

# Sexual Violence Against Women in Conflict Zones:

A content analysis of World War II, the Vietnam War, the Former Yugoslavian War and the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Rachel E. Boenigk

Research Assistant

The Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System

This paper explores four hypotheses regarding the potential causes of sexual violence against women in conflict zones. A literature review frames the problem and a content analysis and discussion deliver the results of this study. This paper also explores several implications of the study.

## Introduction: Setting the Scene

Sexual violence against women was used as a weapon of war even in early human history.<sup>1,2,3</sup> As early as the Seventh Century BCE, The Bible tells stories of wars between Jews and their enemies that involved mass rapes. Evidence of these atrocities is found in Deuteronomy 21, Isaiah 13:16, Lamentations 5:11 and Zechariah 14:2. From ancient Rome and the conquests of Alexander the Great to Ancient Chinese chronicles and the German Rape of Belgium during World War I, mass rape claimed countless victims.<sup>4</sup> In just the Twentieth Century, militaries or paramilitary forces used mass rapes as a weapon of war in Belgium and Russia during World War I; Russia, Japan, Italy, Korea, China, the Philippines, and Germany during World War II; and since World War II, during conflicts in Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Burma, Bosnia, Cambodia, the Republic of Congo, Croatia, Cyprus, East Timor, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Kuwait, Kosovo, Liberia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Peru, Pakistan, Rwanda, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Turkey, Uganda, Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Zimbabwe.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, rape as a weapon of war has decimated societies and claimed countless female<sup>1</sup> victims throughout history.

This paper specifically analyzes potential causes of sexual violence against women in a limited number of conflicts: World War II, the Vietnam War, the civil war in the Former Yugoslavia and the ongoing conflict in the DRC. My hope is that by studying this issue, we can better direct resources for the prevention and treatment of sexual violence. In order to do so, I seek to draw correlations on the potential causes of sexual violence against women across conflicts, decades and cultures through a content analysis supported by a literature review.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: This paper uses female(s) and woman/women interchangeably. I recognize that there is a difference between gender and sex. However, for the purpose of this paper, because I have no knowledge of the definition of woman/women used in my sources, I am forced to be as broad as possible in my discussion of gender and sex.

This paper is organized as follows. The next section delivers a background on the conflicts of this study. I then provide a review of the literature to both define different types of rape and explain my selection of rape as a weapon of war to focus on for this study. Also in the literature review, I frame the causes of sexual violence for the reader. Then, discussions of methods for selection of sources for the content analysis as well as limitations of my analysis follow. I then give an introduction to the content analysis. Next, I discuss my hypotheses and relay my results. An analysis by conflict follows, in which I attempt to draw out correlations between the conflicts and the potential causes of sexual violence in each respective conflict. Finally, I discuss my findings and provide policy implications and conclusions.

### **Background: Conflicts of Study**

#### *World War II*

World War II began with the invasion of Poland by German in 1939. The war evolved into a world war, pitting the Allies (most commonly known as England, France, the United States and the Soviet Union) against the Axis Powers (most commonly known as Germany, Italy and Japan).

While many know of the tragedies of the Holocaust, those acts of genocide were not the only violations of human rights during this war. Rape was seen by many military officers from all sides as a necessary evil during World War II. In some cases, military leaders sanctioned rape and the use of comfort women or brothels. Estimates of the number of comfort women in Japanese camps during the war surpass 200,000.<sup>6</sup> In Germany, an estimated 34,140 women were forced to work in brothels; there were also countless women who were raped before their executions in concentration camps.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, Soviet soldiers were responsible for the rapes

of an estimated 2,000,000 German women and girls.<sup>8</sup> American soldiers raped more than 10,000 women in Okinawa and at least another 14,000 in Western Europe.<sup>9,10</sup> This is not an exhaustive list of sexual violence during World War II. It is simply an attempt to show that all sides violated human rights; and, all sides perpetrated sexual violence against women.

### *The Vietnam War*

The Vietnam War was fought by American soldiers against North Vietnamese forces from 1955 to 1975. The war ended with the withdrawal of American troops from Saigon in 1975. Over the course of the twenty year conflict, 2.59 million U.S. troops fought in Vietnam.<sup>11</sup> Sexual violence against women undoubtedly occurred during the Vietnam War, as verified by first hand accounts. At the time of this paper, I could not find an accurate estimate for the number of women raped by U.S. or North Vietnamese troops during the occupation of Vietnam.

### *War in the Former Yugoslavia*

Slovenia seceded from Yugoslavia on June 25, 1991. Fighting between Serbians and Bosnians continued on and off until 1999. Sexual violence was an integral weapon of this civil war. Serbians followed patrilineal customs in which a father's ethnicity determined the ethnicity of the child. Because of this ideology, rape was used as a weapon of not just war, but ethnic cleansing, or genocide.<sup>12</sup> It is estimated that soldiers raped between 20,000 and 50,000 women, many of whom were Muslim, not Serbian.<sup>13</sup>

### *The Ongoing Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo*

Armed conflict in the DRC has claimed countless lives. Since the beginning of the conflict (1998) in the DRC, more than 200,000 women and children have fallen victim to sexual

violence at least once.<sup>14</sup> And today, like every day in the DRC, another 1,100 women and children will experience heinous acts of sexual violence.<sup>15</sup>

## **Types of Rape**

In order to better understand rape in conflict zones, one must understand two types of rape: gang/group and weapon of war. While there are overlapping areas for each of these types of rape, for the purpose of this conversation, each type will be discussed separately. For the purpose of this paper it is important to understand the differences between these types of rape. At the end of this section, I also provide two important definitions for this paper: sexual violence and rape. It is important, for context, to understand these two definitions. However, in this paper, I use rape and sexual violence interchangeably.

### *Gang/Group Rape*

Gang/Group rape remains a major problem in conflict zones. Hagen and Yohani claim that approximately 90% of rape in war is perpetrated through gang rape.<sup>16</sup> One major difference resounds between gang/group rape and single offender rape. According to Cohen gang/group rape is most commonly used as a bonding experience.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, Cohen cites another study which shows “perpetrators of group rape were far less likely to have previously committed sexual offenses than are lone perpetrators.”<sup>18</sup> Gang/Group rape can overlap with rape as a weapon of war.

### *Rape as a Weapon of War*

According to Hagen and Yohani, several characteristics distinguish war rape from other forms of sexual violence. These characteristics include: scale, public occurrence, brutality,

slavery, ethnic cleansing and genocidal rape.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the same piece claims, leaders in charge of military forces use rape as an agent of mass murder and ethnic cleansing. Using rape for ethnic cleansing provides the “dominant” ethnic group a way to, “prevent births of children belonging to the enemy’s ethnicity, through death, sterilization, and psychological harm, while impregnating the enemy with children bearing the offending group’s ethnicity.”<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, multiple works confirm the use of rape as a weapon of war while linking it to ethnic divisiveness.<sup>21,22,23,24</sup> These studies agree with the findings above: that military leaders use rape in order to dehumanize, instill fear and decimate ethnic minorities.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>Sexual Violence</b>	"Sexual violence includes completed or attempted sex acts (eg, contact between the penis and the vulva/anus involving penetration; penetration by a hand or object), abusive sexual contact (eg, intentional touching of genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or buttocks), and noncontact sexual abuse (eg, voyeurism, unwanted exposure to pornography, sexual harassment) without the victim’s consent or involving a victim who is unable to consent or refuse."	Haegerich & Dahlberg 2011, 396.
<b>Rape</b>	“Nonconsensual sexual penetration of an adolescent or adult obtained by physical force, by threat of bodily harm, or when the victim is incapable of giving consent by virtue of mental illness, mental retardation, or intoxication.”	Cowan 2007, 807.

### **Causes of Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones**

Many scholars propose different causes of sexual violence in conflict zones. Below is a literature review of those causes. This section focuses on four causes of sexual violence as identified in the literature: aggression, ethnicity, gender inequality and weapon of war.

### *Aggression*

Aggression plays an important role in understanding the causes of sexual violence. Seifter comments, “Rape is not an aggressive expression of sexuality, but a sexual expression of aggression.”<sup>25</sup> In conflict zones, aggression towards an individual because of ethnic divides, gender differences or simply pure anger provides a catalyst for sexually violent behavior. Moreover, both extremes of the power balance incite additional aggression in males.<sup>26</sup> Males with both high and low amounts of power and control are more likely to have aggressive tendencies. This type of atmosphere prospers in the military structure.<sup>27</sup> Some men, generally officers, have a monopoly on control and power in military settings which leads to aggression in both the officers and the enlisted men, who have little to no power at all. Aggression and a military structure which further breeds aggression both contribute to the sexual violence in conflict zones.

### *Ethnicity*

Scholars widely recognize ethnic divisiveness as having a positive correlation with sexual violence in conflict. Rape allows for the militant group to humiliate and decimate a population and at the same time blur ethnic lines through forced pregnancy.<sup>28</sup> Ethnic conflicts are much more likely to include sexual violence than non-ethnic conflicts.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Hagen and Yohani establish that a goal of sexual violence can be an attempt to, “annihilate a cultural group by severing a woman’s ties to her community.”<sup>30</sup> Clearly, studies support the claim that ethnic divisiveness increases the chances of the conflict involving sexual violence.

### *Gender Inequality*

Conflicts in patriarchal societies in which women are subordinates to men are much more likely to include sexual violence.<sup>31</sup> Even in cases of single offender rape in non-conflict areas, men who see women as beneath them are much more likely to exhibit sexually violent behavior.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, Seifert defines a rape-prone society as having the following qualities: “a) male power has been destabilized, b) women have a subordinate status and are held in low esteem, and c) rigid definitions of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ prevail and determine the relative positions of power and the hierarchy of values.”<sup>33</sup> As shown in the content analysis below, conflicts exacerbate these qualities within a society. Men are forced to serve in the military and paramilitary forces; women are left to care for the home; and this separation of genders based on societal duties fosters an atmosphere in which sexual violence prospers. As confirmed by numerous studies, gender inequality undoubtedly plays a role in promoting sexual violence.

### *Weapon of War*

Scholars agree that sexual violence is used as a strategic military weapon during conflicts. Eaton states, “Realizing that rape is often more effective at achieving their aims than plain killing, aggressors have used shocking sexual violence against women as a tool of conflict. [...] The stigma of rape is used to effectuate genocide, destroy communities and demoralize opponents—decimating a woman’s will to survive is often only a secondary side effect.”<sup>34</sup> Another study claims that militant forces use sexual violence as a strategic military tactic aimed at decimating the enemy and leaving proof of their victory for generations to see.<sup>35</sup> Sexual violence has the ability to wipe out an entire ethnic group. Studies show that the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war is undoubtedly a cause of sexual violence in conflict zones.



## Methods

I used the Texas A&M library search system to search for scholarly articles with the following search terms: “sex? Violen? AND World War I;” “sex? Violen? AND The Great War;” “sex? Violen? AND World War II;” “sex? Violen? AND Vietnam War;” “sex? Violen? AND War in the Former Yugoslavia;” “sex? Violen? AND Democratic Republic of Congo.” The articles are sorted by how well they match the search parameters. I analyzed only the top thirty results for each conflict in the study. Additional articles were eliminated that did not apply to my project. I also excluded articles which included “effect(s) of sex? Violen?,” any articles specifically about children, any book reviews, any movie reviews, any articles about violence in war that is not sexual, any articles not in English, any articles not about the specific conflict for which I was searching, any article discussing the psychological trauma of sexual violence, and any articles about sexual orientation. The databases used in my search included: Academic Search Complete (EBSCO), Business Source Complete (EBSCO), CAB Abstracts (Ovid), ERIC (EBSCO), MEDLINE (Ovid), MLA International Bibliography (EBSCO), OmniFile Full Text Mega (EBSCO), PsycINFO 1872-current (ProQuest), ScienceDirect (Elsevier), and Web of Science (ISI).<sup>2</sup>

## Content Analysis Introduction

I use content analysis to study four hypotheses drawn from the literature review on the causes of sexual violence against women as a weapon of war. These hypotheses identify likely causes of sexual violence against women in conflict zones. In order to expedite this research, I limited the number of conflicts considered for the paper to World War I (no results were returned

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<sup>2</sup> This paper may suffer from publication bias. Though I tried to use a diverse listing of databases, the possibility exists that certain topics are published more often than others. Specifically for this project, I worry about the publication bias towards ethnic conflicts.

for the causes of sexual violence against women in World War I), World War II, the Vietnam War, War in the Former Yugoslavia and the conflict in the DRC. I also limited the study to a strictly qualitative study. Numerous problems occur with quantitative data in conflict zones. Collection of data is but one. I completed this study over a two semester period and as a result, was unable to travel to these conflict zones to do data collection. For methodology, I use a definition of content analysis similar to that in “The Current State of Evidence-Based Practice in Social Work: A Review of Literature and Qualitative Analysis of Expert Interviews,” published by the United States National Institute of Health. I have adapted the definition to read: content analysis was conducted to classify sexual violence during specific conflicts according to their causes.<sup>36</sup> In this content analysis, I substituted “expert interviews” for scholarly/policy-based papers written by experts on sexual violence, violence against civilians in conflicts, or violence in general. Within this study, four conflicts are examined: World War II, Vietnam, the former Yugoslavian War and the ongoing conflict in the DRC.

### *Hypotheses*

Hypothesis 1: Overly aggressive members of military and paramilitary groups are more likely to commit sexually violent acts during conflicts.

Hypothesis 2: Ethnic divisiveness in a conflict increases likelihood that sexual violence occurs in the conflict.

Hypothesis 3: Conflicts that occur in societies with unequal rights based on gender are more likely to have sexually violent incidences.

Hypothesis 4: Conflicts in which one group is trying to separate from another (i.e.: civil war), sexual violence is more likely to be used as a weapon of war.

### **Content Analysis Results by Hypothesis**

#### *Hypothesis 1*

To begin, four articles confirm the hypothesis that overly aggressive members of military and paramilitary groups are more likely to commit sexually violent acts during conflicts. None of the articles in my search directly reject this hypothesis. These conflicts include World War II, the war in the former Yugoslavia and the ongoing conflict in the DRC. Bourke claims that members of the Japanese army in World War II went beyond the accepted norm by aggressively targeting and dehumanizing women during the conflict.<sup>37</sup> A piece by Dutton, Boyanowsky and Bond focusing on the war in the former Yugoslavia shows that military groups use rape to exert their sexual power over the enemy's women.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, Patricia Albanese explains that in Yugoslavia, "there is a militarization and war, which celebrates hyper-masculinity and socially sanctions sexual violence."<sup>39</sup> Moreover, Jean-Pierre Bemba, a former member of the DRC militia, claimed during his tribunal for war-crimes that he was unable to control his troops.<sup>40</sup> This analysis suggests that heightened aggression in members of military and paramilitary forces leads to an increase in the likelihood of sexual violence in conflict zones.

#### *Hypothesis 2*

By far, hypothesis 2 (Ethnic divisiveness in a conflict increases likelihood that sexual violence occurs in the conflict) received the most support through my analysis. Sixteen articles identified ethnic divisiveness as a cause of sexual violence against women and none rejected the

hypothesis. The articles that confirm the hypothesis include evidence from World War II, Vietnam, the former Yugoslavia, and DRC.

During World War II, the Japanese army regulated the rape of women. According to one source, “Most of the roughly two hundred thousand Asian women believed to have been used as military sex slaves belonged, therefore, to nations and ethnic groups that Japanese racial ideology defined as ‘lower.’”<sup>41</sup> The same article shows that Japanese men felt superior to the women they were raping and used their superiority as an excuse to continue the violence.<sup>42</sup> Also focusing on sexual violence perpetrated by Japanese soldiers, Vikman states that the Japanese military convinced its soldiers that Chinese civilians were subhuman and therefore subject to any acts the members of the Japanese military committed, including but not limited to sexual violence, especially during the Rape of Nanking.<sup>43</sup>

In Nazi Germany, even with laws banning sex between Aryans and Jews, German soldiers raped Jewish women and girls.<sup>44</sup> The same author goes on to explain that the low racial status of Jewish women in Nazi-controlled lands only encouraged their sexual exploitation by German soldiers.<sup>45</sup> Price takes the analysis one step further and claims that the ethnic divisiveness between Germans and Jews not only encouraged violence but actually legitimized the sexual violence as genocide.<sup>46</sup>

Only one article touched on ethnicity playing a role in the sexual violence perpetrated by American forces during the Vietnam War. Vikman highlights the fact that the military trained American troops to see Vietnamese citizens as subhuman as a way to cope with killing.<sup>47</sup> This mindset carried over to the use of sexual violence during the war. The dehumanization of

Vietnamese men and women allowed soldiers to use force and sexual violence to demonstrate their ethnic superiority.

This analysis heavily supports the hypothesis of ethnic divisiveness as a cause of sexual violence during the war in the former Yugoslavia. The ethnic divisiveness began with deportations, but quickly after, rape and systematic sexual violence surfaced as forms of ethnic cleansing.<sup>48</sup> Nikolic-Ristanovic writes on the war in the former Yugoslavia, stating that a rise in nationalism furthered the ethnic divisiveness of the state and led to an increase in the victimization of women through sexual violence.<sup>49</sup> The author continues by claiming that Serbian military forces used rape as a method of ethnic cleansing during the war.<sup>50</sup> The ICTY also identified ethnic divisiveness as a catalyst for sexual violence against women throughout the war in former Yugoslavia.<sup>51</sup> Vikman further discusses the use of sexual violence in the former Yugoslavia by stating that military forces used it to terrorize the civilians and to ethnically cleanse the state.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, Kuwert and Freyberger discuss the difference, as seen in this conflict, between single acts of rape by individuals and the obviously more devastating, strategic rape of women as a form of ethnic cleansing.<sup>53</sup> Another (anonymous) source identifies rape and sexual violence against women as a form of ethnic cleansing and genocide and highlights its use as such during the war in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>54</sup>

Moreover, the systematic ethnic extermination of the ethnic minority's women during the war in former Yugoslavia included both rape and forcible impregnation.<sup>55</sup> Firsthand accounts of the atrocities of sexual violence in former Yugoslavia cite ethnic divisiveness as a main cause.<sup>56</sup> One survivor states that soldiers used rape to impregnate women of the minority ethnicity and simultaneously destroy the woman's ethnic ties by forcing her to raise a baby of her rapist's (rapists') ethnicity.<sup>57</sup> Schott argues that "rape, forced pregnancy, and enforced maternity have

transformed birth into a weapon of death” in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>58</sup> Borchlet agrees with Schott, arguing that due to the patrilineal understanding of the culture and biology in the former Yugoslavia, forcibly impregnating a woman meant that she would be forced to raise a child of her rapist’s (rapists’) ethnicity, forcibly destroying the victim’s ethnicity.<sup>59</sup> Soldiers detained the impregnated women until the pregnancy was too far along to be ended, forcing these victims to give birth to their rapist’s (rapists’) child.<sup>60</sup> Price expands on this, stating victims of sexual violence did not receive access to contraception, but, medical staffs did give gynecological examinations for signs of pregnancy.<sup>61</sup> In sum, almost all rapes (reported and alleged) which occurred during the war in the former Yugoslavia, were characterized by victims and perpetrators of different ethnicities.<sup>62</sup>

Continuing the analysis to include the conflict in the DRC, one white paper and one in-country study support the hypothesis that ethnic divisiveness increases the likelihood of sexual violence in conflict zones. A report done by the U.S. Government Accountability Office states that in the DRC, members of the enemy forces use sexual violence to display their superiority over another ethnic group’s civilians.<sup>63</sup> Peterman, Palermo and Bredenkamp also state that in the DRC, enemy groups use sexual violence to destroy communities of other ethnicities.<sup>64</sup>

### *Hypothesis 3*

The third hypothesis states conflicts that occur in societies with unequal rights based on gender are more likely to have sexually violent incidences. No articles rejected this hypothesis and nine articles supported it, drawing on the experience in World War II, Yugoslavia and the DRC.

To begin with World War II, Messerschmidt identifies the increased masculinity and patriarchal society found in the Stalinist Soviet Union as a cause of mass rapes throughout the war.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, former Japanese comfort women state that the Japanese soldiers used “limitless power over women’s bodies,” which reinforces the idea that the soldiers believed they were superior to the women.<sup>66</sup> Price also cites a hatred of women, misogyny, as a cause of sexual violence during World War II on both the Pacific and European fronts, encompassing all of the military forces involved in the war.<sup>67</sup>

Describing sexual violence against women during the war in the former Yugoslavia, Price states that an increase in masculinity and misogynist ideals increased the number and intensity of rapes during the conflict. Albanese also claims that sexual violence as a form of ethnic cleansing was furthered by not only the increase in nationalism, but also the shift in the former Yugoslavia to more traditional gender norms, forcing women to be submissive to men.<sup>68</sup> Macek states that as the conflict increased in intensity, the society shifted to a more patriarchal society.<sup>69</sup> Albanese expands on this concept by showing that the shift back to more traditional norms increased the risk of sexual violence against women.<sup>70</sup> Nikolic-Ristanovic continues this line of thought, explaining that not only were women seen as being beneath men, they were considered property.<sup>71</sup> Therefore soldiers believed that sexually abusing women during the conflict meant simply using property for its intended purpose. Vikman expands on this idea, citing a male-biased understanding of biological theory as an additional cause of sexual violence against women in the former Yugoslavia. She claims that a woman’s lower status in the society justified the sexual violence in the minds of the perpetrators.<sup>72</sup> Overall, this analysis agrees with Valentich when she concludes that “The sexist culture which prevailed in much of the former

Yugoslavia appears to have offered the conditions for the sexual subjugation of women as a means of destroying them... [and] their culture.”<sup>73</sup>

Lastly, with regards to the DRC, one article, identified conceptions of women being submissive to men through more “traditional” gender roles as an additional risk for sexual violence against women.<sup>74</sup> The study shows that when the men go off to fight, the women are left with the more traditional gender roles of caring for the children and the home. This shift in roles increases the risk of sexual violence in the ongoing conflict in the DRC.

#### *Hypothesis 4*

No sources in this content analysis directly confirmed this hypothesis. However, no sources denied this hypothesis. Because no sources directly cite the desire to separate as an indicator of sexual violence against women, more research should be done on the topic in order to make a true conclusion of whether or not conflicts in which one group is trying to separate from another (i.e.: civil war), sexual violence is more likely to be used as a weapon of war.

### **Content Analysis by Conflict of Study**

#### *World War II*

The analysis of World War II shows that gender inequality, ethnicity and aggression are indicators of sexual violence against women. My analysis shows that aggressive members of the Japanese military were more likely to commit sexually violent acts, even when Japanese commanders no longer tolerated rape. I also found that in patriarchal societies, in which women are often subjugated, there is a greater likelihood of sexual violence against women occurring during conflicts. This is seen in the misogynistic behaviors of the Japanese towards over 200,000



comfort women and the patriarchal norms of the Soviet army that led to the rapes of 2,000,000 German women during World War II. In both Japan and Germany women of lower racial status often became victims of sexual violence. The sexual violence by soldiers focused on women to whom soldiers felt superior.

#### *The Vietnam War*

My analysis confirmed only one hypothesis, hypothesis 2, for the Vietnam War. While the Vietnam War was not an ethnic conflict, the U.S. Army deliberately taught its soldiers to see Vietnamese civilians as subhuman. As a result, this study shows that American soldiers who raped innocent civilians did so because they felt ethnically superior.

#### *The Former Yugoslavian War*

The Former Yugoslavian War showed a positive correlation for three causes of sexual violence against women. Overly aggressive soldiers used rape to show their power over women from other cultures. Also, the shift of values toward more traditional, gender normative values caused more cases of sexual violence against women. My analysis revealed a positive correlation between Serbian patrilineal norms discussed earlier and sexual violence against women. This is coupled with an ethnic issue. The ethnic divisiveness of the civil war in the former Yugoslavia resulted in the rapes of countless women. Soldiers systematically used rape as a tool for ethnic cleansing, for genocide.

#### *The Ongoing Conflict in the DRC*

The conflict in the DRC exemplifies a positive correlation for three of the hypotheses presented. My analysis shows that military leaders in the DRC lack control over their troops and

as a result the leaders cannot keep the overly aggressive soldiers from raping women as they move through different areas of the country. The analysis also indicates that women in the DRC maintain a subordinate status in society, especially during periods of conflict. This patriarchal mindset leads to the subjugation of women as sexual conquests as well as misogyny. My analysis also shows that ethnic divisiveness is a cause of sexual violence in the DRC. Displaying power over their victims, perpetrators of sexual violence use rape to assert their superiority over the conquered culture and that culture's women.

### **Discussion of Content Analysis**

The confirmation of hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 through this content analysis shows several probable causes of sexual violence against women in conflict zones. Authors agree that overly aggressive members of military and paramilitary groups are more likely to commit sexually violent acts. Despite a lack of evidence from the Vietnam War, hypothesis 1 can be confirmed through studies on the other conflicts of interest. Evidence from World War II, the former Yugoslavia as well as the DRC supports the hypothesis. Additionally, the literature review above shows that several scholars support the idea that aggression increases the risk of sexual violence against women in conflict zones. Hypothesis 2 is also confirmed by this content analysis. Evidenced by all four conflicts in this analysis, the authors show that ethnic divisiveness increases the risk of sexual violence against women. Overwhelming evidence from the war in the former Yugoslavia suggests in that particular conflict, ethnicity was a main factor in the victimization of women through the use of sexual violence. Moreover, the literature review supports this hypothesis. The content analysis also shows that societies in which women are considered subordinate to men sexual violence against women is much more likely to occur. Several authors assert concepts of misogyny and the link between misogynistic ideals and the

occurrence of sexual violence in these conflicts exists, as seen in World War II, the former Yugoslavia and the DRC. Furthermore, the content analysis of hypothesis 3 is also supported by the literature review.

Unfortunately, hypothesis 4 remains unconfirmed. Though the literature review supports this concept, the content analysis did not reveal any additional sources to support it. As previously mentioned, additional work should be done to confirm or deny this hypothesis. Until then it, remains open.

This analysis shows that these potential causes of sexual violence against women are not specific to one conflict, culture or time period. Rather, my hypotheses are confirmed across cultures, conflicts and decades (within the 20<sup>th</sup> century).

### **Implications of Content Analysis**

This study shows several implications for addressing sexual violence against women in conflict zones in the future. Most importantly, because the overwhelming evidence shows that conflicts involving ethnic divisiveness are much more likely to involve sexual violence against women, NGOs and non-profits should focus their attention on these conflicts in their attempts to not only treat victims of sexual violence but to also prevent sexual violence against women. Secondly, women's organizations and other organizations seeking to improve the existence of women across the globe should continue and expand their efforts. As shown, gender inequality in societies leads to a greater likelihood of sexual violence against women during conflicts. By increasing equality for women across the world, there should be an inverse effect on the likelihood of sexual violence against women. Third, additional research and data collection should be done as to better quantify and assess the causes of sexual violence against women in

conflict zones. Lastly, additional research should be done in order to draw a conclusion for hypothesis 4.

## **Conclusion**

It is evident that sexual violence against women has been used in conflicts throughout history. In this paper, I have shown that the causes of sexual violence against women in conflict zones cross cultures, conflicts, and time. This literature review and content analysis provide a starting point for further work concerning sexual violence against women in conflict zones. The content analysis identifies three factors which either increase the likelihood of or directly cause sexual violence against women in conflict zones. While the implications of this research may be limited, it does provide a foundation for additional research.

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