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THE ANALYSIS OF WARTIME RAPE USING POSTMODERN FEMINISM IN THE
CONFLICTS OF SIERRA LEONE 1991, BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA 1992, DARFUR 2003

By

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Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment

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Abstract

This research examines how patriarchal institutions weaponize the act of rape in times of conflict. Rape is understood and conceptualized through the language of masculinity, especially the dominance of the masculine recognized and practiced in various cultures. Postmodern feminists argued that a woman or femininity is regulated, constructed, and defined by men through gender roles and symbols. As such, a woman does not exist as her own individual, but follows a constructed identity given by patriarchal institutions. In the theater of war, when a man rapes a woman, she is not only a victim of this violation, but further, the rape is qualified as an attack against the masculinity of her society and the men with whom she is affiliated. In this case, when a soldier rapes an enemy woman, he violates the masculinity of enemy men, as the intended objective is not simply the defilement of the woman, but the humiliation of enemy soldiers and society. Because of this gendered identity attached to women, rape becomes an effective weapon of war. This paper uses case-studies in the conflicts of Sierra Leone in 1991, Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992, and Darfur in 2003 to explore the relationship between the weaponization of rape and the patriarchal institutions that enable it. The expected outcome of this study is to demonstrate that rape becomes an effective and widespread weapon of war through the patriarchal understanding of rape.

Introduction

Conflict-related sexual violence, specifically rape, is a consistent occurrence since ancient times, with records from the Greeks, Romans, Hebrews, and historical texts or myths such as the *Illiad*, and the Old and New Testaments (Clark, 2014; Denov, 2006; Card, 1996). Generally, the understanding of war traditionally excludes female voices and participation, including the theoretical development of war in scholarly research (Kinsella, 2004; Peach, 1994). Using Postmodern Feminism as the framework, this paper analyzes wartime also known as martial rape in the civil conflicts of Sierra Leone, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Darfur. Postmodern Feminism contends that language is phallogentric, meaning male-centered. This is because man is the

signifier of his surroundings, consequently defining the environment through and for him. Postmodern Feminists explain this is why the feminine or a woman is outside of the Symbolic Order¹, for the man defines her, but she cannot define herself. This paper uses the conceptual precepts of Postmodern Feminism in tracing and addressing the relationship between patriarchal conceptualizations of rape and how it is weaponized in conflict. The paper's objective is to accumulate conceptual knowledge, supported by empirical case studies, in helping to develop an understanding of how rape systemically occurs in war and its instrumentalization.

Literature Review

Postmodern Feminism

Symbolic Order and Phallogentrism

According to Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1982), the phallus is the signifier to the signified in the Symbolic Order. This essentially means that man is the signifier (p. 78). Language as a medium is spoken by and through him. Consequently, the structure of language centers around man, and he defines the environment. In this context, it is the Subject that defines the Object (pp. 79-80). Both Jacques Derrida (1997), a philosopher and founder of deconstruction, and Lacan (1982) identify that the signified has *privilege*. For Derrida (1997), it was the privilege of presence. (p. 18) For Lacan (1982), the Other² has the privilege of “satisfying needs, that is, the power, to deprive them of one thing by which they are satisfied,” and that the feminine sex “will reject an essential part of her femininity, notably all its attributes through masquerade...It is what she is not

¹ The Symbolic Order is a concept of Lacan based on Freud's psychoanalysis. It shows phallogentrism, which means man is the signifier of language, and everything is signified through him. In simpler terms, man dictates meaning through objectification.

² The terms I/Other, Subject/Object, were coined by Sartre in his work *Being and Nothingness* (2021). It explains the relational existence of persons. The I (Subject) dictate the existence and meaning of the Other (Object). Specifically, the Object cannot exist without the Subject. Outside of the Subject's perceptions, the Other is *nothing*.

that she expects to be desired as well as loved.” (p. 81, 84) This means that a woman is believed to have *privilege* in the phallogentric language as she is created and defined by man. She becomes what she is not in order to satisfy the phallus. Her *privilege* is her passive existence for man. Postmodern feminist Helen Cixous (1981) refers to this as the reason why both Lacan and Freud reasoned that the actual woman is not found in the Symbolic (p. 45).

Cixous delves deeper into the feminine in a phallogentric language, and explains what a woman must do. She argues that a “woman must write woman. And a man, man.” (Cixous, et al., 1976) Man dominates speaking and writing, with a masculine focus that oppresses and prevents the feminine from defining herself. (p.879) For a woman to be free, she must write herself and reconnect with her sexuality by articulating how her body is possessed and controlled the phallus. She must separate herself from the roles given to her by man, through which she escapes to enjoy her basic freedoms and pleasures. Philosopher and feminist theorist, Monique Wittig (1981), compares the idea of women to that of race, which is assumed to be natural when that nature itself is an idea (p. 282). The perceived visible and biological differences are interpreted by men as belonging to a social order that they created, specifically the myth of woman as an *imaginary formation* of men (p. 283). For both Wittig (1981) and Cixous (1976), the definition of a woman is by and for men. Cixous (1981) points out that gender roles are similar to a game of make-belief wherein women and girls follow a given set of criteria by being the ideal version of women, but she is not actually herself (p. 47).

A Woman's Voice

Cixous, et al., (1976) advises that a woman must write and speak from herself and for women. She must challenge the phallogentric language. Cixous says that a woman must “conform in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than

silence.” (p.883) Cixous (1981) further claims that it is nearly impossible to create a whole new language centered outside of the phallus, and explains that this is because the phallogocentric language is used and taught from infancy. It is how people born into this world are taught to speak. She states “For as soon as we exist, we are born into a language and language speaks (to) us, dictates its law.” (p.45) This language influences conceptual thinking of one’s being and existence, in which people are already thinking with a masculine language. Because the woman is outside the Symbolic, it is extremely difficult and nearly impossible to form a whole new structure of language. Cixous, et al., (1976) argue that only those that can break free from the phallogocentric language can write feminine and construct a whole new language. However, she argues that just because it is exceedingly difficult to escape the phallogocentric symbolic order and write in feminine language, it does not mean this feminine language does not exist. (p. 883).

Philosopher and psycholinguist, Luce Irigaray (2002), suggests that people must change their method of speech in both word choice, tone, and even syntax. (p. 87) Using a phallogocentric language involves the transmission of information, but not actual communication. (p. 86) She uses the phrase “I love you” as an example, explaining that this objectifies another person and excludes them from the speaker. In order to truly communicate this phrase, one must say “I love to you,” maintaining the speaker and receiver as Subjects. The language becomes more inclusive as it leaves space for discourse such as using the words “together,” “with,” “between,” and “to” (p. 87). Psychoanalyst and semiotician Julia Kristeva (1987) used the term *transference love*, which changes the relationship of the I/Other into I with the Other (p. 15).

Phallogocentric Language

The phallogocentric language consists of words that exist in opposition to defining the world. This is described to be both dualist and hierarchical (Cixous, 1981). The power dichotomy can be

mainly seen in man/woman that extends to big/small, higher/lower, good/bad, and so forth (p. 44). Everything understood in the world through language originates from the man/woman power dichotomy that is assumed to be natural when it is not. Women surrendering themselves to a male-centered order results in their silence and mere imitation that ideally exists for men (Kristeva, 1987). In short, a woman can never truly speak for herself, but only for what the phallogentric language dictates her to say. Irigaray (2002) finds that this dichotomous language excludes the Subject from the Object. She states that man separates himself from matter-mother, “separating himself from it, in forgetting it, in interrupting every bond of contiguity-continuity, in suspending every empathy (in the etymological sense of the word) with this primary matter irreducible to his being man” (p. 194). In this binary system, it follows the “Dominion of One, of the sameness of One” (p. 196). This means that man defines everything he is not, which is why he is the center. Due to this dichotomy, a woman being the opposite of man does not maintain nor support the actual nature of these two sexes.

Irigaray (2002) extends phallogentric language to the way it is used in logic and reasoning, that is, logos. With the use of hierarchical language, and man dominating as the sole signifier, a *solid entity*, he excludes his connection with the world, turning its entirety into an Other (p. 199-200). This affects the physicality of existence, which assumes the subjective understanding to be true, when it is actually questionable (p. 200). Essentially, the phallogentric language is a language of dominance. Women are not only differentiated in sexual or social categories from men, but also in their relational identity (Irigaray, 2002). Irigaray (2002) found that a sample of eight-year-old Italian girls talked differently from boys. The girls focused more on the relational aspect between people, especially to the opposite sex. For boys, they spoke in a more subject-object relationship

(p. 80). This means that women tend to talk using Subject to Subject rather than Subject to Object. They are more relational compared to men in using language.

The Phallogentric Logos in the Conceptualization of Conflict and Rape

This all connects to gender construction of the two sexes that are assumed to be natural. From cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead's research (1935), she found variation in gender roles in three small-scale societies, particularly in the masculine and feminine dichotomy. She suggests that the social traits are given to these sexes and can change from culture and time periods, wherein the people conform to their assigned positions (p. 38). Knowing this, she states "Standardized personality differences between sexes are of this order, cultural creations to which each generation, male and female, is trained to conform" (p. 39). Consequently, gender roles are social constructions that are not attached to the biological characteristics of the sexes. This inherent difference is assumed to be natural when it is not (Meger, 2010; Kinsella, 2004). Arguably, this relates to the roles of sexes during war, wherein the difference between sexes is not inherent, instead, it is produced (Sjoberg, 2006; Kinsella, 2004). This reproduction is crucial to the construction of the patriarchal conceptualization of war, conflict, and rape, and how the conceptualization of the latter is designed to exclude the feminine. By excluding the feminine, phallogocentrism allows patriarchy to define wartime rape, or wartime sexual violence, through the instruments of the masculine, as opposed to the victimhood and suffering of the feminine.

Patriarchal Conceptualization of Rape

Recalling the postulates of Postmodern Feminism, a woman cannot define herself nor speak of her own experiences because she is within the phallogentric language. Everything she understands and knows, even her own body, is according to the phallus. As Ann Rosalind Jones

(1981), a comparative literature professor in Smith College, emphasizes, a woman's identity is determined by her direct relation with man. She is a man's mother, daughter, wife, and property (p. 248). In this situation, a woman cannot nor does she have her own definition. The conceptualization of rape by the patriarchal symbolic order has a relationship with the sexual objectification of women, because she is an extension of man. In this context, she is *his* object. American philosopher Claudia Card (1996) argues that cross-culturally, rape is a language of masculine dominance. This is to send a message to women and girls that they do not have autonomy over their own bodies, and that their bodies are regulated and governed by men (pp. 6-7). Additionally, rape does not only mean dominance over women, but also over men who have direct or symbolic connection to the raped woman or women. Further, rape as a masculinized weapon of war also extends to its use against men. While rape against men is not as prevalent, the purpose for rape is to subjugate the enemy men to sexual humiliation and penetration. As such, rape is essentially a heterosexist narrative as the given soldiers seek to feminize enemy men.

This postulate rests on the understanding that rape uses the forcible penetration of the penis, and/or an object (symbolizing the penis) for penetration, to demonstrate masculine power over a feminized identity. As such, a rapist turns victims into passive, weak, feminized objects (Card, 1996; Kirby 2020). Arguably, this is the result of the dualistic hierarchy in a phallogentric language, to become the active against the passive, to become the Subject against the Object.

In male-dominated societies, the masculinity of a man depends on his ability to provide and protect his women (Mullins, 2009). Rape becomes a deliberate attack towards a man's masculinity as his property is being attacked and violated by another man (Kirby, 2020; Clark, 2014). Rape uses a woman's body to attack the masculinity of the men with whom she is associated. This happens because in patriarchal societies, a woman's worth is based on her honor,

virginity, chastity, and fertility (Snyder, et al., 2006). If a woman is raped, she brings shame to herself and her community. She is usually ostracized, forced into prostitution, pressured into committing suicide, and methodically stigmatized by her group (Denov, 2006; Snyder, et al., 2006; Thomas and Ralph, 1994).

Weaponization of Rape

In times of conflict, the military weaponizes rape by using it persistently and prevalently against women in order to exhibit their masculine superiority over enemy men. In addition, rape is also a way to show masculinized ethnic supremacy against different communities during civil conflicts. Hence, rape would happen in the private and most importantly public spheres. In numerous cases, the soldiers would rape the victims in front of male relatives and other community members (Pinaud, 2020; Clark, 2014; Mullins, 2009; Snyder, et al., 2006). In the 2017 Myanmar conflict, for example, soldiers gathered about 40 women and girls aged 15-40, to be publicly raped in the village center for many hours in front of their village leaders (Alam and Wood, 2020). The Rohingya survivors in the 2016 *cleanup* operation testified in seeing multiple women and girls raped by the Myanmar soldiers, while also hearing their cries for help. Other testimonies claim that little girls running from violence were systemically raped. Rapes here took place in many spheres, with some women and girls raped in front of the males, to other victims being gang raped in public (Peltola, 2018). In the Bosnian War, women and girls were also raped in front of their male family members, and brought to concentration and rape camps to be forcibly impregnated by Serbian men. The act was not only physical, but it was also ideational: to destroy her lineage in order to *dishonor* her community and even her own nation (Snyder, et al, 2006). African civil wars expert Clemence Pinaud (2020) found that women were publicly gang-raped in South Sudan as a

form of performative politics, showing power and dominance (p. 648). This was also evident during the Rwandan Genocide, where Hutu soldiers would engage in public gang rapes against Tutsi women and girls as an act of retaliation against Tutsi women. The soldiers reasoned that these Tutsi women would look down on Hutu men. They had to rape them to further masculinize themselves (Peltola, 2018; Mullins, 2009).

Anthropologist Carolyn Nordstrom (1996) suggests that public rapes are further used to terrorize the woman's family and community (p. 152). In the wars that took place in the Balkans, Central America, and the Philippines, researchers suggest that the effectiveness of rape as well as its prevalence has a connection to a woman's honor, chastity, virginity, and other gender role-specific traits (p. 151). In essence, it reaffirms the exercise of the Symbolic Order through the masculine's qualification of the values that define womanhood, and the act of denying or defiling womanhood. Kirby emphasizes that rape becomes "useful to the extent that an audience will understand it as a desecration" (p. 217). For as long as rape is acknowledged as the language of masculine dominance, it will be continuously useful for military institutions. (Clark, 2014). Similarities, these wartime rapes occur for various purposes by the military. They can be used to dehumanize the subjugated population, *cleanse* the bloodline, and invoke ethnic hatred, group superiority, and terror. Weaponizing rape is complex and useful for various militarized institutions, especially when designed to destroy the morale of enemy male civilians and soldiers (Pinaud, 2020; Peltola, 2018; Clark, 2014; Mullins, 2009; Snyder, et al., 2006).

In other instances, soldiers use rape to build social cohesion, celebrate, and boost their morale as men. Harvard political scientist Dara Cohen (2017) observes that gang rapes foster collective responsibility and bonding between current and new members. This also becomes a performative act as the perpetrators show off to their colleagues to seek validation from fellow

soldiers (p. 703). Additionally, gang rapes for social bonds also occur in times of peace as exhibited in the Democratic Republic of Congo prior to the 1996 civil war, as well as in Cambodia, and South Africa (Alexandre and Mutondo, 2022; Cohen, 2017).

Wartime Rape

Wartime rape is different from peacetime rape. While rape is a symbol of masculine dominance in both times of peace and war, its purposes are not the same. Rape in times of peace happens as a result of an individual or group misconduct, and is a clear violation of law that stipulates punishment by government. Generally speaking, it is not a political act. Civil rape also happens in smaller numbers due to existing laws and punishment of perpetrators. Wartime rape, on the other hand, is a deliberate and intentional attack on a woman's community, and depending on the context of the conflict, even to her nation. This entails a fundamental political component, especially considering the fact that wartime rape either has direct or tacit sanctioning by the state or a political group. This becomes a collective security issue to women and girls as it happens on a wider scale, with tolerance from higher ranking military officers and political officials (Ju, 2022; Meger, 2010; Baaz and Stern, 2009; Hansen, 2000). Additionally, as intuitively gauged, rape in conflicts has significantly higher proportion than rapes during peace. In 2002, results from the Physicians for Human Rights survey showed that an estimate of 215,000 to 257,000 Sierra Leonean women were subjected to sexual violence. In the Bosnian war, an estimate of about 25,000 to 50,000 women were raped (Denov, 2006). These statistics show gender-based violence against civilians during conflict. This is further supported by the presence of rape camps, performative politics of rape, and the disproportionately high number of female victims (Denov, 2006; Thomas and Ralph, 1994).

Militarized Masculinity

The military, as an institution, remains an inherently masculine structure. Traditionally, women were neither involved nor participated in the military. It was “fought by men, with and against other men, for male-defined purposes and ends” (Peach, 1994). Professor of International Relations at Cardiff University, Marysia Zalewski (1995), emphasizes how the creation and enforcement of a masculine persona is overlooked when it comes to analyzing the military’s behavior in conflict (p. 352). The military was understood to be exclusively male, but this idea of the militarized male is constructed as an act to be portrayed by the soldiers. An example of this is when drill sergeants would use feminine traits as insults to trainees, calling them *pussies*, *little girls*, and so forth. If the masculine persona was not embodied by the military, arguably, neither insult nor heterosexist humiliation in training was necessary (p. 352).

Typically, the military has masculine and feminine spheres where the male and female sex fulfill their roles. Soldiers ideally belong to the male sphere, and represent the characteristics of a warrior showing rationality, strength, vigor, and bravery. It is part of their valor. While the ideal feminine sphere is associated with submissiveness and *easy* tasks such as cooking, secretarial work, cleaning, administrative, and other non-combatant roles (Baaz and Stern, 2009). Women that join the masculine sphere are technically accepted by their comrades, however, their reproductive value lessens as they are no longer feminine. The woman is far too much like a man to be a woman (p. 506). Scholars use the term militarized masculinity to refer to the military’s use of hypermasculinity and misogyny that devalue and oppress feminine traits (Riley, 2020). This militarized persona can even show itself as a standard especially to female recruits seeking to fit in (Clark, 2014). In this case, women participate in acts of sexual violence and rape in order to conform to the masculine persona (p. 466).

Research Question: What is the relationship between militarized conflict, patriarchal conceptualization of rape, and weaponization of rape?

Hypothesis: When rape is conceptualized through the constructs of patriarchy, it becomes a more effective and widely instrumentalized weapon of war.

Methodology

The framework of this study is postmodern feminism, which is an ontological field that deals with the reality of existence. It deconstructs the phallogocentric language in order to understand the relations between man and woman, not only in cultural and biological differences, but in relational as well. Due to the nature of the subject, a case-study analysis is suitable in understanding the connections of the phallogocentric logos to the effective utilization of wartime rape. The variables of the cases are: (1) conflict, which all three cases satisfy. A conflict in this paper is the absence of legal institutions and enforcement of laws. Additionally, the number of wartime rape is significantly high compared to peacetimes. (2) The conceptualization of rape in the phallogocentric logos is traced by how the community perceives women such as their virginity, purity, motherhood, and other feminine traits. (3) Effective use of rape is measured not only by the high number of rape-cases, but also how it was used. For example, Serbian soldiers use rape in order to forcibly impregnate women to damage their honor and image as *Mothers* of Bosnia.

The United Nations (2021) reported that in the year 2020, there were 2,542 cases of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), although this data is limited and should not be taken as an actual measurement of the prevalence in CRSV. These numbers only account for the verified cases wherein the victims gave their testimonies to the researchers. Women and girls disproportionately have higher numbers in being victims of CRSV compared to men and boys. The United Nations (2021) found that 2,400 of verified cases were from women and girls, meanwhile men and boys accounted for 58 cases. This statistic does not mean to exclude the male-sex and their experiences. Instead, it is to show that wartime rape is a sex-based act of violence mostly committed against women. Further, what limits accurate numbers is that in patriarchal societies, rape-victims carry both the shame and stigma of their rape, with many engaging in

secrecy or concealment. Due to the severe humiliation the victims face, there is a high level of impunity towards rape and lower verified cases (Gingerich and Leaning, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2003; Tadeusz, 1993). This paper provides a case-study analysis in the following conflict zones where rape was instrumentalized as a wartime weapon of masculinity: Sierra Leone, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Darfur. These cases were selected on the following criteria: the conflicts occurred during the post-Cold War period, specifically from 1990 to 2005.

According to the United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the Sierra Leone 1991 civil war resulted in an estimate of about 250,000 cases of women being raped. A 1997 survey also found a significant increase of human immunodeficiency viruses (HIV) in prostitutes at Freetown³, from 26 percent in 1995 to a sudden 70 percent in 1997. While the Forum for Women Educationalists together with other institutions medicated 2,000 victims of sexual violence between March of 1999 and February of 2000, many of these victims were infected and pregnant (Bastick, et al., 2007). The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992 resulted in 20,000 to 50,000 estimates of rape. However, it is difficult to obtain more accurate estimates as victims kept their rapes secret, underwent severe mental trauma, or attempted and even committed suicide. (Bastick, et al., 2007; Thomas and Ralph, 1994). Specifically in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the government would over-estimate numbers of rape committed by enemy perpetrators, possibly for political purposes (Bastick, et al., 2007). The conflict in Darfur, Sudan in 2003 resulted in 9,300 documented cases of rape, with estimates being double the number (p. 63). The Human Rights Watch World Report (2007) estimates that “tens of thousands of women have been subject to sexual violence.” (p. 47).

³ Freetown is the capital and largest city of Sierra Leone.

Case Study Analysis

Sierra Leone

Brief History of Conflict

Sierra Leone was a former British colony that became independent in 1961. The new government called the All-People's Congress (APC) sought to rule a diverse country, and as of 2001, Sierra Leone consists of about sixteen ethnic groups. However, due to corruption, nepotism, and financial mismanagement by the APC, this created dissatisfaction and tension from the citizens. Consequently, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) were the rebel forces that aimed to reform the government by overthrowing the APC. The civil war started by March 1991 and would last for ten years (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2002). The war ended with about five thousand civilians killed, one hundred civilians that suffered from limb amputations, and thousands of women and girls subjected to sexual violence. Other catastrophic damages towards civilians by the rebel forces included using noncombatants as human shields as well as destruction of property such as homes and villages (p. 12).

Women in Laws and Cultural Norms

Despite constitutional law granting equal rights between men and women, and prohibiting discrimination against the sexes, customary law is practiced and followed by society. Under customs such as Islamic law, a woman's rights in marriage are constricted compared to the 1991 constitutional law. In this context, a woman's value is determined by her marital status, and the number of children she can bear. Women can only marry with consent from the parents, however, her consent in arranged marriages are not upheld (p. 17). In Sierra Leonean society, the husband and his family have custodial rights over the wife's children. She can only care for the boys until the age of nine, while girls are supervised until they come of age if divorce or death of the male-

spouse occurs. Moreover, society permits domestic violence against women as the husband has the right to discipline his wife by force (p. 19). In Sierra Leonean law, there is no age of consent. Due to this, minors can “consent” to sexual acts committed by men when other states would declare it as statutory rape. Additionally, marital rape is not seen as criminal offense as it is a woman’s duty to have sex with her husband regardless of her consent (p. 20). The perception of society towards women and girls are low, and as such, sexual violence is not treated as seriously. Virginity also has a role in regards to defining rape. In Sierra Leonean society, rape is only rape when it is done to a virgin. But when it is done to a non-virgin, then it is the woman’s fault as she is perceived to either consent to or seduce the man (p. 24).

The Data of Rape in Conflict

Society’s perceptions towards women and girls also influences the action of combatants towards female civilians. During the civil war, sexual violence occurred at a massive and systemic scale (Amnesty International [AI], 2000). Women and girls were subjected to forced marriages, and/or multiple perpetrator rapes, with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) estimating about 75% of abducted women and girls having been sexually abused (p. 2). Consequences of such actions resulted in forced pregnancies and contraction of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS. The Physician for Human Rights (PHR) estimates that in 2002, about 215,000 to 257,000 women and girls were victims of conflict-related sexual violence (HRW, 2002). The perpetrators were mostly identified to be RUF and the Liberian forces that supported them (p. 26). While on a lesser-scale, government forces and Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) also committed sexual violence against women (p. 12). On January 1999, the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the Sierra Leone chapter of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE Sierra Leone) treated 1,862 female survivors under their care,

with MSF stating that 55% of the survivors reported being victims of gang-rape, and 200 of them being pregnant (p. 27).

Testimonies from Victims

Regardless of ethnic group, socioeconomic status, or age, the women and girls that were raped by individuals or groups, were based mostly on the preference of being virgins and young women. As mentioned, virginity is valuable in Sierra Leonean society, with non-virgins being less valued for marriage. A fifteen-year-old witness explained how both the RUF and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council were finding virgins in Freetown in 1991. Other testimonies shared that the combatants would physically check women and girls if they were virgins or not. In 1999, at the city of Cline Town⁴, a rebel commander ordered the examination of girls from the ages of 12-15 years old to see if they were virgins.

A captured nurse testified that the youngest rape victim she treated was a nine-year old with severe injuries such as a torn and bleeding perineum (p. 28). Another victim was vaginally and anally raped by 10 RUF combatants. While she was not raped in front of her parents, she was heard (pp. 28-29). She also shared how she had no friends despite having an operation in 2001 as she “smelled too bad.” According to a ten-year old girl at the time of the event, she witnessed an elderly woman getting raped with soldiers mocking her about her age (p. 29). A seven-year-old child testified of being raped, and mentioned how other civilians saw her, yet they could do nothing to save her. A Freetown student was sixteen when she was forced to marry a ranked Colonel “Jaja,” being stripped, beaten, and had an umbrella shoved into her genital area, while many people watched the scene (p. 34).

⁴ Cline Town is a smaller area inside of Freetown.

The rebels used sexual violence to violate social norms and to subjugate the civilian population. A father was forced to watch his daughter being raped by both RUF and AFRC rebels. The rebels would also take the male-family members and line them up in front of the bed where the combatants proceeded to rape the women and girls. One of the rebels declared, “Don’t you want to see what we do to your daughters?” (p. 36). In another example, a policeman was forced to watch the rape and abduction of his three daughters in Kingtom⁵ (AI, 2000). Rebel soldiers also forced men to rape their own family members in front of others, such as fathers raping daughters, or brothers raping sisters. This was intentionally done as incest was taboo in Sierra Leone. Those who refused to rape were killed by the combatants. Further, many women and girls were also raped in front of their families (HRW, 2002; AI, 2000). Women and girls were abducted for sexual slavery and forced labor, while the family members who sought to protect them were killed by the rebels (HRW, 2002). Numerous women and girls were forcibly impregnated, with those having abortions or no choice but to bear the child till full term. Another abducted nurse testified that a rebel doctor was ordered not to perform abortions, provide birth control, or traditional herb treatments. This was because the rebels believed the population should be sustained even though many civilians had died (pp. 40-41).

Most of the women and girls that have been victims of wartime rape have mostly refrained from reporting their abuse or being subjects of public discourse. The doctors interviewed by the HRW (2002) explained that before the war occurred, rapes were not allowed to be publicly discussed. It is also said that rapes occur within families or extended families, and as such, were considered private family matters. This secrecy was also for allowing the victims to be married and their families to receive beneficial dowries. Additionally, in a small community, people will

⁵ Kingtom is a suburban area located at the north side of Freetown.

gravely shame the offender as everyone is familiar with each other. Due to the low-status of women and girls, persecution of conflict-related sexual violence was not likely as seen in the Lomé Amnesty⁶ which sought to excuse perpetrators of the war (p. 25, p. 61).

The Phallogentric Logos and Rape

As the large body of evidence in the Sierra Leone case study demonstrates, rape in conflict is used by the military, as a masculine institution, to dominate and control the civilian population. Rape was used as a political act, and happened frequently in public. This was used to break the masculinity prowess and prestige of the civilian men, as the perpetrators defiled and abducted their women and girls. Case in point, soldiers deliberately searched the fathers of these women so that they could watch the rape. The perpetrators would taunt the fathers' masculinity, empowering themselves while humiliating the civilian men. Moreover, a seven-year-old victim testified about being publicly raped, but her community was powerless to protect her. On the other hand, the perpetrators were fulfilling the active role of the masculine persona that the military enforces them. They successfully Objectify the civilians by placing themselves as the *solid entity*, the Subject. Rape is a visible act of these soldiers as signifiers re-defining the civilian women to become their Objects. Effectively, it ruins and prevents these women from fulfilling their ideal social role. In Sierra Leonean society, considering the high value placed on virginity, this patriarchal construct was used to reinforce the weaponization of patriarchal objectives. Thus, if a woman is defiled before marriage, she is not seen as eligible for marriage and is thus perceived as being used, leading her to lose her value in society. In this context, the phallogentric value that is imposed upon her by patriarchy is also the same value that is taken from her through the weaponization of rape. Further,

⁶ The Lomé Amnesty was created in July 7, 1999 in order to pardon all combatants in the civil war. With this agreement, government institutions were prevented in sending trials and proper sentences that would hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes.

rape is only rape when it is committed to a virgin. This leads to rebel forces deliberately finding virgins by going as far as to gather and physically check the women's vaginas. Additionally, virgins and young girls are preferred as they are the ideal woman since they are innocent and unused. These masculinized conceptualizations of what constitutes a woman's value were important casual variables in explaining the behavior of military institutions and how they weaponized rape as an instrument of war.

Consequently, in the phallogocentric logocentric, rape disrupts the Symbolic Order of the community as the civilian men who perceived themselves to be the ideal Subject are then Objectified through the perpetrators' rape and abduction of their women. The rebel forces effectively stole their women by owning their bodies, making them unusable for the civilian men. In other cases, soldiers forced the men to rape their own women and girls. The civilians were coerced into committing taboo, and this disrupted the family social structure further. These women bore the full brunt of sexual assault and violence. The normalization of this modality of behavior, the justification of soldiers to engage in such behavior, and the indifference to the suffering of these women are directly related to the phallogocentric conceptualization of the act of rape: as a weapon of war, it was an effective and acceptable instrument for the masculinized institution of the military,

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Brief History of Conflict

Former Yugoslavia now consists of six independent countries with various ethnic groups, with Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) being the most diverse (Tabeau and Bijak, 2005). In 1991, the country consisted of 1.9 million people, with 44% being Bosnian Muslims, 31% Serbs, and other remaining ethnicities. In the same year, President Milosevic was the Serbian President, whose policies aimed to increase Serbian dominance. This threatened the other ethnic groups, especially

the three republics of Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia. The first republics to gain independence were Slovenia and Croatia, as their relative capabilities and resources allowed them to escape Serbia's attempt at dominance. Bosnia faced a more difficult situation because it consisted of two dominant groups: the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs, and a minority of Bosnian Croats supported by Croatia. The Bosnian Muslims were left with the choice of selecting independence rather than choosing to be subjected to Serbia or Croatia (pp. 188-189). In this situation, by March of 1992, elections took place granting Bosnia's independence from Yugoslavia, with clear, unanimous support from the populace. However, this was rejected by the Bosnian Serbs who wanted to remain with Serbia, and even wanted their own independence within Bosnia. Scholars argued that what primarily triggered the civil war was the international recognition of Bosnia's independence, especially by the United States and Europe (Moodie, 1995).

Wartime Rape, its use, and effects

As this project has addressed, rape is seen as a shameful act that severely stigmatizes the victims. Because of this, rape becomes a significantly underreported crime in peacetime. This extends from during and after times of conflict, with the obtaining of accurate numbers becoming more of a challenge to reporters or fact-finding missions. With the breakdown in government structure, victims are doubtful they can receive justice for the crimes committed (United Nations Security Council, 1994). All sides of the conflict have committed sexual violence against civilians; however, findings suggest that significantly higher numbers of Bosnian women were particularly raped by Serbian forces (AI, 1993; Tadeusz, 1993). Additionally, the Special Rapporteur found that (1) no political nor military leaders ceased to lessen nor prohibit rape, (2) Croat, Muslim, and Serbian women were deliberately abducted and raped multiple times, and (3) rape was used as a method of ethnic cleansing in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia (p. 19).

The United Nations Security Council (1994) reported five patterns in wartime rape: (1) victims experienced individual or small-numbered multi-perpetrator rapes. This was when tensions were extremely high before the conflict, and regional governments began to terrorize neighborhoods by stealing, house-breaking, beating, and raping women. (2) In areas of conflict, soldiers grouped the people based on sex and age. Combatants deliberately raped the women in public, then abducted and brought them to camps. (3) Men usually were killed while some were spared and brought to camps. Women were brought to different camps where they were gathered and sexually assaulted both privately and publicly. (4) Rape was used in the military policy of ethnic cleansing wherein survivors testified and believed they were held captive in facilities with the goal of being raped multiple times. In those camps, women were raped frequently, often in front of others, with some captors claiming that they impregnated these women. Victims testified that the soldiers would repeatedly tell them that these rapes were orders from the President or the political leadership. The victims who became pregnant were detained until it was too late for an abortion. One soldier told a woman that “she would give birth to a chetnik boy who would kill Muslims when he grew up.” These women were raped in order to bear the ethnicity of the perpetrators. And (5) other women were detained in facilities other than camps, such as hotels. These women held a different purpose, they were used for the sexual entertainment of soldiers. These victims were most likely killed rather than traded like the women in the camps (pp. 58-59). With these findings, women and girls were raped with military intention, not solely because of camaraderie or *carnal desire*.

There are findings that show combatants would commit mass sexual violence in order to displace ethnic groups by terrorizing them. They would rape in order to prevent families from returning to their homes as they would remember their traumatic experiences. Additionally,

victims were threatened by perpetrators to never report the sexual violence or else they would kill them. Combatants would rape women in front of their family members, both minors and adults, with the primary targets being young women and girls that were most likely to be virgins, together with socially-prominent and educated women. In other cases, these soldiers would also force these victims to rape each other, hence forcibly committing incest (pp. 59-60). Women were also abused with foreign objects penetrating their genitalia such as broken glass, truncheons, and guns, while men were forced to perform castration on each other in camps. The United Nations Security Council (1994) observed patterns in this systemic rape such as displacement, humiliation of both victims and her communities, rape camps, encouragement towards rape and sexual torture, and support from both militia and local authorities (p. 60). Rape was weaponized to humiliate, degrade, traumatize, and to *ethnically cleanse* targeted ethnic groups (Tadeusz, 1993). Rape became useful because it was understood that massive and public rapes would destroy the honor of men, their lineage, and eventually their nation. These meanings were shared with the Muslims, Croats, and Serbian people. As such, rape understood by these communities contributed to its effectiveness (Snyder, et al., 2006). Since the conflict by nature was torn by ethnic lines, women were understood to be both the cultural and biological mothers of the nation, consequently becoming the boundaries of the nation together with the land. As Snyder, et al., (2006) stated “the Bosnian nation and its land could be symbolically and materially conquered on the battleground of women’s bodies” (p. 191).

The Phallogentric Logos and Rape

In this conflict, women were perceived as the cultural and biological bearers of the nation. This phallogentric Symbolic Order qualified women as specific representatives of a given male ideal. By virtue of this designated symbol, the rape of these women became an instrumental act by

enemy soldiers. The Serbian perpetrators, for example, used this to their advantage by forcibly impregnating women with their children. In this act, the symbolic role of women as mothers of the nation was ruined. The Serbian military designated women to rape camps, while men were sent to concentration camps. Men were most likely killed or forcibly castrated by the soldiers. In these camps, there were a couple of instances of male-to-male sexual violence for the purpose of degrading the civilian men. In other instances, women were violently raped to the point of physical injury, which included the use of objects. This fulfilled the military's goal of changing Bosnia's ethnic population by the forcible production of Serbian children. In short, they used the woman's role as mothers to their advantage in order to effectively change the lineage of her children. Rape was the means to achieve to achieve a specific end: a masculine identity of ethnic superiority.

Public displays of rape were not only used to humiliate, but also to show Serbian ethnic superiority to both the civilian men and minors. The soldiers did not explicitly state their purpose of targeting these knowledgeable women. Bosnian women were not only bearers of children and culture, but they also upheld the honor of their families, specifically their men. If a woman was raped, she brought shame to her men. Due to this, the victims would conceal, commit suicide, or never return to their families in order to maintain this honor. The Object roles, as assigned to them by the phallogentric Symbolic order, that these women fulfilled for men were effectively weaponized by the military. Not only were they targeted for their mother-roles, but also for their sexuality. Some women were brought to different facilities such as hotels for fulfilling the soldiers' sexual pleasure. For the combatants, these women were sexual toys meant to masculinize, satisfy, and strengthen the social bonds of soldiers. This collective behavior was quite consistent with the institutionalized norms of the Serbian military, as hyper-masculinity was defined by the crude

subjugation of *enemy* women, with weaponization of rape as the ultimate instrument of such subjugation.

Darfur, Sudan

Brief History of Conflict

Sudan gained independence in 1956 from the British, and Arab political leadership that controlled the government, consequently proceeded to neglect Darfur – a large desert and savannah region in the southwest area of Sudan. This area is about the same size as France, and inhabited by diverse ethnic groups with an estimated population size of 5-6 million in 2004. Tensions began to rise in the region due to serious issues such as land grabbing, desertification, drought, and population growth. The area also lacked both water and usable land for pastures and agriculture. The conflict began in 2003, when rebel forces attacked the government's military in El Fasher, and caused the Government of Sudan (GOS) together with *Janjaweed*⁷ to attack non-Arab ethnic groups in Darfur (Gingerich and Leaning, 2004). In 2004, the GOS and *Janjaweed* destroyed villages through air and land attacks. The combatants proceeded to burn houses, destroy wells, irrigation, trees, crops, and other essential materials. These military forces dislocated about 1 to 1.5 million people, while also preventing humanitarian aid. Even with peace negotiations and diplomacy in 2004, the GOS and *Janjaweed* refused to comply with these agreements and proceeded to violate them (p. 4)

⁷ The *Janjaweed* is a militia consisting of criminals, mostly combatants from Chad, and other various ethnic groups. Some members are primarily interested in criminal activity, while others believe in ethnic superiority. This group is supported by the Government of Sudan, hence their constant attacks to villagers being permissible (Gingerich and Leaning, 2004).

Utilization of Wartime Rape and Testimonies

Testimonies found three general themes in the sexual violence committed by the GOS and *Janjaweed*: (1) the perpetrators would violate women and girls searching for firewood and water outside the village premises while also attacking the village, (2) they would gather the people into the village center, and either kill the men and boys or force them to watch rape of women and girls, (3) women and girls become displaced en mass (p. 14). Accounts also testified that men and boys would prioritize leaving the villages as they were the ones most likely to be killed, believing that the women and girls would not be killed but only raped. Due to this belief, Darfurian families staying in camps would strongly prefer the women and girls to forage for food, water, and firewood, as they feared that men and boys who leave the camp would immediately be killed by the military forces (pp. 14-15).

Most rapes occurred publicly when villages were raided by combatants. They would force family members, including the children of these victims, to watch the rape and prohibited any disturbance to the act. Reports indicate that women and girls from ages 10 to 70 years old were victims, including visibly pregnant women. Nongovernmental organizations and humanitarian institutions discovered that most of the rapes were gang rapes, involving more than one assailant. The *Janjaweed* would also use objects to both vaginally and anally penetrate the victims, while also beating, cutting, using knives to mark their legs, and sexually mutilating them. The militia would also engage in abduction in order to forcibly impregnate women so that they may bear a *free child*, use them as sex slaves, forced marriages, or be released after a few days. There are also reports of women being rape-slayed as well (p. 15). By 2004, there were about 9,300 documented cases of rape, with other organizations saying estimates are double the number. The victims often reported these cases to human rights groups and NGOs instead of the authorities (p. 16).

In qualifying these developments, Gingerich and Leaning (2004) argue that rape is used as a strategy in order to effectively terrorize and break Darfurian society. Rape was used in the following ways. (1) rape survivors and other escapees helped spread fear to other villages about the *Janjaweed*, and this prevented exercise of movement and economic negotiations in the process. (2) The combatants stole property and livestock, while killing men in the process. (3) Rape fractured social bonds in these villages, and also was used as method of displacement, thus separating friends and family in the process. Additionally, Darfurian traditional and social norms value virginity and chastity, and violation of these norms created long-term social and communal problems. (4) Lastly, rape carries strong social stigma for both the victims and their families. Because of this, the perpetrators would often rape these women and girls in front of their village in order for them to immediately be stigmatized. Further, the *Janjaweed* claim that the non-Arabs have *polluted* bloodlines, and can only be cleansed when they impregnate their victims with *free babies* (pp. 17-18).

The Phallogocentric Logos and its Consequences

As mentioned, Darfurian societal values, constructed by its phallogocentric logos, extolled purity, virginity, and honor in relation to sexuality. This makes the events highly traumatic for both the individual and the community that witnessed such acts. Numerous victims kept their rapes a secret from both their husbands and families if they were not publicly raped. With such strict social norms, these victims mostly told their stories to foreigners, visitors, and international workers (p. 23). In some cases, mothers that were forced to watch the repeated brutal rapes of their daughters were left with long-term psychological and other mental health problems. Male survivors were more willing to talk about the rapes, however, they were more reluctant to talk about the rape of their family members. (p. 24). While it is difficult to measure, there is possible

stigma attached to these victims that can result in their ostracization by their community or abandonment. It is also possible they may no longer be seen as marriageable or pure (p. 28). In this context, the norms and values constructed by patriarchy produced outcomes that amplified the suffering of women, for the laws of the Symbolic Order were weaponized against them.

Stigmatization of Woman and Shame of Men

Abdullahi (2016) confirms this, as findings demonstrate that women were ostracized after their rape. They were labeled by the community as dirty, used, unclean, unfaithful, or traitors. They were no longer eligible for marriage, other women suffered from divorce, abandonment, neglect, and others were killed (p. 56). A victim named Yursa experienced abandonment, saying “I do not have value and I am a dishonor to the community...and had baby with the *enemy*, a *Janjaweed baby*.” Zayam was insulted by her community, and her husband’s friends and family want him to divorce her due to her rape. Another victim by the name of Dowsa experienced bullying and ostracization from her community, saying “no one greets me or says hi to me” (p. 57). In a patriarchal society like Darfur, marriage is a way for a woman to live and have economic sustenance through her husband. Due to rapes, these women are prohibited from marriage and become impoverished or are murdered. Some families disown the rape victims, leaving them vulnerable (p. 62). Males who choose to stay with their wives and female relatives that were rape victims were shamed. Abdull, a former Darfur community leader states “I am often called a coward and filth because I continue to stay with my wife even though she was raped” (pp. 67-68). Abdi, a father in his late forties, witnessed his family’s rape with one soldier saying “You cannot even help and protect your women” and he started to feel “shame and guilt.” (p. 68).

Rape as an Effective Weapon

Since the *Janjaweed* preferred to rape the women and girls, but kill men and boys, male-villagers prioritized the evacuation of the males first, as they believed women were most likely to survive. This extended to women and girls living in refugee camps as they were tasked with gathering resources like firewood and water. Men's safety was prioritized over women because they believed they would be spared. Due to this belief, women were raped and/or abducted by the *Janjaweed* forces, leaving other victims displaced. Similar to the cases in Sierra Leone and Bosnia, the *Janjaweed* deliberately raped women in front of family members, specifically showing it to the victim's children. It was for them to show the ethnic superiority of Arabs over non-Arabs. The soldiers executed public displays of rape to effectively do this, suggesting a consistency in the behavior of masculinized institutions where rape is instrumentalized as a weapon of war. Namely, the confluence of rape as public shame, rape as emasculation of society, and rape as weapon of war has a consistent thread in all three of the case studies, even though each conflict took place in a different part of the world, with different ethnic groups, religions, and political systems. The constancy of patriarchal institutions, the prevalence of a Symbolic Order that denies women voice or identity, and the Subject-Object principle that allows for the weaponization of rape as a masculine instrument, demonstrate an important causal relationship. Thus, the *Janjaweed*, just like Serbian soldiers, or RUF forces in Sierra Leone, successfully used rape as a phallogocentric language of dominance to objectify men by defiling their wives and impregnating their women with children. In all three theaters of war, the singular goal was to the combatant's militarized masculinity and ethnic superiority.

Limitations

This research is limited as it used process tracing of patriarchal social structures from these cases based on reports from Nongovernmental Organizations and the United Nations. As such, there needs to be more in-depth research showing the connections of how wartime rape is weaponized and used by the militia with different goals. Depending on the conflict, there are combatants that use rape to eradicate the nationality of the enemy. This was seen in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The conflict included rigid ethnic lines between the Bosnian Muslims, Serbs, and Croats as there was no formation of a politically unified Bosnia (Snyder, et al., 2006). This contrasts to Sierra Leone's RUF as pregnancies were used to alleviate the population loss from the conflict (HRW, 2002). There are specific cultural-contexts that can account for rape as a medium in obtaining different goals. Further, it is strenuously difficult to obtain accurate numbers and more robust association between social structures and rape not only because of the patriarchal norms, but also because governments can exaggerate the numbers for their political agendas. This was seen in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina's government ruining the image of its *enemies* through rape counts (Bastick, et al., 2007). There needs to be more reliable measurements in the association of wartime rape and patriarchal social norms.

Additionally, postmodern feminism is applied to deconstruct the relational positions of men and women. It is limited to the deconstruction of language, and the ontological existence of the sexes. In line with case-studies, it is only limited to three conflicts. Due to this, the argument can be strengthened if there are additional cases measuring and comparing the common themes of wartime rape and its weaponization by the military.

Conclusion

This paper shows that rape as a masculine language of dominance successfully objectifies both civilian women and their men. The patriarchal creation of women as a being that exists for and belonging to men makes rape more effective. It is weaponized by the military with the main purpose of Objectifying and Subjugating enemy men by defiling their women. Combatants engage with rape as a heterosexist narrative. As seen in the case studies, women's social, biological, and relational roles were used as a means to destroy the Symbolic Order of their men as Subjects. Perpetrators forcibly take the role as Signifiers, having the power to change a woman's value based on her virginity, chastity, and honor to her community. It effectively destroys social order by disrupting it through rape. Due to the phallogentric language of Subject/Object relations, rape becomes effective to all that understands it.

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