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Peace and conflict studies C
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We will teach you a lesson

A qualitative study on militarized masculinity and the use of sexual violence in armed conflict

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Abstract:

This paper will focus on articulating and arguing for the intricate relationship between militarized masculinity in ethno-nation conflicts and the use of conflict related sexual violence (CRSV). While previous research has been done on the topic of interest. The aim is to further elaborate on the topic and also provide an explanation for a rather understudied aspect of CRSV. Which is the use of sexual violence against men and how it is just as gendered in nature as the use of sexual violence against women. This paper will aim to answer the following question: *To what extent and in what ways does militarized masculinity result in the use of sexual violence in armed conflict*? I will be using the structured focus comparisons method (SFC) in order to study two cases of interest that vary in their use of CRSV. The results suggest that while one party built their ethnic identity surrounding violent masculine ideals the other aimed for a gender equal nationalist movement. The variation in their views and behavior resulted in the extensive use of CRSV by one party and the general absence of CRSV by the other.

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1. Introduction:

Masculinity and femininity are not biologically fixed traits but rather a performance chosen from one's cultural repertoire (de-Silva, 2009, 87). In nationalist conflicts the constructed gendered patterns associate masculinity with the military and women with their maternal sacrifices, relegating them to the roles of wives and mothers of their soldering sons/husbands (Kahandagaman, 2014/2015: 53). Nationalism therefore becomes a masculine enterprise whereby nationalism depends on the masculine technology of "othering" in order to establish its dominance and distinguish itself from other nations. The process of "othering" is mainly done through political and structural discrimination. The enemy "other" is established as inferior and dehumanized through their association with negative stereotypes. In the context of extreme violence, the process of othering ends up resulting in the use of sexual violence as a means to emasculate and subordinate the enemy "other". Through acts of sexual violence against both the enemy women and men, a symbolic act of domination is carved into their body. A permanent reminder of their subordination (Slootmaeckers, 2019: 240-254).

Taking this explanation into account, the aim of my thesis is to explain the relationship and effect of militarized masculinity on conflict related sexual violence (CRSV) in the context of an ethno-national conflict. As it has been argued above that both militarized masculinity and nationalism have the tendency to differentiate themselves through gendered terms. The use of sexual violence thus becomes a tool that is inflicted upon the enemy "other" as a means to maintain one's dominant position in the gendered hierarchy. The thesis will therefore focus on answering the question in the context of an ethno-nationl conflict: *to what extent and in what way does militarized masculinity result in the use of sexual violence in armed conflict*.

While there already exists an abundance of research on the interested topic. The aim of my thesis is to further elaborate on a rather understudied aspect of the chosen topic and that is sexual violence against men. I will be using the SFC method in order to both structure my thesis in a

comprehensible manner and focus my thesis on the main topic of interest. The cases that I have selected were done through the most similar case study whereby two cases were selected based on their presence and absence of the DV of interest.

2. Theory:

2.1. Previous research:

Hegemonic masculinity is the norm that enforces structural and political discrimination against women and other men that fall under the category of "subordinate masculinities". The ability to showcase aggression, physical strength, sexual performance and the capability to protect women are some of the central aspects of hegemonic masculinity. These aspects are naturalized into the society through a set of social hierarchies and cultural mediums, thus creating a social system which encourages men to compete for and fulfill these ideals (Alison, 2023: 75, 76). Aggression is specially an enduring aspect of the ideal masculinity whereas non-aggressive behavior becomes an enduring element of femininity (ibid). Politicians have historically idealized militarized masculinity by valorizing the "soldier" that protects the nation as an ideal form of masculinity. Militarism promotes stoicism, risk taking and the use of lethal violence as the ideal characteristics of a true soldier (Higate, 2004: 433, 434).

Militarism in the context of ethno-national conflicts further polarizes the in-group/out-group and feminine/masculine identities. The "others" or the out-groups are demonized whereas the "us' " or the in-group is militarized through issues of honor, revenge, victory and glory. The feminization of the nation through terms such as "mother of the nation ", "war widow" or "martyr's mother" also justifies the use of violence as means for retribution against the enemy. By victimizing women as passive victims, they are used as a reason to militarize the civilians, specially the men and boys. (Joseph, 2013: 713, 714). The feminization of the nation and the objectification of women as "honor" or "property" of the nation also ends up in women becoming the main targets of sexual violence. Women's bodies in the context of ethno-national conflict thus become a conquered territory, or a target of violent domination (Alison, 2023: 81). In ethno-national conflicts, women are also oftentimes sidelined and confined to their strict roles of mothers and child bearers of a society. Their symbolic association with the preservation and multiplication of

a society is then politicized by the leaders. As they encourage the men to take up arms and protect their women and the mother nation from the enemy. In the nationalist discourse, masculinity thus becomes positively associated with one's ability to perform as a soldier in an armed group/military. The dichotomization of sexes by creating a distinct difference between the roles of men and women is a distinct feature of nationalism and militarized masculinity in the context of a conflict. (Caprioli, 2005: 165-167) Therefore one can argue that in ethno-national conflicts, rape against the enemy women is a strategic motivation for an armed group to extert their dominance over another nation/ethnic. Wartime sexual violence has been defined as a communicative action between men where one's victory and masculinity is defined through the violation of the female body (Alison, 2007: 80,81)

The rape and violation of an individual woman is symbolically significant as their violation sends out the broader message of a nation being violated. The symbolic representation of women as the makers of the nation makes them a territory that is constantly contested over. Their body is violated as a means to violate and pollute the entire race and the sanctity of the enemy nation. Militarization further reinforces such nationalist notions by justifying the violence committed against the enemy nation as a means to dominate and destroy the enemy "other". Before the enemy "other" can impose any legitimate threats to the sanctity and security of the "in-group" (Joseph, 2013: 713). However, it is not only about security. As nationalism and militarized masculinity also preaches dominance by enforcing a certain form of ideal hegemonic masculinity. This type of masculinity encourages sexual potency and violent domination of not only the feminine counterpart but also of the other subordinate masculinities that exist in the gendered hierarchy of a society (Nath, 2022: 48).

Militarized masculinity has the tendency to dichotomize gender roles where women are typically associated with peacefulness and life-giving whereas men on the other hand are associated with the roles of the protective guardians. Such distinctions help legitimize the unequal gender relations, resulting in the formation of a gender hierarchy. Those that cannot conform to the idealized form of masculinity are considered to be less than or subordinate to the ideal heterosexual masculinity (Eichler, 2014: 82, 83; Baaz and Stern, 2009: 498-500). The gender hierarchy in ethno-national conflicts also helps with the process of othering by associating the

"out-group" with masculine traits that are considered to be at the bottom of the hierarchy. The use of sexual violence thus become a tool to carve out that distinction. The rape of women sends a message to the enemy men that they are not capable enough to protect their women and thus are submissive to the true masculine prowess of the perpetrators. The use of sexual violence against the male body on the other hand is an act of masculine dominance where the aim is to emasculate the man by rendering him incapable of defending himself. Furthermore, men also embody their ethnicity which makes sexual violence an act of proving the subordination of an ethnic group as whole (Slootmaeckers, 2019: 247, 254). The aim of the perpetrator is to feminize the victim by rendering them violated, passive and incapable of fighting back. Another argument is that in ethno-national conflicts, enemy men are oftentimes perceived as feminine in order to make them less powerful in comparison to the masculine self. Crimes of sexual violence thus becomes a power relationship where the masculine nation dominates the feminine enemy (Schulz, 2021:44-47).

Gendered study is therefore extremely important in the context of ethno-national conflicts as gender plays an important factor in constructing identities and forming distinct boundaries between communities. In the context of the nationalist discourse, gendered language and symbolism is used as means of inclusion or exclusion. The construction of the nation only works in relation to the othering of the enemy group. The process of othering in turn requires setting boundaries by directly associating the enemy group with negative or feminine values (Joseph, 2013: 711,712). It has thus been argued that male on male acts of sexual violence is a highly masculinized act of asserting dominance over the enemy. Where the objective is to render the enemy male emasculated, feminized or homosexualized through acts of sexual violence against them. By reducing the role of men to that of victims of violence, their masculine identity is stripped away from them. The male victim thus becomes subordinated to the superior masculinity of the perpetrator (Schulz, 2021: 44,45; Cockburn, 2013: 434).

The main theoretical argument that is going to be tested in this paper is the causal relationship between militarized masculinity and CRSV in ethno-national conflicts. While this paper does not introduce or elaborate on a gap. The aim is to further investigate and add into a rather under researched aspect of the interested topic and that is the gendered nature of sexual violence when

it comes to male victims. Their experiences oftentimes go unreported or simply categorized as torture which undermines and completely ignores the complexities of gender dynamics. This thesis hopes to further elaborate on and examine the problem.

2.2. Defining key concepts

Militarized masculinity:

Militarized masculinity is the process through which masculinity becomes associated with one's ability to serve in the military. Militarized masculinity can be considered as a form of hegemonic masculinity which is based on the domination of femininity and other subordinate masculinity in the gendered hierarchy. Militarized masculinity reinforces their dominance by encouraging and reproducing the gendered binary division between the masculine protector and the feminine victim. The man thus becomes associated with strength, aggression, and capable of committing violence, whereas women become associated with passivity and weakness. Such dualistic thinking which confines men and women to certain roles within a society further promotes the domination of men over women (Nath, 2022: 47-49). Militarized masculinity also further affirms the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity by utilizing and valorizing the ideal masculine soldier in order to successfully implement the military culture into their community. In the context of conflict, militarized masculinity is further appropriated, as military propaganda encourages young men to take up arms and to showcase their strength, courage, determination and patriotism against the enemies (Higate, 2004: 434). Militarization of the ideal masculinity also becomes a significant tool for the politicians/leaders, in order to gain the support of the citizens and recruit more soldiers so that they could further legitimize the influence of the military in society. Therefore, the recruitment process becomes heavily politicized as it highlights the obligation of the citizens to bear arms and to defend their nation (Kestnbaum, 2009: 239).

Ethno-nationalism:

Nationalism is defined by its perceived dissimilarities between ethnic, religious or cultural identities which constitutes the internal “in-group” unity vis-a-vis the “other”. By creating a

distinct difference between self and the other a boundary is set and that boundary is further maintained through a set of symbolic or physical matters that determine who is part of the nation and who is not (Slootmaeckers, 2019: 243). The symbolic and physical markers of nationhood are very much gendered in nature. As a nation is symbolically represented through its association with motherhood. The women in the nationalist discourse become associated with the symbolic bearers, caretakers and sole representatives of the nation. In the context of a conflict, the men are called to bear arms in order to protect their mother nation from foreign invaders. The "other" women however become associated with the reproducers of the enemy who are multiplying the numbers of the invaders and destroying the purity of the nation through their offspring. The militarization of the nation thus politicizes such symbolic images by claiming their mother nation to be under the threat of violation by the enemy (Joseph, 2013: 712).

Sexual violence in armed conflict (SVAC):

It has been argued that sexual violence in armed conflict have the tendency to mainly look at women as victims of violence. Previous concepts of SVAC mainly marginalized the violence committed against men by emphasizing penetrative rape over other forms of violence. Such narrowed down definition of SVAC not only marginalizes the experiences of men but also of women who suffered from other forms of sexual violence (Schulz, 2021: 32). Historically, men and their experiences of sexual violence have mainly been categorized as torture which is based on the gendered notion of heterosexual misculinity which claims that real men cannot get raped. However, in many of the instances, the "torture" of the men included sexual acts of violence through genitalia beatings, castration, enforced rape and other harms mainly directed towards the genitalia. The aim of perpetuating such types of harm is to emasculate and homosexualize the victim by reducing them to the status of a passive victim (Nath, 2022: 53). Therefore, in order to conceptualize a more inclusive definition. Conflict-related sexual violence, here is defined as a violence of sexual nature that is committed against a victim or victims by using force or threats of further harm. This definition covers up a broad scope of various forms of sexual violence that can be committed against an individual or a group, ranging from rape, sterilization, penetrative rape, sexual torture to mutiliation and forced coercion (Schulz, 2021:36, 37).

2.2.1. Theoretical explanation of the relationship

Ethno-National conflict

IV: Militarized masculinity ————————- DV: conflict related sexual violence (CRSV)

The rape and violation of an individual woman is symbolically significant as their violation sends out the broader message of a nation being violated. The symbolic representation of women as the nation makes them a territory that is constantly contested over. Their body is violated as a means to violate and pollute the entire race and the sanctity of the enemy nation. Militarization therefore not only reinforces the masculine notion of a violent protector but also justifies the violence committed against the enemy nation as a means to dominate and destroy the enemy "other". Before they can impose any legitimate threats to the sanctity and security of the "in-group" (Joseph, 2013: 713). However, it is not only about security. As nationalism and militarized masculinity also preaches dominance by enforcing a certain form of ideal hegemonic masculinity. This type of masculinity encourages sexual potency and violent domination of not only the feminine counterpart but also of the other subordinate masculinities that exist in the gendered hierarchy of a society (Nath, 2022: 48). Therefore one can argue that In the context of ethno-national conflicts, rape against the enemy women is a strategic motivation for an armed group to extert their dominance over another nation/ethnic. Wartime sexual violence has been defined as a communicative action between men where one's victory and masculinity is defined through the violation of the female body (Alison, 2007: 80,81). However, by mainly focusing on men as perpetrators of violence, we oftentimes overlook the use of sexual violence committed against men by men. It is therefore important to incorporate the use of sexual violence against men by men as they reasoning behind such actions are just as gendered as the use of sexual violence committed against women. For example, one of the argument highlights the use of sexual violence committed against men is used as a means to emasculate them. The aim of the perpetrator is to feminize or homosexualize the victim by rendering them violated, passive and incapable of fighting back. Another argument is that in ethno-national conflicts, enemy men are oftentimes perceived as feminine in order to make them less powerful in comparison to the

masculine self. Crimes of sexual violence thus becomes a power relationship where the masculine nation dominates the feminine enemy (Schulz, 2021:44-47; Nath, 2022: 53).).

To test whether this theory is correct, this thesis will seek to answer the following question: *to what extent and in what ways does militarized masculinity result in the use/increase of CRSV*. The aim is to determine whether militarized masculinity in the ethno-national context results in the use of CRSV. As both militarized masculinity and ethno-nationalism is built on the subjugation of other masculinities and femininities. The aim is to understand the process whereby nationalist groups utilize violent masculinities in order to distinguish themselves from one other and justify the use of sexual violence as a means to maintain that distinction.

3. Research design:

3.1. Research Method:

In this thesis I will be using the most similar case study which in its purest form is a study of two or more cases that are the most similar across all of the measured IV except the IV of interest. Taking this definition into consideration, I will be choosing two cases that are the most similar on all levels of the measured IV except the IV of interest which might explain the absence/presence of DV of interest. However this type of methodology has its drawbacks. Since it is hard to find cases that perfectly match one another on all of the measured IV. Therefore, the aim is to find cases with approximate matching instead. The cases are selected through controlling for some of the measure IV in order to isolate the interested IV (Gerring and Seawright, 2008: 304,305). I will be also using a structured focused comparison where I will be operationalizing my variables through sets of questions which will not only help me focus on my variables of interest. But it will also help me structure my thesis. A structured focused method (SFC) should include two comparative case studies where a set of standardized/general questions are asked as a means to focus on the research objective. The questions also help the researchers structure their inquiry around their research objective which helps them refrain from blending or introducing several theoretical explanations for their case studies. By using this method, my aim will be to focus on explaining the relationship between militarized masculinity and conflict related sexual violence through my units of analysis (George and Bennett, 2005: 68-70)

The operationalization of the concepts will help measure the IV and DV by giving the theorized relationship a proper structure. The questions that will be asked will help explain the causal mechanism and the relationship between the IV and DV. However, it is also important to highlight the limitations with the chosen methodology. The main critical limitation of the SFC is that it relies on the subjective assessment of the results. Which means that the results are based on probability and the results are an average estimation of the causal effects of the variables. Despite its limitations, it is still of great importance to the field of scientific research. As it helps with giving a research paper a proper structure, making it easy to assess and further develop on the theory. The SFC method also helps elevate the validity of the concepts by closely examining the hypothesized causal mechanism while also addressing and highlighting the causal complexities of the chosen cases. Therefore, I have chosen the SFC method. The concepts and the cases that are chosen for this paper have a complex causal relationship with one another and therefore my aim is to highlight some of the complexities of the cases (Drozdova and Gaubatz, 2017: 12,13)

3.2. Operationalization of variables:

3.2.1. Independent variable:

In order to operationalize my independent variable, the following two questions are designed as a means to focus on two of the main aspects of militarized masculinity:

(1) To what extent and in what ways were the military/armed groups glorified through propaganda?
(2) What roles did the women play in their respective armed groups?

The first question focuses on the glorification of militarized masculinity by the politicians and the media. As per my definition, militarization of hegemonic masculinity is appropriated into the society through propaganda. It is a tool used by the government to justify militarization, alienate the enemy and recruit more soldiers. Militarization of a society is not a natural occurrence. It is a phenomenon that occurs in the context of war. The army and the soldiers become the ideal

symbols of manhood who are willing to lay down their lives for their nation. Therefore, the aim is to understand the variations in the use of propaganda between the respective armed groups. The second question on the other hand will help me focus on the roles and involvement of women in the armed groups. Their inclusion on all levels of the military system can have an immense impact on the way manliness is portrayed and understood in their respective society. Militarized masculinity is built upon the belief that war is a masculine enterprise. The inclusion of women would therefore help one understand the way masculinity has been shaped and reformed due to their involvement.

3.2.2. Dependent variable:

In order to operationalize my DV, I aim to focus on answering two of the following questions.

1. In what ways were men and women targeted differently when it came to the use of sexual violence?
2. What were the general reaction of the public when it came to the survivors of sexual violence?

The main focus of the questions were to be more inclusive in nature as the aim was to understand and highlight sexual violence committed against both men and women. The first question will therefore help me focus on answering the variations in the way men and women were targeted and violated. Whereas the second question will help me highlight and argue for the general disregard shown by the society concerning male victims of sexual violence. The popular discourse often perceives men as the perpetrators and women as the passive victims of violence. Which confines individuals to a set of characteristics, taking away their individual identity and agency.

3.2. Case selection

As explained in the research method section, the methodology of most similar case studies was employed in order to strategically and purposefully select two cases that are similar across

variables except the IV and DV of interest. The main focus was the countries in South Asia due to their shared history of nationalist struggles against colonialism and the ethnic diversity and ethnic fragmentation that plagues them. The nationalist struggles that were once homogenized in their collective struggle against their colonizers were later broken down. As the smaller identities began to question the legitimacy and the policies of the post-colonial state. The contradictory and oftentimes faulty policies mainly favored the ethnic/religious groups of the political elites. Which resulted in the formation of ethnic greviances and ethnic cleavages (Upreti, 2006: 538, 537; Gerring and Seawright, 2008: 304,305).

A struggle for national/ethnic identities began to emerge during the post colonial era resulting in the binary division of gendered norms. War, conflict and politics became a male prerogative whereas women became confined to their domestic spheres. As they became the symbolic honor and reproducers of the national/ethnic identity. Their sexuality and reproductive rights became strictly monitored by the nation. Such dichotomized categorization have resulted in the belief that through rape one can pollute the enemy race. A woman's dishonor thus becomes the dishonor of the entire nation. Such beliefs and attitudes are quite common in South Asia, resulting in the use of mass rape by armed forces (Joseph, 2013: 713-715). The two cases that were eventually selected for this thesis are the Sri Lankan armed forces and the LTTE in the Sri Lankan conflict between 1984-2009. The reasoning behind the choice was due to the extreme use of sexual violence by one side and the surprising restraint shown by the other side (UCDP, 2023; HRW, 2013)

3.2.1 Cases Selected

Sri Lankan government

Historically, the Sinhalese dominated government has politicized ethnic differences in order to gain popularity and support from the majority of the Sinhalese population. They deliberately formulated policies that would discriminate and segregate the minority groups while simultaneously privileging the Sinhalese. For example in 1956, they enforced an only language act which made Sinhala the only official language of the state and the public affairs. Then in

1972, they made changes in the education system which allowed the Sinhalese students to be able to enter medicine and science schools with much lower scores than the Tamil students. The main reason for implementing such policies was to gain support and win elections. Such policies however created an environment of distrust among the Tamils and they lost their faith in the democracy of Sri Lanka. Besides the obvious discriminatory policies, the Tamils also suffered from constant riots where they were killed, robbed and had their houses burned down. The government also responded with little to no interest in persecuting the mainly local civilians who took part in the riots (Imtiyaz and Stavis, 2008: 139, 140).

Sri Lanka has had a history of tumultuous relationship with the LTTE. The conflict intensity very much depended on the political leader that was in charge. For example in 1995, president Chandrika Kumaratunga successfully managed to call for a truce with the rebels. This laid the groundwork for a peace talk with Norway as a mediator in 2002. However, due to the instability of the talks, the LTTE pulled out of the peace talks but they still held on to the ceasefire agreement. However fighting flared up again in 2006. The government annuls the ceasefire agreement and launches a massive offensive which eventually pushes the LTTE to a corner. The government was extremely violent during their offense and refused to accept anything less than a complete defeat of the LTTE (Sirilal and Norton, 2009). The government during these last years of war was led by Mahinda Rajapaksa who elected his brother Gotabhaya Rajapaksa as the secretary of defense. His brother was one of the main figures that led the military campaign against the LTTE (Ali, 2022).

Both of the Rajapaksa brothers were accused of committing gross human violations. However they denied those charges by claiming that they led a campaign with the civilian well being in mind. But despite their claims, the overwhelming reports indicated that the army was extremely violent and cruel during the last years of the conflict. Rajapska's military campaign very much channeled the ethno-nationalist sentiments that promoted the supremacy of the Sinhala-Buddhism (crisis-group, 2017). Mahinda Rajapksa's nationalist sentiments were quite evident during his speech after LTTE's defeat. In his speech which was addressed to the parliament, he claimed to have protected the motherland from the clutches of terrorism. He also put a lot of emphasis on "us" and "them" by claiming that "our" heroic soldiers liberated the

Tamil people from the clutches of “those” terrorists (LTTE). In his speech, he also constantly remarked on the heroic expenditures of the nation's soldiers who were also someone’s son, husband and brother (RW, 2009). His victory not only increased his popularity in Sri Lanka but also managed to win him another presidential election (crisis-group, 2017).

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

The LTTE which was led by Vellupillai Prabhakaran was infamous for unsung sucide bombings against civilians, key targets (politicians, military officials) and against enemy strongholds during periods of conflicts. The attacks were mainly led by some of the most well trained and radicalized cadres known as the Black Tigers and the Sea Tigers. What was so distinct with the LTTE’s use of sucide bombings was that they were not used as a means to instill terror by targeting large numbers of civilians. They were extremely selective with their targets and their use of sucide bombers was always strategic. The LTTE’s use of sucide bombings was unparalleled in terms of its effectiveness as the group managed to assassinate two heads of the state: Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 and Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1993 (Jackson et al., 2007: 62-64). The assasination of Rajiv Gandhi was committed by a teenage girl named Dhanu from the Black Tigers division (Dissanayake, 2017: 5).

While being initially confined to the supportive roles of information collection, fundraising, recruitment, or medical treatment etc. The LTTE first founded its women’s front of the liberation tigers in 1983. The first batch was trained in Tamil Nadu (India) in 1985 and they first actively engaged in combat in 1986. In the following years, more women joined the LTTE and the women’s wing was further expanded into three divisions: the political wing which focused on administrative tasks and aimed for a gender equal society for the Tamil women, the second division was the military wing that engaged in active combat and the third division consisted of a suicide cadres (Dissanayake, 2017: 2). The individuals who were chosen for sucide mission went through an extremely tough training sessions that ranged from 9 months to an entire year. They were taught how to hide their bombs or how to blend into their environment. Only those who were able to operate independently, think fast on their feet and had an extreme hatred in their hearts for the enemy were chosen for the sucide mission (Jackson et al., 2007: 63,64).

Their violent tactics eventually led to the 2002 peace talks between them and the Sri Lankan government. The peace talk resulted in ceasefire and the LTTE successfully managed to implement their control over some of the areas, managing to establish a “mini” Eelam in the controlled regions (ibid: 62). The LTTE legitimized their control over the regions through various tactics. In some regions, they monopolized the justice system and enforced their own policies, rules and regulations. However in other regions, they allowed state or non-state actors to work in order to fulfill the basic needs of the local population. The LTTE was extremely strategic in their maintenance of legitimate control over the regions. They used symbolism and narratives of heroic achievements in order to gain support of the local population. Through their mimicry of statehood, the LTTE wanted to show the locals that they were capable of delivering government services which further legitimized them as a sophisticated and capable group (Frerks and Terpstra, 2018: 1041, 1042).

3.2.2. Control Variables

In order to isolate the IV and DV of interest, certain variables had to be controlled for in the selected cases. The first variable to be controlled for is **political instability**. Sri Lanka has a “culture of violence” corresponding to the unhealthy obsession or fascination with hegemonic masculinities in the form of strong man politics (Meegaswatta, 2022: 726, 727). With the majority of the politicians resorting to ethnocentrism and militarism in order to gain popular vote and support from the Sinhalese majority. They preach for a military solution against the LTTE claiming that victory is the only solution to the problem. While efforts were made in order to find a peaceful alternative through a truce in 1995 and a cease fire agreement in 2002. However, due to the extreme nationalist sentiments by some Sinhalese politicians and the LTTE’s refusal to accept anything less than a free Eelam. These agreements never reached any solutions and the fighting resumed afterwards resulting in high casualties. The 2002 agreement was specially politicized by Mahinda Rajapksa who became elected in 2005. During his presidency Mahinda Rajapksa presented himself as the ideal savior of the Sinhalese society claiming militarism to be the only solution by positioning them as the saviors and heroes of the Sinhalese identity. The politicians who made an effort in promoting secularism, religious autonomy or compromise with the LTTE were either branded as traitors or in some occasions even assassinated by Sinhalese nationalists (DeVotta, 2007: 48-51; Sirilal and Norton, 2009; Meegaswatta, 2022: 725).

The LTTE on the other hand was not the sole militant group that rose against the government. Between the late 1970s to early 1980s, several separatist groups existed. However, the LTTE completely annihilated them all, managing to maintain their monopoly over the sole representatives of the Tamil society (UCDP, 2023). They would mercilessly dehumanize, humiliate and kill the Tamils who chose to join the other groups. The LTTE also thrived over the political instability of the Sri Lankan government as ethnic greviances also resulted in their increased popularity amongst the Tamils (Karmakar, 2022: 3-6). During the last few years of the conflict, the LTTE also went through an internal strife, resulting in their eastern commander breaking away from the LTTE with his 6,000 fighters (Sirilal and Norton, 2009).

The second variable to be controlled for is the **principal-agent problem.** The argument is based on the fact that some armed forces or the members of the armed forces are opportunistic in nature. They use sexual violence for their personal gratification (Bigio and Vogelstein, 2017: 5). Therefore it has been claimed that the widespread use of sexual violence by the Sri Lankan armed forces was due to the lack of control over some of the soldiers. While the general restraint shown by the LTTE was due to the centralized power and the draconian forms of punishment inflicted on those who broke the law (Wood, 2009:149-152). However, the judicial impunity was state enforced, meaning that the state allowed the use of sexual violence. The commanders also either encourage or ignored the use of sexual violence by their soldiers. Such behavior indicates that it is not the opportunistic soldiers that caused the widespread use of sexual violence. Rather it has been allowed by the government for its strategic purposes (HRW, 2013).

The third control variable is the use of **one sided violence** by both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan armed forces/politicians/civilians. The LTTE has conducted ethnic cleansing against both the Muslims and the Sinhalese who lived in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. They have also forcefully recruited children and unwilling civilians through threats of bodily harms or coercion. The Sri Lankan government/armed forces on the other hand have committed various degrees of violence against mainly Tamil civilians. Their tactics ranged from extrajudicial

executions, gender-based violence and indiscriminate bombings and shelling of civilian areas and supporting or encouraging riots that have caused the deaths and property destructions of thousands of Tamils. They also deprived the people of food, water, and access to medical care (HRW, 2013; IJRC, 2015; Meegaswatta, 2022: 728, 729).

3.3. Main sources and data collection:

Majority of the data that has been collected on the case studies are from various articles and reports by various independent organizations such as amnesty, crisis group, and human rights watch. Due to the IV of interest being based on perception, research articles were strategically chosen as a source rather than statistics. The aim was to highlight the way militarized masculinity was perceived by the respected parties in order to highlight its effect and consequences. However, the articles which were specially focused on LTTE seemed to have contradictory opinions on the behavior of the group which made it hard to identify and understand the inner workings of the LTTE. Despite the limitation, I still aimed to focus my study on the questions by following the SFC method while simultaneously making sure that some of the contradictory opinions were mentioned and argued for. I still chose to use these articles as despite their contradictions, some of the information was still the same across all of the articles. I cross checked the information with other articles and with the information that existed on the internet in order to make sure that it was legitimate. The reports on the other hand that were brought forth by independent organizations were extremely well articulated and detailed. However, due to the government restriction the reports were based on Tamil diasporas who had fled the country.

It is through their stories that the bigger picture was formulated. The reports were detailed interviews which was of great help as my DV required an understanding of personal experiences with CRSV. The reports were also cross checked through comparison. Lastly, the articles written by Thillini N.K. Meegaswatta (2022) and Anushka Kahandagama (2014/2015) were quite different from other articles. Their main focus was how masculinity and femininity was perceived by the masses and how it affected individuals. Their articles were also of great help in understanding the use of CRSV by the Sri Lankan armed forces as the authors gave the readers

an in-depth understanding of violent masculinities. Finally, I also used a speech that was given by Mahinda Rajapksa after his victory over the LTTE. His speech was an interesting addition to the paper as it gave me a first hand account of Mahinda Rakapaksa's nationalist beliefs.

4. Findings:

4.1. LTTE:

4.1.1. Independent variable:

1. To what extent and in what ways were the military/armed groups glorified through propaganda?

Velupillai Prabhakran was extremely authoritative in nature, wanting the LTTE to be the sole representative of Tamil society. His nationalist rhetoric always pointed out the importance of the LTTE, claiming that without the tigers there will be no hope for the Tamils. He made sure that LTTE was positioned as the only saviors, protectors and heroes of the Tamil society (Karmakar, 2022: 6). Martyrdom was one of the most pervasive and idealized forms of fighting amongst the LTTE. The aim was to politicize their deaths and remind the people of the struggle for a separate nation. The martyrs were commemorated every year and idealized as symbols of freedom. Some of them were even given the status of saints (Frerks and Terpstra, 2018: 1037-1039). The LTTE in some of the areas that they controlled had the legitimate power to use films, documentaries and podcasts as mediums for propaganda. The movies or podcasts were broadcasted in their controlled regions which mainly showcased the bravery of the LTTE (Frerks and Trepstra, 2018: 1040,1041).

The LTTE also worked extensively towards influencing and encouraging women to join their armed group. They would send pamphlets to women, declaring LTTE to be the only path towards both personal and national liberation. Majority of the women were inspired to join the resistance due to its promises of personal freedom from the rigid and oftentimes suffocating traditional

gender roles. The Tamil women for example were required to have both *addaccam* (modesty and silence) and *odduccam* (poise and restraint). Their mobility was therefore constantly monitored and controlled in the public spaces and they were under the constant scrutiny of the male population. The LTTE poised itself as an armed group that not only promised emancipation for women but also an opportunity to change societal norms. They even created a word for empowerment (Ah-Lu-mai) which did not exist in the Tamil language before. The LTTE gave women an image of androgynous fighters who fought against the patriarchal values by dressing and behaving contradictorily. (Alexander, 2014: 24,25). Prabhakaran himself would encourage women to join the armed group by constructing the discourse of female cadres being the highest symbol of empowerment. He would constantly talk about the importance of female cadres by attributing women to the success of the LTTE (Dissanayake, 2017: 3).

2. What roles did the women play in their respective armed groups?

Women began to join the LTTE in 1976 which later on led to the formation of the women's front of the liberation tigers in 1983. The women's front consisted of the political wing, the militant wing and a sucide unit. Each unit and wing was under the operational command of a female cadre. The political division mainly worked with various campaigns and projects which among other things aimed at empowering women. The women's political division extensively worked for the prevention of sexual harassment, rape and domestic abuse against Tamil women. They created several projects through which women were trained in auto-mechanics or small scale business ventures in order to make them more independent and self-sufficient. The military wing on the other hand trained their women in active combat. They were expected to do the same things as their male counterparts. Women therefore went through extensive training in the use of weapons, explosives, and other specialized combat training (Alexander, 2014: 23, 26, 29 ; Dissanayake, 2017: 2).

The sucide unit on the other hand were a few handpicked female cadres who were trained for specific occasions. They were also known as the birds of paradise and their missions consisted of committing suicide bombings against high value targets. The targets were mainly military personnel, politicians or religious sites etc. The female sucide cadres would go through extensive

training in which they were taught how to hide their bombs, how to go through checkpoints undetected and how to think fast on their feet. The LTTE had created several tactical innovations such as bra and underwear bombs or fake pregnancy bombs. These innovations helped the female cadres pass through checkpoints undetected (Dissanayake, 2017: 3–5; Jackson et al., 2007: 63-65). Female cadres seem to have been some of the most effective sucide bombers, having conducted 15 out of the 23 high value targets (ibid). It has been estimated that around 20 to 50% of the LTTE consisted of female fighters (Gunawardena, 2006: 83; Alexander, 2014: 26; Dissanayake, 2017: 2).

4.1.2. Dependent variable:

1. In what ways were men and women targeted differently when it came to the use of sexual violence?

There seems to exist little to no reports on the use of sexual violence by the LTTE. However, there have been isolated instance of sexual violence committed by cadres against women/girls. In 2002 for example, a girl was raped by a male cadre, because she had tried to escape from the LTTE after she was forcefully recruited by them. It is however unknown if the perpetrators suffered from any consequences. There was also another instance where a widow in Batticaloa, accused a well known cadre of attempted rape. The widow first reported to the LTTE but received no help which made her report the case to the Sri Lankan monitoring mission. The LTTE later on claimed to have disciplined the cadre but still maintained his position as a trainer in the LTTE. However, in another instance, four male cadres who gang raped a 13 year old girl were severely punished. It was reported that they were dragged around town with their hands tied to a tractor (Wood, 2009: 147, 148).

Despite the general restraint from the use of sexual violence, the LTTE still was an extremely cruel and violent in their tactics. For example, in 1990 around seventy five thousand Muslim women were forcefully displaced by the LTTE in the Jaffna peninsula and the Mannar islands in northern Sri Lanka. In the early august in the same year, the LTTE cadres killed around one

hundred Muslim men and boys. They were conducting an ethnic cleansing against the Muslims in the north. Ethnic cleansing is usually a process which triggers a widespread use of sexual violence. However, the LTTE did not engage in such acts and no evidence suggested any forms of institutionalized use of sexual violence by the LTTE in the areas that they had control over (Wood, 2009: 147-149).

2. What were the general reaction of the public when it came to the survivors of sexual violence?

When it comes to LTTE during the times of conflict, there seems to exist polarizing views on their attitudes towards victims of sexual violence. Some argue that the LTTE mainly used female cadres who were victims of rape. The choice of female rape victims as sucide bombers suggest that females were mainly exploited in the armed group through the manipulation of their emotions. The argument further suggests the women's value in the Tamil society depends on her purity and chastity which when taken away from them, leaves them impure. Sucide bombing therefore becomes a ritual of purity for these women. The point is further proven by the fact that the majority of the high profile sucide attacks were carried out by women (Dissanayake, 2017: 4,5; Gunawardena, 2006: 85; Ward, 2019: 176). However, there do exist other arguments that suggest that while initially the LTTE did had a rather conservative view on victims of rape. Their attitudes seem to have changed with time, especially with the increase in the numbers of female cadres. The women's wing specifically advocated for the survivors of sexual violence claiming that rape is something that they should not be blamed for (Rajanayagam, 2008: 7,8).

The roles of women as sucide bombers can also be argued on several levels. While it is true that women did commit sucide bombings, they were not the sole perpetrators. Martyrdom and sucide attacks were the LTTE's *Modus Operandi*. Sucide units existed in all of their military wings/units and included both men and women. Majority of the deaths by sucide bombings was carried out by men while some of the high profile assassinations were carried out by women. By simplifying the role of women as victims of rape, we take away their agency and the complexity of their individual choices. Female sucide bombers are not all victims, some actively chose to be agents

of violence. As they were willing to do whatever it takes for their freedom and the freedom of their nation. It is also important to highlight here that martyrdom was one of the most pervasive acts of warfare by the LTTE. It was idealized and indoctrinated into the minds of the cadres. Sucide bombing and martyrdom was branded as a necessity, an important step that needs to be taken by individual cadres for the sake of their freedom (Gunawardena, 2006: 83-87).

However, when it comes to male victims of sexual violence, there seems to exist a rather dismissive attitude towards their experiences. As the Tamil political narrative mainly focuses on the female victims. The general silence from the Tamil media, activists and the community seems to be an attempt in keeping the heterosexual masculine male body intact and secured. The silence also seems to be due to the general absence of the discourse surrounding men as victims of sexual violence. The idea that men can not get raped seems to be quite pervasive in the Sri Lankan society at large (Meegaswatta, 2022: 733,734).

4.2. Sri Lankan army:

4.2.1. Independent variable:

1. To what extent and in what ways were the military/armed groups glorified through propaganda?

The Sri Lankan government has constantly justified their oppression of the Tamil population by using historical mythologies as the basis for the Sinhalese domination. According to them, Buddha himself had visited Sri Lanka three times: the first time he visited the north where he forced the Yakshas (demons) into submission. The second time he visited East where he forced the Nagins (snakes) into submission. The third time he visited the South, where he built a sanctuary for the Buddhist. This particular mythology has been constantly used by the Sinhalese government to preach for a Sinhalese-Buddhist nation. It is also interesting to understand the symbolic association of the regions. Because majority of the Tamils live in the eastern and northern regions that are associated with demons and snakes. Whereas majority of the Sinhalese and the centralized government live in the south which is associated with the Buddha's sanctuary

(Devotta, 2007: 6,7; Jackson et al., 2007: 59). Majority of the elite political leaders seem to use historical mythologies as a means to strengthen their position by mobilizing along ethnic cleavages. Their use of such mythological association constructs fears of Tamil domination and aggression. Which the politicians then utilize through comparing themselves or the army with famous mythological heroes in order to present themselves as the heroic protectors of the nation (Kahandagama, 2014/2015: 54; Imtiyaz and Stavis, 2008: 138-143).

The Sri-lankan pro-war films especially helped propagate the image of the heroic Sinhalese soldier. They portrayed the Sinhalese soldiers as a benevolent and humanitarian helper of the oppressed Tamil women, who were constantly abused by their male counterparts. The Tamil men or the LTTE specifically were characterized as evil and destructive villains. The pro-war films created a clear distinction between the two competing masculinities by portraying one as destroyers and abusers of the nation and the other as protector of the nation. Through such depiction, the Sinhalese soldier was positioned as the dominant masculinity in the gender hierarchy (Kahandagama, 2014/2015: 52, 54-57). Mahinda Rajapaksa utilized the historical mythology or nationhood and heroism in his political campaign in 2005. He claimed himself to be the hero, the protector and the father of the nation. After his victory, he gave a speech at the parliament where he constantly compared his victory with that of the historical and mythological Sinhalese heroes. His speech also included the names of the heroic soldiers and commanders who died for the motherland. While at the same time commending the wives and mothers of the martyrs for the sacrifices of their heroic sons and husbands (RW, 2009; Imtiyaz and Stavis, 2008: 144).

2. What roles did the women play in their respective armed groups?

There seems to be an underrepresentation of women in the Sri Lankan armed forces, as little to no information exists on female combatants during the armed conflict. The official site for the Sri Lankan army women's corps does have an official archiv on women who served and died during the time of conflict. Their archive however does not have any detailed information on how these women died. The only information that exists are their names, units, date and place of death. However, by looking at the timeline, one can see that women in the Sri Lankan army have

been active in combat since 1996. What is interesting to notice however is that almost all of the central and colonel commandments for the women's corps are and have been men. Throughout its history, the women's corps seems to only have had two female colonel commandants, one between 2016-2018 and the other between 2008-2010 (Sri lankan army, 2023). There also seems to be a general absence of women from dangerous border areas where the majority of the conflict occurred. Their appointment as police constables or in the Air Force also seems to mainly serve a supportive purpose. In 1997 for example, women were recruited as police constables only so that male constables could be posted in the dangerous border regions of Sri Lanka. Whereas in the Air Force, women mainly seem to have piloted surveillance and transport aircraft (Marecek, 2000: 155).

The lack of female influence in the military seems to stem from the historical and cultural perception of the role of women in the Sinhalese society. Historically women have been considered as guardians and visible representatives of the Sinhalese culture. Which confined women to domestic roles. The traits that were often associated with the Sinhalese women was chastity, modestity and general ignorance of the world beyond their home. The ideal Sinhalese woman was obedient towards her husband and dedicated herself to her children and to the needs of her family members. The Sinhalese woman with her chastity and purity performed a superior form of femininity that was meant to signify the superiority of the Sinhalese race over the others (Marecek, 2000: 141-146). Such ideals were embedded in the Sinhalese nationalist discourse which explains the general lack of female soldiers in influential roles. While women have served and continue to serve in the military, they remain confined to the supportive roles. Which one can argue reinforces the gendered binary division that exists within the military institute. Where the armed struggle thus becomes a masculine prerogative (de Silva, 2009: 87; Marecek, 2000: 155)

4.2.2. Dependent variable:

1. In what ways were men and women targeted differently when it came to the use of sexual violence?

Sexual violence in armed conflict was extremely prevelant and asymmetric in nature as the reports indicated that majority of the perpetrators were from the various branches of the Sri Lankan government. The army, the terrorist investigation division (TID) and the criminal investigation department (CID) were all accused of committing sexual violence against detainees. The majority of the victims belonged to the Tamil ethnicity and they were mainly detained at airports, displacement camps or checkpoints. They were then brought into official or unofficial (secret) detention centers where they were tortured and sexually abused for months or even years. The aim was to forcefully coerce the victims into confessing their alleged connection with the LTTE. However, it was also used as a means to discourage the Tamil population from supporting the LTTE (Pararajasingham, 2018). The extreme prevalence and cruelty of sexual violence committed by state officials was not an isolated incidence. Which means that the occurrence of sexual violence were not due to the actions of a rogue personel. They were state enforced and the practices were known and even encouraged by some senior officials (ibid).

The use of sexual violence in Sri Lanka was extremely gendered in nature as both men and women were targeted as a means to humiliate, degrade and emasculate the entire Tamil society. The men were sexually abused as a means to homosexualize and emasculate them. The reasoning behind it can be due to the fact that men are associated with aggression and strength. They are supposed to be the heroic soldiers and protectors of their fragile and feminine counterparts. The male body that is enshrined with such meanings thus becomes a site of violent contestation. As the perpetrators of sexual violence for example would forcibly rewrite and remake the male body through extreme forms of sexual violence. By destroying the body through mental and physical abuse, the perpetrator symbolically achieves complete victory and domination over the enemy body and the nation as a whole (Meegaswatta, 2022: 732, 733). The men who suffered sexual abuse claimed that they were forced to strip, perform oral sex, were orally and analy abused on several occasion. They were also forced to rape other fellow inmates (male/female) while multiple officers watched. They were constantly degraded verbally and even tortured through other methods such as extreme beatings with various objects, asphyxiation, electric shocks and application of chili powder on sensitive areas. These extreme methods were meant to both mentally and physically destroy the victims, causing a breakdown of their

willpower in order to both assert dominance and make them comply (HRW, 2013; Pararajasingham, 2018).

The women while experiencing the same forms of torture as their male counterparts also suffered from forced impregnation, miscarriages and forced sterilization (HRW, 2013). In comparison to their male counterparts who were mainly tortured in the detention centers. Women suffered from sexual violence and in some occasions even killed by the Sri Lankan police forces at various checkpoints and even in the vitctims own home. In September 1996 for example, an 18 year old girl was rapes and murdered at a checkpoint near Jaffna. When her family went in search of her, they were also killed. The perpetrators managed to evade accountability without any repercussions. Another report claims that two girls were raped by a group of army soldiers in her own house in 1997. They too were never prosecuted and the entire case was ignored. Other than the random targeting, female LTTE cadres were also subjected to rape and murder, specially during the last few years of the conflict. There were reports of videos and pictures taken by the Sri Lankan soldiers which were seemingly made as trophies. The videos and pictures showed evidence of the female soldiers being raped before they were executed (ibid; Ganguly, 2022).

2. What were the general reaction of the public when it came to the survivors of sexual violence?

There seems to be a general impunity and disregard for the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Sri Lankan military, CID and TID. Throughout the conflict, the perpetrators of sexual violence were rarely convicted for their crimes. The victims also felt unsafe as they and their family's life would be threatened or harassed if they reported the crimes (HRW, 2013). After the conclusion of the conflict, Mahinda Rajapksa who was the president of Sri Lanka at that time, refused to acknowledge any of the allegations against the army and the government. He vehemently claimed that his army conducted a humanitarian war and that their fight was that of a victory of terrorism. Mahinda Rajapaksa himself enforced an inherently patriarchal hegemonic masculine ideal of a warrior, savior, father and a soldier. This depiction of a hegemonic masculine ideal often requires the denigration of other subordinate masculinities as evil, vile or less than. Which in the backdrop of an ethnic nation requires aggressive action.

Mahinda Rajapaksa embodied such ideals and promised to eradicate the LTTE and unite the mother nation (Meegaswatta, 2022: 725; crisis group, 2017).

An important aspect of the ethno-nationalist discourse in Sri Lanka is that women are at the front and center of the nationalist struggle. Their body and their sexuality are strictly controlled in their society as a means to preserve the superiority of their ethnic groups. In the case of the Sinhalese ethnic identity, women are told to perform their ethnic superiority by wearing *sari* and being respectful of the cultural attire. In order to differentiate themselves from other Tamil and Muslim women. The use of sexual violence was thus uses as a tool to demean and dishonor the enemy women as "whores", making it a pervasive method of "othering" (Marecek, 2000: 144 ; Tambiah, 2005: 245). In the Sri Lankan society rape was therefore an extremely taboo subjec. Therefore, many of the vitcims of sexual violence were afraid to come forth or report their experience. Their fear stems from the cultural belief of sexual purity before marriage. Women especially fear discrimination and rejection from their society. Men on the other hand fear that their masculinity would be put in question. As the belief is that men cannot get raped. Those who have suffered sexual violence are homosexualized and thus fear further persecution, as homosexuality is considered a crime in Sri Lanka. Another factor that hindered proper investigation were the institutional barriers that were imposed by the Sri Lankan government. For example, under the prevention of terrerorism act (PTA), alleged LTTE members were taken into custody without any trial or legal support (Traunmüller et al., 2019: 2019, 2020; HRW, 2013).

4.3. Analysis of the findings

The findings seem to suggest that there existed quite a variation in the attitudes and behaviors of the interested parties. The LTTE openly encouraged women to join their armed groups whereas the Sri Lankan government/armed forces mainly relegated the women to the supportive roles. They did not seem to have any influential roles in comparison to the female cadres in LTTE who were active at all levels of the LTTE. However, it is still important to highlight here that the LTTE was extremely authoritative in nature with only Prabhakaran having the right to finalize important strategic decisions. Despite that it is still important to look at the roles of women in

the LTTE and how their inclusion has helped shape masculinity and femininity. As per definition, militarized masculinity is a form of hegemonic masculinity which is built upon the gendered binary division of masculine protectors and feminine victims. In the context of conflict, militarization of masculinity occurs through the association of ideal masculine traits with the military. In ethno-national conflicts in general men are called to bear arms and protect their nations from enemy others. Their manhood becomes associated with their ability to protect their mother nation. Such ideals did not seem to exist in the LTTE as both men and women were equally recruited, trained and indoctrinated into the armed struggle. There were no gendered divisions that called for men to bear arms while confining women to the domestic sphere due to their passive nature and their vulnerability. The LTTE on the contrary seemed to promote emancipation of women from the rigid gender norms of their society. The political division also seemed to extensively work against gender discrimination and sexual violence against women.

Sri Lanka on the other hand constantly valorized the sinhalese soldier through mythological heroes. The armed forces were branded as “Rana Viru” or war heroes who were the epitome of benevolence. Through the use of mythological history and its heroes, the Sinhalese politicians/armed groups positioned themselves as the hegemonic masculine protectors of the mother nation. Due to the relational nature of hegemonic masculinity which depends on the domination of other femininities and subordinate masculinities. The Tamils and specially the LTTE were positioned as villainized and subordinated masculinities who were a threat to the mother nation. Whereas, the women were divided into two categories, the superior Sinhalese women who were confined to the domestic sphere and the inferior sexually impure Tamil women.. Their exclusion seems to stem from the nationalist rhetoric of superior race and the gendered dichotomization of femininities which confines women to the domestic sphere. They are the symbolic bearers of the nation and their performative femininity is of high value for the Sinhalese nation. They are therefore forced to perform their roles in order maintain the superiority of the Sinhalese race.

The institutionalization of CRSV by the Sri Lankan armed forces/politics was aimed towards forming a distinction between us and them. Due to ethnic cleavages and militarized masculine ideals in the Sinhalese society, sexual violence became a pervasive method through which

differences were physically carved up into the bodies of the enemies. Men were targeted because they represented the masculinities of the nation. Their penetration and submission meant that the entire nation was positioned as the subordinate, emasculated and homosexualized form of masculinity. Whereas, the heterosexual masculinity of the perpetrators remained intact. Such behavior really highlights the gendered norms surrounding sex and sexuality as those who were penetrated or rendered submissive were the only ones who were categorized as feminine/homosexual. The women on the other were targeted due to them being symbolic bearers and nurturers of the nation. Their targeting is two fold in nature, as sexual violence against them is meant to both destroy the nation and to emasculate their men by rendering them incapable of protecting their women/ honor.

In conclusion, militarized masculinity in the context of ethno-national conflicts has the tendency to normalize and promote sexual violence against enemy other. The aim is to not only dominate the enemy nation but to also create a proper distinction between “us” and “them”. The nation “self” becomes associated with dominant masculine traits which are built upon the dichotomized gender norms. The women in such a context therefore become objects of protection and violation, depending on their ethnic/national associations. The act of sexual violence in armed conflict is very much gendered in nature as it is an effective tool used by groups in order to maintain their superiority over other ethnicitities/nationalisties. In the case of Sri Lanka, the Sri Lankan armed forces had a culture of violence due to their unhealthy obsession and fascination with hegemonic masculinity. Whereas, the LTTE was mainly focused in their nationalist pursuit for a separate nation without focusing much on masculinities and femininities. For them, both men and women were equal participants in their struggle for a separate nation.

4.3.1. Alternative explanations:

An alternative explanation that might explain the general restraint against the use of sexual violence can be due to the LTTE’s dependence on foreign aids. While not mentioned before due

to the focus of the thesis being on militarized masculinity. The LTTE was highly dependent on foreign Tamil diasporas for fundings. They received financial and moral support from them and they were some of the main sources of their finances. However, it is important to highlight here that the LTTE still conducted grave human violations such as sucide bombings, child recruitments, ethnic cleansing, intimidation, and forced extortions. While the majority of the Tamil diasporas did support the LTTE. Those who did not were threatened, beaten and forced to financially support and participate in their struggles. LTTE's relationship with their Tamil diasporas is complicated in nature as some consider them as the legitimate power against the government while others refrain from their support due to the human rights abuses committed by the LTTE (HRW, 2006; Wood, 2009: 147-149). It can therefore be argued that while the LTTE does seek legitimacy and support from foreign diasporas. They do not present themselves as humanitarian armed forces. They base their legitimacy over their military prowess by positioning themselves as the sole opposition for the Sri Lankan armed forces.

The second alternative explanation is based on the LTTE's cultural and societal value which requires sexual purity and celibacy from their male and female cadres. Mahinda Rajapaksa strictly adhered to his societal beliefs and enforced a draconian law over the LTTE and the controlled areas against sexual relationships outside marriage (Wood, 2009:149). While this is a rather interesting argument, it is still important to not overlook the other factors that have had a clear effect on the attitudes and behaviors of the LTTE. The women's political wing and the female commanding officers had made a huge impact in the way women were portrayed in the LTTE. Their struggle for equality did bring some changes in the rigid cultural norms of tha Tamil society, eventually resulting in the restructuring of gender norms.

4.3.2. Limitations and generalizability

One limitation was the lack of accessibility on the CRSV reports in Sri Lanka. Due to the government's refusal to cooperate and the stigmatization and discrimination against the victims of sexual violence. There seems to exist only a few detailed reports on the detention centers and the situation of the survivors and their experiences. While the reports did manage to give enough

information through which one could assume the endemic nature of sexual violence. It was still hard to highlight some of the other interesting aspects of the conflict. For example, some of the reports suggested that female government officials were also involved in the sexual tortures of the Tamil civilians and combatants. However, the reports only mentioned them through a few sentences. Which makes it hard to determine their level of involvement and their roles in the use of sexual violence.

The articles that were chosen for this thesis were also extremely polarizing, especially when it came to LTTE. While some authors argued that the LTTE gave women the choice of freedom, others argue that women were just "cogs in a wheel" and that female emancipation was just a ploy for LTTE to gain more manpower. Some authors bring up the argument that majority of the female sucide bombers were vicitms of rape which the LTTE utilized in order to assasinate high value targets. The LTTE strictly adhered to celibacy before marriage and therefor considered raped victims as impure. However, other authors argue that while initially having negative attitude towards rape victims. The LTTE's attitude changed with time as more women were involved in their organization. They became more inclusive and even allowed their cadres to marry raped vicitms in order to protect their social standing. Such variations in the opinions of other researchers made it quite hard to determine the behavior and attitudes of LTTE. It is also important to highlight here that majority of the arguments surrounding female cadres as victims of rape are based on allegations. In one article for example, the author claimed that one of the most famous cadres: Dhanu was an alleged rape victim. However, it is hard to judge the strength of an argument when it is based on allegations.

Finally, when it comes to the generalizability of the chosen topic. It is important to highlight that the IV and DV of interest seems to be only replicable under certain contexts. The focus of my phenomena of interest has been in the context of ethno-national conflicts. The tendency of militarized masculinity to create a distinction between us and them through gendered language and behavior is a trait that is closely linked to the ethno-nationalist tendencies of othering.

5. Summary and conclusion:

In conclusion, the aim of my thesis was to study and argue for the causal relationship between militarized masculinity and CRSV. The cases that were chosen for my thesis were the Sri Lankan armed forces and the LTTE. Through the method of structured focus comparison the IV and DV of interest were operationalized through questions in order to keep the focus of the studies on the interested variables and to structure the paper in a comprehensible manner. The findings of the case study suggested that CRSV was more common amongst the Sri Lankan armed forces. The argument that was built from the findings brought forth several factors. The first being the propagation of militarized masculinities by the Sri Lankan politicians/armed forces. They used extensive propaganda in order to increase their popularity amongst the masses. They played on old mythological histories and ethno-nationalist prerogatives in order to alienate the Tamils. They further legitimized the existence of the military through the vilification of tha Tamils by branding them as a threat to the Sinhalese identity. Their glorification of strong man politics, their hard stance on the LTTE and their cultural of violence resulted in the widespread and systematic use of sexual violence against majority of the Tamil minorites. The LTTE on the other hand based their nationalist struggle along the line of personal and national liberation. Women were promised with personal emancipation and the LTTE was positioned as the only way through which women could gain equality in their patriarchal society. The LTTE did not propagate any type of violent militarized masculine behavior. For them men and women were equally important in their struggle for a separate nation. Their support for gender equality was shown through their prohibition of and unlawfulness of domestic and sexual violence against Tamil women.

While this thesis was not built on a gap that was found in the selected topic of interest. The papper still shed some light on the oftentimes dismissive nature of the society and the reaserachers at large when it comes to male victims of sexual violence. This paper argued that sexual violence against men are just as gendered in nature and that their experiences can help further elaborate on the compelixites of gender dynamics. Men are targeted differently in comparison to women. Women are targeted as a means to penetrate, defile and destroy the nation. Whereas, men are targeted due to their association with the masculine identity of the enemy nation. They are homosexualized and feminized as a means of differentiation. Where the dominant masculine nation is put into comparison with the submissive enemy “other”. However,

due to the limitations of this thesis, not much was said about the female perpetrators of sexual violence. Further research should therefore be done on their roles in the use of CRSV and why they are oftentimes branded as an anomaly rather than a serious matter of discussion.

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