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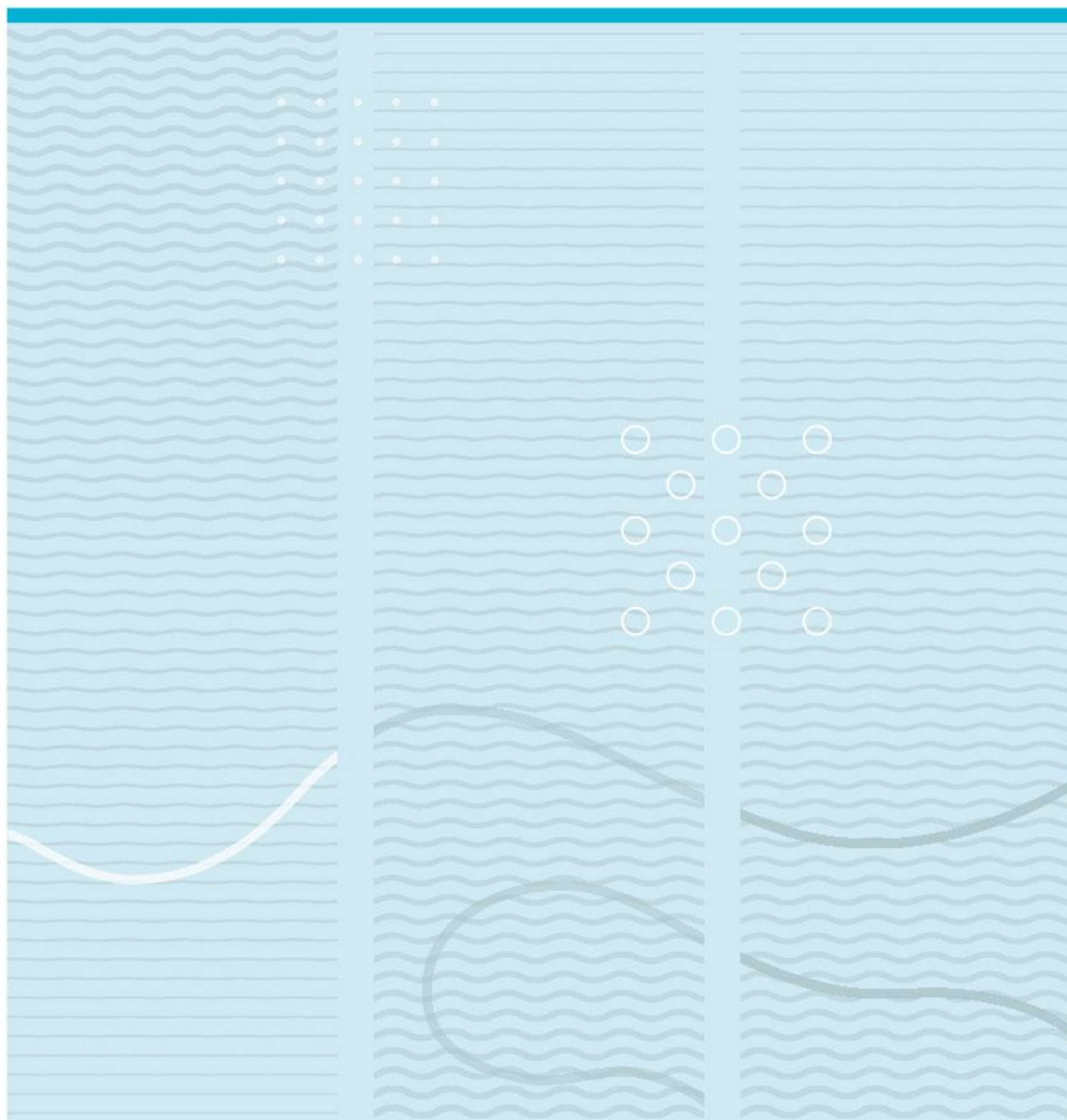
Understanding Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: A Comparative Analysis of FARC and PKK's Repertoires of Violence



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This thesis is worth 45 study points

Abstract

Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) is one of the most horrific, least understood, and under researched phenomena concerning modern warfare and armed conflict (Cohen, 2013a, p. 461). Moreover, earlier research focusing on conflict and post-conflict settings have not meaningfully incorporated gender-based violence. With the advancement of women's human rights, the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, and the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, CRSV has increasingly gained attention in research and international politics.

In the wake of this increased interest, this thesis main objective is to investigate CRSV through a comparative analysis of the repertoires of two armed groups, based on existing literature. The armed groups in focus are Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas (FARC) and Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan (PKK). The choice to compare one group that has done an extensive use of sexual violence (FARC), with one that has not employed it (PKK), is in line with the aim of contributing to research on the mechanisms behind CRSV and the reasons for its use and variation in use. Over the last decades, it has become increasingly clear that CRSV varies in form and frequency across different conflicts (Wood, 2006). In this regard, the comparative analysis of the two case studies covers different explanations for the use or non-use of sexual violence as a war strategy. To this extent, the thesis draws on Cohen's (2013a) theory on the level of group cohesion influencing the level of CRSV, and Wood's (2009) theory on strong norms and military hierarchy, limiting the use of sexual violence.

The research findings emphasize how forced recruitment mechanisms, leading to lower group cohesion, is a risk factor for high levels of sexual violence. However, these risk factors can be mediated by norms against sexual violence in combination with military training and strong internal military discipline and hierarchy.

Keywords: Conflict-related sexual violence, CRSV, armed conflict, gender violence, FARC, PKK

List of Abbreviations

CEDAW – The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

CRSV – Conflict-related sexual violence

FARC – Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas – Ejército del Pueblo (in English known as The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)

ICCPR – the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR – the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

LTTE – Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

PKK – Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan (in English referred to as the Kurdistan Workers' Party)

SVAC – The Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict dataset

UCDP – Uppsala Conflict Data Program

UDHR – The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Table of Contents

Abstract 3

List of Abbreviations 4

Acknowledgements 8

Foreword 8

1. Introduction 9

1.1 Introducing the topic 9

1.2 The prevalence of gender-based violence 11

1.3 CRSV in numbers 12

1.3.1 CRSV Historical cases 12

1.3.2 Contemporary cases 13

1.4 Human Rights and CRSV 13

1.5 Scope and purpose of the study 15

1.6 Research questions 16

1.7 Key concepts 16

1.7.1 Violence 16

1.7.2 Gender-based violence 17

1.7.3 Conflict-related sexual violence 17

1.7.4 Armed group 18

1.7.5 Repertoires of violence 19

1.7.6 Soldier 19

1.7.7 Victim 19

1.8 Structure of the thesis 20

2. Literature review 20

2.1 Violence against civilians 21

2.2 One-sided violence to extract resources fast 22

2.3 Repertoires of violence 23

2.4 Research on CRSV 24

2.5 Explanations on variation in the use of sexual violence 24

2.5.1 Breakdown of social structures/Opportunism 24

2.5.2 CRSV as a weapon of war 25

2.5.3 Ethnic war and ethnically based hatred 27

2.5.4 The continuum of violence 28

2.6 Armed groups and the absence of sexual violence 30

3. Theoretical framework 31

3.1 Cohen's group cohesion theory and Wood's theory on military hierarchy 32
3.1.1 Cohen's theory on the use of sexual violence 33
3.1.2 The data foundation of Cohen's theory 35
3.1.3 Limitations of Cohen's group cohesion theory 37
3.2 Wood's theory on the absence of sexual violence 38
3.2.1 The data foundation of Wood's hierarchy theory 41
3.2.3 Limitations of Wood's hierarchy theory 41
4. Methodology 42
4.1 Quantitative and qualitative methods 42
4.2 Epistemological foundation 44
4.3 Methodological choices 45
4.4 Data collection 46
4.4.1 Secondary analysis 46
4.4.2 The Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (SVAC) dataset 47
4.5 Comparative research design 48
4.5.1 Limitations of comparative research design 48
4.6 Case selection 49
4.7 Positionality 50
4.8 Ethical considerations 51
4.9 Limitations of this study 52
4.9.1 Data reliability 52
4.9.2 Limitations in using secondary sources 53
5. Case descriptions: FARC and PKK 54
5.1 FARC and the conflict in Colombia 54
5.2 FARC's repertoire and use of sexual violence 55
5.3 CRSV in the Colombian conflict 58
5.4 PKK and the conflict in Turkey 58
5.5 PKK's repertoire and the absence of sexual violence 59
5.6 CRSV in the Turkish-Kurdish conflict 60
6. Comparative analysis 60
6.1 Forced recruitment 60
6.2 Ideology and hierarchy 62
6.2.1 The FARC's ideology and hierarchy 63
6.2.2 The PKK's ideology and hierarchy 64
7. Conclusion 66
Bibliography 68

List of figures 74

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Foreword

My relation to this topic began with lectures and literature on violence against civilians and one-sided violence. Through Stewart and Liou (2017) I learned that territory plays a role in an armed group's use of violence against civilians. If an armed group has domestic territory, they will likely try to build good relations with the civilians in their territory. However, if moved into foreign territory, they will allegedly turn violent against civilians, as they do not need to build long-term relations but only to extract resources from them quickly. Stewart and Liou (2017) use the PKK as their case to prove the territory's role in causing violence against civilians. They show that the PKK's attainment of foreign territory caused the level of one-sided violence by the group to rise significantly. I became curious and wanted to know if this was true for non-lethal forms of violence, especially sexual violence. This led me to research the role of foreign territory in the case of sexual violence (Aspen, 2022). Since I did not find any reports of PKK using sexual violence, regardless of the location of their territory, I became interested in why that is. This interest contributed to the choice of my topic; the use and non-use of sexual violence by armed groups.

1. Introduction

“The greatest pleasure in life is to defeat your enemies, to chase them before you, to rob them of their wealth, to see those dear to them bathed in tears, to ride their horses, and to ravage their wives and daughters” - Genghis Khan quoted in Storkey (2018, p. 136).

1.1 Introducing the topic

Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) is a form of gender-based violence, that has just recently gained massive international and political attention. CRSV is a type of violence performed against people in or related to a conflict. The victims can be civilians, as well as combatants and detainees (Cohen & Nordås, 2014, p. 420; Merry, 2009, p. 156; Pedro & Oxfam International, 2009, p. 2; Storkey, 2018, p. 146; United Nations Department of Peace Operations, 2020, pp. 5-6, 9; Wood, 2009, pp. 142-143).

Rape and other forms of sexual violence have always characterized wars and armed conflicts, but CRSV has been ignored or treated as an unavoidable side-effect of war that ‘just happen’, and that cannot be stopped or hindered (Cohen, 2013a, p. 461; Cohen & Nordås, 2014, p. 418; Farr, 2009, p. 6; Meger, 2010, p. 119; Merry, 2009, p. 156; Skjelsbæk, 2019, p. 54). With the advancement of women’s rights, the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, and the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, it has increasingly gained focus in research and international politics. Rwanda and Yugoslavia witnessed numbers of sexual violence victims, especially violent forms of sexual violence, that could no longer be ignored. In addition, and maybe more significantly, in these two conflicts CRSV was finally shown to be strategic and deliberate (Cohen, 2016, p. 2; Schoenfeld, 2018, p. 3; Skjelsbæk, 2001, pp. 211-212; 2019, p. 54). In the former Yugoslavia, sexual violence was used in ethnic cleansing; Serbian forces used mass rape to chase away and exclude Bosnian Muslims from specific areas (Schoenfeld, 2018, p. 3). In Rwanda, sexual violence was used as a weapon in the genocide by Hutu extremists to displace and eradicate the Tutsi minority. With sexual violence, they could infect Tutsis with HIV and therefore harm and kill more people than they had immediate access to (Schoenfeld, 2018, p. 3). Through these conflicts, it was visible that CRSV indeed could be a conflict strategy and a weapon of war.

Over the last decades, it has become clear that CRSV varies in form and frequency across conflicts (Wood, 2006, 2009). There are examples of armed groups that do not use sexual violence to any notable degree and who sanction soldiers who rape (Haner, Benson, & Cullen, 2019, p. 288; Wood, 2009, p. 151). Conversely, there are examples of groups that deliberately use rape or other forms of sexual violence as a war strategy (Wood, 2006, p. 315). Furthermore, other groups do not deliberately use it, but tolerate CRSV; this is reflected in the fact that the group's leaders do not sanction soldiers who rape (Cohen, 2013a, p. 461; Wood, 2009, p. 137, Wood 2017, p. 513). The scale of the human, and particularly women's right issue of CRSV and the variation across conflicts has made it evident that there is something more going on that needs to be studied and explained rather than assuming that CRSV is an unavoidable and equal-sized aspect of every war and in the repertoire of every armed group (Wood, 2006, Wood 2009, p. 132).

This thesis, by focusing on the use of CRSV by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas – Ejército del Pueblo (FARC, in English referred to as The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), and Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan (PKK, in English referred to as the Kurdistan Workers' Party), will help uncover mechanisms behind the use and limited use of sexual violence in conflict. FARC was a guerrilla group in the Colombian civil war, and PKK is an armed group in Turkey and Northern Iraq. FARC was known for high levels of sexual violence, and PKK for restraining their use. Both were long-lived, leftist armed groups, that operated in fragile democracies (Eccarius-Kelly, 2012, p. 236). The ideological foundation of the groups is significant. According to both Wood (2009, pp. 132, 134) and Watanabe (2022, p. 84) leftist ideologically based groups will restrain their use of CRSV. FARC and PKK are both based on a Marxist ideology and have a high level of female members, however they have a very different repertoire of violence against civilians and women (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b; Haner et al., 2019, p. 396; Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022b).

My research will build on Wood's (2009) theory on military hierarchy to limit the use of sexual violence and Cohen's (2013a) group cohesion theory on the use of rape by armed groups as the conceptual framework to analyse the findings. With my comparative analysis, I aim at digging deeper into the circumstances and factors that contribute to the use of sexual

violence, the motives and aims for armed groups to use or not use sexual violence. Comparing these two groups, can teach us something about how groups with similar ideologies can have very different observed patterns of sexual violence. Understanding in which contexts CRSV does not happen, or identifying factors of groups not having sexual violence in their repertoire, can contribute to our understanding of CRSV and why it happens in some conflicts and is used by some groups, and not others.

1.2 The prevalence of gender-based violence

Gender-based violence, and especially violence against women and girls, has been considered a 'global pandemic' (Harvey, 2021, p. 2; Storkey, 2018, p. 4). It is one of the most widespread human rights violations in the world (Harvey, 2021, p. 5). Accordingly, sexual violence is one of the most widespread human rights violations against women. A staggering seven out of ten women have been "*…targeted for sexual violence in their lifetime…"* (Storkey, 2018, p. 15). The estimated number of female victims of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner, is 736 million worldwide (UN Women, 2022a). This entails that almost one out of three women has experienced one of these types of violence or both within their lifetime (UN Women, 2022a). This number does not entail everyone who have experienced sexual harassment. Women who are displaced or living in areas affected by armed conflict, are particularly vulnerable to violence (Harvey, 2021, p. 8; World Health Organization, 2020). Moreover,

> *"Globally, the prevalence of violence against women and girls by an intimate partner in 2018 was higher than the prevalence of COVID-19 in the past 12 months, throwing into sharp relief the disparity in attention and resources each crisis has received"* (Harvey, 2021, p. 5).

This statistic sheds light on an important fact; that gender-based violence is a widespread, but neglected problem. During the Covid-19 pandemic and its following measures, gender-based violence against women has been observed as a 'shadow pandemic' (UN Women, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020). The lockdowns, and the socio-political and economic consequences of the pandemic resulted in a significant increase in violent episodes against women (UN Women, 2020). From this it is evident that pandemics can increase gender-based violence. This is also true for wars (Storkey, 2018, p. 136).

1.3 CRSV in numbers

CRSV is a serious and widespread human rights violation. It largely violates the rights of women and girls; 97 percent of the reported CRSV victims in 2021 were women and girls (United Nations, 2022). Only in 2021, there were 3,293 United Nations verified cases across 18 countries of conflict, an increase of over 800 cases from the year before (United Nations, 2022). According to Bradley (2020, p. 177), every fifth woman displaced due to humanitarian crisis, has been sexually assaulted. It is likely that there are many unreported cases, as I will further discuss in Chapter 4. Methodology, under 4.6.1 Data reliability. The global level of CRSV shows the severity of the human rights issue. However, global numbers have limited value for research on CRSV. The use and level of CRSV varies significantly across conflicts, time and armed groups, therefore it is important to look at local contexts and specific conflicts in addition to information relating to how widespread CRSV is across conflicts. In the following section, I will give some examples of historical and contemporary cases and contexts where CRSV has been extensive.

1.3.1 CRSV Historical cases

During the Second World War, the German army arranged military brothels in concentration camps, cities and field camps. It is estimated that more than 50,000 women and girls served in the brothels in the areas under German control. Many of the women serving there were forced and experienced rape (Wood, 2006, p. 310). The sexual violence by the hand of German soldiers seems to have primarily happened in military brothels, although German troops did also rape women and girls outside; however, the numbers of victims and cases are not well documented (Wood, 2006, p.310). Conversely, the rape of civilian women by Soviet army soldiers has better documentation. Soviet troops raped thousands of women and girls in Germany and Hungary, particularly targeting those of German ethnicity. Numbers from hospitals in Berlin indicate that at least 95,000 rape victims were treated there. This estimate covers Berlin only, so it is safe to conclude that the total number of rapes was much higher (Wood, 2006, pp. 309-310).

During the three-month Tutsi genocide in Rwanda in 1994, it is estimated that at least 250,000 women were raped (Schoenfeld, 2018, p. 3). Ethnicity played an important role in the Rwandan war, similar to the conflict in former Yugoslavia from 1992-1995. Numbers from the war in former Yugoslavia, indicate that between 20,000 and 50,000 were raped (Schoenfeld, 2018, p. 3). Unfortunately, despite the increased international attention that especially the conflicts in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda contributed to, CRSV is still a part of contemporary conflicts. In the next section, I will show this with examples from Ukraine, Ethiopia, Iraq, and Syria.

1.3.2 Contemporary cases

Shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, there were reports of gang rapes and sexual assaults at gunpoint (Mannell, 2022, p. 1). In the Ethiopia – Tigray conflict that began in November 2020, widespread CRSV has been reported, including gang rape in victims' homes and detention, as well as sexual slavery (Amnesty International & Human Rights Watch, 2022, pp. 3, 126). In 2014, the Islamic State (Daesh) conducted a mass-killing in the Sinjar area of Northern Iraq and Syria. Several thousand people, of the Yazidi minority group were either killed or abducted (Pettersen, Sande, & Allkunne, 2021). Young women were taken and kept as sexual slaves for the fighters of the Islamic State (Nobel Price Outreach AB, 2018). Nadia Murad was one of these women. She managed to escape after three months, and in 2018 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, increasing international attention on this critical topic (Kreft et al., 2020, p. 457; Nobel Price Outreach AB, 2018; Skjelsbæk, 2019, p. 58).

As we can deduct from these contemporary examples, there is no sign of CRSV disappearing, despite increased international attention, human rights norms and UN resolutions on rape as a war strategy. In the next section, I will go through some of these norms.

1.4 Human Rights and CRSV

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966) and the International Covenant on Economic,

Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966)[1] form the International Bill of Human Rights (Alston, Steiner, & Goodman, 2013, p. 139). It could be argued that the legally binding ICCPR covers sexual and domestic violence through its parts on torture, dignity and non-discrimination, but it does not mention sexual or domestic violence explicitly, and therefore it lacks the focus and specificity needed to protect women against these violations (Fitzpatrick, 1994, p. 534). The International Bill of Human Rights also lacks specific responsibilities for state parties regarding action against rape and domestic abuse (Alston et al., 2013, pp. 158-159; Fitzpatrick, 1994, p. 534).

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was developed in response to the shortcomings in the International Bill of Human Rights regarding gender violence and discrimination (Alston et al., 2013, p. 166). Adopted in 1979, the Convention is broader and more detailed in its focus and definition of discrimination of women (UN General Assembly, 1979).

In 1993, came the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, that recognised CEDAW and earlier efforts to improve women's rights and decrease violence. Particularly, the 1993 Declaration responded to the need of explicitly referring to 'violence against women'. The Declaration was also meant to contribute to further secure implementation of the CEDAW (O'Rourke & Swaine, 2019, p. 670; UN General Assembly, 1979, 1993).

In addition to the legally binding documents, there are six resolutions by the UN Security Council regarding CRSV (Kreft et al., 2020, p. 459). The resolutions express the UN Security Councils opinions regarding the topic (United Nations, 2023). For instance, resolution 1820 condemns the use of CRSV as a war strategy (Kreft et al., 2020, p. 459). However, the resolutions are not legally binding. They can have influence on the international agenda, but are mostly formal statements of the views of the UN Security Council (United Nations, 2023).

[1] *ICCPR and ICESCR came into effect in 1976.*

1.5 Scope and purpose of the study

The thematic focus of this thesis is the variation in the use of CRSV by armed groups. According to Cohen (2013a, p. 461) wartime rape is one of the most horrific and least understood phenomena of modern warfare and armed conflict. The purpose of this thesis is to understand potential mechanisms behind CRSV, and explain variation in its use. I want to understand the differentiating factors between the widespread use of CRSV, and the restraint in use of sexual violence by armed groups in conflict.

This research is relevant because rape and other forms of sexual violence have violated women's rights for a long time; however, it is still a relatively new research topic (Cohen & Nordås, 2014, p. 418). There are several theories, explanations, and assumptions about CRSV; for instance, about who uses it, why it is used, and in which contexts it is used. In order to decrease the use of sexual violence, it is crucial to understand why sexual violence is used in armed conflict and which factors can limit its use. Restricting wartime rape is extremely important as its use has long-lasting negative effects on victims and post-conflict societies (United Nations Department of Peace Operations, 2020, p. 6).

I will use Cohen's (2013a) theory on group cohesion and Wood's (2009) theory on military hierarchy, in my analyses of two comparable cases. The cases are two armed groups with a different repertoire of violence, namely the PKK and FARC. The first showing restraint in the use of sexual violence, and the second showing high levels of CRSV (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b). These armed groups were chosen as they were based on similar, leftist ideologies, that according to Wood (2009, p. 132, 134), often limit their use of sexual violence.

By doing a comparative study, I can use Cohen's (2013a) and Wood's (2009) theories on two contrasting cases that the theories have not been applied to before. This thesis will contribute with more knowledge on variation in CRSV, and contribute to research explaining why that variation exists. By identifying different risk factors for the widespread use of CRSV and reasons for restricting its use, it can be easier to anticipate when it will happen, different risk factors for widespread use, and what things can restrict the use.

1.6 Research questions

To contribute to research about the mechanisms behind the use of CRSV, I want to investigate why it is part of the repertoire of some armed groups and absent in others. Therefore, considering the context and the main objectives of my study, I ask

❖ What are the reasons behind the variation of the use of CRSV?

By answering this research question, I wish to contribute to answering the wider question of why CRSV is used and how it can be restrained. To help with my analysis, I include the following sub-questions;

- Why did FARC extensively use CRSV?
- Why did PKK restrain their use of sexual violence?

As mentioned, I will draw on Wood's (2009) theory on strength of military hierarchy and Cohen's (2013a) theory on group cohesion to answer these questions.

1.7 Key concepts

1.7.1 Violence

The World Health Organization provides the following definition of violence; "*The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation"* (Krug et al., 2002, p. 5). Harm inflicted against oneself is not relevant for this thesis. As the topic of this thesis is CRSV, political violence and violence against civilians, an individual's self-harm or suicide attempt is not relevant. Therefore, the definition of violence in this thesis will correspond to: "*The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against… another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation"* (Krug et al., 2002, p. 5). Another person or group could mean anyone in this context, soldiers and civilians alike. This definition of violence is wider than the term one-sided violence, that is the standard

measurement for violence against civilians, as it includes non-lethal violence and the threat to use force or power (Eck & Hultman, 2007, p. 235).

1.7.2 Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence, sexual violence and violence against women are often used together and sometimes interchangeably, even if they are slightly different. Gender-based violence entail both sexual violence and violence against women, but it also comprises non-sexual violence and violence against other genders than women (OHCHR, 2014). I prefer using gender-based violence and sexual violence as they are gender neutral. However, I do understand gender-based violence as "*rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms*" (UNHCR, 2021), which largely harms women (OHCHR, 2014).

As mentioned, CRSV is a form of gender-based violence (OHCHR, 2014). In this thesis, gender-based violence encompasses violent actions directed towards someone *"on the basis of their gender, sex or non-conformity to gender-norms and stereotypes"* (Harvey, 2021, p. 6). The violent acts may include domestic violence, intimate-partner violence, femicide, forced marriages, female genital mutilation, and sexual violence (OHCHR, 2014; UN Women, 2022b). Some of these are overlapping, but they all have in common that they entail actions or acts that are harmful to the person they are directed at (Harvey, 2021, p. 6; Mibenge, 2014; OHCHR, 2014; UN Women, 2022b; UNFPA, 2022; UNHCR, 2021).

1.7.3 Conflict-related sexual violence

There are several definitions of wartime sexual violence, and it lacks a common definition that most researchers agree on (Nordås & Cohen, 2021, p. 194). The definitions can include different forms of sexualised violations. Most definitions of CRSV include rape, but consider sexual violence to be a broader category also encompassing other types of sexualised violence (Nordås & Cohen, 2021, p. 194).

In this thesis CRSV is used within the meaning of war rape, sexual torture, sexual slavery, sexual mutilation, forced abortion or sterilization and forced pregnancies, forced prostitution, that are related to the conflict (Cohen & Nordås, 2014, p. 419; Wood, 2018, p. 515). Following Wood (2006, p. 308), rape is defined as the forced penetration of mouth, anus or vagina with a penis, hand or an object.

To be conflict-related, sexual violence needs to be connected to a conflict. According to the United Nations Department of Peace Operations (2020, pp. 6-7) there are three criteria, of which two need to be fulfilled for the violence to be considered CRSV. The criteria regard different relations that the sexual violence can have to a conflict to be considered conflict-related. One of the criteria has a temporal value, according to which sexual violence has to happen in close temporal proximity to a conflict. That can be during a conflict, but also before or after the conflict as long as it is in close proximity, and also in a pre- or post-conflict setting that is unstable. For instance leading up to a conflict or leading to peace, but not fully peace or control (United Nations Department of Peace Operations, 2020, p. 7). The next criterion, is geographical vicinity, meaning that the sexual violence is taking place in an area or bordering area of armed conflict (United Nations Department of Peace Operations, 2020, p. 7). The third criterion is causality. This entails that it is possible to link increasing levels of sexual violence to the conflict conditions. For this to be established, there has to be an increase from the level of sexual violence before the conflict, that can be shown to be caused by the conditions of the armed conflict (United Nations Department of Peace Operations, 2020, p. 7).

1.7.4 Armed group

In this thesis armed group entails any active organised fighting group with political motivations, in a conflict. What they call themselves and how they are classified by others, may differ. In this thesis, armed group is the term used for insurgencies, paramilitaries, terrorist groups, guerrilla groups, freedom fighter groups and rebel groups. This does not include criminal gangs or drug cartels, even though that can be difficult to determine sometimes, because armed groups can rely on illegal drugs, and criminal gangs can take part in fighting. However, an armed group in this thesis will be one that takes part in a conflict and has political

motives. Generally, I do not include state forces in armed groups , but in some data and theories, state forces will be included when using the term armed group.

1.7.5 Repertoires of violence

An armed group's repertoire of violence can be defined as "*that set of practices that a group routinely engages in as it makes claims on other political or social actors"* Wood (2009, p. 133). For this thesis, this is specified to an armed group's preferred violent practices and set of violent behaviours. Following Wood (2009, p. 133) the repertoire can include "*any or all of the following: kidnapping, assassinations, massacres, torture, sexual violence, forced displacement…"* (Wood, 2009, p. 133).

1.7.6 Soldier

Soldier is, in this thesis, used indiscriminately with fighter, with the plural form soldiers, fighters or cadre. It refers to military personnel and people actively involved in activities of an armed group.

1.7.7 Victim

One of the central debates in feminist scholarship regards the use of the word "victim" to describe women. Several feminist scholars worry that women are often portrayed as victims of violence, especially in international law and human rights norms (Parisi, 2017, p. 6). This concern is justified by the many resolutions and declarations on violence against women, CRSV, and sex trafficking. Usually with a focus on women and girls, and the UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, also focusing on women and girls, it is easy to understand the worry that women too often are framed as victims. One potential issue with this is that this framing can contribute to ideas that women are weak, lack agency and are always innocent (Kempadoo, 2012, p. xxix). Women are the ones that something happen to, not the ones that do something. Related to CRSV, the framing of women as victims can contribute to an oversimplification of the issue and women's roles in violence. Women can be perpetrators of sexual violence, and female cadre can be both victims

and perpetrators of CRSV simultaneously (Cohen, 2013b). I will not elaborate more on this debate in this thesis, as it is outside of my scope. However, I am aware of the discussion and think it is important to consider, although I choose to proceed using the term victim. I am using the word victim mainly to refer to victims of CRSV. Albeit it can describe a male or female victims, my focus in this thesis is on women and girls. I could have used survivor, however it seemed unnatural to me, as many victims of CRSV do not survive.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven main chapters. *Chapter 1.* introduces the topic, by providing background information in relation to CRSV and its prevalence, and the connection of CRSV to human rights. Additionally, the first chapter presents the purpose of this research, the research questions, and gives an overview of the main key concepts that are deemed necessary to clarify for the following analysis. *Chapter 2.* outlines relevant scholarly contributions that are thematically divided in four parts; violence against civilians, one-sided violence, repertoires of violence, and previous research conducted on CRSV. The theoretical framework is mapped out in *Chapter 3*., including Cohen's theory on the use of sexual violence by armed groups, and its data foundation and limitations, and Wood's theory on the absence of sexual violence, and its foundation and limitations. The methodology of this study is reviewed in *Chapter 4,* presenting the dataset and collection, the research design, the limitations of the research in addition to my epistemological foundation, positionality, and ethical considerations. In *Chapter 5* and *6,* I present my comparative analysis of the FARC's and PKK's repertoires of violence. The analysis is divided in two main parts: the first (*Chapter 5*), provides a description of the FARC and PKK cases and conflict contexts, including their repertoires of violence. *Chapter 6* is dedicated to the comparative analysis and discussion of the two cases relating to their recruitment methods, ideological foundation and internal hierarchy. *Chapter 7* consists of concluding remarks.

2. Literature review

2.1 Violence against civilians

As discussed in definitions of key concepts, violence can entail physical or psychological harm, and the threat of acts of violence is also considered violence.

Violence against civilians can occur in many ways during a conflict. Civilians can be harmed by attacks that are not directly targeting them, by being in the wrong place at the wrong time (Aspen, 2022). They can for instance, be caught in the cross-fire when armed groups are fighting each other (Eck & Hultman, 2007, p. 235). When a government army is trying to destroy rebel group territory, civilians can be harmed if they are near or in the territory. However, there are several armed groups, governments and militias targeting civilians, trying to harm or kill them (Eck & Hultman, 2007, pp. 233, 238-240). This is termed one-sided violence. One-sided violence implies deliberate lethal attacks on non-combatants (Eck & Hultman, 2007, p. 235). To be counted as one-sided violence in the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) Dataset on organised violence it has to result in a minimum of 25 deaths per year (Aspen, 2022; Eck & Hultman, 2007, p. 235).

Research on violence against civilians have largely focused on civilian deaths (Balcells & Stanton, 2021, p. 48; Cohen & Nordås, 2014, p. 418). The focus has been on major deliberate violent events of massacres and genocides (Eck & Hultman, 2007, p. 233). Eck and Hultman (2007, p. 233) introduced new data and analysis of one-sided violence, which allowed the study of smaller events of violence against civilians, resulting in a minimum of 25 deaths. This allowed the study of lethal violence against civilians of smaller size than what had been studied before, and the comparing of violence against civilians across contexts and time (Eck & Hultman, 2007, p. 234). However, the research was still focused on lethal forms of violence.

Eck and Hultman (2007, p. 233) investigated one-sided violence in intrastate conflicts from 1989 to 2004. They found a trend; that one-sided violence has happened on a relative low scale, but with sharp increases in short periods. They realized that rebel groups are generally more violent towards civilians, with the exception of some periods of time when governments were conducting mass-killings of civilians (Eck & Hultman, 2007, p. 233). With

CRSV it is the other way around. State forces are reported as the main perpetrators of CRSV (Cohen & Nordås, 2014, p. 418). This shows how important it is to not just look at lethal violence when determining a group's level of violence. Stating that state forces are less violent against civilians, can give a wrong picture of reality when they are reported to commit more sexual violence than rebel groups and militias (Cohen & Nordås, 2014, p. 418).

2.2 One-sided violence to extract resources fast

Research has showed that the location of a rebel groups territory has consequences for their behaviour towards civilians (Stewart & Liou, 2017, p. 299). A rebel group will be much more violent towards civilians if they have control on foreign territory than if they only have control on domestic territory, meaning territory within the state they would like to govern (Stewart & Liou, 2017, pp. 284-285). A group controlling domestic territory, meaning areas they would like to control more permanently with people they would like to govern, will strive to build good long-term relations with civilians and limit violence against them (Stewart & Liou, 2017, p. 285). The rebel group can even provide them services, like education or hospitals. This is to make civilians more compliant, and extract resources like money, good-will and new recruits over time (Stewart and Liou, 2017, pp. 285-286). Stewart and Liou (2017, pp. 285-286) term this cooperation quasi-voluntary compliance, as the civilians may not be a hundred percent dedicated to the armed group, but will comply. This strategy by the armed group is understandable in territory that they would like to govern long-term. However, if a rebel group has foreign territorial control, it will be much more likely to use violence against civilians, even if the civilians are members of the group's own political community (Stewart & Liou, 2017, p. 284). Quasi-voluntary compliance and violence against civilians are two different strategies armed groups can use to extract resources from their territory and the people living there (Stewart & Liou, 2017, p. 285).

Like most research on violence by armed groups, Stewart & Liou (2017) focus on lethal violence. The case study they use to support their theory, is the PKK. They show how the PKK turned more violent against civilians when they moved into foreign territory. However, they measure the level of violence in civilian deaths (Stewart & Liou, 2017, pp. 285, 289-290). I will show that the violent turn caused by foreign territory, is not necessarily true for non-lethal

forms of violence, like CRSV. Nonetheless, the research by Stewart & Liou (2017, p. 290) does indicate that when an armed group controls domestic territory, civilians within that territory can be less at risk of sexual violence, as the armed group is using the strategy of governance and quasi-voluntary compliance.

2.3 Repertoires of violence

As defined in key concepts, an armed group's repertoire can include lethal or non-lethal forms of violence, including sexual violence, other forms of torture, abductions or mass-killings (Wood, 2009, p. 133). An armed group can prefer to use sexual violence or it can choose to not use it at all. It is well established that sexual violence can be used as a strategy by armed groups and governments, especially related to genocide or ethnic cleansing (Kirby, 2012, p. 798; Wood, 2009, p. 132; 2018, p. 520). However, that something is common in war does not mean that it occurs in every or even most conflicts. There are several examples of groups not resorting to sexual violence at all in their repertoire of violent behaviour towards civilians or others (Wood, 2009, p. 152). There are even examples of armed groups committing ethnic cleansing without using sexual violence (Wood, 2009, p. 143).

Research on conflict-related violence has largely overlooked sexual violence. Previous research has not focused on CRSV or other forms of non-lethal violence related to conflict (Cohen, 2013a, p. 462). Therefore, much of the reality of groups' violent activities has been disregarded. A group or state force can seem less violent if you only count their deliberate violent events that cause at least 25 civilian deaths. However, they might be very violent in terms of sexual torture or other types of non-lethal violence against civilians. If we take FARC as an example, their one-sided violence peaked between the year 2000 and 2004, with over one thousand civilians killed (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022b). In the same time period, there have been only isolated reports of them using sexual violence (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b). In the years between 2010 to 2016 their use of sexual violence peaked, however the civilian death toll amounted to 67 in total during the same years (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b; Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022b).

2.4 Research on CRSV

Although CRSV is a relatively new focus area of research, it is a fast-growing field that entails a growing body of studies (Nordås & Cohen, 2021, p. 194). Like the research on one-sided violence, early studies on CRSV have been focused around major events, like massacres, mass-rape and genocides (Nordås & Cohen, 2021, p. 196). This is understandable as there is more available data on the extreme cases of CRSV. In addition, the extreme events can increase the visibility and contribute to attention and therefore funding more research on the topic. However, the major events are just part of the story on CRSV, and it is crucial not to overlook smaller-scale events of CRSV. Like any human rights topic, CRSV is context-dependent and complex.

Contemporary researchers have been interested in the variation in use of sexual violence in armed conflicts. As mentioned, it was earlier assumed that rape and other forms of sexual violence were present in every conflict to a similar degree (Nordås & Cohen, 2021, p. 197). It was thought to occur in all conflicts and thought to correlate with other forms of violence.

2.5 Explanations on variation in the use of sexual violence

In this section I will go through different explanations of CRSV and relate them to the variation in levels of sexual violence in conflict.

2.5.1 Breakdown of social structures/Opportunism

A popular explanation of why soldiers and non-combatants use sexual violence in war, mostly found outside of feminist research, is that individuals use the chaos and breakdown of social structures during war to their own advantage (Cohen, 2013a, pp. 462-463). Individuals who wanted to rape before the breakout of war or want to do so during the war for their own individual reasons, can find opportunity to rape in the chaos and disarray of conflict. In the war situation there can be opportunities for them to use sexual violence. *"Conflict allows men to take women that they have maybe wanted for a long time but who refused them.' Sometimes,*

such notions of 'seizing the opportunity' also featured accounts of 'testing/tasting' (sexually) unfamiliar women" (Baaz & Stern, 2009, p. 1161). The breakdown of structures for reporting and also for criminal prosecution, can lead the men who have been rejected before, to "take" the women they want, as the chaos of war presents the opportunity. In this quote, Baaz and Stern (2009) point to how women can be targeted for being from a different ethnicity, religion, because they are viewed as unfamiliar by the perpetrator. The "unfamiliar" women might not be socially acceptable partners for the perpetrators in peace time, however war provides an opportunity to have sex with them without their own community knowing about it.

Perpetrators can use the breakdown of institutions and chaos as they know they will probably not suffer any legal punishment for the rape. The war can lead to breakdown of institutions for reporting, and therefore the perpetrator can rape without consequences. This is not always true however, because some countries will not have had opportunities for reporting of sexual violence before, but during conflict humanitarian organisations come in and can actually increase the opportunities to report sexual violence (Cohen, 2013a, p. 462; 2016, p. 68).

This is a likely explanation for individual cases of wartime rape to some degree. Surely some individuals will use the chaos of conflict and breakdown of structures to rape. However, it is a limited explanation. CRSV happens in such a large scale in some conflicts and very little in others, and opportunism alone does not explain this variation (Cohen, 2013a, pp. 470-471).

2.5.2 CRSV as a weapon of war

A rhetoric and explanation used by feminist researchers in the 1990's and early 2000's, was that rape is a weapon of war (Card, 1996; Maedl, 2011; Meger, 2010, p. 119; Nordås & Cohen, 2021). That entails that rape or sexual violence can be used by armed groups or state forces as an intentional strategy for obtaining their political goals, like a weapon (Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation, 2022). It has been used to explain the strategical use of rape in some conflicts, like the forementioned Rwandan genocide, and the conflict in former Yugoslavia

(Schoenfeld, 2018). This explanation focuses on the functionality of CRSV and the purpose of using rape in conflict (Card, 1996, p. 7).

An armed group or state force can use sexual violence as a means to attain their goals. Raping enemy women can be a way to dominate and show power over enemy men as they were unable to protect "their" women (Farr, 2009, p. 4). Or it can be used strategically to cause displacement (Pedro & Oxfam International, 2009, p. 3). However, it does not seem to be used strategically everywhere, all the time (Wood, 2018).

There is a question of accountability regarding wartime rape, when soldiers are influenced by drugs (Baaz & Stern, 2009, pp. 511-512). An argument against the "rape as a weapon of war"-explanation is related to questions of accountability. Meaning, the ability to always make rational decisions. There is a need to question the soldiers' capabilities to make conscious and well thought through decisions in the chaos of war, when they are often heavily drugged (Baaz & Stern, 2009, pp. 511-512, Haner et al., 2019, p. 413).

The rhetoric of "rape as a weapon of war" is still used by NGO's and media (Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation, 2022; Norwegian Church Aid, 2019). However, several scholars criticize the term. Kirby (2012) claims that the term masks internal and sometimes contradicting differences in explanations of CRSV. The term "rape as a weapon of war" can be used by actors and researchers that mean different things by it. Kreft et. al. (2020, p. 457) claims that the term is an oversimplification.

Research has shown CRSV to vary in use and although it may be used strategically, it is not used strategically all the time, everywhere (Wood, 2018). That not every rape is a weapon of war does not mean we need to discourage the term altogether. Rape and other forms of sexual violence can be used deliberately and strategically, as a weapon of war.

Research supporting the "rape as a weapon of war" explanation is often based on observed effects of the sexual violence used by an armed group or state force, without knowing

if those effects were intended and the rape was indeed ordered by commanders in said armed group (Wood, 2017, p. 514).

CRSV has been and still is described as a weapon of war, and some will describe it as a cheap weapon of war (ABColombia, 2013, p. 8). Bullets and weapons are expensive for an armed group, but rape is described as cheap or even free. All you would need is a soldier willing to rape. With regards to monetary costs, of course rape would be cheaper. However, if other costs are considered like the spread of sexually transmitted diseases to the armed group's soldiers, or the trauma that the perpetrators can get from raping someone, the cost is not so cheap after all. Spreading diseases, traumatising perpetrators as well as victims (Cohen, 2013a, pp. 462, 465).

2.5.3 Ethnic war and ethnically based hatred

An explanation connected to the "weapon of war"-explanation are the explanations relating CRSV to genocide, ethnic cleansing and ethnic hatred. The ethnically based explanation for the occurrence of CRSV, consists of claims about sexual violence being used strategically for ethnic cleansing or genocide. These explanations are often based on case studies from the former republic of Yugoslavia and from the Rwandan genocide. An example from Schoenfeld (2018, p. 3) *"In Rwanda, rape was used as a military strategy to support Hutu extremists' goal of exterminating the minority Tutsi population."* As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, widespread rape was used deliberately to spread HIV and to chase away the targeted ethnic group from certain areas. However, that CRSV is used strategically in extreme cases of genocide and ethnic cleansing, does not mean that CRSV is always used strategically in every conflict. That CRSV was used strategically in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, support that rape of women can indeed be used strategically in war and as a strategy in settings of ethnic cleansing and genocide. However, the strategical use in these conflicts does not indicate that CRSV is used strategically in every case. According to Cohen (2016, p. 2) this is a fallacy people make. "*Observers often assume that the underlying causes of all wartime rape are similar to those in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina: namely, that rape is ordered as part of military strategy, and as a tool of ethnic cleansing or genocide"* Cohen (2016, p. 2).

"As women are key in holding the honour of an ethnic or religious group intact, their violation can be used to tear down and destroy the society of the 'enemy', as a form of ethnic cleansing. Gita Sahgal, human rights and women's activist, believes that because women are seen as the reproducers and carers of the community, rape is often used in ethnic conflicts as a way for attackers to impose social dominance and redraw ethnic boundaries" (Storkey, 2018, pp. 143-144).

A version of the ethnic hatred argument, or maybe explanation for it is the linking of women's bodies with an entire nation, ethnicity or society, termed "Woman-as-nation".

"Indeed, in times of war/armed conflict female bodies are regarded as the vessels through which national, ethnic, racial and religious identities are reproduced… Rape in this context is used not only as an attack upon the individual female, but also as attack upon the nation" (Banwell, 2020, p. 19). That women are regarded as bearers of ethnicity, nationality, culture and religious identity, can make them a sexual target during conflict. Raping one woman is not simply an individual attack, but an attack on the ethnic group or community the armed forces would like to harm. Woman-as-nation explains how sexual violence can be an effective war strategy to attack an entire community. Especially if the goal is to severely hurt and impair an ethnic group, and especially for long-term effects (Sharlach, 2000, p. 90).

Cohen (2013a, p. 471) describes ethnic hatred arguments as some of the most common explanations of the use of rape in war. However, she does not find a relation between ethnic wars and levels of CRSV (Cohen, 2013a, p. 471).

2.5.4 The continuum of violence

The continuum of violence-explanation fronted mainly by critical feminist theory, relates wartime sexual violence to rape in peacetime and other forms of violence against women (Kreft et al., 2020, pp. 457-458; Wibben, 2019, pp. 16-17). This explanation entails important implications for how CRSV should be studied as a phenomenon, more related to

other types of violence women experience in peace and war. Therefore, it will also be discussed in chapter 3. Theoretical framework.

Feminist theory on CRSV entails as mentioned focusing on the wider gendered contexts that create the vulnerability of women to violence. They focus on the structural gender inequalities that create gender-based violence (Kreft et al., 2020, pp. 457-458). Feminist theories have contributed with the term the continuum of violence that is relevant for research on CRSV. The continuum of violence entails that CRSV is part of a continuum, and therefore it should not be isolated from other forms of gender-based violence.

> *"As the statistics calmly tell us, acts of violence to women aged between 15 and 44 across the globe produce more deaths, disability and mutilation than cancer, malaria and traffic accidents combined. The truth is that violence on such a scale could not exist were it not structured in some way into the very fabric of societies and cultures themselves. It could not continue if it were not somehow supported by deep assumptions about the value of women, or some justification of the use of power."* (Storkey, 2018, p. 2).
>
> *"As such, CRSV falls on a continuum of violence that spans peace and war; the root causes are structural gender inequalities and patriarchal relations"* (Kreft et al., 2020, pp. 457-458)
>
> *"Sexual violence occurring in the domestic sphere during war should not so easily be dismissed as not war-related, because war is present in the daily interactions of people living in conflict contexts"* (Kreft et al., 2020, pp. 460-461)

Scholars like, Fitzpatrick (1994, p. 548), highlight that the isolation and focus on CRSV contributes to difference of the treatment of peacetime rape versus wartime rape. State responsibility is much more pronounced for punishing and preventing rape in war than in peace time. This is one of the risks of the exceptionalism of CRSV. However, the continuum of violence explanation has limitations regarding explaining variation in levels of CRSV.

Within the same conflict, several explanations can be true at the same time. Soldiers in DR Congo interviewed by Baaz and Stern (2009), describe that two types of rape has happened in the conflict. The soldiers name them lust rapes and evil rapes. Their explanations indicate that evil rapes are strategic, used to dominate, destroy and terrorize. While the lust rape seem more opportunistic (Baaz & Stern, 2009, p. 512)

Bosnia-Herzegovina soldiers explain; "*One woman was told by a rapist that he wanted to try a Muslim woman and that she should be honored; a second woman was told that he would make "Cetnik babies" in Muslim and Croat women; a third woman was told by a rapist that he had been ordered to do so"* (Wood, 2006, p. 313). This statement indicates that within the same conflict different explanations can be true for different soldiers.

2.6 Armed groups and the absence of sexual violence

In her pioneering work, Wood (2006, 2009) showed that sexual violence can vary enormously from conflict to conflict in form and prevalence. Earlier, CRSV was believed to correlate with a group's general level of violence, meaning other forms of violence, like one-sided violence. She also showed how it can vary across time and armed groups within an armed conflict. I discuss her theory further in the second part of chapter 3. Theoretical framework.

Wood (2009) showed how sexual violence is not in the repertoire of every armed group even if they are very violent against civilians in other ways. Wood's (2009) research showed how this is not always the case. She uses the phrasing *"absence of sexual violence",* but she explains that it doesn't necessarily mean a total absence. It would be impossible to guarantee that the group has not had individual or isolated cases of CRSV. She states that for a group to be counted as a non-user of sexual violence, there will have to be no reports or very rare reports of sexual violence by the group (Wood, 2009, p. 133).

According to the SVAC dataset, the LTTE have been reported to use widespread rape, prevalence 3, only in 1995. Aside from that year, there have been reports each year from 1989 to 2014 on the conflict in Sri Lanka involving LTTE, where there has been no reported sexual violence by them, prevalence 0. This alludes to what Wood means when she writes about the

absence of rape. She does not necessarily mean that no rapes have ever happened or that there have been no years with exceptions. The total absence of sexual violence can never be guaranteed, however, the LTTE and other groups have committed far less or very limited number of sexual assaults (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b; Wood, 2009, p. 133).

3. Theoretical framework

There are two main theoretical framings with different implications for how CRSV should be studied. The first I have already discussed in the literature review under 2.5.4 The continuum of violence. It draws on feminist theories, and look at CRSV in relation to structural gender inequality, wider gender-discrimination, and the violence women experience in peacetime (Kreft et al., 2020, pp. 457-458). This perspective entails that CRSV should not be studied as an isolated phenomenon. The other framework advocates for researching CRSV as a separate phenomenon, distinct from peacetime rape, but also distinct from other types of violence in conflict (Cohen, 2013a, p. 462). I find both of these frameworks useful for the analysis of CRSV used by armed groups, and will explain them a bit more in this chapter. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I will focus more on two central theories within the framework that looks at CRSV as a distinct phenomenon. In this thesis, I am studying CRSV specifically and separated from other types of gendered violence, for instance domestic violence.

I find both perspectives useful to explain different things regarding CRSV. As mentioned, the continuum of violence framework does not explain why there is variation in the use of CRSV, especially between armed groups in the same context, but also across conflicts (Cohen 2013a, p. 471). This is acknowledged by Kreft et al. (2020), as they look at gendered structures and CRSV in Colombia;

> *"One caveat to note here is that societal gender inequalities and patriarchal structures, while useful to explain why armed actors perpetrate sexual violence against women, cannot account for variation in the use of such violence between armed groups."* (Kreft et al., 2020, p. 476).

According to Cohen (2013a), the continuum of violence does not explain levels of CRSV across conflicts either.

In this thesis I am concerned with comparing armed groups and explaining variation in the use of CRSV. For the purpose of this thesis, CRSV is studied as a separate phenomenon, for the sake of comparison, and explaining variation. I find it useful to isolate CRSV to be able to compare and explain mechanisms in armed groups associated with different levels of wartime rape.

Even though I am not using the continuum of violence a lot in this thesis, I still think it offers important cotributions to research on CRSV. CRSV should be studied both as a separate phenomenon, but also as a concept related to wider gendered structure. For instance to research why CRSV exists in the first place, as this is not well covered in the theories that looks at CRSV as a separate phenomenon. However, I also see benefits of isolating sexual violence that is related to the conflict to be able to compare groups, conflicts, contexts, and find variation. Given that the scope of the thesis is explaining the use and non-use of CRSV by armed groups, a specific focus on CRSV is suitable.

3.1 Cohen's group cohesion theory and Wood's theory on military hierarchy

Given the scope of the thesis, I analyse the two cases I have chosen, namely the use sexual violence by the FARC and the non-use of sexual violence by the PKK, through two theories within the "distinction framework" in CRSV research. The theory of internal group cohesion by Cohen (2013a, 2016, 2017) and the theory on a group's internal hierarchy by Wood (2009) forms the base of analysis for this thesis. Neither of them is very explicit about their epistemological foundation, however they do base their theories in quantitative studies on co-variation of different variables with the level of CRSV, they look at observable implications and formulate hypotheses to be tested. Seemingly placing them in a more positivist or natural science epistemology (Bryman, 2012, pp. 19, 27-28) They do not connect their work to wider gender norms or structural gender inequality. Cohen (2013a, p. 471) does mention that totally

dismissing gender inequality would be wrong. *"Although it would be inaccurate to argue that gender inequality has no influence on wartime rape, there is no evidence that conflicts with high levels of rape are distinguished from conflicts with little or no rape by these factors"* Meaning that gender inequality in itself cannot account for variation in CRSV across conflicts. (Cohen, 2013a, pp. 461, 463-464) also refer to wartime rape as being qualitatively different from peacetime rape, as it is more often conducted by multiple perpetrators, often more brutal in public or in front of others to a larger degree than outside of conflicts.

The two theories are within the CRSV as a distinct phenomenon framework. These theories do not contradict each other, both can be true at the same time. For instance; low group cohesion can make an armed group more susceptible to using rape, while a strong internal hierarchy can prevent the rapes from happening because the leadership enforce rules against CRSV that the soldiers follow. This chapter will explain and expand on the two theories I am using on CRSV.

3.1.1 Cohen's theory on the use of sexual violence

Cohen (2013a) has provided a theory on the role of group cohesion in armed groups for the use of sexual violence. The scope of the theory is explaining variation in the level of CRSV. Her theory is that an armed group's internal social unity, or rather lack thereof, can contribute to increase the use of sexual violence. If a social bond and sense of unity is lacking within an armed group, the combatants can resort to gang rape as a bonding experience. In addition, both gang and individual rapes can be ways for members to prove their loyalty or position in a group of "unfriendly" strangers. Cohen connects recruitment mechanisms in armed groups to their use of rape. "*Whether rape becomes widespread may be explained by differences in recruitment strategies and the resulting variation in internal social cohesion"* (Cohen, 2013a, p. 465). Brutal forms of forced recruitment are related to higher levels of wartime rape.

> *"The use of kidnapping as a recruitment mechanism was surprisingly common during recent civil wars: about 29 percent of state forces reportedly used pressganging—the term commonly used to describe abduction by states—to garner fighters, while about 22 percent of insurgent groups used abduction. As I demonstrate, groups that use these*

extreme forms of forced recruitment are significantly more likely to be reported as perpetrators of rape than are groups that use voluntary methods" (Cohen, 2016, p. 3).

Cohen argues that rape, and multi-perpetrator rape in particular, can work as a socialization tool. Raping together can form bonds of loyalty and enhance intragroup cohesion (source). Individual rapes can be used for increasing one's status within the group and for bonding as the soldiers share their experiences even if they committed the rapes individually. Bragging about an individually perpetrated rape can prove masculinity and show power and what one is willing to do for the group (source). Participating in a multi-perpetrator rape can show loyalty to the group and that the member will do violent or extreme things for the other soldiers (source). Gang rape does not have to be a conscious strategy used deliberately to connect with the other soldiers. It can be something that is generated for many reasons, and then is sustained and increases due to its socializing effects (Cohen, 2013a, pp. 461, 464, 475; 2016, pp. 3, 67; 2017, pp. 704, 712).

The theory on combatant socialization states that one could maybe expect diminishing returns, as sexual violence could decrease once tight social bonds are formed, however many armed groups have several periods of influxes of new fighters, so CRSV would depend on new soldiers coming into the group (Cohen, 2017, p. 703).

In simple terms, Cohen's theory is that extreme forms of forced recruitment to an armed group will resort in low social cohesion, which will then result in a higher level of sexual violence. Likewise, an insurgent group with a higher sense of unity, will commit less sexual violence. As Cohen argues,

"*armed groups may use wartime rape as a socialization tool when they suffer from low intragroup cohesion. Rape—and especially gang rape, or rape by multiple perpetrators—enables armed groups with forcibly recruited fighters to create bonds of loyalty and esteem from initial circumstances of fear and mistrust"* (Cohen, 2016, p. 2).

3.1.2 The data foundation of Cohen's theory

Cohen (2013a) has tested this theory in a quantitative cross-national study of rape in civil wars from 1980 to 2009. This large study covered armed groups in 86 intrastate conflicts, trying to find one or several common factors of armed groups that have sexual violence in their repertoire, and variables that can covariate with the use of sexual violence. Cohen (2013a) measured the use of forced recruitment and its correlation with the use of CRSV. She also tested other explanations formulated into hypotheses. All the hypotheses tested are showed in Figure 1:

TABLE 2. Explaining Wartime Rape: Arguments, Hypotheses, and Data Sources

Arguments	Hypotheses	Independent Variables (source)
Opportunism/Greed	*H1:* State collapse→ state- and insurgent-perpetrated rape	Magnitude of state failure (PITF)
	H2: Material resources→ insurgent-perpetrated rape	Contraband funding (Fearon and Laitin); Diaspora support (UCDP)
Ethnic hatred	*H3:* Ethnic wars → conflict-wide rape	Ethnic war (Fearon and Laitin)
	H4: Perpetrators of genocide → state- and insurgent-perpetrated rape	Genocide (PITF)
	H5: Secessionist aims/ethnic cleansing→ insurgent-perpetrated rape	War aim (Fearon and Laitin); Ethnic cleansing (ethnic-secessionist wars) (Fearon and Laitin)
Gender inequality	*H6:* Greater gender inequality→ conflict-wide rape	Fertility rate (World Bank); Women's rights (CIRI)
Combatant socialization	*H7:* Abduction by insurgents→ insurgent-perpetrated rape	Abduction (original data)
	H8: Pressganging by states→ state-perpetrated rape	Pressganging (original data)

Figure 1 shows the hypotheses tested by Cohen's (2013a, p. 469) cross-national study of variation in use of CRSV .

In the quantitative study, Cohen finds support for H7 and H8, namely that abduction and pressganging by armed groups and state forces are strongly associated with rape (Cohen, 2013a, p. 469)

> "In all cases, abduction and pressganging increase the probability of wartime rape. Rebel groups that rely on abduction are about 2 times, 3.2 times, and 5.5 times more likely to commit wartime rape at levels 1, 2, and 3, respectively, than those groups that do not abduct their fighters" (Cohen, 2013a, p. 472).

This shows that there is a correlation between violent and random abductions and rape by the armed groups. However, there was no association between less extreme forced recruitment, like coercion or conscription (Cohen, 2013a, pp. 461, 466, 469-470).

Cohen finds some support for the opportunism/greed explanation that is tested through hypothesis 1 and 2. Opportunism/greed is the term Cohen uses for explanations that revolve around war creating an opportunity to rape through institutional failure, therefore men who want to rape that would not in peacetime due to social norms and laws, during war will have the opportunity to rape. For insurgent violence, meaning sexual violence by insurgent groups, her research finds that the extent of state failure (H1) and dependency on contraband lootable resources (H2) are associated with rape (Cohen, 2013a, pp. 462, 470-471).

As I expanded on in the literature review, both ethnic hatred and opportunism/greed are widely used explanations for the use of CRSV, however they find limited or no support in the data of Cohen (2013a). Hypotheses 3, 4 and 5 are formulated on the base of explanations that wartime rape is rooted in ethnic hatred. As discussed in the literature review, many claim that ethnic wars or genocides are the main settings for widespread CRSV. However, Ethnic hatred tested through these three hypotheses does not lead to rape in any significant degree. State forces are actually more likely to rape in armed conflicts that are not based on ethnicity (Cohen, 2013a, p. 471).

By the methods and the hypothesis used to measure the relationship of gender inequality and wartime rape (H6), Cohen does not find a covariation. She states that it would be wrong to think that gender inequality is not associated with wartime rape at all. However, she does not find evidence that gender inequality explains the variation in occurrences of widespread wartime rape. There is no indication of difference in levels of rape by level of gender equality. Gender inequality is however highly related to the onset of armed conflicts, but not to widespread wartime rape (Cohen, 2013a, p. 471).

In addition to the cross-national study, Cohen has investigated the theory in four case studies of Sierra Leone, El-Salvador, Timor-Leste and DR Congo. She finds that the theory holds and advocate for framing and researching CRSV as a type of social control and combatant socialization. To my knowledge, the theory has not been tested on FARC in Colombia or PKK in Turkey and Iraq (Cohen, 2013a, pp. 474-475; 2016; 2017, pp. 701, 711-712).

3.1.3 Limitations of Cohen's group cohesion theory

The theory connects low group cohesion with rape as a bonding experience, however in Cohen's (2013a) quantitative study of civil wars, we do not know if she is measuring group cohesion when measuring forced recruitment. In other words, we cannot be sure of the validity of this measure. Forced recruitment is used as an indication of low social unity, and that might be a valid and accurate measure of group cohesion, or it may not be. It is not given that forced recruitment results in low group cohesion, but it can be likely. Researching each group and conflict in-depth would be one way to look closer into this (Bryman, 2012, p. 170).

The group cohesion theory claims that especially gang rape form bonds between soldiers, however the data does not usually discriminate between individual or multi-perpetrator rapes, and there are no exact numbers on which form occurs more in which conflict, or by which armed group. The data on CRSV is not fine-grained enough. Therefore, we cannot know for sure if armed groups with low social cohesion use gang rape more than armed groups with higher social cohesion. However, research has shown that gang rape occurs more in wartime than peacetime, which could indicate a difference between multi-perpetrator rape and individual perpetrator rape. It could also indicate that there is a difference between wartime rape and peacetime rape. We also know that wartime rapes usually are more violent, public and has a higher degree of humiliation than peacetime rape. It is definitely thinkable that individual rapes can contribute to social cohesion in the same way that gang rapes do; however by looking mostly at theories on gang rape and data that does not discriminate on number of perpetrators, we cannot be sure if there are other variables contributing to one or more of the forms of rapes (Cohen, 2013a, p. 467; 2016, p. 5; 2017, p. 703).

In this thesis, Cohen's theory on reasons for using sexual violence by an armed group, is supplemented by Wood's theory and explanations of armed group's not using sexual violence. As I am researching one armed group that uses CRSV and one that reportedly does not, I found it useful to combine one theory on the use of rape in war with one on the non-use of CRSV.

3.2 Wood's theory on the absence of sexual violence

Wood (2009) has contributed with a theory on the absence of sexual violence from an insurgency's repertoire. Her theory connects the level of hierarchy within an armed group to their use of CRSV.

> *"Given the challenges of organizing and controlling violence toward group goals, armed groups tend to be hierarchical. Whether decisions of the leadership are effectively enforced down the chain of command within the armed group depends on the strength of the military hierarchy"* (Wood, 2009, p. 137).

In short, limited use of sexual violence can be connected to strong hierarchy within an armed group. In this theory, the absence of rape and other types of CRSV is due to norms or rules against sexual violence, that can exist for several reasons, combined with a sufficiently strong hierarchy enabling the leadership in the group to enforce these standards. The leadership can deem CRSV as counterproductive to their aims, due to, for instance, spread of diseases among cadre, or they can have strong cultural norms against it. Wood names this "The top-down implication" and explains: *"If leaders judge sexual violence to be counterproductive to their interests and if the hierarchy is sufficiently strong, little sexual violence will be observed"* (Wood, 2009, p. 140). In addition, the other way around could be true: if an armed group has strong hierarchy and deem sexual violence to be beneficial for the group or at least not contradicting their aims, they can encourage or tolerate this type of violence (Wood, 2009, p. 140).

In addition to her theory on military hierarchy, Wood (2009, pp. 134-136) describes four explanations of the absence of sexual violence, that she deems incomplete. The first

"incomplete explanation" simply states that the absence of sexual violence is due to the absence of civilians to exercise violence against. This could be the case if a rebel group is active in an area without civilians. Wood considers this explanation to be incomplete due to most armed groups having relationships with civilians, operating in areas with civilians and often depending on civilians for supplies and information (Wood, 2009, pp. 134-135).

The second "incomplete explanation" is that the observed restraint in CRSV by a group is due to restraint in their overall level of violence against civilians. Wood (2009, pp. 134, 152-153) explains that this could be observed for some armed groups, like the Martí para Liberación Nacional (FMLN) in the civil war in El Salvador. The FMLN committed violence against civilians very rarely compared to other armed groups, and had no reported allegations of sexual violence. However, this explanation is deemed as incomplete, as there are several cases where insurgencies are very violent towards civilians, but restrain their use of sexual violence

> *"...some insurgent groups, such as the LTTE in Sri Lanka and many Marxist-Leninist groups, engage in significant levels of other forms of violence against civilians but rarely engage in sexual violence. Levels do not vary consistently across the repertoire of armed groups: Some exert unusually high levels of sexual compared to other forms of violence, others unusually low levels. Thus we should not assume that sexual violence varies with the general level of abuse"* (Wood, 2009, p. 134).

One could also object to this second incomplete explanation by stating that CRSV is not limited to civilians. CRSV consists of any act of sexual violence that is related to a conflict, against any person (United Nations Department of Peace Operations (2020, pp. 6-7).

The third "incomplete explanation" Wood (2009, p. 135) is known as the substitution argument; "According to the substitution argument, if combatants do not have regular access to prostitutes, camp followers, or willing civilians, they will turn to rape" (p.135). Meaning that wartime rape is explained by soldier's unmet sexual needs in armed conflict. An armed group's limited use of rape would then be a result of access to military brothels or civilians wanting to have sex with soldiers, for instance. A relevant discussion here would be if military brothels could not in themselves considered CRSV. I would claim that prostitution in army

base brothels can be a form of CRSV, as many women and girls in said brothels are trafficked and not there voluntarily. However, if we set aside that discussion, an observable implication of the substitution argument would be that soldiers with access to brothels use less CRSV on others. According to Wood (2009, p. 135) this is not true in all cases, and therefore it cannot be a complete explanation. For instance, "…combatants of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone engaged in frequent rape of civilians despite their access to many girls and women held as sex slaves" (Wood, 2009, p. 135). The substitution argument does not explain targeting of particular groups, as that would be according to individual preferences, which would not explain why an entire group had the exact same preference. This incomplete explanation also struggles to explain extremely violent rapes and other forms of sexual torture that is not penetrative rape, or rape not used for sexual pleasure (Wood, 2009, p. 135).

The fourth "incomplete explanation" is related to the number of female members in an armed group. The explanation would be that insurgencies with many female fighters, will show more restraint in the use of sexual violence. There are several versions of this argument. Some claim that female soldiers avoid using or partaking in sexual violence themselves and will therefore restrain the use of CRSV by the group. Others claim that with access to female fighters for sex, the soldiers will not "need" to rape. This would be another version of the substitution argument. A further version of this explanation is that the presence of female cadre disturbs the male bonding and the misogynistic attitude that leads to the use of CRSV. For all of these versions of this explanation, the observable implication would be less rape committed by groups with many female members. This could be true for some groups, as I will show in my case study of the PKK. However, there are several armed groups that have female fighters, but also rape civilians. There are examples of female perpetrators of rape. There are armed groups like the FARC that abducted girls and raped their female combatants. Wood (2009, p. 135) states that female combatants engage in sexual violence in Sierra Leone and Rwanda, and that the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone committed a lot of sexual violence despite having many female fighters (Wood, 2009, pp. 135-136). However, Wood (2009, p. 136) claims that an armed group can "…pursue a strategy or ideology (for example, recruitment based on sexual violence by enemy forces) that both appeals to female recruits and also promotes the prohibition of sexual violence. (We will see that it is the third that appears to occur in the Sri Lankan case.)" In this way, limiting the use of sexual violence can be a deliberate strategy to recruit women to the insurgency.

Wood (2009) adds to these explanations two factors that could be very influential for a group's potential execution of sexual violence, namely strength of military hierarchy and norms about which types of violence that are preferred or accepted. These two factors form the *Hierarchy theory*.

3.2.1 The data foundation of Wood's hierarchy theory

Wood (2009) investigated the armed group LTTE in Sri Lanka. LTTE is an armed group that has been extensively violent towards civilians, and has committed acts of ethnic cleansing. However, according to Wood (2009), they have committed very little sexual violence (Wood, 2009, pp. 143, 147-148). Wood (2009) showed how the LTTE's strong internal hierarchy and norms that prohibit sexual violence result in LTTE's low level of sexual violence. LTTE have recruited members by force, including many girls. There have been no reports of sexual violence against the combatants (Wood, 2009, p. 146).

3.2.3 Limitations of Wood's hierarchy theory

The focus of Wood's theory is sexual violence against civilians. However, CRSV is not just directed at civilians, it can also be targeting female cadre in an armed group. This means that there could be other paths to CRSV internally in an armed group, directed at one's own fighters.

Wood (2009) only uses one case, namely the LTTE's limited use of sexual violence, to research her theory. She states herself that this is not enough to prove the theory, and that other factors could contribute the non-use of CRSV in other armed groups. *"That one case confirms the top-down implication does not of course mean that other paths to a relative absence of sexual violence are not possible"* (Wood, 2009, p. 152).

As I have shown, both of these theories have limitations. However, they are ground-breaking in the research on CRSV, and useful for researching the use and limited use of sexual

violence in the two cases of focus in this thesis. Cohen's theory is ground-breaking in the sense that she was the first to systematically review CRSV across all civil wars. Wood's theory is one of very few that look at the absence of CRSV which is important to understand all aspects of CRSV, like when and where it occurs and how it can be limited. I will primarily use the group cohesion theory and military hierarchy theory in this thesis, by considering recruitment strategies, level of hierarchy, and commitment to ideology.

4. Methodology

In this chapter, I will first describe the main divide within research methods. Namely, the divide between qualitative and quantitative approaches. I will go on to epistemological foundation (4.2). Then, I will map out my methodological choices (4.3), the data collection (4.4), research design (4.5), case selection (4.6), my positionality (4.7), and ethical considerations (4.8). Finally, I will go through limitations of this study (4.9).

4.1 Quantitative and qualitative methods

Within the social sciences there are two broad categories of research approaches named qualitative and quantitative methods (Bryman, 2012, p. 35). There are discussions on the relevance of this distinction, however it is still in use, and can be helpful even knowing that they can overlap and that there is no clear divide between the two (Bryman, 2012, p. 35). Therefore, I will not go into the discussion in this thesis, but rather describe the two research directions briefly before I go on to the method used in my research, namely comparative research design.

Quantitative methods focus on measurement. It can be quantifying social phenomenon to numbers and measure variation, co-variation or influence of one variable on another. It is closely linked to the natural sciences, especially positivism, by trying to keep the researcher and research objective, measurable and generalizable. By generalizable, I mean that one is able to take the results of one study and see the same result in a different context. The research

should be conducted in a way so that results will be similar if someone else does it at a different time and in a different context. Quantitative datasets and analyses mainly focus on large study units, consisting of many people or several countries. This is to increase the generalizability. If a tendency is shown in a large enough sample, or study unit of the population, it can be generalized to a larger population. An example of a research method would be election polling, where one asks a representative sample of the population in a country what they are going to vote. As long as the sample is big enough, it can give a quite accurate election result (Bryman, 2012, pp. 35-37, 176-177).

Another example of a quantitative study more closely related to the thesis topic, is Cohen's (2013a) cross-national study of the use of rape in war. Like most quantitative research, the study unit is large. In Cohen's (2013a, p. 466) case it consisted of 86 conflicts. The study focuses on the measurement of CRSV, and covariation with other variables, like gender inequality and ethnic hatred. The goal is to investigate which variable contributes to high levels of CRSV, and therefore investigate and rule out variables that do not have an effect on sexual violence.

Qualitative research is more concerned with meaning, words and understanding, than measurement and explaining (Bryman, 2012, p. 380). Qualitative methods can be more suitable for going deeper in a smaller research unit, to understand the ways of the small group in their particular context, instead of generalising to a whole country or wider humanity (Bryman, 2012, p. 389-390). It is more concerned with particularities of context, researching social processes and analysing meaning (Bryman, 2012, p. 380).

Qualitative research is less concerned with replicability, than quantitative research is. As quantitative research is more concerned with the researcher being value-free, qualitative research is connected to an epistemology signifying that knowledge production about the social world can never be objective. This entails that the social researcher is likely to influence his research and results, and another researcher might not be able to produce the same result in the seemingly same context. Replicability is not the goal of qualitative research (Bryman, 2012, pp. 169, 390). Interpretivism is a central concept. It entails that to be able to understand cultures

and practices that are not the researcher's own, she would have to interpret the world like the people being studied (Bryman, 2012, p. 399).

Qualitative methods are more concerned with seeing issues and topics from the perspective of the people being studied, and is less structured and streamlined than quantitative methods (Bryman, 2012, p. 399). This could be why some researchers have thought it easier to combine with feminism. According to Bryman (2012, p. 410), some associate qualitative research with feminist research. This view entails that qualitative research is easier to combine with sensitivity to structural gender inequality, particularly because it disregards the qualitative principle of research being value-free, and therefore gender-neutral (Bryman, 2012, pp. 399-400, 410).

An example of qualitative research related to CRSV, could be researching the meaning of sexual violence of soldiers in an armed group. The researcher would probably use interviews, and try to find out what sexual violence meant and why it was used in that particular context. The results would not be generalisable to all armed groups, but could go a lot deeper, look at connections and generate hypotheses for further, larger studies.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods and strategies are useful in social science research. However, they are useful for different research questions and different purposes of the research. Going into the details of every case of a cross-national study to find a tendency of a large study unit would be impossible and counter-productive. Similarly, trying to research a mechanism working within an armed group over time and how different factors can work together within this social mechanism, would need qualitative research.

4.2 Epistemological foundation

The epistemological base of social science research largely revolves around the question of how the social world can and should be studied. Whether or not it is possible to research the social world using natural science principles (Bryman, 2012, p. 27). The natural

science epistemology is named positivism. Positivism includes principles of an objective and value-free researcher, and that observable phenomena are the only objects of study (Bryman, 2012, p. 28). My epistemological foundation for this thesis is closer to positivism than interpretivism.

4.3 Methodological choices

As mentioned, in the foreword of this thesis, PKK's limited use of sexual violence even as they have been very violent towards civilians, contributed to my interest in this topic. I read Wood's (2009) article on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelan's (LTTE) restraint in use of CRSV. I discovered several similarities between PKK and LTTE, another group that was extremely violent towards civilians, but also avoided sexual violence. They were both ethnically based armed groups with a significant number of female members. They were both secessionist groups, meaning that they were fighting for their own territory. As I went through in the theory chapter, Wood (2009, p. 149) found that norms against sexual violence combined with a robust top-down hierarchy in the LTTE, were the factors preventing soldiers from using sexual violence. Strong norms against sexual violence can be ideologically based, for instance, in leftist ideologies. The PKK has leftist ideologies, a powerful hierarchy, and a high level of female members. I became interested in armed groups with leftist ideologies and their use or limited use of sexual violence. My initial hypothesis, following Wood (2009, pp. 132, 134), was that leftist ideologically based groups would restrain their use of CRSV. According to Watanabe (2022, p. 84) leftist armed groups has incentives to limit their use of CRSV, and according to Wood (2009, pp. 132, 134), many of them do.

For the sake of comparison, this is a quantitative study of covariation between CRSV and other factors following my two chosen theories on military hierarchy and forced abduction. However, I am also relying on case studies and interviews describing for instance the hierarchy and discipline in PKK. I compare two groups, and for the sake of this analysis I am less concerned with the meaning of CRSV in the Colombian or Turkish contexts or within the armed groups, and more concerned with explaining and measuring the functions of this violence. However, I see the limitations in this, as gender is connected to meaning, and what it means will vary from context to context.

To be able to study the difference in use and non-use of CRSV, I chose to compare two armed groups with a difference in use of CRSV in their repertoires. Comparative case study-approach is appropriate for this purpose.

4.4 Data collection

Given the theories I am using, both qualitative and quantitative methodology would be possible, and since I am analysing previous research, both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used in the secondary sources I am using. I have used quantitative datasets on armed conflict and levels of CRSV by different armed groups.

4.4.1 Secondary analysis

Secondary analysis means basing one's research and analysis on already existing studies. It consists of analysing past research and results on the topic, and therefore not collecting one's own primary data. Primary data would be conducting interviews, questionnaires or experiments. The previous studies analysed can be both qualitative and quantitative. The researcher that uses secondary analysis will most likely not have been involved in the studies they are analysing (Bryman, 2012, p. 312).

The secondary sources analysed and discussed in this thesis are research and studies already conducted on the armed groups in question, violence against civilians, violence against women, sexual violence and CRSV. My research questions and theories have guided my data collection. I have used global and country-specific reports on CRSV, articles on the internal structure of PKK and FARC, and data on their violence against civilians both quantitatively, through the UCDP Dataset, and in articles researching the armed groups' use of violence. In addition, I build on different researcher's explanations and theories on CRSV, and the SVAC-dataset.

4.4.2 The Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (SVAC) dataset

The Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (SVAC) Dataset is used in many of the studies I base my research on. I am also using the dataset to find the prevalence of CRSV by armed groups, and within different conflicts.

The SVAC dataset is a set of data on CRSV encompassing 129 active conflicts from 1989-2019. It has analysed and coded if and how CRSV is described in annual and special reports by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and US State department annual reports (Cohen & Nordås, 2014, pp. 418-419; 2021a, p. 10; 2021b). The SVAC-dataset consists of a register of conflict-years, countries, armed groups and governments, and reports of sexual violence. Regarding armed groups, the SVAC-dataset only include CRSV used against persons outside of its own ranks (Cohen & Nordås, 2021a, p. 4).

In the dataset, researchers have coded the prevalence of CRSV by referring to words used to describe the situation of sexual violence in a conflict by a group, or by taking into account the number of victims, if that number is provided in the report. Therefore, the dataset cannot be used to assess numbers of victims or exact numbers of incidents of sexual violence. However, it can give us an indication of the level of CRSV by showing us how it was described in that particular conflict, in that particular year and by that particular group. The SVAC-team analyse the conflict reports, and code them according to if they mention sexual violence that is likely connected to the conflict, and which words they use to describe the sexual violence. For instance, prevalence level 3, which is the highest prevalence coding, means that the sexual violence is likely related to the conflict and is described in the reports as massive, systematic, innumerable and/or a terror tactic. If the reports describe 1000 or more victims of CRSV, it is also coded as prevalence 3. Prevalence level 2 is the mid-level coding corresponding to 'numerous', where the sexual violence was likely connected to the conflict and described as common, widespread or extensive, or counting for 25 up to 999 victims within that year. Prevalence level 1 means that the sexual violence is likely related to the conflict, but the words used to describe the sexual violence are 'reports' of sexual violence or 'isolated reports', or mention 1-25 victims. Prevalence 1 is the lowest level of the sexual violence reports. Prevalence level 0 means that there were reports on the country, conflict, group, and human

rights situation, but they did not mention sexual violence that could be connected to the conflict (Cohen & Nordås, 2014, pp. 419-421). The coding does not include threats of sexual violence, or non-sexual torture, for instance if the victim is forced to undress and tortured without penetration or torture of sexual organs (Coding manual, 2021a, pp. 16-17).

An advantage of the SVAC-dataset is that it can make levels of CRSV easier to compare across armed groups. However, since the level is coded from the words used to describe the level of CRSV, it does not let us compare actual numbers of cases for different armed groups or conflicts. Another limitation, is that it does not include the rape of soldiers within an armed group (Cohen & Nordås, 2021a).

4.5 Comparative research design

Comparative research design involves comparing two cases that contrast each other. The researcher uses the same or similar methods to study both cases and compare the two. An example would be what I am doing in this thesis, using the same theories on both cases. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 72-75). Given the size of a master's thesis, a comparative design will unavoidably limit the space for each case given that there are two cases to describe, compared to a case study that would go deeper into the case given the space and time available for that one case.

4.5.1 Limitations of comparative research design

Like with any method or research design, there are limitations connected to comparative case studies. Comparison can exaggerate both differences and similarities. When comparing, one puts the spotlight on some differences and similarities which can steal focus from other ones, or make them less visible. This, for the context of my thesis, can result in a simplistic view of both groups as either more similar than they are or more different from each other than they are. Accordingly, when one looks for similarities, it can be easy to exaggerate them and downplay the factors that set groups or contexts apart.

A case study goes deep into each case describing and analysing circumstances and particularities about that case. However, it can still risk being a snap shot, depending on the period of time taken into consideration for the study. This means the years I include in my study unit. For instance, if I am studying the Colombian internal conflict, it could look different if I start considering it when it was a Spanish colony or after, or if I only look at the years after the peace agreement with FARC in 2016. These choices of scope and study unit can be justified, but they *have to* be justified. In this thesis I am looking at FARC as an armed group with focus on its use of sexual violence, therefore my study unit of the FARC will be limited by available data on CRSV, which covers 1989-2019 (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b).

4.6 Case selection

To answer my research question on why some armed groups use CRSV and some do not, I selected two comparable armed groups based in the same ideology, with a different repertoire regarding sexual violence.

The FARC and the PKK have similar ideological foundations, as they both sprung out of the Marxist ideologies (Haner et al, 2019, p. 396, Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022b). Therefore, they are similarly based in leftist ideology. Leftist groups have incentives to limit their use of sexual violence, and many of them do not use it (Watanabe, 2022, p. 84; Wood, 2009, p. 132).

Following Wood (2009), a high level of female members is assumed by some to explain the absence of CRSV. This informed my case selection, as both FARC and PKK have a high level of female members (Haner, Cullen, & Benson, 2020, p. 280). PKK and FARC also have similar death tolls of civilians, both registered with over 1300 resulting deaths from deliberate attacks on civilians (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022b, 2022f). Both groups have been focused on defending themselves against attacks from government forces. And both have had focus on territorial control (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022b, 2022f). They are, or were in FARC's case, both long-lived guerrilla groups, involved in drug trade. They both seemingly

had abduction in their repertoire if violence, which was an important factor to test Cohen's (2013a) theory on forced recruitment's influence on the use of CRSV.

In addition;

> *"(a) both groups operate in partial (or fragile) democratic environments in which the conduct of military forces has been inconsistently constrained; (b) both groups have engaged in classic insurgent strategies that focused on providing an alternative to state structures by temporarily holding sovereignty over territory or populations; and (c) both groups emerged during the Cold War period, benefited from state sponsors until 10 years ago, and framed their ideological motivations as left-wing revolutionary or ethno-nationalist. Among their motivations were changes to the nature of society through the redistribution of resources and demands for increased local autonomy or separation. Today* [in 2012]*, the FARC and the PKK are considered fully self-funded organizations"* (Eccarius-Kelly, 2012, p. 236).

FARC and PKK operate in different contexts, in different continents on opposite sides of the world. However, for this research on CRSV, I find it valuable and interesting to compare them as they have similarities in ideology, but very different repertoires of violence against civilians and women. From my research, we will not learn how the groups are exactly the same, but we can say something about similar ideological mechanisms working in both groups. My thesis provides additional testing of the hierarchy and group cohesion theories. In addition, we can learn about how these two groups ended up with different repertoires of violence, which can lead to further hypothesising around the mechanisms of CRSV.

4.7 Positionality

The positionality of a researcher can influence the choices made in a research project. A researchers positionality entails characteristics that can influence the worldview, interpretations of results and eventual blind-spots of the researcher.

My positionality consists of being a Norwegian national. In regards to the research topic of CRSV, I do not have any experience living in an area affected by war. This makes it difficult for me to take an insider-view of armed groups and CRSV. Regarding my research question on variation in use of CRSV, I analyse studies on the armed groups, for instance qualitative interviews with former members. In addition, I look at quantitative studies and datasets. Being an outsider would maybe affect my thesis more if I was conducting interviews in conflict settings. However, my analysis of these existing studies and data sources can be influenced by my positionality in what I notice in the data and what I overlook.

As a woman, my gender influenced the choice of topic for this thesis. I have always considered myself a feminist, meaning that I advocate for equal rights for all genders and want to see changes in the structural inequalities in the world. I am critical in the sense that I want to change injustices and balance inequalities.

I consider myself a humanist. To me that entails that I respect others, and think that most people in most situations are doing their best to create a good life for themselves. The implications this has for my research is that I try to understand, rather than make judgements on the subjects of the study.

4.8 Ethical considerations

As a master's student of social sciences, I am unqualified to interview very vulnerable, possibly traumatised people that have been soldiers in wars or victims of CRSV. There is a real risk of retraumatizing survivors and former combatants in war by interviewing them about their traumas. There are several ethical principles that social research should follow. If I had conducted interviews, there would be a risk of breaking the ethical norm of not causing harm to participants. The interviews could have caused harm by retraumatizing them, or by making it known to their environments that they are victims or perpetrators of sexual violence, that can be followed by stigma or exclusion from their community. Unfortunately, many victims of CRSV are excluded or stigmatized by other community members. There would also be a risk to break the ethical principle of invasion of privacy, as questions about sexual violence and

motivations to cause sexual harm would indeed be private (Bryman, 2012, pp. 135-136, 142-143).

4.9 Limitations of this study

4.9.1 Data reliability

A severe limitation when researching sexual violence in general and also CRSV, is unreliable reporting. Underreporting makes it difficult to trust data and numbers on sexual violence completely. There are very valid reasons to believe that sexual violence against men is underreported. It has not been focused on as much as with the one against women, and there is great shame connected to being a male victim of CRSV. In countries where sex between men is illegal, it would be likely that men raped by men have increased fear of telling anyone, in case they can be stigmatized or reported to the police. For female victims as well there can be shame, fear of stigma, fear of repatriation from perpetrators or armed groups connected to the perpetrator, and fear of being excluded from the family and their community. In countries where abortion is illegal even in the case of rape, it can be difficult and maybe dangerous for the victimized woman to report the rape if she had an abortion after. These fears and shames can lead to underreporting of rape, both in conflict and in peace time. Another data limitation is that the most violent rapes and sexual mutilations can be the easiest to access data on. This is because they leave evidence on the bodies of victims, also the ones that have been killed after the rape. If the victim is not killed, but severely harmed, they would have to go to a hospital to get treated. This would increase the chances that they themselves or a health professional will report as they recognize the signs of rape. This can again lead to underreporting of less violent sexual violence (Cohen & Nordås, 2014, p. 421; Dumaine, Nordås, Gargiulo, & Wood, 2021, p. 2; Grupos Focales de Hombres Víctimas de Violencia Sexual, Red de Mujeres Víctimas y Profesionales, & All Survivors Project, 2022, p. 10; Wood, 2006, p. 318).

I do not have detailed enough data to discriminate between factions within an armed group. It would have been useful to see if there are variations of the use of CRSV also within an insurgency; for example, there could be tendencies or mechanisms that influence one unit

to use CRSV and one to not use it. Alternatively, all units could use sexual violence, but of different forms or to a different degree. This is outside the scope of this thesis, as the microlevel data is not available to me at this point (Wood, 2006, p. 334).

4.9.2 Limitations in using secondary sources

Another main limitation of my research is the use of secondary sources. Of course, using secondary sources has many advantages. For instance, the ability to build on and include a lot more data. I would not have been able to do a large-scale study of several conflict situations within the time and resources dedicated to a master's thesis. I would not have probably been able to conduct interviews with former combatants of the FARC and PKK, and certainly not with victims, as I discussed under section 4.5 *Ethical considerations*. Secondary data was inevitable in my research; nevertheless, there are some risks connected to its use. For instance, the different studies I built on may use the same words, but meaning different things. CRSV is often defined in different ways that include and exclude different actions.

Another issue linked to the limitations of secondary sources is the difficulty in finding detailed data on targeting, forms of sexual violence, perpetrators, and victims. Many reports on CRSV in Colombia state that all actors in the conflict have resorted to sexual violence, but does not specify to which degree each group has used it. This makes it difficult to single out FARC, and find reliable data on the use of CRSV by FARC only.

Since I am using secondary analysis, researching studies that have already been conducted, they might differ in methods. This can be a challenge for the comparison, as the methods used to research PKK can differ from those used to research FARC. The number of available studies for each case also vary.

In researching FARC and the Colombian civil war setting as a case, I met another challenge; language. A lot of the research on FARC is in Spanish, which I unfortunately do not understand. Some research is translated to English, meaning that information can be lost on the

way, because words can have different connotations in different languages. However, I might have missed a lot of information due to lack of translated articles. This is particularly true for the work of the Truth Commission documenting stories of victims and combatants, after the peace agreement in 2016 (OHCHR, 2022). The detailed version of the Truth Commission's work is only available in Spanish, and I had to rely both on research articles and reports, but also on newspaper articles that provide the information in English (OHCHR, 2022). This is a severe limitation as the newspapers might have their own agenda, and will focus on the information they deem relevant, and therefore might leave out information that would have been useful for this thesis. To account for this limitation, I have only used large newspapers I trust, like Reuters. Research articles on FARC as an armed group has also been limited, since fewer articles are translated in English.

5. Case descriptions: FARC and PKK

In this chapter, I will briefly describe the origins of FARC and PKK, and the conflicts they were and are involved in. In addition, I will go through their repertoires of violence, with a focus on sexual violence.

5.1 FARC and the conflict in Colombia

The civil war in Colombia is the oldest of internal conflicts that persists today. It started when the two dominant political parties formed after independence from Spain in 1819 (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022a). The Liberal party and the Conservate party fought over territory and ideologies of centralism versus federalism. The Liberal party fought for more federalism, and the Conservative party, consisting of many landowners, wanted stronger centralism (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022a). Several rural armed groups, were formed in response to this fighting (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022a, 2022b). From 1948 to 1958, the period known as 'La Valencia', there was intense fighting between the two parties, and armed groups were fighting each other. As the name reveals, this period was very violent (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022a, 2022b, 2022d).

In 1958, the two political parties came to an agreement about sharing the power by alternating between the two parties. This power sharing agreement was undemocratic, as no one else could then run for election (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022a, 2022b). When the two parties joined forces in government, they started attacking rural armed groups (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022b).

In 1966, FARC, also called FARC-EP, was formed. It started as a collection of rural armed groups that were formed when the two political parties were fighting each other (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022b). Peasant groups joined together to form the FARC guerrilla, based in Marxist-Leninist ideology (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022b). They were backed by the Communist Party and wanted economic reform, a new government and an end to U.S. imperialistic influence (Britannica Academic, 2023; Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022b). FARC became the largest insurgency in Colombia (Svallfors, 2021, p. 9). In 2016, the Government of Colombia and the FARC formed a peace agreement (OHCHR, 2022; The United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, 2020, p. 13). Dissidents of the FARC are still participating in the continuing armed conflict in Colombia (The United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, 2020, p. 13).

5.2 FARC's repertoire and use of sexual violence

FARC has used several forms of violence during the Colombian conflict. Their repertoire includes political killings, large-scale kidnappings, forced disappearances, forced displacement, executions, and the widespread use of landmines, recruitment and use of child soldiers (Eccarius-Kelly, 2012, p. 243; Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022c; US State Department Bureau of Democracy, 2011, p. 1). In addition, FARC has used civilians, including children, to carry out attacks for them, including suicide bombings (US State Department Bureau of Democracy, 2011, p. 18). FARC has used one-sided violence, targeting "*suspected supporters of paramilitary groups, political adversaries, journalists, and certain indigenous groups and local leadership*" (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022c). According to, The US State Department Bureau of Democracy (2011, p. 24), FARC has also targeted teachers, and trade unionists.

Aligned with previous research, but also counter-intuitively, the years that FARC's levels of one-sided violence were at the highest, they show only isolated reports of sexual violence (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b; Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022c).

There have been reports of massive use of CRSV perpetrated by the FARC (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b). However, it has not been reported as widespread every year. In fact, for many years there were no reports of CRSV-use by FARC at all. According to the SVAC Dataset, there was no reported CRSV by FARC from 1989 until 1998 (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b). The prevalence was coded as 0, meaning that a report on the conflict was issued, but it did not mention CRSV by the FARC (Cohen & Nordås, 2021a, p. 10). However, there were reports of the Colombian Government force perpetrating rape in 1990, 1992, 1993, 1996 and 1997. This indicates that the lack of reports perpetrated by FARC, is not due to sexual violence not being reported on at all.

According to the SVAC dataset (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b) there were isolated reports of sexual violence by the FARC guerrilla every year from 1999 to 2004, and from 2007 to 2009. These years were coded in the dataset as prevalence 1, which means the sexual violence was described as isolated incidents. In 2010, the sexual violence rose rapidly, and from 2010 to 2013, the reports were described as massive and coded as prevalence 3. In the years of 2014 to 2016, there were numerous reports of CRSV by FARC, that was coded as prevalence 2 (Cohen & Nordås, 2014, pp. 419-420; 2021b). As mentioned in chapter 4.3.2, the prevalence coded in the SVAC-dataset consists of reports of sexual violence against victims outside the FARC's own ranks (Cohen & Nordås, 2021a, p. 4). FARC has also been known to rape within its own ranks (ABColombia, 2013, p. 1; Charles, 2020; Vivanco & Human Rights Watch, 2016).

The FARC's use of sexual violence has had a wide range of forms. The SVAC Dataset have attributed the following forms of sexual violence to FARC; rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced abortion/sterilization and sexual torture (Cohen & Nordås, 2014, p. 419; 2021b). Reports of victims coming forward, have included women and girls kidnapped by the

armed group and held as sexual slaves, women raped in their own homes, and in farming fields by FARC soldiers (Charles, 2020; Moloney, 2014; Vivanco & Human Rights Watch, 2016).

Unfortunately, many reports and articles on sexual violence in Colombia do not discriminate by actor. Like in the following quotes, several armed groups are often grouped together. Therefore, it can be difficult to know how much of the sexual violence each group was responsible for, like here;

> *"From 2010 to 2013, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) were reported to have committed massive sexual violence to the degree that no other leftist rebels except the Khmer Rouge have ever committed"* (Watanabe, 2022, p. 83).

It can also be difficult to know which groups are responsible for which forms of CRSV, and how CRSV has been used by each group, meaning if it was indeed strategically used or not;

> *"Sexual violence has been employed as a weapon of war by all of the armed groups involved in the half-century-long Colombian conflict. State military forces, paramilitaries and guerrilla groups have used sexual violence with the goal of terrorizing communities, using women as instruments to achieve their military objectives"* (Pedro & Oxfam International, 2009, p. 1).

Several reports claim that CRSV has been used strategically by every armed group involved in the conflict (Grupos Focales de Hombres Víctimas de Violencia Sexual et al., 2022, p. 9, Pedro & Oxfam International, 2009, p. 1). However, this is difficult to assess when it is not specified in detail how it is used by each group;

> *"...all armed actors (both state and non-state) used sexual violence as a form of strategic violence that sought to reassert their authority in the territories."* (Grupos Focales de Hombres Víctimas de Violencia Sexual et al., 2022, p. 9).

However, it does seem likely that FARC has used CRSV for territorial control. UCDP reports that involvement in the drug industry intensified its violence against civilians (Grupos Focales de Hombres Víctimas de Violencia Sexual et al., 2022, p. 9; Kreft et al., 2020, p. 463; Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022c).

5.3 CRSV in the Colombian conflict

In Colombia, sexual violence has been widely used by state forces and armed groups, both against civilians and cadres, with almost 33,000 victims between 1985 and 2016 (Grupos Focales de Hombres Víctimas de Violencia Sexual et al., 2022, p. 9, Kreft et al., 2020, p. 463). The overwhelming majority of these victims were women and girls. According to the All Survivers Project Report called "Laying Down Arms Reclaiming Souls";

> *"As of April 2022, the Victims Unit had registered 32,904 victims of crimes against sexual integrity and freedom in the course of the armed conflict between 1985 and 2016. Of these, 29,724 were women and girls, 2,669 were men and boys, 507 were identified as LGBTI and three people as intersex"* (Grupos Focales de Hombres Víctimas de Violencia Sexual et al., 2022, p. 9).

From this report, it is clear that CRSV has been commonly used in the Colombian civil war, especially targeting women and girls.

5.4 PKK and the conflict in Turkey

The PKK started out in Ankara, as a non-violent Kurdish student activist group in the 1970s with an ideology inspired by Marxist-Leninist principles (Haner et al., 2019, p. 396; Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022f). Their political activism raised awareness about the rights of Kurdish people and Turkey's discrimination of Kurds (Haner et al., 2019, p. 396). In 1980, a military coup in Turkey resulted in a regime that made all political activity illegal, including any political group or peaceful demonstration (Haner et al., 2019, p. 397). Under the military regime, conditions for Kurdish people worsened. The words "Kurd" and "Kurdistan were forbidden, and the Kurdish people could not use their own language (Haner et al., 2019, p. 397). The Turkish military government labelled Kurdish politicians as terrorists and imprisoned them. The increasingly harsh treatment of the Kurds, generated resistance and fuelled recruitment to the PKK (Haner et al., 2019, p. 397).

The conflict between the Turkish government and PKK began in 1984 (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022e). PKK started as a secessionist group, wanting to establish a

Kurdish state independent of Turkey (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022f). Later, they moved on to a goal of self-governance in areas largely inhabited by Kurds in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. Their new direction would not change state borders, but would give the PKK control in the areas where Kurds already live within these countries (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022f) According to Haner et al. (2019, p. 396) the PKK have now landed on a goal of equal citizenship rights for Kurds within a truly democratic Turkey. The common factor being the minority Kurdish peoples' rights to not be discriminated, organize politically and to express their culture (Haner et al., 2019, pp. 396-397; Stewart & Liou, 2017, p. 294; Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022f).

5.5 PKK's repertoire and the absence of sexual violence

As mentioned in chapter 2.2, the PKK has been shown to use two different strategies in their relation with civilians, namely the quasi-voluntary compliance and one-sided violence (Stewart & Liou, 2017, pp. 298-299).

In the 1980s, PKK used the strategy of quasi-voluntary compliance (Stewart & Liou, 2017, p. 298). At the time they were focused on trying to establish an independent Kurdish state. *"…the PKK sought to establish mutually beneficial relations with civilians to access critical resources by limiting civilian casualties to generate quasi-voluntary compliance"* (Stewart & Liou, 2017, p. 298). Given that their goal was to govern their own state, they focused on building institutions and forming positive relations with civilians (Stewart & Liou, 2017, p. 295). After moving to foreign territory in Northern Iraq in 1991, the PKK turned violent against civilians, both Turkish and Iraqi Kurds. The PKK's repertoire of violence included, among others, suicide bombing and kidnapping (Kent, 2020; Stewart & Liou, 2017, pp. 294-295; Szekely, 2020, p. 3). However, there is a notable absence of sexual violence (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b).

There are no reports in the SVAC-dataset of PKK using sexual violence (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b). There have been reports about the Turkish-Kurdish conflict every year from 1989 to 2019, however none have included CRSV used by PKK according to the SVAC

Dataset (Cohen & Nordås, 2021a, 2021b). The prevalence of CRSV used by PKK is coded as 0, meaning reports have been issued covering the conflict, but none mention rape or other types of CRSV perpetrated by PKK (Cohen & Nordås, 2021a, 2021b). However, as I show in the next session, CRSV has been reported in the conflict between PKK and the Turkish government (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b).

5.6 CRSV in the Turkish-Kurdish conflict

Overall, CRSV has been far less reported in the Turkish-Kurdish conflict than in Colombia (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b). Nevertheless, this does not mean that it was completely absent. According to the SVAC-dataset, there have been reports of sexual violence likely related to the conflict over several years. The perpetrators are reportedly the Turkish state forces and their village guards (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b). The prevalence reported in the dataset connected to this specific conflict, is 1, meaning the violence has been described as isolated reports or having 1-25 victims a year (Cohen & Nordås, 2014, p. 420). Even if the reports are not massive or numerous, they have persisted over time. There have been reports of CRSV by the Turkish government or their village guards every year from 1995 to 2009 (Cohen & Nordås, 2014, p. 420; 2021b).

6. Comparative analysis

The data provided has shown that despite their similar ideological base in Marxism, PKK and FARC differ enormously in their level of CRSV (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b; Haner et al., 2019, p. 396; Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022b).

6.1 Forced recruitment

As discussed in chapter 3., Cohen's (2013a, 2017) theory on group cohesion, views forced recruitment as a risk factor increasing chances of widespread use of CRSV. She goes further stating that groups using extreme forms of forced recruitment have lower internal group

cohesion, and are therefore more likely to be perpetrators of wartime rape (Cohen, 2016, p. 191). Cohen shows that especially violent and arbitrary forms of forced recruitment, like abductions, are connected to high levels of CRSV (Cohen, 2016, p. 191; 2017, p. 702). She theorises and shows that rape and especially gang-rape can be used to increase social unity and connections within an armed group (Cohen, 2017, pp. 701-703).

Forced recruitment has reportedly been used by both FARC and PKK (Cohen, 2016, p. 78). However, how violent and arbitrary the forced recruitments are, has been difficult to assess. The PKK has reportedly used abductions, according to Cohen (2016, p. 78);

TABLE 2.6 Reports of abduction and forced recruitment by insurgent groups

WERE THERE EVER REPORTS OF *ABDUCTION* BY ANY INSURGENT GROUP?	WERE THERE EVER REPORTS OF *FORCED RECRUITMENT* BY ANY INSURGENT GROUP?
Yes in 20 conflicts (22% of total)	Yes in 42 conflicts (46% of total)
Afghanistan (Mujahideen; Taliban); Algeria (FIS); Burma; Burundi (Hutu groups); Cambodia; Colombia; DRC (RCD); El Salvador; Guatemala; Liberia (NPFL; LURD); Mozambique; Nepal; Pakistan (Taliban); Sierra Leone; Somalia (post-Barre); Sudan (SPLA); Turkey (PKK); Uganda (LRA)	Afghanistan (Mujahideen; Taliban; Taliban II); Algeria (FIS); Algeria; Angola (UNITA); Bosnia-Herzegovina; Burma; Burundi (Hutu groups); Cambodia; Chad (FROLINAT); Colombia; Croatia; DRC (RCD); El Salvador; Ethiopia (Eritrea); Guatemala; India (Naxalites); Israel; Ivory Coast; Lebanon; Liberia (NPFL; LURD); Morocco; Mozambique; Nepal; Nicaragua; Pakistan (Taliban); Peru; Philippines (MNLF; NPA); Russia; Sierra Leone; Somalia (post-Barre); South Africa (Namibia); Sri Lanka (JVP II; LTTE); Sudan (SPLA; Darfur); Tajikistan; Turkey (PKK); Uganda (LRA); Yemen (al-Houthi)

Figure 2: A table of reported abductions by armed groups copied from Cohen (2016, p. 78).

However, PKK's forced recruitment is described as conscription by Stewart and Liou (2017, p. 295), indicating that it is a less extreme form of forced recruitment. According to Cohen (2017, pp. 702-703), the less extreme forced recruitment methods do not entail increased risk for CRSV. Therefore, if PKK's forced recruitment was within the same community and the forcefully recruited knew fighters in the group already, it might lead to higher group cohesion, and decreasing risk of CRSV.

In 1990, the PKK saw that forced conscription decreased support for them in the Kurdish population (Stewart & Liou, 2017, p. 295). Therefore, they decided to avoid it going forward, as they wanted to build better relations with civilians (Stewart & Liou, 2017, p. 295). Further, I have found no reports of PKK abducting people to fight for them. In addition, to me it seems contradictive given their strict regulations on relations with civilians and their dependency on dedicated fighters (Haner et al., 2019).

The FARC has abducted people, and forcefully recruited children, to use them as fighters and as sexual slaves (Charles 2020, Eccarius-Kelly, 2012, p. 243; Rosenau, Espach, Ortiz, & Herrera, 2014, p. 282, Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2022c; US State Department Bureau of Democracy, 2011, p. 1, Vivanco & Human Rights Watch, 2016). For the FARC the group cohesion theory could be supported as they did use abductions and showed high levels of CRSV some conflict years. At the surface level this seems like a credible explanation. However, to me, it seems like an incomplete explanation as the sexual violence used did not just victimize civilians, but the FARC's own fighters. Rape of fellow combatants are not likely to create social cohesion, maybe even the contrary.

The findings on FARC's large-scale kidnappings and use of CRSV complicates the explanation in Cohen's group cohesion theory. FARC has shown a massive reported level of CRSV, both against civilians and its own cadre. The rape of civilians could be connected to group cohesion, however the group cohesion theory struggles to explain internal use of CRSV.

The group cohesion mechanism predicted by Cohen (2013a, 2016, 2017) is unclear in the cases of FARC and PKK. At first glance, one could think that the group cohesion mechanism is observed in both cases. However, the data is not specific enough to assess if the forced recruitments by FARC and PKK are violent, extreme or arbitrary enough to cause low group cohesion. In addition, the group cohesion mechanism struggles to explain internal rapes and sexual slavery within the FARC.

6.2 Ideology and hierarchy

As stated earlier, leftist ideologies are thought to incentivise restraint in the use of CRSV. Leftist armed groups are thought to show absence or limited levels of sexual violence (Watanabe, 2022, p. 84; Wood, 2009, pp. 132, 134). This can be connected to their values and norms against violence against women. According to Wood (2009) such norms combined with a strong military hierarchy, can lead to absence of CRSV. In the cases of FARC and PKK, this statement seems supported.

6.2.1 The FARC's ideology and hierarchy

The data on FARC's use of sexual violence varied over time. Showing no reports and isolated reports of CRSV from 1989 to 2009 (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b). In 2010, the level suddenly increased from prevalence 1 to prevalence 3, described as massive in the SVAC Dataset (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b). From the available data, it seems like the FARC both disconnected from its ideology and from its central leadership.

> *"The FARC has moved away from the centralized wheel structure model toward a system of multiple decision-making nodes.* ***Guerrilla units disconnected from central control*** *as their* ***political destinations became unfocused*** *following the losses in 2008 of Marulanda and Rau´l Reyes (commander of the southern bloc), Mono Jojoy's killing in 2010 (top military tactician of the FARC), followed by Cano's death in 2011… Since the FARC's 2010 and 2011 leadership losses,* ***regional bloc commanders have increased their operational flexibility and local commanders initiated atomized operations to pursue personal interests****"* (Eccarius-Kelly, 2012, p. 250).

According to Eccarius-Kelly (2012, p. 250), the deaths of several military leaders resulted in a disconnection from central control, and a restructuring of the FARC. The disconnection is further described;

> *"Guerrilla units now operate in an atomized manner since they are often disconnected from the central leadership. This encouraged a growing number of FARC commanders to focus on narco-profits rather than the organization's ideological goals"* (Eccarius-Kelly, 2012, p. 235).

This indicates that local leaders, that felt disconnected from central control, focused more on their own personal winnings than the original ideological goals and values of the FARC.

Since 2004, the Colombian security forces have interviewed members who have left the FARC and other armed groups in Colombia (Rosenau et al., 2014, p. 277). This work has resulted in a "*database of more than 15,000 digitized interview transcripts"* (Rosenau et al., 2014, p. 277). Rosenau (et al., 2014) have used the database to collect findings on why members have left armed groups, and made their results available in English. The disconnection from ideology that Eccarius-Kelly (2012, pp. 235, 250) finds, fits well with responses from ex-members of the FARC when asked why they left the insurgency. Ideological disenchantment was the main reason they provided;

> *"Our preliminary review identified three main factors that contributed to decisions to leave the armed struggle. First, many former militants* ***cited ideological disenchantment, and in particular, the FARC's perceived deviation from the revolutionary principles*** *that had first attracted these young people to the movement…"* (Rosenau et al., 2014, p. 284)

It seems like the FARC started out more ideologically based and with stronger central control, indicating a stronger military hierarchy, but then strained further away from their ideological origins and attained a more de-centralized structure (Eccarius-Kelly, 2012, pp. 243-244). These findings indicate support for Wood's (2009) military hierarchy theory. In FARC's case it seems that weaker connection to ideology and weaker hierarchy contributed to the widespread use of CRSV.

6.2.2 The PKK's ideology and hierarchy

The PKK, seem to have a strong military hierarchy and connection to their leftist ideology, that entails principles of gender equality (Haner et al., 2019, p. 398; 2020).

"...since the founding of the PKK, Apo [their leader] *has promoted a secular Marxist–Leninist approach that has embraced feminism. His advocacy for gender equality was present in the formative years of the organization and, following his imprisonment, in his published writings."* (Haner et al., 2020, p. 283).

Being an armed group in the Middle-East and of Kurdish culture, that according to Haner et al. (2020, pp. 279, 282) included traditional patriarchal values, could have resulted in the PKK being less concerned with gender equality.

The PKK has a 'code of violence' defining legitimate and illegitimate targets of violence and in which situations violence can be used, that they are able to enforce. These findings indicates that their hierarchy is strong (Haner et al., 2019, p. 393, Wood, 2009, p. 136). The PKK uses sanctions against members that violate the code (Haner et al. 2019, p. 403).

"PKK members have to act in a specific and structured way because there is a code for every aspect of their conduct, including the use of violence" (Haner et al., 2019, p. 402).

According to Haner et al. (2019, pp. 410-411) the code entails a prohibition against holding women detained. This is connected to the organisation's reputation, as they do not want any allegations, true or false, of CRSV (Haner et al., 2019, pp. 410-411).

In addition, it seems the PKK have had a strict focus on military training, and a strong connection to their ideology that they have been able to convey to their members;

"First, every PKK member has to undertake a ***continuous training program to learn these ethical principles and guidelines.*** *The code is reinforced throughout a member's involvement in the organization by reviewing all aspects of armed conflict through a discussion and scenario-based teaching method. Second,* ***leaders of all units have to set an example for their soldiers and support the code under any circumstances****. Deniz indicated that, without the support of the commanders, it would be impossible to establish a uniform code of ethics for PKK members. Third,* ***to ensure that its codes are followed, the PKK enforces a system of sanctions to punish violations****"* (Haner et al. 2019, p. 403).

Wood's (2009) theory on norms against CRSV and strong military hierarchy is supported in the case of PKK. The armed group shows no reports of CRSV (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b). Their ideological norms include gender equality, and are enforced through, and combined with thorough training of combatants in the rules of the group with a specific focus on when and how to use violence and legitimate and illegitimate targets.

7. Conclusion

In this thesis I have compared the repertoires, more specifically the use of CRSV, by the armed groups FARC and PKK. The armed groups show different levels of CRSV-use, despite their leftist ideologies and presence of many female cadre. FARC have showed widespread use of sexual violence, and PKK has showed no reported use of sexual violence (Cohen & Nordås, 2021b).

I have investigated the group cohesion and military hierarchy theories of Cohen (2013a, 2016, 2017) and Wood (2009) on CRSV, through a comparative case study of FARC and PKK. This contributes to the research on the mechanisms behind CRSV, differences in repertoire of violence by armed groups, and potential ways to restrict the use of sexual violence in war.

My conclusion is that norms against CRSV and a strong military hierarchy, can result in low levels of CRSV committed by an armed group. This mechanism has earlier been showed by Wood (2009) in the case of LTTE. In this thesis, I have showed it in the cases of PKK and FARC. In the case of PKK, there has been no reports of CRSV. In the case of FARC, the reports of CRSV increased following ideological disconnection.

With regards to the group cohesion-theory, it could be supported in the case of FARC. However, it seems incomplete, as it struggles to explain why levels of CRSV varies over time, and the many cases of sexual slavery within FARC's own ranks.

As the theories I have used, have limitations in explaining the onset of CRSV, meaning why it starts to be used in the first place, and the use of CRSV within an armed group, further research should look into this. Particularly regarding the FARC, as they are reported to have used abductions and high levels of CRSV, including rape within their own ranks.

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List of figures

Figure 1 A table of hypotheses tested by Cohen's (2013, p. 469) cross-national study of variation in use of CRSV.

Figure 2 A table of reported abductions by armed groups copied from Cohen (2016, p. 78).