolation of confounding variables.

3.5.1 Forced recruitment
Several scholars have pointed to how sexual violence is more likely when combatants are forcefully recruited, which refers to how rebel groups recruit civilians against their will (Cohen, 2013). It increases the risk of opportunistic violence as the risk of combatants feeling disconnected to the group is higher (ibid.). However, it can also be ordered by the rebel leaders in a way to increase group cohesion and promote peer integration (Schneider, Banholzer and Albarracin, 2015). Therefore, the type of recruitment mechanism is important when assessing
both groups. When examining FARC and LTTE, it becomes apparent that both groups used a mix of recruitment methods. Both groups had a substantial amount of voluntary cadre, who had strong ideological convictions or desires to join the ranks (Leech, 2011:49; Terpstra and Frerks, 2017). However, forced recruitment was also widespread across both groups, sometimes but not always including children (For LTTE, see for example Terpstra and Frerks, 2017:280, and for FARC see UN, 2009:22, 33). LTTE had the policy of “one member per family” and thus forced most Tamil families to give at least one member to the insurgency (Wood, 2009:148). FARC on the other hand has been reported of forcefully recruiting people from rural areas (UN, 2009).

3.5.2 Religious motivations
Many scholars argue that religious beliefs can contribute to an increase/decrease of strategic sexual violence. For example, radically religious groups such as the Islamic State are known for their extensive use of various forms of sexual violence (Ahram, 2019). At the same time, religion can cause leaders to prohibit the use of sexual violence through a stigmatisation mechanism, as it is seen as morally unjustifiable on religious grounds, as was seen on the part of some rebel groups in Burundi (Muvumba Sellström, 2019). When examining FARC and LTTE, it becomes apparent that neither group has any strong religious motivations. FARC is founded on a Marxist revolutionary ideology (UCDP, 2019a; CISAC, 2019b) and LTTE is founded on a more nationalist socialist vision (Terpstra and Frerks, 2017; LTTE, 2005:308). Although many of LTTE members were Hindu, religion was never explicitly a part of their political vision, and the group is founded on secular principles (UCDP, 2019b; Peterson, 2013). The LTTE demanded that the combatants abandoned most aspects of a normal life, including religion, and fully dedicated themselves to the mission of the rebel group (Wood, 2009:149).

3.5.3 Group cohesion
As argued by Wood (2009) internal structures are necessary determinants for whether sexual violence occurs. In more cohesive groups, the commanders can control its combatants, both in order in urging or prohibiting acts of violence. Opposingly, in groups that are internally disorganised, the leaders cannot control the combatants, and thus any policies they enforce become pointless (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2006). Thus, indicators for a strong group cohesion is that there is a hierarchical structure, a strong command and control system and organized units. FARC is known for its strong group structure and hierarchical structures, with many different units and blocs hierarchically organised and geographically spread out over Colombia, all reporting to a Central Command (Provost, 2017; Cunningham et al., 2013; CISAC, 2019b). The same is applicable to LTTE, who had a naval force, air force as well as a the suicide
unit called the Black Tigers, and the leader Prabhakaran is known to have held the group in a
tight grip (Al Jazeera, 2009; Wood, 2009; CISAC, 2019a). The rebel group had a strong command
and control structure, with punitive measures taken to punish any combatant who disobeyed
policies (ibid).

3.5.4 Female combatants
Some scholars argue that rebel groups with more female combatants tend to commit fewer acts
of sexual violence, and that female cadre choose to not use sexual violence strategically. It is
however important to remember that females can be and sometimes are perpetrators as well
(Cohen, Wood and Hoover Green, 2013) but previous studies have supported the notion that in
general; when there is a higher level of female combatants, the likelihood of a rebel group
deploying tactics of sexual violence, is lower (Gerecke, 2010:141; Wood, 2010:132-134).

Looking at the selected cases, I find that LTTE welcomed women into their ranks,
and it is believed that between 15 % and a third of the combatants were women, and around 30-
40 % were women in the ‘Black Tigers’ division(Dissanayake, 2017:1-4). The recruitment of
women to the LTTE was beneficial strategically, but it also allowed women to break away from
traditional patriarchal norms in society (ibid). However, the decision-making was still in the hands
of men (Dissanayake, 2017:1-4). Similarly, FARC had a prominent level of female combatants,
and it is estimated that between 20 and 30 % of FARC’s fighters were women(Leech, 2011:50;
Gutiérrez Sanín, Francy and Franco, 2017). However, no women have been included in the
secretariat, but FARC have claimed that 40 % of its commanders are women (Leech, 2011:50).
Witness reports indicate that many women choose to join FARC to find a different purpose and
for the opportunity to live a different kind of life (ibid:53). The female recruitment seem to have
been compatible with the Marxist ideology of FARC (Gutiérrez Sanín, Francy and Franco, 2017).
3.5.5 Table 1: Overview of alternative explanations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Combatants</td>
<td>What is the level of female combatants in the rebel group?</td>
<td>Around 20-30% female combatants.</td>
<td>Between 15% and a third of all combatants were women (higher percentage in the Black Tigers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Cohesion</td>
<td>Does the group have a strong group cohesion?</td>
<td>Yes, the group show signs of high group cohesion.</td>
<td>Yes, the group shows signs of high group cohesion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious motivations</td>
<td>Does the group have any religious motivations?</td>
<td>No, religion is not a fundamental part of the group’s ideology.</td>
<td>No, religion is not a fundamental part of the group’s ideology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced Recruitment</td>
<td>Does the rebel recruit some of their combatants with force?</td>
<td>Yes, the group forcibly recruits many combatants.</td>
<td>Yes, the group forcibly recruits many combatants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Findings

4.1 Dependent variable: Strategic use of sexual violence

The following findings indicate that there is a high prevalence of strategic use of sexual violence in FARC’s case, and a low prevalence of strategic use of sexual violence in LTTE’s case. For an overview, see Table 2 in section 4.1.3.

4.1.1 FARC: Findings on strategic use of sexual violence

In this next section, I present the findings on FARC’s strategic use of sexual violence. The forms of violence captured by Cohen and Nordås’ (2014) dataset, are rape, sexual slavery, sexual prostitution, forced abortion/sterilization and sexual torture. During the time period, 2000-2015, the most abuses were reported in the last five years, with the prevalence in the dataset marked as either a 2 or 3 which indicates very high frequency and reports of sexual violence (Cohen and Nordås, 2014). Further, when examining the targeting of sexual violence, it becomes clear that FARC has targeted a variety of different groups, as well as used sexual violence within its own ranks.

In the conflict in Colombia, all parties are responsible of committing acts of sexual violence, particularly against women in rural areas, and Afro-Colombian and indigenous women (UN, 2006:15, 21). FARC-combatants have been identified as perpetrators of such attacks, and the attacks have fuelled a massive national displacement of women who have been forced to flee from armed groups and conflict zones (ibid:63). A UN report shows that FARC have used sexual violence to frame themselves as dominant, and to gain control over territory (UN, 2001:57), and some humanitarian organisations have been threatened that actively support and protect women from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities (ibid). According to a US government report (2007), "violence against women is employed as a strategy of war by the actors of the armed conflict" and that the groups spreads fear and dehumanizes victims in their communities.

The armed groups in Colombia have all targeted women from indigenous, peasant and Afro-Colombian communities, namely those who are “organized, displaced, returnees or confined” (UN, 2005:62). This has particularly occurred in the areas of Tolina, Risaralda and Quindío (UN, 2005:26, 57-60. FARC have selectively targeted females who assumed to be having relations to combatants of the opponents, or other women who opposed or criticized FARC in any way (ibid.). According to these reports, FARC used sexual violence as means punish dissidents and to teach them to obey, as well as to frighten and humiliate vulnerable communities. Further reports points to the use of sexual violence as a mechanism for “pressure
or retaliation”, and an example of this is how FARC, in June 2007, sexually abused a teacher in Medellín who had refused to teach her students the guerrilla’s political ideas (UN, 2008:21). Similarly, on 26 June that same year, several women were raped by the FARC guerrilla for “having refused to cooperate” (UN, 2008:32). Reports show that FARC has actively used sexual violence within its own ranks, and systematically against women (UN, 2001:24). The group forcibly recruited young girls and boys, and reports have found that many girls became subject to sexual slavery. Forced abortions, and compulsory use of contraceptives was enforced in the group (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood, 2017:32).

Furthermore, there are signs of FARC attempting to prohibit the use of sexual violence. FARC has a number of internal laws that apply to its combatants, which are collected under the so-called ‘Regulation’, a number of prohibited actions that have been updated regularly since the 1990’s. In the latest update in 2013, sexual violence is prohibited and any acts are to be handled through a court martial (Provost, 2017:243-4). An example of such a prosecution was when one combatant was sentenced to death after the sexual assault of a woman (ibid:245). However, the FARC courts have been criticized by international organisations, such as Human Rights Watch, and analysts, who claim that the many trials have been unjust and not acceptable according to norms of international law (Provost, 2017:250-251).

4.1.2 LTTE: Findings on strategic use of sexual violence

Few reports claim that LTTE used sexual violence as a weapon of war, and most of them are unverified (All Survivors project, 2017:9; no reports of CRSV in the SVAC-dataset in Cohen and Nordås, 2014). An exception is the following example: “one prisoner held by the LTTE for three years in the mid-1990s was regularly tortured, including the use of a hot iron on his genitals” (Wood, 2009:149). Some reports however find that Tamil civilians and LTTE soldiers were subjected to rape, massrape and sexual torture by Sri Lankan government military and paramilitaries, especially in rural areas (All Survivors project, 2017:14; Minority Rights Group, 2013:7-8, Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2001:1).

According to reports and interviews, LTTE maintained strict restrictions on behaviour for Tamils, and only allowed sexual relations between married couples ( Minority Rights Group, 2013:9). In Tamil society, sex between unmarried couples, and rape is considered a crime (Wood, 2009). Extensive punishments followed for those who broke any rules, including the use of sexual violence. An example is the following punishment after four LTTE-combatants gang-raped a young girl; “As punishment, their hands were bound, and they were dragged behind a tractor. At the end their bodies were torn up, and they were crying for water when they died”
(Wood, 2009:148). Further, four years after the war, witness reports tell of how the situation for women in northern Sri Lanka, former LTTE-controlled areas, has worsened due to government abuses (Minority Rights Group, 2013:7-8, 21). The group did however commit many other forms of abuses (Terpstra and Frerks, 2017). An example of this is how the LTTE targeted the Sinhalese population, for example; “in 2006 the LTTE killed more than one hundred Sinhalese civilians in various villages in the northeast, including sixty-eight in the village of Kebithigollewa.” (Wood, 2009:148).

4.1.3 Table 2: Summary of findings on DV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic sexual violence</th>
<th>Questions (SFC-method):</th>
<th>Analyzed Values:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General</strong></td>
<td>Has the rebel group used strategic sexual violence in the armed conflict?</td>
<td>FARC: High prevalence of Strategic CRSV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many reports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Form</strong></td>
<td>Has the rebel group used any of the following forms of abuses related to the conflict: rape, mass rape, sexual mutilation, sexual torture, prostitution, forced pregnancy-abortion?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All/most forms of abuse reported on in conflict: rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, sexual prostitution, forced abortion/sterilization and sexual torture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Targeting</strong></td>
<td>Is the sexual violence targeted toward a group based on its ethnic/social status? Is the individual specifically selected due to its outspoken support/role for the opponent? Does any of the following forms of targeting apply; collective, selective or indiscriminate?</td>
<td>All or some forms of targeting. Selective and collective most significant. Targeting of specific ethnic groups, dissidents and women associated with opponents and random targeting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Independent variable: Legitimacy-seeking characteristics

The following findings indicate that FARC has Weak-Medium legitimacy-seeking characteristics, and LTTE has Medium-Strong legitimacy-seeking characteristics. For an overview of findings, see table in section 4.2.3.

4.2.1 FARC: Legitimacy-seeking characteristics

4.2.1.1 FARC: Engagement in political affairs

According to the following findings, there is some evidence on how FARC has engaged in political affairs. However, I find that in general, the political ambitions oftentimes are overshadowed by military tactics, and as such, the political wing and ideas do not influence all of FARC.

First, I look at the FARC’s General Secretariat, that consists of seven members who all handle matters regarding the rebel group, including political, military and finance strategies (CISAC, 2019b). The structure of FARC, when examining the General Secretariat, is modelled by how the Colombian army is organised (Provost, 2017). With different military units and blocs, the rebel group is very hierarchical and organised as a military organisation, and its focus was on battle strategy and territorial control (CISAC, 2019b; Cunningham et al, 2013).

FARC seem to have used a dual strategy when it comes to how it has attempted to achieve its goals (Provost, 2017; Gentry and Spencer, 2010). FARC, on the one hand has focused on ways to infiltrate the state institutions, thus gaining control over certain areas and local governments, and on the other hand, ways to “impede the state’s credibility” by showing the incapability of the government (Provost, 2017:237).

Some examples of this strategy follow. FARC offered security services, and built roads, which on some occasions gave them civilian support as they provided something that the incumbent government did not, but other peasant and communities were resistant towards FARC’s attempt to govern (Arjona, 2016:175, 194-6; Provost, 2017:230). In some communities, the FARC combatants become friendly with the civilians (Arjona, 2016:186). Despite having extensive control in some communities, FARC did not emerge as an de facto government, but attempted to exercise as much control as possible behind the scenes and function more as a military allegiance to the local government (Provost, 2017:236-240). Oftentimes, FARC influenced local government representatives, funded projects, and gave instructions to mayors regarding policies on education, labour relations, justice, health and infrastructure (ibid).

Although FARC themselves did not hold elections with their own names on the ballots, they oftentimes controlled and decided who was to be selected (Arjona, 2016:186-187). These
tendencies appear to have grown stronger during the late 1990’s, as Colombia went through a decentralization phase, and the local government got more power over resources and services (Sánchez and Palau, 2006).

FARC’s political vision is based on leftist Marxist philosophy, and FARC was founded in 1964 by a group of peasant farmers, including the previous leader Manuel Marulanda, but the grievances concerning land rights and inequality emerged during the civil war La Violencia that set “liberal and communist peasant self-defence groups” against the conservative government (Norman, 2018:639-640; see also Metelits, 2010:90). The goal was to urge the citizens to take control over their land and stand up against the government (Provost, 2017; Lee, 2012:30-32). However, the political vision of FARC significantly weakened during the mid-2000s due to how FARC largely shifted its focus from political objectives to their engagement in coca cultivation and drug trade (Norman, 2018:641; Lee, 2012:29-32; Cunningham et al., 2013). Interestingly, FARC tried to merge their political ideology with their drug trade goals, by claiming that the coca cultivation was a way of protecting peasants and fighting against landowners, which they referred to as “narco-bourgeoise”, as well as largely blaming the US for high demands of drugs (Bruce-Jones and Smith, 2019:5).

The weakened political ambitions became evident after leader Manuel Marulanda was killed in 2008, as he was more politically driven than other leaders (Metelits, 2010:117-120). Simultaneously, FARC lost its political power as peace negotiations ended, and the Pastrana administration, who had held an approachable stance towards FARC, was replaced by the more aggressive Uribe administration (Metelits, 2010:119; CISAC, 2019b). FARC’s connection to peasant communities weakened, and analysts point to how FARC was not able to sustain its relationship with civilians when it was focused on the rival groups, due to the increase in paramilitaries and self-defence groups (ibid). Further, when FARC did issue political statements, they mainly concerned critique of the government (Lee, 2012:32). These developments explain how FARC, a politically driven rebel group, in the early 2000s lost its political objectives in favour of business and military-related goals. However, during the 2010s as peace negotiations began, land reformation was at the forefront of FARC’s negotiations priorities, which indicates that there may have been a slight shift at the end of time period under study (Bruce-Jones and Smith, 2019:5-6).

The findings indicate that FARC, during the early 2000s, attempted to spread its political vision to one compliance constituency: the civilians. For instance, FARC held political trainings and meetings for civilians in rural communities, where they discussed FARC’s Marxist
ideology, with the aim to spread their vision and thus recruit them to the guerrilla (Arjona, 2016:176-77). The findings suggest that FARC tried to reach out to the international community through internet propaganda, but in general held a negative stance toward the international system, and in particular the US (Lee, 2012:33; CISAC, 2019b). In 1993, FARC established an international committee (COMINTER) with the aim to handle diplomatic ties with 27 different Latin American and European countries, and the goal was to handle its international objectives with likeminded leftist governments (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2011:30; Cunningham et al., 2013:480). In the early 2000s as well, in June 2000, diplomats from Europe, Canada, Japan and the UN, all travelled to FARC-controlled zones to participate in discussions regarding crop eradication and human rights (Rabasa and Chalk, 2001:30).

4.2.1.2 FARC: Secessionist goals
FARC did not have any stated secessionist goals (UCDP, 2019a), but are very open regarding their goals of overthrowing the government (Metelits, 2010). In the previous section, FARC’s political vision was more explicitly described. In short, FARC’s goal has consistently been to overthrow the government, and its ideology is based on a Marxist-Leninist philosophy (CISAC, 2019b). FARC did have control over certain areas in Colombia, but the goal was never to form an independent region or state (Provost, 2017).

4.2.1.3 FARC: Relations to compliance-positive actors
FARC’s most significant secondary support has come from Venezuela’s President Hugo Chavéz (Gentry and Spencer, 2010:472). Due to the extensive human rights violations and lack of freedom that has characterised Chavez’ rule, one may note that this does not encompass a compliance-positive actor (Amnesty International, 2008:327). However, the group did maintain relations and receive from the Geneva Call in 2014 (Geneva Call, 2015). However, no public support has been expressed from any large international organisation or compliance-positive actor. The group did establish diplomatic ties, but most significantly to like-minded states and groups, such as Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela, as well as individuals in the US (Gentry and Spencer, 2010:473).

However, FARC, held a negative stance towards many compliance-positive countries, such as the US, or organisations such as the European Union. Arguably, the relationship between the US and FARC has worsened due to the drug trade, and FARC’s essential role in this context (Lee, 2012:30-33). Thus, it seems that the groups’ relations to the international community changed over the time period under study, and significantly grew weaker during the 2000s, and recovered slightly during the last few years during the peace negotiations,
as FARC showcased themselves willing to reach an agreement (Bruce-Jones and Smith, 2019:2-6).

4.2.2 LTTE: Legitimacy-seeking characteristics

4.2.2.1 LTTE: Engagement in political affairs

During the armed conflict, LTTE engaged in political affairs in several different ways. First, LTTE had a Central Governing Committee, under the firm leadership of Prabhakaran until his death in 2008, under which all different departments, including the political secretariat, had to report to (Mampilly, 2011:111; UCDP, 2019b: CISAC, 2019a). There were several different departments that focused on areas such as finance, healthcare, education, judiciary, police, and the group as a whole was organised in a similar way to that of the Sri Lankan government, with a “top-down” structure (Mampilly, 2011:25, 111). Further, there was a female political wing that oversaw issues regarding education and employment possibilities for all women, and in general worked to improve rights for women (Terpstra and Frerks, 2017:299).

LTTE established de facto governments in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka (UCDP, 2019b). Between 1990-95, LTTE held the Jaffna, and between 1995-2009 the group maintained its control over Vanni (Stokke, 2006:1020-22). In these areas, LTTE provided services such as police security, a judicial system with courts, healthcare and education (ibid). At most, LTTE controlled around a third of Sri Lanka, with Kilinochi being the administrative center (Mampilly, 2011:21-22). Strict norms of conduct were prevalent, regarding for instance relationships between sexes, and oppression was a significant characteristic of LTTE’s rule, especially towards dissidents and non-Tamil groups (Terpstra and Frerks, 2017:288-289). Sometimes the government-like institutions were completely run by LTTE, but they also controlled some government officials (ibid). During the early 2000s, before the peace process broke down in 2005, LTTE focused on political means, through establishing government-like institutions and giving its political wing an essential role (Stokke, 2006:1022).

LTTE had a well-declared political vision. Several findings are notable when addressing the group’s political vision. Firstly, LTTE’s main goal, until 2001, was to create an independent state for the Tamil population (BBC, 2002; UCDP, 2019b). After this the group demanded to be allowed an autonomous region, in their strongholds. This is further delved into in the next section. Secondly, LTTE had a reformist socio-political agenda, that included the fighting of oppression and social injustice, this in particular concerned disrupting the caste system and improve women’s rights (Terpstra and Frerks, 2017:297-298; LTTE, 2005:308-309). In the groups’ own words, the goal of the LTTE was to ‘integrate both national struggle and class...
struggle, interlink both national emancipation and socialist transition of our social formation into a revolutionary project aimed at liberating our people from both national oppression and social tyranny’ (LTTE 2005:308-309). Thus, LTTE’s ideology was a combination of nationalism, and socialism. In LTTE statements, there is a focus on the emancipation of women (LTTE, 2005:312-313). The female political wing propagated abolishment’s of cast divisions, and they worked to ensure that there were legal measures for cases of harassment and rape, and the group organised welfare centres (Dissanayake, 2017:4-5).

In sum, the group intended to fight against the injustices that were prevalent in traditional Tamil societies (Terpstra and Frerks, 2017:297-298). The reforms did not appeal to all groups in the Tamil society, particularly not the “higher” castes such as the Vellalla, according to respondents on surveys researching the Tamil population’s view on the caste system (Wood, 2009:149. The leader of LTTE, Prabhakaran, was from the Karyar caste, whom are traditionally fishermen, and many from the higher castes thus had an issue accepting the socio-political reforms that LTTE enforced (ibid). What is notable about the way LTTE spread its political vision to the national audience, is the coercive techniques that they adopted to do it (Terpstra and Frerks, 2017). Witnesses speak of the LTTE as an oppressive state in that it silenced any dissidents, and the Tamil population living within LTTE’s territory were forced to obey all rules and reforms that the group enforced (ibid).

This political vision, and the governance efforts, were part of what LTTE kept emphasizing in their propaganda targeted at the international community. LTTE used several different channels to propagate how efficient and legitimate their efforts were to their compliance constituencies (Terpstra and Frerks, 2017:296). For example, LTTE established around 54 offices around the world, the first one was established in the 1960’s in the UK, functioning like embassies, and also had contact and influence over many Tamil organisations located abroad that collected funds from the diaspora community (Becker, 2006; Al Jazeera, 2009). Many of these Tamil NGOs worked as front organisations to LTTE and were thus part of an extensive international network with the goal of partly funding the insurgency, as well spreading LTTE’s perspective on the civil war (Stokke, 2006:1028-1030; Ruadel, 2013). Protests were organised in London, and there were several websites that worked to spread videos and statements from the LTTE. Also, the LTTE released propaganda films, framing their own narrative about the war (Terpstra and Frerks, 2017).
4.2.2.2 LTTE: Secessionist goals

LTTE’s main goal was, throughout the civil war, to create an independent region in the north and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka (CISAC, 2019a). This idea stemmed from sentiments of ethnic nationalism on the side of the Tamil population and can be traced back to how the Sri Lankan government under many years enforced discriminative policies against the Tamil minority, as well as ethnic tensions between Tamil and Sinhalese population (Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2001:2; UCDP, 2019b; Mampilly, 2011). This can be exemplified through several historical events. Firstly, in 1956, when the majority-Sinhalese government proposed the one-language policy. Another significant historical can be traced to 1983, when the government released the “anti-Tamil pogrom”, after which riots ensued (Mampilly, 2011:9 5-109). In the following decades, the Sri Lankan state grew more repressive, and the military got more ethnized, with primarily Sinhalese enlists (Rajasingham-Senanayak, 2001:4). In sum, much of the ethnic nationalism prevalent within LTTE stems from years of discriminative policies against the Tamil population (Yass, 2014).

Who LTTE’s future state was going to include changed over the time period under study. In the beginning of the 1990’s, the proposed state was to include other minorities apart from Tamils, such as the Muslims, of which many spoke Tamil language (Terpstra and Frerks, 2017:289). However, as LTTE grew more radical, Muslims and persons outside of the Tamil ethnic group, such as Sinhalese civilians, were cast out from LTTE’s controlled areas in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, and many were displaced (ibid).

Furthermore, LTTE, during the 2000s and peace negotiations during which Norway was a facilitator (UCDP, 2019b), changed its former goals of creating a fully independent state, and instead proposed that the region would become autonomous, but not declared an independent state. This was made clear in the Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) proposal that was declared in 2001 (BBC, 2002). This proposal, the Interim Self-Governing Authority (IGSA) revealed detailed plans on the conditions and policies of this agreement. In the proposal, LTTE emphasized how efficient their governance, control and jurisdiction were working in the areas under their control. LTTE highlighted the necessity of protection of human rights for all ethnic and social groups, as well as the importance of secularism. The proposal included an outline of a relatively autonomous set-up for the LTTE, in which they would have juridical, financial control, as well as control over specific land areas and offshore marine and natural resources. However, when the peace negotiations broke down and the fighting intensified during the last five years of the civil war (UCDP, 2019b), LTTE’s former demands resurfaced. This can
be seen in statements released by the LTTE, for example like the following: “We have a homeland, a historically constituted habitation with a well-defined territory embracing the Northern and Eastern Provinces, a distinct language, a rich culture(...) As a nation we have the inalienable right to self-determination.” (LTTE, 2005:299). After 2005, LTTE experienced divisions over their secessionist goals, which resulted in the leader Karuna defecting to the government with some combatants (CISAC, 2019a).

4.2.2.3 LTTE: Relations to compliance-positive actors

In this section, I present the findings on how LTTE maintained relations with compliance-positive actors. LTTE had a vast international network with diaspora communities in the UK, US, Australia and Canada, as well 54 embassies spread out over the world (Al Jazeera, 2019). LTTE maintained relations with different Tamil NGO’s and businesses, and LTTE was highly dependent on the diaspora for material and financial resources (Fullilove, 2008). These groups oftentimes spread LTTE’s message via internet forums and websites, and tried to frame LTTE’s message in a beneficial light (Becker, 2006; Ruadel, 2013:38). This community may arguably have been concerned about the human rights abuses of the LTTE, as they during the early 2000s urged LTTE to work towards a diplomatic solution, which ultimately led to one ceasefire in 2001 (Fullilove, 2008:80). LTTE also worked with many Tamil organisations that focused on humanitarian matters, some of these groups, such as Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), were however accused of partially funding the insurgency (Mampilly, 2011:44). The IGSA proposal in 2001 may be considered an attempt from the LTTE to address more compliance-positive actors, and to frame themselves as a valid political authority (BBC, 2002).

However, LTTE was categorised as a terrorist organisation by democracies such as the UK, EU and the US (Al Jazeera, 2009). No international organisations or states (compliance-positive actors) were found to be directly supporting the LTTE, but the group did engage and receive help from the UNHCR, ICRC, Geneva Call and the Danish Refugee Council (Ruadel, 2013:31, 38, 41). For example; a liaison officer from the UNHCR helped the LTTE with things such as “field monitoring, specific interventions, advocacy and promotion of protection of IDP’s” (ibid:31).
4.2.3 Table 3: Summary of findings on IV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement in Political Affairs</td>
<td>a) Does the group engage in any political affairs, for example by creating a political wing or by holding elections? b) Does the rebel group have a clearly formulated political vision, and does it spread its vision to international and national audiences?</td>
<td>a) Existent political secretariat with prominent role, and functions as a de facto government in areas under control. b) Many statements of political ideas. c) Showcases many different ways to communicate with compliance constituency, through embassies, diaspora networks, propaganda channels, civilians in controlled areas.</td>
<td>a) General Secretariat that controls political questions, but the focus seems to be more focused on military strategies. Engages in governance, but mainly as a means of territorial control and in a secretive manner. b) Some statements of political ideas, but political vision is unclear under time period. More focus on business and military objectives. c) Showcases some ways to communicate with constituency, primarily civilians and likeminded groups and state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secessionist goals</td>
<td>a) Is the group aiming to create a new independent state or an autonomous region?</td>
<td>a) Many/strong statements signalling secessionist goals, as per indicators</td>
<td>a) No statements signalling secessionist goals, as per indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations to compliance-positive actors</td>
<td>a) Does the group depend on or maintain relations with a compliance-positive actor, for example on financial support?</td>
<td>a) No reports on different types of support, apart from small Tamil organisations b) Reports of training/meetings between human rights group, NGOs and rebel groups C) Offices in 54 countries, including the UK. Associations with Tamil organisations working abroad.</td>
<td>a) No reports on different on types of support b) Reports of meetings with diplomats and international organisations. c) Some reports of international offices, COMINTER, only with like-minded countries. Negative stance towards international community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Analysis of findings

In this concluding section, I discuss the findings, alternative explanations, and weaknesses and strengths of the research design. In sum, the findings indicate some support for the theoretical framework and the hypothesis, but some aspects deserve further evaluation.

Regarding the use of sexual violence, FARC showcased a high prevalence of strategic use of sexual violence, both in form and targeting (Cohen and Nordás, 2014; see also UN reports). An unexpected finding was how prevalent sexual violence was within the ranks of FARC. These results may be surprising, seeing as described in section 3.4.1.4, how life as an insurgent is appealing to women who join the ranks. The use of sexual slavery can be considered a strategic way to maintain contentment levels for men, as well as prove dominance over the enslaved women. Forced abortions and contraceptives were most likely enforced due to “practicalities”, as pregnant women would be considered nuisances in a guerrilla-life.

In sum, FARC appear to have engaged in all forms of targeting; collective (towards specific groups, such as Afro-Colombians or indigenous groups), selective (dissidents/opponents) and indiscriminate (random targeting of women in rural areas, regardless of group belonging). Important to note is that FARC committed many abuses within its own ranks, thus pointing to how sexual violence was a viable strategic tool within ranks to achieve goals. I conclude that despite the formal prohibition of sexual violence within FARC (Provost, 2017), the actual effect of the prohibition seems to be unclear, and leaders have apparently still used sexual violence as a weapon of war, according to the former findings. However, one could argue that this prohibition was an attempt to tackle the issues with sexual violence within FARC, which then goes to question whether the group cohesion within FARC was as high as previously evaluated. Contrastingly, LTTE showed low signs of sexual violence, and the group prohibited the use of sexual violence (Wood, 2009). LTTE maintained strict control over its inhabitants regarding sexual relations, and any deviances were severely punished (ibid). I conclude that LTTE abstained from the strategic use of sexual violence.

The findings of the legitimacy-seeking characteristic show that some aspects of the theoretical framework can explain the variation in sexual violence. The first aspect, the rebel group’s engagement in political affairs, shows some significant differences between LTTE and FARC. LTTE ruled as a de facto government, whereas FARC focused on infiltration, influence and military strategies (Stokke, 2006; Gentry and Spencer, 2019). LTTE had departments functioning like a government, whereas FARC was structured more like an army (Mampilly, 2011; Provost, 2017). LTTE focused on establishing their own state in the northern and eastern
provinces of Sri Lanka, and FARC worked more behind the scenes to infiltrate and influence local governments, although they in some cases did set up courts, roads and security systems (Stokke, 2006; Arjona, 2016). LTTE spread its political vision to its national audiences and international audiences through its expansive international network, and by establishing embassies, and spreading its message through propaganda (Fullilove, 2014). FARC also did this to some extent, and to its national audiences by training communities in Marxism (Lee, 2012). FARC held a relatively negative stance towards the international community, which can be traced to their radical political ideology. This appears to have changed over the course of the insurgency however, as FARC in the early 2000s seemed more open to establish links and spread its political vision through meetings with diplomats and internet propaganda (Gentry and Spencer, 2019).

The second legitimacy-seeking characteristic, secessionist goals, indicates the strongest variation between the rebel groups under study. The LTTE had well-defined secessionist goals, whereas FARC did not. Although both groups maintained territorial control, only the LTTE formulated specific goals concerning independence (CISAC, 2019a, 2019b). This characteristic is the most explanatory for the variation of strategic sexual violence. Some analysts only use secessionism as an indicator of legitimacy-seeking characteristic (Stewart, 2018), and it would be interesting to research this aspect more in-depth. Secessionist rebel groups are more reliant on the civilian population, as this encompasses their future citizens of the independent state (Fazal, 2018:194), and researching secessionism as the primary explanation on variation of sexual violence could be the subject of a future study.

The third aspect of the independent variable, relations to compliance-positive actors, shows inconclusive results. Both FARC and LTTE have attempted to establish relations with compliance-positive actors, during different periods during the time period under study, but neither has received extensive support from a large international organisation or compliance-positive state (Lee, 2012; Fullilove, 2014). Thus, the results of this indicator are inconclusive, yet it appears that both FARC and LTTE made attempts to showcase themselves as a viable political authority, by pointing at their governance attempts. These findings are more apparent in LTTE’s case as LTTE established offices in countries such as the UK, in comparison to FARC who mostly engaged with likeminded actors (Terpstra and Frerks, 2017; Arjona, 2016; Provost, 2017). Thus, LTTE has a more extensive international network and has not showcased signs of being as negative towards the international community as FARC. In sum, LTTE showcased medium-strong levels and FARC showcased weak-medium levels, on the independent variable legitimacy-seeking characteristics.
In a different vein, the group cohesion variable, one of my alternative explanations, would be worthwhile to explore further. Despite the findings indicating high group cohesiveness, the fact that FARC prohibited sexual violence, in the judicial context, could point to that the group was not as cohesive as firstly was assessed (Provost, 2017). However, it could also mean that the political policies of the General Secretariat were overshadowed by gaining military advantages through the use of CRSV, especially since FARC had a focus on military strategies during the time period under study (Cunningham et al., 2013). This would indicate support for this thesis’ theoretical framework. In sum, one may argue that more research on group dynamics and cohesion would be beneficial to improve our understanding on the matter. Conclusively, this thesis joins previous works (Wood, 2009) that deem organizational strategy as an important factor to assess when it comes to strategic CRSV.

One of the main strengths of the research design is the degree of isolation and exploration of alternative explanations. By this I refer to how I investigate and challenge the explanatory power of four well-known explanations for the variation of sexual violence. This method ensures isolation in my study (Kellstedt and Whitten, 2013:61), and it contributes with new insight into how our current explanations on the use of sexual violence may need challenge, further assessment and investigation. On the other hand, an issue with this research design concerns the weak potential of generalizability of the results, due to the low external validity of the research design. This is a common issue in qualitative studies (Gerring, 2007), and it would thus be beneficial to complement this study with a quantitative analysis. However, the level of internal validity is considerably higher, due to the multidimensionality of the measurements of key variables (see section 3.1).

Further, another issue concerns the lack of investigation into the causal mechanism. This thesis could benefit from an additional process-tracing component (Kellstedt and Whitten, 2013:44-45), as this would enable full exploration of the causality of my theoretical argument. To overcome this issue, I now present some nuances in my findings that I argue provide some insight to the causal mechanism. For example, one could argue that LTTE abstained from the use of sexual violence after noticing the lack of support the government was receiving after its extensive use of strategic sexual violence. I find support that many inhabitants in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka were fearful of the army due to their extensive use of sexual violence during the civil war, and that the situation for women has worsened since the fall of the LTTE (Minority Rights Report, 2013), but whether the LTTE actively noticed these attitudes among its inhabitants, and whether the use of CRSV increased civilians’ negative
attitude towards the government, has not been explored. Studies point to the extensive use of strategic CRSV deployed by the government (All Survivors project, 2017:14), and it is possible that LTTE noticed the international denouncement of this, as the group was very active and connected to its international network (Fullilove, 2008), and thus made an effort to prohibit and punish any acts of sexual violence that occurred within the group. This can be related to the legitimacy-seeking characteristics of the LTTE. In-depth interviews and documents written by the LTTE would be interesting in order to gain insight on this matter.

Alternatively, the reason as to why LTTE chose to prohibit the use of sexual violence could be more in line with what previous scholars have discussed; such as the norms regarding sexual relations in Tamil society, or how LTTE demanded that its combatants conformed to a puritanical code (Wood, 2009). However, these explanations are not necessarily incompatible with my explanation regarding the goals of legitimacy and could rather be considered factors that contributed to the success of LTTE’s enforcement of policies, as for instance how the strict punishment and puritanical codes eliminated any forms of sexual abuse. Contrastingly, FARC have shown no care regarding its record of sexual violence, since international denouncement did not alter the group’s behaviour, but rather, on the contrary, during 2010-15, FARC’s intensity of using CRSV increased (Cohen and Nordås, 2014). This could indicate that FARC assessed that the reputational costs of using CRSV were lower than the military gains. More investigation on this matter would be interesting and gain insight to the research on CRSV.

5. Conclusion
The purpose of this study is to investigate the variation in rebel groups’ use of strategic sexual violence. To recap, my main argument is that legitimacy-seeking rebel groups, measured as groups who engage in political affairs, have secessionist goals, and maintains relations with compliance-positive actors, are more likely to abstain from the use of strategic sexual violence. I investigate LTTE, who did not strategically use sexual violence, and FARC, who did. Conclusively, the findings indicate some support for the main argument and framework, but these findings need to be further assessed and evaluated in order to gain more strength, as all aspects do not show full support to the correlation between the key variables in in my argument, and the causal mechanism has not been fully investigated.

More specifically, I find that LTTE, given its secessionist goals, extensive engagement in political affairs, and some, but not extensive, relations to compliance-positive
actors, showcased medium-strong legitimacy-seeking characteristics. FARC, who have no secessionist goals, have a less straight-forward approach to political affairs and are more oriented around military and financial goals, and have some but not extensive relations to compliance-positive actors, showcased weak-medium legitimacy-seeking characteristics (see 4.2.3). This thesis joins a larger group of literature that shows how secessionism often is related to armed groups’ care for civilians (see for example Stewart, 2018). This indicator is the most distinguished as FARC has no secessionist goals at all, whereas LTTE does. Simultaneously, these findings are in line with those of Jo (2015), who shows how some of the groups who complied with IHL did not score fully on all legitimacy-seeking characteristics.

The paper contributes with novel insight on the variation of the use of sexual violence across rebel groups, partly through the explanations provided by the theoretical framework, but especially through the analysis of FARC and LTTE. The rebel groups share many characteristics and historical developments, yet still behave in very different ways when it comes to the use of sexual violence. The thesis combines the research on rebel compliance and sexual violence, and extends the theoretical framework initially developed by Jo (2015). This thesis calls for further research on the variation of the strategic use of sexual violence, and how secessionist groups may be less likely to adopt such strategies. More quantitative studies would be beneficial in exploring the relationship and to improve our ability to generalize these findings to a larger set of cases (Gerring, 2007:43).

The policy implications of this study call for engagement between the international community and rebel groups regarding the issues of sexual violence, in order to encourage rebel groups to not use sexual violence as a weapon of war. A more general policy implication that is inherited within studies on rebel groups and IHL, is the need for more accountability for rebel groups and their actions in war (Jo, 2015; Krieger, 2018). In order to do this, we need to move beyond the state-centredness of international law (ibid), and see rebel groups as viable actors, as this will enable the international community to prosecute rebel groups and hold them accountable for their actions, which in turn could encourage rebel groups to comply with the norms of international laws. This could improve the conditions for all countries that are affected by the devastating consequences of armed conflict.
6. Reference list


7. Appendix:

7.1 Appendix A: SFC-analysis for dependent variable:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic sexual violence</th>
<th>Questions (SFC-method):</th>
<th>Analyzed Values:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has the rebel group used strategic sexual violence in the armed conflict?</td>
<td>High prevalence of Strategic CRSV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low prevalence of Strategic CRSV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many reports</td>
<td>Few reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Form                      | Has the rebel group used any of the following forms of abuses related to the conflict: rape, mass rape, sexual mutilation, sexual torture, prostitution, forced pregnancy/abortion? | All/most forms of abuse reported on in conflict |
|                           |                          | None/ Some reports of abuse reported in conflict |

| Targeting                 | Is the sexual violence targeted toward a group based on its ethnic/social status? Is the individual specifically selected due to its outspoken support/role for the opponent? Does any of the following forms of targeting apply; collective, selective or indiscriminate? | All or some forms of targeting. Selective and collective most significant. |
|                           |                          | No/low reports of targeting       |
7.2 Appendix B: SFC-analysis for independent variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legitimacy-seeking characteristics:</th>
<th>Analyzed Values (Weak-Medium-Strong):</th>
<th>Weak Legitimacy-seeking Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement in Political Affairs</td>
<td>Questions (SFC-method)</td>
<td>Strong Legitimacy-seeking Characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Does the group engage in any political affairs, for example by creating a political wing or by holding elections?</td>
<td>a) Existent political wing with power over military b) Many statements of political ideas c) Showcases many different ways to communicate with different audiences</td>
<td>a) Non-existent political wing or weak political wing, engages in political affairs b) None/ few statements of political ideas c) Showcases no/ few way communicate with constituency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secessionist goals</td>
<td>a) Is the group aiming to create a new independent state or an autonomous region?</td>
<td>a), b), c) Many/strong statements signalling secessionist goals, as per indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations to compliance-positive actors</td>
<td>a) Does the group depend on or maintain relations with a compliance-positive actor, for example on financial support?</td>
<td>a) Many/strong reports of some/all different types of support b) Reports of training/meetings between human rights group, NGOs and rebel groups C) Office in great power state (democracy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>