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SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ARMED CONFLICT: HOW LEVELS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN  
PEACETIME AFFECT LEVELS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

by

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B.A. Clemson University, 2020

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the department of Political Science  
in the College Sciences  
at the University of Central Florida  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Why do some armed conflicts have higher levels of sexual violence than others? Some existing theoretical work has pointed toward the possibility that the presence of sexual violence before armed conflict occurs can impact the levels of sexual violence during armed conflict, however, little empirical work has examined these theories. This thesis uses new, unique data to address concerns about the validity of previous studies and to explore sexual violence over the boundaries of time, looking at pre-conflict levels of sexual violence in addition to levels of sexual violence during armed conflicts. Using a parallel mixed methods research design, this thesis utilizes ordered logit regression analyses to test its central hypothesis, as well as an exploratory thematic analysis to generate further understanding of the phenomena. Overall, the findings of the study align with the expectations, indicating a positive relationship between levels of sexual violence in a country during peacetime and levels of sexual violence seen during the presence of armed conflict, suggesting that peacetime levels of sexual violence in a country can be predictive of the levels of sexual violence seen in that country during armed conflict. This thesis builds upon the limited data available on sexual violence to aid in the understanding of and fight against sexual violence in both peacetime and in times of conflict. Future research should continue expanding on this study as well as working to organize and make available existing data and sources to ensure future studies can work to better understand the reasons behind the use of sexual violence in conflict as well as during peacetime.

For my younger self.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence (SV) is a worldwide issue that affects people of all genders, races, ethnicity, and ages. It is most often understood in individual contexts, based on a story from the news or the experience of a friend; however, sexual violence also takes place on much larger scales. SV occurs in times of peace and armed conflict, and it is considered to be one of the most traumatic, extensive, and most common human rights violations (ICRC, 2013; Lindsey, 2001). In some conflicts throughout history, sexual violence has been used as tool or weapon of war, with different reasons behind its use (Wood, 2009). Wartime violence, like bombs and missiles, targets populations indiscriminately, however, other types of wartime violence, like sexual violence, target women and girls disproportionately (Levy & Sidel, 2000). In the past few decades, some movements have begun to bring awareness to the issue of sexual violence, resulting in less of a taboo around it in some areas of the world.

Regardless of this slight improvement in some places, there is still a powerful stigma around sexual violence all around the world, resulting in it being under-reported, under penalized, and under convicted, leading to a massive understatement of the instances of sexual violence. For this reason, research on sexual violence is unable to fully capture a clear picture of sexual violence. Sexual violence during times of conflict is even harder to examine in research, resulting in an even larger gap in the understanding of sexual violence during conflict. Sexual violence in conflict has been studied across disciplines, including political science, psychology, history, and more; however, because of the extreme variations in the types of sexual violence and reasons behind their use, there are still so many questions left unanswered about the use of sexual violence in conflict. While we may never fully be able to understand why sexual violence

is used in conflict or have accurate data to be able to empirically examine instances of its use in conflict, one thing we may be able to do is understand how the past influences the present and future. To be able to understand this connection through time, we must gain a better understanding of the perpetration of sexual violence in times of peace, or no conflict.

While it may seem obvious to say that pre-conflict levels of sexual violence would continue with the onset of conflict, sexual violence in conflict is often studied from the lens that it is used as a weapon of war. Often, conflicts like that of the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, dominate the existing research due to the use of sexual violence, specifically rape, in pairing with genocide as a weapon of war. While these specific conflicts are infamous for the presence of rape as a tool of war, the presence of sexual violence in these conflicts is examined as a phenomenon that is separate from any pre-conflict peacetime sexual violence. Because of the many reasons behind the use of sexual violence in conflict, limiting the examination of sexual violence in conflict to its use as a tool of war diminishes the multifaceted nature of sexual violence and fails to take the past into consideration. Instead, this thesis explores the following research question: To what extent do peacetime levels of SV affect levels of SV in times of civil conflict?

Overall, I hypothesize that the culture surrounding sexual violence is uniquely tenacious, such that it is unlikely to be displaced during war—and instead is likely to serve as an amplifying factor for the levels of sexual violence during times of conflict. Following the processes of a parallel mixed methods research design to examine the overarching—I will be using two distinct methodological strands. In the first strand, I develop a quantitative analysis, using unique data, seeking to causally test whether peacetime sexual violence predicts sexual violence in armed conflict across varying modern environments. In my second strand, I conduct an exploratory

thematic analysis that, unlike the quantitative strand, is not causally structured; instead, it uses a hybrid inductive/deductive coding processing to explain themes that emerge to explain how sexual violence evolves over time.

This study opens the door for future researchers to better understand sexual violence across the boundaries of specific causal theories and across time. This study also highlights and builds upon the existing, but extremely limited, data available to allow future researchers to continue to build on the availability and validity of data on sexual violence to aid in the fight against sexual violence in both peacetime and in times of conflict. In the next section, I will define the words and language surrounding this topic and then, I will give an overview of the existing literature on the reasons behind the use of sexual violence in times of conflict and the connections between peacetime and times of conflict. Then, I discuss my theory and argument for the reasons behind the use of sexual violence and why peacetime levels and levels in times of conflict are related: that the presence of and culture surrounding sexual violence in a country during peacetime heavily impact how sexual violence is treated in that country during times of conflict.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Defining Sexual Violence

Before any of the terms under the umbrella of sexual violence and theories behind its perpetration can be defined, the definition of sexual violence must be clarified. Sexual violence (SV) is defined as any sexual act or any attempt to obtain a sexual act through violence or coercion of any type, regardless of a perpetrator's relationship to the victim (International Criminal Court, 2011, p. 20; Krug et al., 2002, p.149; McDougall, 1998). While SV can be defined in many ways, this study will rely on the International Criminal court definition of the crimes of SV, also used by the Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (SVAC) data set, that defines crimes of SV as rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, and forced sterilization or abortion (International Criminal Court, 2011; Nordics & Cohen, 2014) as well as Elizabeth Wood's (2009) inclusion of sexual mutilation and sexual torture.

Rape is specifically defined as the invasion of the body of a victim "resulting in penetration, however slight, of any part of the body of the victim...with any object or part of the perpetrators body" by force, coercion, threat of force, or any instance or environment in which the victim cannot or is unable to give genuine consent (International Criminal Court, 2011, p. 28). Sexual slavery is defined as a perpetrator exercising "any or all of the powers attaching the right of ownership over one or more persons, such as purchasing, selling, lending or bartering such a person or persons" in which the "perpetrator caused such person or persons to engage in one or more acts of a sexual nature," (International Criminal Court, 2011, p. 28).

Forced prostitution is defined as a "perpetrator or another person obtain[ING] or expect[ING] pecuniary or other advantage in exchange for or in connection with acts of a sexual

nature,” where the perpetrator or another person caused “one or more persons to engage in one or more acts of a sexual nature by force, or by threat of force or coercion,” or any instance or environment in which the victim cannot, or is unable to give genuine consent (International Criminal Court, 2011, p. 29). Forced pregnancy is defined as a “perpetrator confin[ING] one or more women forcibly ma[king] pregnant,” usually “with the intent of affecting the ethnic composition of a population or carrying out other grave violations of international law,” (International Criminal Court, 2011, p. 29). Forced sterilization is defined as a “perpetrator depriv[ING] one or more persons of their biological reproductive capacity,” (International Criminal Court, 2011, p. 29).

Elizabeth Wood (2009) also included sexual mutilation and sexual torture in the definition of SV, which was later adapted and included by the SVAC data set. Sexual mutilation is defined as the “permanent disfiguration, including but not limited to cutting/severing of breasts or genitals,” which “caused death or seriously endangered the physical or mental health of” the victim (Nordics & Cohen, 2014; Wood, 2009). In general, torture is defined as “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from [the victim] or a third person information or a confession,” punishment, or any reason based on discrimination of any kind (International Criminal Court, 2011, p. 14; UN General Assembly, 1984, p. 113-114). In this case, sexual torture would then be the same definition as general torture but would be any sexual act rather than any general act. SV can be defined as so much more than what is mentioned above, however, in this study, the use of the term SV will be limited to the aforementioned definition(s).

## Dominant Theories of SV in War

SV during conflict is not a new area of health research, but it is only within the past 15 or so years that political scientists have begun to engage with it as a topic to study (Nordås & Cohen, 2021). In these studies, conflict has most often been explored as the independent variable or main driver of SV (Butler & Jones, 2016). When times of conflict arise, it is followed by a general rise in violence, which partly explains why past research has considered conflict a main driver of SV. However, rape and other forms of SV have been distinguished from other crimes of violence during war and conflict because of the differing theories and explanations behind its use during conflict. Some scholarship has shown that rape has a far greater increase than other violent crimes in war during the peak periods of violent crime in conflicts, adding even more credibility to the idea that rape and other acts of SV are distinct from other types of violence and acts of war (Morris, 1996).

The three major schools of thought surrounding the reasons behind the use of SV in armed conflict are strategic, opportunistic, and continuum theories. Strategic theoretical frameworks are often used when examining SV in conflict, as it is the framework that examines SV as a weapon of war. In this framework, SV is seen as a weapon of war that is used to control, terrorize, or displace populations by targeting female members of said population (Koos, 2017). This SV is often paired with genocide and is always used strategically as a way to meet the goals of the perpetrators in conflict (Sharlach, 2000). Additionally, SV can be strategic when it is used as compensation for combat or an institutional reward, part of the “so-called spoils of war” (Nordås & Cohen, 2021; Wood, 2014). SV through a strategic framework is not reserved for



only high intensity conflict but can also be used to deter women from protests or other types of political participation (Principe, 2016).

Often, SV is solely examined as a weapon of war, resulting in genocidal armed conflicts, like the instances in Rwanda and the countries of former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, being the faces of SV in armed conflict. Although the scholarship on SV during conflict primarily examines SV solely in the extreme uses as a weapon of war, this is sometimes seen as a simplistic analysis that overlooks all other instances of SV and may overlook these significant underlying factors tied to gender (Baaz & Stern, 2009). More recently, scholars have begun to point out the possible relationship between pre-existing patterns of gender inequality and the occurrence of SV in conflict, noting that the key to preventing SV is to better understand its origins and the relationship between gender and conflict-related SV (Alexandre & Mutondo, 2022; Davies & True, 2015, 2017).

Opportunistic theoretical frameworks see SV in conflict as an effect of the onset of conflict. This framework often considers SV as a result of “principal-agent dynamics” where oversight and discipline are prerequisites for restraint (Nordås & Cohen, 2021). The scholarship in this framework suggests that given the opportunity as well as impunity and lack of discipline from the principal actor, usually a military leader, agents have a preference for committing SV (Nordås & Cohen, 2021). A large proportion of this scholarship agrees that the absence of the rule of law and weakened state institutions make SV in context of some conflicts much more likely (Koos, 2017). The third prominent theory behind the use of SV during conflict is the continuum theory of violence. Often, this theoretical framework is also used outside of SV scholarship, arguing that violence in general that is present before a conflict will continue into conflict. However, this theoretical framework is often expanded outside of just violence, arguing

that things like institutional gender inequality also fall on continuum scales, continuing on in the onset of conflict. The dominant understandings of SV in conflict have made a recent shift from the perception that it is, like other types of violence, an inevitable aspect of conflict to the perception that it is preventable (Baaz & Stern, 2013).

Galtung (1990) is often noted in more recent research on SV (e.g., Alexandre & Mutondo, 2022; Kostovicova et al., 2020) due to his argument that different types of violence are interdependent and when the violence is gendered, specifically against women, meaning that exploitation and repression are mutually reinforcing. Types of violence can be more subtle, like certain languages using the same word to refer to men and the entire human species (e.g., man and mankind in English), or cannot be subtle at all, like SV (Galtung, 1990). Modern research on SV in armed conflict is catching up to this understanding, noting that violence against women, especially during conflict, cannot be understood independently from institutional, gendered aspects of society (Alexandre & Mutondo, 2022; True, 2010).

Much of the research that has pointed out the potential connection between peacetime SV and SV in conflict can be categorized within the framework of continuum theories of violence. Continuum theories suggest that SV in conflict can be a continuum of the pre-conflict status of women and treatment of SV. The concept of a “continuum of violence” is most often traced back to Liz Kelly’s (1988) *Surviving Sexual Violence* where she argued that different forms of SV are all connected by the underlying culture of the tactics and strategies used by men to control women. The sociocultural frameworks of gender and sexuality that perpetuate patriarchal ideas of women being subordinate or submissive as well as the suggested idea of victim complicity that are grounded in these perceptions of gender norms are a huge factor in the continuum of SV (Herman, 1997; Herman & Hirschman, 1977; Kelly, 1988; Boesten, 2017). Galtung (1990) also

argued that ‘violence breeds violence,’ not simply meaning that violence places breed violent people, but instead that violence, oftentimes, is the deprivation of needs, which results in direct violence. So, while it can be said that the ‘violence breeds violence’ understanding is too simplistic, it is only a simplified way to communicate that systemic violence in beliefs and cultural understandings carries over into other settings.

Some research has shown that, when looking at countries that have experienced SV in conflict, SV was already present, or even prevalent, before conflict took place (Alexandre & Mutondo, 2022; Butler & Jones, 2016; Dijkman et al., 2014; Morris, 1996; Nordås & Cohen, 2021). Along with the finding that SV was always prevalent in Burundi and only became more frequent during the civil war, Dijkman, Bijleveld, and Verwimp (2014) also found that younger women were found to consistently report rape more often than older women. While this could stem from younger women simply being rape victims more often than older women, it could also stem from older women being less likely to report their rapes due to the older, usually more traditional, cultural stigmas that they grew up with that are now more strongly ingrained in them than younger women. Looking at qualitative examinations of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, communities that enable and remain passive toward SV tend to have higher SV rates both before and during conflict, with the judgment and backlash being aimed primarily toward the victims instead of the perpetrators (Alexandre & Mutondo, 2022).

This culture of SV can also be referred to or understood as ‘rape culture.’ To clarify, rape culture, as defined, is an environment “in which rape is pervasive and normalized and pervasive because of societal attitudes about gender and sexuality” (Buchwald et al., 1993; Flintoft, 2001, p. 134; Herman, 1984). The perpetration of rape culture is also sometimes used interchangeably with the environmental definition, causing it to be defined as a “theoretical construct

encompassing several rape-supportive attitudes, including traditional gender roles, hostility toward females, and acceptance of violence (Burt, 1980; Johnson & Johnson, 2021; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, 1995).

Rape culture has been cited frequently throughout research, but like many aspects of sexual violence, it is examined more theoretically rather than empirically due to the lack of explicit measurements and data available on the perpetuation of rape culture (Burnett et al., 2009; Johnson & Johnson, 2021; Strain et al., 2016; Swauger et al., 2013). The reason behind why sexual assault has sometimes been referred to as a ‘silent epidemic’ is due to its high prevalence throughout the country but low reporting rate that is hypothesized to be because of existing rape culture (Flintoft, 2001; Johnson & Johnson, 2021).

Attitudes accepting of violence against women has a strong relationship with rape propensity, with themes of hyper-masculinity, hostility toward women, rape-myth acceptance and adversarial sexual beliefs were found to play a role in heightened rape culture and rape propensity (Morris, 1996). The culture of ‘macho,’ or hyper-masculine personalities or mindsets in men is seen internationally and across cultures and is made up of a lot of these aforementioned traits and actions (Morris, 1996; Mosher & Sirkin, 1984). This masculine and heavily patriarchal culture does not just affect the perpetration of SV broadly in a culture, but also permeates deeply into the motivations of individual perpetrators. This ‘macho’ personality, often consisting of “calloused sex attitudes” is shown to cause men to believe that violence is “manly” and exciting (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984). A handful of studies from the late 1980s and early 1990s showed that not only is there a positive correlation between ‘macho,’ or highly masculine, personalities and aggressive sexual behavior, but also that men with strong ‘macho’ personality characteristics were found to experience less negative affect, and sometimes enjoyment, when imagining

themselves committing rape when compared to less ‘macho’ men (Mosher & Anderson, 1986; Mosher & Sirkin, 1984; Sullivan & Mosher, 1990).

When Baaz and Stern (2008) examined SV, specifically, by interviewing the main perpetrators of SV in a conflict, many of the men interviewed regarded the military as a “place to prove one’s manhood,” which was accomplished through acts like SV, especially during conflict. Although these interviews done with the perpetrators tended to place blame on the victim and outside variables like their wife not loving them or socioeconomic factors, it was clear that the culture surrounding SV and masculinity was the main driving force behind the use and perpetuation of SV (Baaz & Stern, 2008; Morris, 1996). ‘Rape myth acceptance’ and other attitudes that are accepting of other types of violence against women have also been shown to bear a relationship to rape propensity, both in peacetime and in armed conflict (Morris, 1996). Rape myths can be broadly defined as any prejudicial stereotypes or false beliefs about sexual assault, rapists, or rape victims “that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women” (Barnett & Hilz, 2018) and often come from existing or prevalent rape culture present (Briere et al., 1985; Burt, 1980; Hegeman & Meikle, 1980; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). The acceptance of these myths is commonly referred to as rape myth acceptance and while sometimes it is outwards and malicious, it is oftentimes subconscious and ingrained, which can be attributed to rape culture (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

Rape myth acceptance can result in the lessening of the definition of rape (Burt & Albin, 1981; Muehlenhard & MacNaughton, 1988; Norris & Cubbins, 1992), lessening of the degree of responsibility attributed to a rapist (Burt, 1983; Check & Malamuth, 1985; Linz et al., 1989), and is often linked to conservative or traditional gender roles (Barnett & Hilz, 2018). Overall, rape culture and rape myth acceptance go hand-in-hand in the measurement of societal attitudes

regarding women and SV against women, and all contribute to the perpetuation of violence against women. ‘Rape myth acceptance’ attitudes can stem from many areas but hostility toward women is a strong factor in these attitudes (Check, 1984). Attitudes under the umbrella of hostility toward women and that lead to ‘rape myth acceptance’ can include the belief that most women are deceitful, the idea that women only flirt to hurt or tease men in some way, and the thought that women take advantage of men that do not stand up to women (Check, 1984; Morris, 1996).

Across a lot of the scholarship, regardless of whether strategic, opportunistic, or continuum, theories focusing on normative, or legal, prohibitions highlight the importance of looking before the perpetration SV. Communities with enabling or passive cultures toward SV, like rape cultures, can also be paired with a lack of normative prohibitions in place, with the government not criminalizing SV (Alexandre & Mutondo, 2022; Butler & Jones, 2016). The normative prohibitions explanations to SV are not limited to only legislation on SV, but also extend to the presence of legislation on domestic and intimate-partner violence and SV (Davies & True, 2017). The lack of normative prohibitions paired with the absence of legal structure in place for victims to rely on for justice or support create an environment of impunity that is exploited, especially during times of conflict. This impunity that men benefited from in war time is clearly rooted in the tolerance shown toward SV in peacetime (Alexandre & Mutondo, 2022; Davies & True, 2017). Throughout scholarship, SV is seen more frequently during conflict when prohibitions or laws against sexual violence were not already in place (Alexandre & Mutondo, 2022; Butler & Jones, 2016). This reinforced the findings of previously mentioned research that countries with cultures accepting of SV and without repercussions towards perpetrators during peacetime have much higher levels of SV during conflict than countries who

have repercussions. However, these findings came with limitations that impacted the significance, which complicates the ability to generalize these findings without more examination.

### Rebuttals to the Dominant Theories

Some current research has identified aspects of SV during conflict that cannot be explained by solely applying continuum or normative prohibition theories, which attests to the multifaceted nature of SV in conflict. However, due to the lack of empirical and quantitative research connecting pre-conflict peacetime levels of SV and SV in times of conflict, there are still a lot of unanswered questions and missing pieces. Examining SV during peacetime is the next step to better understand sexual violence during conflict. After looking through past research, it is clear that peacetime SV and SV during conflict can be connected in some ways, but the question of exactly *how* connected they are remains. Since SV is so nuanced, it is important to not only look at the many driving factors behind its use in conflict but also to examine SV over time, specifically examining SV before the onset of conflict, to better understand the connections between SV before and after conflict.

While there is a lot of emphasis on continuum theoretical concepts—whether it be a continuum of SV or other gendered structures, like the culture surrounding SV—there is some argument against these theories. Wood (2015) has criticized the theories of continuums of gender-based violence, noting they are seemingly obvious and only valid in the theoretical. Nordås and Cohen (2014) found that gender inequality is not able to explain SV in conflict. Finally, Quijano and Kelly (2012) argue that assuming a connection between peacetime inequality and SV in conflict are only ‘simplistic cultural arguments.’ These arguments have

merit and are important to consider when tackling a puzzle as unique and multifaceted as SV, especially in conflict. The continuum theories do feel obvious, as Wood (2015) pointed out, but as seen in Nordås and Cohen (2014) and Butler and Jones (2016), there still has not been much quantitative replication proving that it is necessarily obvious.

The theoretical explanations behind the perpetration of SV in armed conflicts are individually valid but also overlap significantly, with the culture surrounding SV before conflict being highlighted across theories. The qualitative findings seen throughout the continuum explanations of SV suggest that the pre-conflict culture towards women, masculinity, and sexual violence has a significant impact on the SV seen during times of conflict, further justifying why peacetime SV should be predictive of SV during conflict. In the next section, I expand on my new approach to these past shared elements of the theories, offering a new argument for what drives SV in conflict.



## CHAPTER THREE: THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS

While some theories or causal variables may be significant in some instances, SV in conflict is too multifaceted to generalize empirical results without looking at different types of conflicts over time. Existing scholarship shows a consensus that SV in conflict is different from other types of violence seen in conflict, but regarding the reasons behind its use, there is still debate about the extent to which different factors play a role in the perpetration of SV in conflict. Due to the multifaceted and nuanced nature of SV there will probably never be an instance where a simple, singular variable is the reasoning behind the use of SV in a given conflict. However, understanding what connects SV over time allows for a better understanding of the underlying reasoning behind the use of SV in conflict. Because SV in conflict is often examined only through the lens of SV as a mass tool of war, there has been a lack of empirical connection between peacetime SV and SV in conflict.

Looking at the rebuttals to the continuum theories of SV in conflict mentioned in the previous chapter, there are arguments to be made against them. Wood (2015) is correct in saying this theory seems obvious and is currently only seen to be theoretically valid but that is due to the lack of empirical research and findings that could take these theories past the theoretical level. Although it seems obvious, it cannot be treated as such due to the lack of evidence that makes empirically testing the theory difficult to do. Throughout research disciplines, questions that have been treated as obvious have resulted in surprising outcomes that do not always align with expectations; therefore, especially when there is still debate surrounding the reasons behind the use of SV in conflict, it is imperative to find ways to empirically test this theory to be able to better understand SV in armed conflict. Nordås and Cohen (2014) found that gender inequality is

not able to solely explain SV in conflict, however, in their explanations of policy recommendations, a lot of them suggested prohibitions like armed group commanders building institutions to prevent SV or international campaigns to ‘name and shame’ states in response to SV, which all point a finger toward an existing problematic culture surrounding SV.

The argument that continuum theoretical frameworks are all just ‘simplistic cultural arguments’ is, ironically, too simple of an argument. SV and other types of gendered violence, while they can be present in some cultures more than others, are often seen as rooted in the globalization of capitalism and other masculine dominant structures that were also spread through colonization (Anglin, 1998). To suggest that SV and other forms of violence against women are solely cultural removes the nuance regarding how institutional inequality and violence against women became so embedded into certain societies.

Structural forces like the patriarchy and rape culture exist during peacetime, often deeply ingrained into cultures and societies, and thus also exist during the onset of conflict. Other explanations of the presence of SV in conflict, like conflict strategy and theories of opportunity, can explain only a small sample of instances of SV in conflict. However, continuum theories that encompass not only the presence of SV continuing during conflict but also the continuation of the existing culture that surrounds SV in a given community. Even in instances where other theoretical explanations are dominant, these continuum theoretical explanations of SV and the culture of SV are still present, and often are an overlooked impacting variable. In sum, there are many motivations behind the use of SV in conflict, however I argue that all motivations can be connected back to the presence of rape culture and SV in pre-conflict peacetime society.

Since the presence of rape culture and societal treatment of SV in a country is not private, it is possible for other actors outside of that country to be aware of that and exploit it. Although

theories of opportunity account for the idea that both military forces and civilians would take advantage of the lessened attention paid to crimes outside of the ongoing conflict as well as the idea that military forces would take advantage of the culture surrounding SV in a foreign country they are in due to conflict and the impunity they may benefit from, they do not account for the deeper explanation as to why the perpetrators feel inclined to use and benefit from these opportunities. Examining peacetime before conflict is the best way to understand the deeper explanations behind the presence of SV during conflict and doing so through the framework of continuum theories is the only way to encompass all types of SV, regardless of intent.

Therefore, I theorize that the strongest impacting variable in the presence of SV during armed conflict is the multidimensional culture surrounding and presence of SV during pre-conflict times of peace because, unlike many aspects of conflict, it does not begin existing solely when the conflict begins. Similarly, unlike many aspects of a country *before* conflict, it is not upended or forgotten when the war begins. Therefore, I specifically hypothesize that, pre-conflict peacetime levels of SV will have a positive relationship with levels of SV during conflict and may be able to act as a predictor of SV in conflict.

*Quantitative Hypothesis: I expect pre-conflict peacetime levels of sexual violence, above other mediating factors, to positively affect sexual violence in armed conflict across all conflicts.*

However, because this attempt to more clearly define and test a multifaceted phenomenon like SV culture is predicated on the idea that there are many nuances to that phenomenon, I also will engage in an exploratory thematic analysis of SV culture before and during conflict, to better understand any additional forces that may underlie its power. This exploration complements my quantitative causal analysis, but does not attempt to formally test the theory illustrated above. I elaborate on this research design in the following section.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN

### Overview

Looking through the available scholarship, there are many ways to analyze SV across country-year observations. Typically, however, SV is examined with different independent variables, usually by using conflict as the main independent variable. While these examinations can produce findings that are important to the scholarship, they fail to take the full breadth of SV into consideration, which could be the key to understanding SV during conflict.

Butler and Jones (2016) were the first to attempt to empirically connect pre-conflict, peacetime SV with SV during armed conflict, specifically looking at government security forces. They were also the first to put together a pre-conflict SV data set, which is something that popular SV datasets, like the Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (SVAC) data set lacked (Butler & Jones, 2016; Nordics & Cohen, 2014). While this study paved the way for future researchers to dig deeper into this idea, the data set lacked continuity and had questionable accuracy, due to its extreme inconsistencies with the SVAC data set. These inconsistencies will be expanded on later, in the 'Methods' section. This study showed that pre-conflict, peacetime levels of SV are connected to levels of SV in armed conflict, but that the levels often stay the same, rather than increase, with the onset of armed conflict (Butler & Jones, 2016). While this may not be false, the questions of validity in their data call the validity of their findings into question.

Limitations from the currently available databases are present. First, there is no singular database that includes pre-conflict, post-conflict, and during conflict levels of SV. The SVAC data set includes during and post-conflict levels of SV but does not examine pre-conflict levels of SV (Gleditsch et al., 2002a). The Butler and Jones (2016) data set includes pre-conflict and

during conflict levels of SV but does not distinguish between the two and only examines 1999-2011, resulting in the inclusion of countries that are in conflict during the whole time period or most of it, leaving little room to examine pre-conflict levels of SV. The SVAC (Gleditsch et al., 2002a) and the Butler and Jones (2016) data set also examine different countries, resulting in a lack of continuity between the two. Additionally, although the SVAC (Gleditsch et al., 2002a) and Butler and Jones (2016) datasets are coded almost identically, there are immense differences in their scores that overlap in country-year, which calls the validity of their SV scores into question.

Butler and Jones (2016) propose a question and hypothesis closest to those being proposed in this study, but due to the inconsistencies in their data, their findings are not significant and cannot be treated as generalizable. I am improving on this study and other past research on SV in conflict by manually re-coding the data, looking across the boundaries of conflict-years, and broadening the scope of actors. A few studies mentioned, including Butler and Jones (2016), only examine government actors, specifically government security forces; however, I will be expanding this by examining actors outside of these boundaries. Since the presence of rape culture and the legal treatment of SV in a country is not private, it is possible for other actors outside of that country to be aware of that and exploit it. It is for this reason why I am expanding the sample of conflicts to include conflicts with actors outside of just government security forces.

These limitations make it very difficult to show any sort of statistically significant relationship or correlation between the variables. To combat these limitations, I have manually coded the SV scores for the country-years in my quantitative sample using the same coding methodology as the SVAC data set (Gleditsch et al., 2002a). I have used the U.S. State

Department Country reports as well as the Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch country reports, for further clarification, for each country-year of a conflict as well as a much greater period of pre-conflict country-years than what is currently available. This way, I will be able to expand on the available data to be able to examine a much more extensive subject pool.

I will be examining the overarching research question of the extent to which a country's pre-conflict peacetime levels of and culture surrounding SV affect the levels of SV during conflict. To examine this relationship, I will employ a parallel mixed methods research design, using both quantitative and qualitative methodological strands (Tashakkori, Johnson, & Teddlie, 2020). In my quantitative strand, I will be causally testing whether pre-conflict peacetime levels of SV affect SV during armed conflict in varying modern environments with a country-year unit of analysis. My sample includes 42 countries, with 90 total country-year observations, accounting for the three countries with two separate armed conflicts being examined. In my qualitative strand, I will be exploring the themes that appear related to pre-conflict peacetime SV and SV during armed conflict, using existing an exploratory thematic analysis of grey literature on SV and conflict in Egypt and Niger.

In line with the nomothetic and idiographic foundations underlying quantitative and qualitative parallel mixed methods research designs (Tashakkori et al., 2020), this means that the quantitative strand of my analysis will causally test whether pre-conflict SV generally predicts conflict-time SV, while the qualitative strand of my analysis will specifically explore (rather than causally test) the dominant characteristics that appear relative to SV and war. I will also be considering the extent to which the analysis of each quantitative and qualitative strand do, and do not, reinforce and inform future research for one another. Finally, after analyzing the findings of

both strands separately, I will form one integrated meta inference about my overarching research question.

### Quantitative Methodology

To test the quantitative hypothesis and examine the extent to which pre-conflict peacetime levels of SV affects the levels of SV during conflict in varying modern environments, I conduct an ordered logistic regression using a unique data set of SV levels during the first year of conflict and of levels of SV five years prior to the first year of conflict for each country in the sample.

The dependent variable is an ordinal scale of the intensity of SV during times of conflict, coded from zero to three. The primary independent variable of interest in this study is an ordinal scale of the intensity of SV five years prior to the first year of conflict in a given country, also coded from zero to three. The data for these variables come from a data set that I created using the U.S. State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices as well as the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International Country Reports as supplemental material. The U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices is the main source from which I am collecting my data, but to avoid any issues in the validity or possible bias that may exist by only referencing a single country's reports, I also relied on the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International Country Reports to act as supplemental data. Due to the lack of available quantitative data on SV, especially before and during conflict, the variables must be coded from these qualitative reports rather than from exact numerical data.

The coding of these variables comes from the coding of the 'prevalence' variables in the SVAC data set (Nordics & Cohen, 2014). A score of 'zero' indicates that while there is a report

on the country and there may have been SV present, there is no mention of it in any report. A score of 'one' indicates that SV was mentioned in reports but is mentioned using words like "reports" or "isolated" (Nordics & Cohen, 2014). A score of 'two' indicates that SV was mentioned in reports and used words like "widespread," "frequent," or "pattern" and or mentioned that SV occurred "commonly," "periodically," or "routinely" (Nordics & Cohen, 2014). A score of 'three' indicates that SV was mentioned in reports and was described as "systematic" or "massive," or stated that SV was used as a "weapon," "tool of war," or "terror tactic," (Nordics & Cohen, 2014).

The countries in this sample were chosen using the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Database (Gleditsch et al., 2002a). Armed conflict can be broadly defined as any "contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between at least two parties, of which at least one is the government of the state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year" (Gleditsch et al., 2002a, 2002b). First, the observations were narrowed down to only conflicts that began in 1994, due to the availability of country reports being scarce before 1989, and the necessity of being able to examine five years prior to the first year of conflict. Then, the observations were narrowed down based on how recent previous conflict took place in a given location, with any previous armed conflict in a country needing to end at least 10 years before the first year of conflict being observed in the sample. Since I am examining pre-conflict peacetime, I wanted to ensure that all peacetime examinations were true peacetime examinations rather than potentially being post-conflict or intermittent period of conflict examinations due to the presence previous of armed conflict. In other words, all conflict observations within this sample will be at least 10 years after the most recent previous conflict to ensure there is no overlap in conflicts.



Additionally, armed conflicts that took place across multiple locations were left out of the sample due to the inability to fit into the country-year unit of analysis without overlap or inconsistency. Lastly, observations were narrowed down based on the availability of reports, since I cannot code an observation if there is no report for a given country. The observations in my final data set, coincidentally, all fall under the categories of either intrastate conflict or internationalized internal armed conflict. Intrastate armed conflict occurs “between a government and a non-governmental party, with no interference from other countries,” (Gleditsch et al., 2002a, 2002b). Internationalized internal armed conflict has the same definition but, instead, does have intervention from other states on one or both sides of the conflict (Gleditsch et al., 2002a, 2002b).

The U.S. State Department’s Country Reports on Human Rights Practices are the main components of the data set due to the availability of reports for every country-year being examined. However, since these country reports are created by the U.S. State Department from a U.S. perspective, there is potential for bias, which could threaten the validity of the data even though the United States itself is not a country being examined in this data set. This is where international organizations, like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, come into play to ensure the validity of the data. Although Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International do not have a country report available for every county-year, it is important to consider and use all available information for each observation since, without available numerical data on the reports or prevalence of SV, I rely on country reports and the words of others to code observations.

Human Rights Watch only has country reports for about half of the country-year observations but the reports that are available will be used for the since it is better to have more information than less going into the coding of the variables. The countries that did not have a

report for the examined years also did not have any reports for the few years after either. Amnesty International has a country report for almost every country-year observation, but for every country-year observation that they are missing a report, they have a report for the year before or after. For the ‘during conflict’ observations, I chose the available country report after the first year of conflict to ensure the observation is still occurring in the beginning, and during, the conflict. For the observations that are five years before the first year of conflict, I chose the available country report for the year before to ensure that the data is allowing for enough time before conflicts to ensure a true peacetime measure. Only one country-year, Mali-2002, did not fall into this pattern and instead, has a country report two years before the original observation. This does not come as an issue because this is an observation that is measuring before conflict, peacetime levels of SV, which is a category that the available Amnesty International Country Report still falls into. Overall, it is important to examine and digest all available perspectives and understandings of each country-year observation so I will be using the U.S. State Department’s Country Reports on Human Rights Practices as the main component of my data set as well as the Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch country reports as a sort of ‘checks and balances’ system to ensure the least bias possible.

To do this, I scored the U.S. State Department, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch country reports separately for each country-year observation and then averaged the scores for each observation. For this reason, the final scoring of each observation has the potential to not be a perfect integer and could fall into decimal regions. To account for this while also continuing to contain the data in ordinal categories, I will be rounding up any final observations that contain decimals. Since SV is under-reported and available data and reports are unable to account for SV that occurs in private or secret, it is important to remember that all data

and reports of SV are most often under-reporting. While it may seem counterproductive to average out scores and then proceed to round them up anyway, it is a necessary step to ensure all available data is being considered. It is also important to remember that SV is massively under-reported, making it most logical to round up final scores rather than round down. None of the observations across sources differ by more than a single integer, which means that if any difference exists and requires averaging, it will only produce a 0.5, or half, decimal. Therefore, exclusively rounding the averages up will not create any inconsistencies.

Using this data set that I have coded, I will be running an ordered logit regression of my independent and dependent variable as well as added control variables. I am using an ordered logit regression because it is most appropriate for ordinal ranked outcome variables. For the predictor variables measured categorically, it would be most appropriate to treat them as factor variables in the analysis; however, because of the small sample size, this frequently led to excluded cases. Instead, continuous estimations were compared to discretized estimations, and no significant change in model strength was evident; therefore, this analysis cautiously proceeded while treating those otherwise categorical variables as continuous. In doing so, the analysis will also first test the ordered logit assumption of proportional odds. Once that is ensured, I will also be examining the marginal effects and predicted probabilities of specific outcomes.

### *Controls*

I will be introducing several controls to further test my hypothesis. My first control is the 'Intensity Score' (IntensityScore) for the armed conflict, which comes from the UCDP Armed Conflict Database and takes the intensity of the conflict in the first year of conflict into account

(Gleditsch et al., 2002a). This variable is coded as a “one” if the conflict is ‘minor,’ meaning the number of battle-related deaths were between 25 and 999 deaths in that year. A “two” indicates the conflict is a ‘war,’ meaning the number of battle-related deaths exceeds one thousand (Gleditsch et al., 2002a). As mentioned before, previous research on SV in conflict has treated the presence of conflict as the main driving force behind the presence of SV, which theoretically would mean that a more intense conflict with more violence and death is likely to have much higher levels of SV than would be seen in a less intense conflict. This intensity variable is important to examine as a control variable in this study since there is a possibility that a more intense conflict would result in an increase of different types of violence and, thus, higher levels of SV.

The next control is the ‘Type of Conflict’ (TypeofConflict) variable, which also comes from the UCDP Armed Conflict Database (Gleditsch et al., 2002a). This variable is coded from one to four, but since all the observations in my sample happen to be either intrastate conflicts or internationalized intrastate conflicts, the observations in my sample will be coded as a “three” if the conflict was an intrastate conflict, or as a “four” if the conflict was an internationalized intrastate conflict (Gleditsch et al., 2002a). The difference between the two types of conflicts lies in the actors, with internationalized intrastate conflicts having the military forces of an external government also fighting in the country that the conflict is taking place in. With external military forces comes more military personnel that come from different societies that may have different cultures surrounding SV. For this reason, there is a chance that internationalized intrastate conflicts will result in higher levels of SV during conflict, possibly increasing the levels of SV before conflict.

The next control is a ‘Normative Prohibitions’ (NPFYOC) control variable, coded from zero to three, with “zero” meaning there were no normative prohibitions in place, “one” meaning there were some normative prohibitions put in place but rarely or not at all enforced, with possible mentions of SV by police or in police custody, “two” meaning there were some normative prohibitions in place and they were somewhat enforced, and “three” meaning there were normative prohibitions in place and they were actively and well enforced. Here, normative prohibitions refer to laws that are in place related to SV, which can include if and how certain types of SV are punished, if marital rape is included in the legal definitions of rape, and if these legal punishments are enforced or mostly for show. This variable will be coded using the country reports that were used for the main independent and dependent variables. Since normative prohibitions in a country are a key element in examinations of the culture surrounding SV, it is important to control for the possibility that the presence or lack thereof of normative prohibitions has a strong effect on the levels of SV in a country. The impunity that perpetrators of SV benefit from in a country that has little to no normative prohibitions could be an influential factor in if the actors present become perpetrators of SV. For this reason, country-year observations in a country with less or no normative prohibitions in place could have higher levels of SV.

### Qualitative Methodology

Since I argue the multidimensional nature of SV-perpetuating cultures is what makes SV before conflict predictive of SV during conflict in my quantitative analysis, this thesis necessarily needs to acknowledge that there may be unnoticed or unmeasured elements of SV and its culture that appear in conflict environments. As such, my qualitative methodology seeks to reveal any key themes that are essential to understanding SV culture, whether or not they have

been already identified. To do so, will be conducting an exploratory thematic analysis of reports on Egypt and Niger. I have chosen these two countries with armed conflicts to examine because Egypt and Niger were both countries that, although had the same quantitative SV score before and during conflict, had a noticeable increase in SV when conflict started, just not enough to break into the next coded integer. This shows that conflict caused an expected increase in SV but did not cause a dramatic enough increase to be coded differently. Although both countries had no coded increase quantitatively, Niger had a score of “one” both during and before conflict, whereas Egypt had a score of “three” across time observations. Therefore, looking into these two countries not only allows for a deeper examination of SV and its multidimensional themes, not limited by the generalizations of the quantitative scale, but also allows facilitates that exploration between countries on opposite ends of the ordinal scale.

It is well established in research that one of the most often used methods with the highest yield of qualitative data collection is primary interviews (Polkinghorne, 2005; Rogelberg, 2004). Getting first-hand accounts of events and experiences is essential to the understanding of private or controversial themes, like SV, due to the present stigmas and shame that can impact victims. Primary interviews allow for confidentiality and comfort, which allows victims to open up about their experiences and their thoughts and emotions associated with said experiences. Additionally, primary interviews are useful in uncovering hidden networks of victims that are willing to share their experiences, using snowball sampling. However, a multitude of limitations exist in trying to access these populations. These limitations include the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent travel restrictions that followed as well as the sensitive nature of SV, especially in conflict, that needs to be treated accordingly.

In fact, at the origins of this project, I was supposed to interview SV survivors of a specific conflict when COVID-19 and the following travel restrictions commenced. Once travel restrictions were lifted and limitations lessened, there were still immense limitations in resources, like time and the availability of trained professionals that were needed due to the nature of the topic, like translators and trauma informed social workers or mental health professionals, that made this field work currently unable to be carried out to plan. With this understanding, online platforms for primary interviews, like Zoom, were considered. However, once again due to the sensitive nature of the topic at hand, the victims that originally were willing to share their experiences and start off the snowball sample were no longer comfortable with doing so in an online format.

Therefore, this analysis instead pursues secondary analysis of existing qualitative reports, using a hybrid inductive/deductive coding approach (Proudfoot, 2022). The country reports used to code the quantitative data is first used to break down the quantitative coding of Niger and Egypt, to demonstrate how the quantitative coding is limited in understanding the changes in levels of SV over time observations. However, those reports alone are not enough to examine the research question at hand. There has been an increase of focus on SV in conflict by non-governmental and inter-governmental entities, some specifically related to SV in armed conflict, and others related to gender-based violence or the rights of women and girls, in general. The result is a significant expansion in NGO reports, or grey literature, as the primary resource for secondary qualitative data on these topics. However, as mentioned and previously demonstrated in the literature review, while this phenomenon is no longer an unspoken or hidden problem, it also means that the available data is buried on an organization-by-organization basis, in inconsistent formats, active-vs-inactive links, and even more limitations, all further limited by

language of publication. In fact, this lack of standardization across the field is so pervasive and—as many of these organizations argue in their mission to research and education—problematic, that the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security developed a specific repository for these materials (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2023). It was designed to consolidate multiple organizations’ reporting in one central location.

As such, this study will use that repository to collect multiple reports for Egypt and Niger, whose SV indicators went unchanged in the quantitative study. To supplement this structured search of grey literature, this study will also use Google as a broader search engine to facilitate a more unstructured search of available grey literature. In the structured search using the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security repository, my specific search strategy included to listing the country (either Egypt or Niger) in quotations in the ‘key-terms’ search bar as well as limiting the results to the “Sexual and Gender-Based Violence” sub-category. From there, I was left with eleven reports for Egypt and four reports for Niger. In the unstructured search using Google, my search strategy similarly included searching the country (either Egypt or Niger) in quotations along with words and phrases like “sexual violence,” “gender-based violence,” “women,” and “conflict sexual violence.” These searches resulted in thousands of results from different types of outlets including news stations from around the world, research articles, and publications from political organizations. These results were narrowed down by quickly reading through each result on the first few pages of results to see if it related to the topic at hand in any way. The skimming of material was limited to only the first few pages of Google results because after usually the fifth or sixth page of results, the results were no longer fully applicable to the research questions at hand.



I conducted my thematic analysis of these reports using both deductive and inductive coding. During the deductive coding process, I established codes that represented topics that I expected to see in the material, based on my theory/hypothesis and quantitative findings, before examining the material. On the other hand, the inductive process coding process was less forthright, coding topics that were not explicitly outlined in my expectations previously but that instead emerged as themes within the literature. As stated previously, this did not seek to casually test or establish what causes the escalation of sexual violence, but rather was designed to clearly *observe* the themes of SV culture and conflict.

## CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### Quantitative

The results of the ordered logit model used to analyze the support for my SV hypothesis is printed below.

**Table 1: Ordered Logit Analyses for the levels of SV during conflict**

Variable	Coefficient (Standard Error)
SVscore5YBC	7.200 (1.85)***
IntensityScore	2.839 (1.67)
TypeofConflict	1.967 (1.55)
NPFfirstYOC	2.215 (1.45)

N = 43  
P value <0.001\*\*\*, P value <0.01\*\*, P value <0.05\*  
See Appendix for extended Stata output

Table 1 shows the results of the ordered logit model, immediately indicating a positive, highly significant relationship between pre-conflict SV and post-conflict SV. Unlike previous attempts at quantitatively connecting and examining pre-conflict peacetime SV and SV during conflict, this study had strong significance, suggesting that pre-conflict SV is strongly correlated to SV during conflict, in line with the hypothesis.

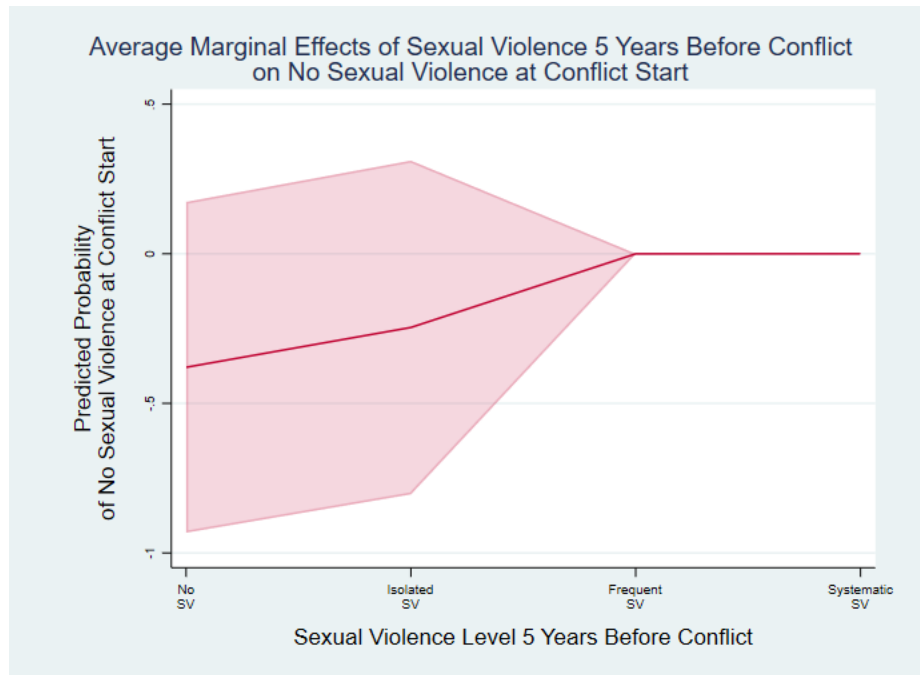
To ensure the validity of these initial ordered logit regression results, I conducted a proportional odds test to check the assumption of proportional odds throughout the results. This test examines the variability of the outcomes across response levels to ensure the coefficients received from these models are able to be treated as standardized shifts in probability. If this test

does not show proportional odds, a generalized model shift would be completed to accommodate for the disproportional odds. However, the proportional odds test confirmed that the results from these models can be treated as standardized and proportional odds can be assumed throughout. Therefore, no additional accommodations needed to be made to ensure the validity of the results of these models.

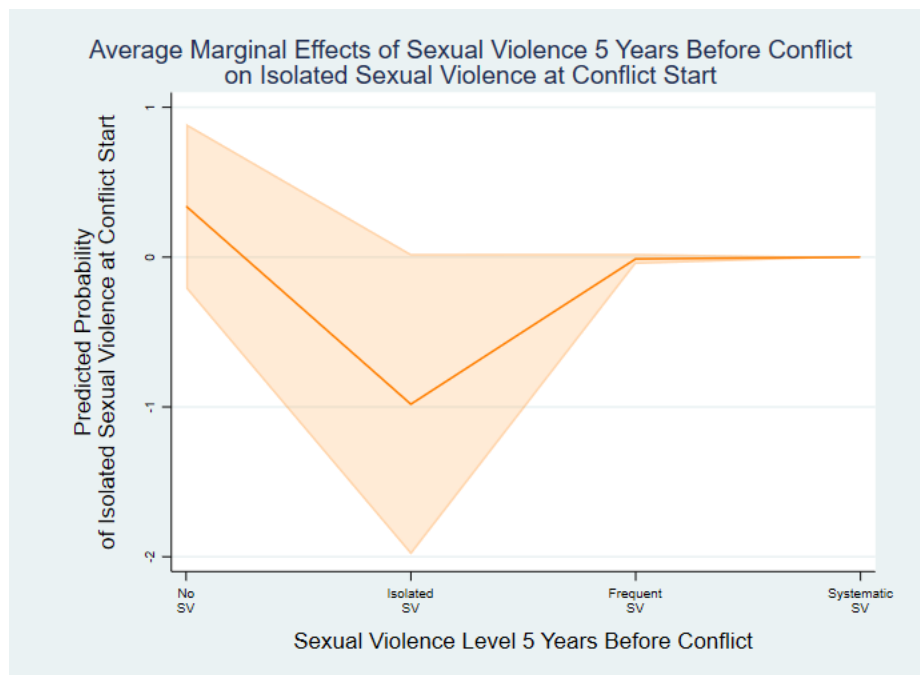
Next, I conducted marginal analyses to measure the marginal effects of the ordered logit model. Looking at the general marginal effects, increases in the pre-conflict SV scores—five years before the onset of armed conflict—decrease the probability of falling into a ‘zero’ or ‘one’ SV score at the start of armed conflict and increase the probability of falling into a ‘two’ or ‘three’ at the start of armed conflict. In fact, the average marginal effects of an increase in SV before conflict lead to a 19 percent increase in the likelihood of an SV score of ‘three’ at the start of armed conflict. This effect holds true for both ‘minor’ and ‘war’ intensity levels, indicating that SV scores before conflict have a stronger effect on the SV score at the onset of armed conflict than the intensity of the armed conflict itself. On the other hand, the effect does marginally change when the conflicts are evaluated based on the type of conflict—in this case, whether they are intrastate or internationalized intrastate conflicts. When a conflict is internationalized, increases in the SV scores before conflict decrease the likelihood that the SV scores will fall into a ‘two’ SV score at the start of armed conflict. This is different from intrastate conflicts, in which increases in SV scores before conflict increase the likelihood of it falling into a ‘two’ SV score at the start of armed conflict. In contrast, increases in the pre-conflict SV scores increase the likelihood of internationalized conflicts falling into a ‘three’ SV score at the start of armed conflict by more than ten percent compared to intrastate conflicts.

Looking at the average marginal effects of normative prohibitions, there was an incredibly inconsistent relationship, with SV seeming to increase at the start of conflict regardless of the level of normative prohibitions. The marginal effects of normative prohibitions seem to be reporting on generalities rather than any significant or predictable relationship between the levels of normative prohibitions and the levels of SV. While this does not align with the expectations regarding normative prohibitions, the results could be greatly attributed to the limitations of the normative prohibitions data. A better, more extensive gathering and coding of the data would be beneficial to further examine normative prohibitions in future research.

I also examined the average marginal effects of pre-conflict SV scores on the likelihood of SV scores during conflict at each possible SV score. All else being equal, these are the most high-impact margins. Below are four figures to showcase the marginal effects and predicted probability for each individual outcome of the dependent variable.



**Figure 1: Marginal Effects of Pre-conflict SV on No ('Zero' Score) SV in Conflict**



**Figure 2: Marginal Effects of Pre-conflict SV on Isolated ('One' Score) SV in Conflict**

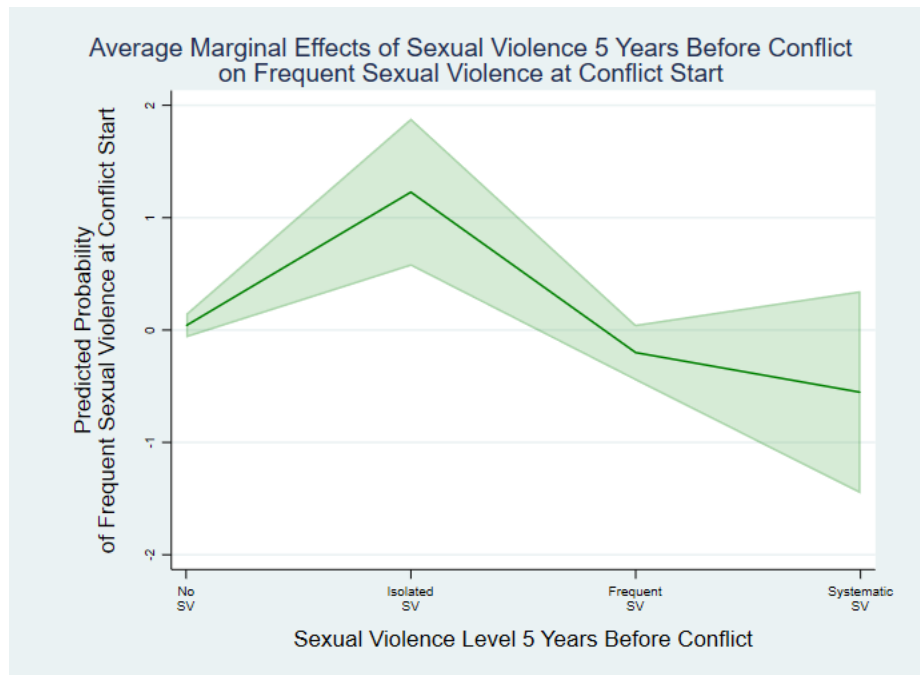


Figure 3: Marginal Effects of Pre-conflict SV on Frequent ('Two' Score) SV in Conflict

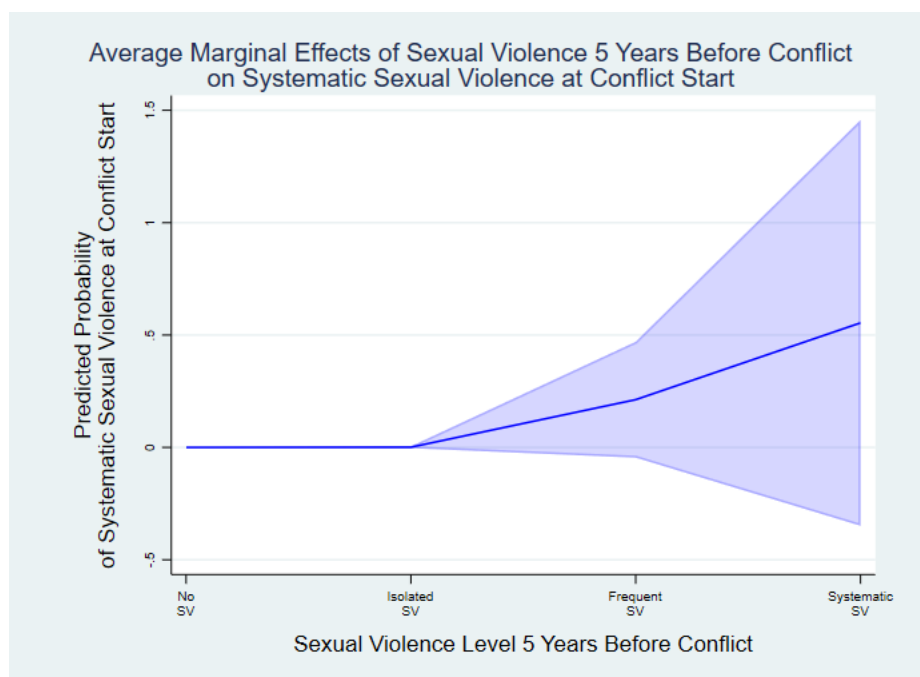


Figure 4: Marginal Effects of Pre-conflict SV on Systematic ('Three' Score) SV in Conflict

Looking at the figures, the positive, significant relationship between pre-conflict SV and SV during conflict, as expected in my hypothesis, is apparent. There is, however, some deviation from this exactly positive relationship, as demonstrated in Figure 2 and Figure 3—specifically, these effects seem to indicate that there may be a negative likelihood that a country stays in the same overall category of SV intensity when they start at a middle level. But, overall, the central takeaway, looking at these figures is that there is a clear indication of some sort of significant relationship between the independent and dependent variable in this study. It bears noting that some confidence intervals cross zero and estimates exceed one hundred percent, due to the limited sample size and effect of treating the factor variables as continues—which means these findings should be interpreting with a note of caution. Clearly, in addition to offering evidence suggesting SV before war predicts its level during war, it is necessary for more data before generalizations about these initial findings can be made. This also reinforces the use of the parallel mixed methodology to further examine this phenomenon of SV in conflict.

### Qualitative

Before moving to the results of the qualitative coding results of the grey literature, the quantitative coding must be broken down to better understand the qualitative hypothesis. Starting with Niger, the first year of conflict was in 2007, so the two country-year observations for this conflict were Niger-2007 and Niger-2002, when looking five years before the onset of conflict.

By 2007, Niger descended into conflict via the Tuareg rebellion and later the Boko Haram insurgency. The attacks, beginning in February 2007, were carried out by the Niger Movement for Justice (MNJ) and targeted the Nigerian armed forces and some foreign economic interests (Welsh, 2008). The conflict started because Niger rebels claimed that the Nigerien

government had failed in honoring the 1995 peace deal that had promised rebels a bigger share of the mineral wealth in the region and previously ended the Tuareg insurgency in the 1990s. From here, the reasonings behind the conflict expanded to the exploitations of the uranium mines, press freedom, and continued retaliation from Nigerien forces (Reporters Without Borders, 2007; Reuters, 2009; The New Humanitarian, 2008)

Quantitatively, both country-year observations were coded as ‘one,’ indicating no change in the levels of SV between the observed years. This finding falls in line with the expectations that the levels of SV before conflict impact, and could possibly predict, the levels of SV in conflict. This also reinforces the methodology of SV before conflict being examined as the main independent variable rather than treating conflict as the main independent variable, reinforcing the theory that the levels of and the culture surrounding SV before conflict has a stronger effect on the levels of SV during conflict than conflict alone. However, when coding these quantitative codes, I noticed that although there was no numerical change in the coding over time, there still was a noticeable increase when conflict started. Again, not enough to constitute a numerical increase but enough to warrant further examination.

Looking at Niger-2002, the U.S. State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices reported that there were “reports of trafficking...young girls for prostitution” with no “precise age of consent” (U.S. Department of State, 2002). The report also noted that “domestic violence against women was widespread,” however, due to fear of “social stigma” or “repudiation” as well as the “ignorance of the legal system,” very few women spoke out in any way which resulted in a lack of statistics regarding the type and extent of domestic violence as well as regarding whether it included SV (U.S. Department of State, 2002). As noted in the explanation of coding in the methodology section, key words like “widespread” often indicate a



coding of 'two', but since the use of the term "widespread" was used to describe domestic violence rather than SV specifically, this did not constitute a 'two' coding for this observation. Lastly, the report also mentioned instances of female genital mutilation, practiced by several ethnic groups in the areas (U.S. Department of State, 2002). All of this put together constituted a 'one' coding for this pre-conflict observation.

Now, looking at Niger-2007—the first year of conflict observation—the U.S. State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices explicitly talks about the presence of rape, specifically noting that in most cases, "spousal rape did not lead to prosecution" but also that more specific, reliable statistics on rape prevalence was not available (U.S. Department of State, 2007). General domestic violence remained "widespread," but the report referenced a UNICEF finding that "rape or attempted rape" represented 16.4 percent of reported cases of violence against women that year (U.S. Department of State, 2007). Similarly, to Niger-2002, there were reports of trafficking women and girls into prostitution but, on the other hand, this report notes that girls are sometimes sexually abused by the men in their household and can also be forced to marry at a young age (U.S. Department of State, 2007). While some of these differences between the report can be attributed to the lack of attention paid to specific issues or to a change in reporting styles, there seems to be a notable increase in SV in general, just not enough to be coded numerically higher. Although there were no Human Rights Watch Country Reports for either year of observation for Niger, there were Amnesty International reports for both years of observation for Niger. However, neither of the Amnesty International reports have any mention of SV or violence against women in general, which does act as a slight confirmation that SV in Niger both before and during conflict are not widespread, at least publicly.

Moving onto Egypt, both years of observation—before and during conflict—are quantitatively coded as ‘three’ in 2009 and 2011. During this period, Egypt move from a non-conflict environment to a conflict environment following the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The 2011 Egyptian Revolution began in January and consequentially spread across Egypt, with the protestor’s grievances mainly focused on political and legal issues (SBS News, 2011). The grievances ranged from police brutality and lack of political freedom to low wages and food-price inflation but the main demand from the protestors was the end of the Mubarak regime (Al Arabiya, 2011; The New Age, 2011). After that goal was achieved, there were a few power exchanges that resulted in continued mass protests and outrage but in 2014, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi was elected president and although it was boycotted by opposition parties, the mass protests diminished (Al Jazeera, 2014; Hussein & Borger, 2012; The Atlantic, 2017). This period from 2011 to 2014 is often referred to as the Egyptian Crisis.

While broadly the Egyptian Crisis, the main conflict that is being highlighted in this country-year observation is the Sinai Insurgency, which was started by Islamist militants against the Egyptian security forces (Awad, 2011). After the fall of the Mubarak regime, the increasing destabilization of Egypt created a security vacuum in the Sinai Peninsula that left no real authority capable of addressing the issues of destabilization (Farid, 2017). Exploiting the growing chaos from the Egyptian Revolution, the militants were able to launch attacks on the government forces in Sinai, which then resulted in the militants of other extremist groups coming out of Palestine, Syria, and Iraq (Fahmy & Bayoumy, 2015; The Economist, 2013).

Looking at Egypt-2009, there was evidence of police and State Security Investigative Services sexually assaulting victims and “threatening to rape them or their family members” (U.S. Department of State, 2009). The report also mentioned that although the number of

criminal rape cases were minimal due to fear and reluctance by women to report, there was an estimated twenty thousand cases of rape annually, including in 2009 (U.S. Department of State, 2009). Sexual harassment was noted to be a “serious problem” for both Egyptian and foreign women, with most women surveyed stating they “faced harassment daily” (U.S. Department of State, 2009). Attempts to combat this sexual harassment were made but these attempts “included blaming women for triggering harassment” (U.S. Department of State, 2009). Along with a high presence of female genital mutilation, child marriages, including those used to mask child prostitution “were a significant problem” (U.S. Department of State, 2009).

Egypt was also noted as a “source, transit point, and destination” for the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation, including forced marriages and forced prostitution (U.S. Department of State, 2009). The Human Rights Watch Country Report confirmed the widespread domestic violence and sexual harassment but was a short report that did not expand on these findings (U.S. Department of State, 2009). The Amnesty International Country Report also confirmed these findings, giving an example of a woman who reported police torture that included “forcibly shav[ing] her head and threaten[ing] to rape her unless she withdr[ew] the complaint” that her husband was tortured by police the previous year (U.S. Department of State, 2009). These reports all reinforced the quantitative coding of Egypt-2009 as a ‘three’ in terms of level of SV.

Looking at Egypt-2014, although the quantitative coding remained a ‘three,’ which is the highest it could be, there was still a notable increase. The U.S. State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices explicitly noted that although cases of rape were still estimated to be around twenty thousand, that “NGOs estimated the prevalence of rape was several times higher...with some rights groups reporting an increase, especially during political protests” (U.S.

Department of State, 2014). The report mentioned “at least nine cases of ‘mob sexual assaults and gang rapes’” during this year (U.S. Department of State, 2014). The overall incidence of sexual harassment was also explicitly noted to have “increased during times of large public demonstrations,” and other actions like trafficking and forced marriages remained a serious problem. The Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International reports confirmed these findings and reinforced the quantitative coding for this observation.

As demonstrated, although these cases did not have a numerical increase in quantitative coding across year observations, there was a notable increase in the levels of SV. To test the qualitative hypothesis of whether pre-conflict SV affects SV in conflict above all other mediating factors, even when it is quantitatively coded as stagnant, I have thematically analyzed the grey literature to dive deeper into the culture surrounding SV and the treatment of women across these cases.

**Table 2: Qualitative Codes**

Deductive Codes	Inductive Codes
Rape and Sexual Torture (RST)	Women as Head of Household (HH)
Domestic Violence (DV)	Domestic Responsibilities (DR)
Continuum of Existing Behaviors (CEB)	Home Safety (HS)
Lack of/Poor Legislation (LPL)	No Access to Economic Security (AES)
Dominant Masculinity/ Patriarchy (DMP)	Abandonment (AT)
Women in Decision Making (WDM)	Women Assimilation (WA)

Table 2 shows the list of deductive and inductive codes gathered from the grey literature. These codes consist of some more obvious codes, like Rape and Sexual Torture (RST), which indicates the presence of references to rape or other types of sexual torture in the grey literature.

However, the codes also consist of some less obvious codes, like Abandonment (AT), which indicates the presence of references to women fearing being abandoned by their partner, family, or community due to either SV or due to women actively seeking out legal or familial support for domestic or SV. Another less obvious code is Women Assimilation (WA) which indicates the presence of women upholding patriarchal ideals, including rape myths—like victim blaming—or agreeing with thoughts like women deserving beatings due to poor completion of domestic responsibilities.

Since the grey literature is limited and does not allow for deeper examination of the exact country-years being examined, these codes allow for a more generalized overview of the existing culture toward women over time for each country. This allows for a generalized but deeper understanding of the culture towards women in both countries while also allowing for a comparison of the countries to examine whether the culture towards women in each country aligns with the expectations that a country with a more negative culture towards women will have a greater probability of having higher levels of SV.

Before even reading the grey literature, one initial pattern that comes to light is the number of grey literatures for each country. Both in the structured and unstructured searches of the grey literature, Niger does not have nearly as much grey literature on the topic of women, gender-based violence, or SV as Egypt does. Although both countries have SV and gender-based violence present, Egypt has exceptionally more grey literature on the topic which could hint to the difference in intensity between the two countries being represented qualitatively.

*Niger*

**Table 3: Frequency of Codes in Niger Grey Literature**

Deductive Codes	Inductive Codes
Rape and Sexual Torture (RST)**	Head of Household (HH)*
Domestic Violence (DV)**	Domestic Responsibilities (DR)*
Continuum of Existing Behaviors (CEB)	Home Safety (HS)*
Lack of/Poor Legislation (LPL)***	Access to Economic Security (AES)**
Dominant Masculinity/ Patriarchy (DMP)***	Abandonment (AT)**
Women in Decision Making (WDM)**	Women Assimilation (WA)

\*Minor, \*\*Moderate, \*\*\*Major

Table 3 shows the deductive and inductive codes along with magnitude subcodes (as demonstrated by asterisks) to indicate the frequency, saturation, and intensity of the main deductive and inductive codes throughout all the grey literature regarding Niger, from both structured and unstructured search strategies. As demonstrated in the table, references to poor legislation and dominant masculinity or presence of patriarchy had the highest frequency and intensity throughout the examination of the grey literature. Literature often referenced the impunity faced by men regarding gender-based violence, especially with SV due to the social norms and taboos that exist in Niger’s patriarchal society. Often, women in Niger have little to no legal support in society, which makes seeking support for domestic or sexual violence very difficult. This lack of legal support allows for men to use legal frameworks as a tool in their favor, with a gender-based violence advisor with Oxfam in Niger noting in 2007 that divorces initiated by men are examined and passed without the judge hearing even “one word” from the involved women (IRIN News, 2007).

This lack of legislative support for women bleeds into other frequently referenced issues like women in decision making, access to economic security, and abandonment. Women in Niger, both in the home and in broader governmental contexts, are rarely acting as decision makers, with a very small percentage of women able to act as the head of household or equal decision maker in a family unit as well as very few women holding any sort of governmental decision-making role (Laouan, 2020; United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2017). Due to this imbalance, it is difficult for improvement to take place, culturally and legislatively. Often, whether due to sexual or gender-based violence or other societal reasons, men in Niger are effectively able to throw women out onto the street or fully abandon them, sometimes overnight (IRIN News, 2007).

Lacking access to economic security outside of marriage, women and girls often must turn to “survival sex” to make money (Donovan, 2018). With Niger being a hot spot for child marriage, girls are often unable to seek out education or monetarily establish themselves outside of marriage, which is commonly forced rather than sought out by the girls (The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2020a). Additionally, because of the prevailing patriarchy in Niger, women are almost always left out of the acquisition of family property, which is passed down solely through the male lineage (Raineri, 2020). However, with all that being said, it has been explicitly pointed out in the grey literature that when compared to other African countries in the region, gender-based violence is far less prevalent in Niger (Raineri, 2020).

*Egypt*

**Table 4: Frequency of Codes in Egypt Grey Literature**

Deductive Codes	Inductive Codes
Rape and Sexual Torture (RST)***	Head of Household (HH)*
Domestic Violence (DV)**	Domestic Responsibilities (DR)*
Continuum of Existing Behaviors (CEB)**	Home Safety (HS)**
Lack of/Poor Legislation (LPL)***	Access to Economic Security (AES)*
Dominant Masculinity/ Patriarchy (DMP)***	Abandonment (AT)*
Women in Decision Making (WDM)*	Women Assimilation (WA)**

\*Minor, \*\*Moderate, \*\*\*Major

Table 4 shows the codes along with the frequency and intensity of the codes throughout all the grey literature regarding Egypt. Although the same three-tiered magnitude subcodes are used with both Egypt and Niger, the subcodes cannot be compared across tables due to the extreme difference in frequency and intensity. The codes that had the ‘Major’ subcode in Egypt’s table, for example, were almost triple in frequency and intensity than the codes that had the same subcode in Niger’s table. In the grey literature, the frequency and intensity of rape and sexual torture, lack of or poor legislation, and dominant patriarchal society was astronomical. A reoccurring topic is mob SV, which is mentioned to only to get worse during protests or conflict. Police and security forces have been known to exploit their power, taking part in rape in other forms of SV, including conducting “virginity tests” on women in their custody, sometimes even arresting those who fail for “prostitution” (BBC, 2015; Ki-Moon, 2012). Since SV is so deeply engrained into the culture, some even calling it “tradition,” authorities rarely intervene to help victims (Abdalla, 2016). Although there are people and organizations who act as ‘rescuers’ in



times of public SV, not only are they themselves subject to physical backlash but perpetrators often work in groups with strategic plans to ensure there is no interference (The Gender Security Project, 2021; BBC, 2013). It is often noted throughout the literature that the SV that occurs as well as the treatment of it by society is mostly due to “longstanding cultural attitudes that are oppressive towards women,” (The Gender Security Project, 2021).

Along with religious and patriarchal aspects, the shortfalls of laws as well as ingrained impunity help foster this culture of “routine sexual and gender-based violence” in Egypt (Amnesty International, 2022). Women often fear not only societal backlash in seeking legal support but also sometimes legal backlash, making sexual and gender-based violence something that women must suffer in silence (Amnesty International, 2015). This backlash does not stop there, with some women even sharing their experiences with backlash coming from medical professionals conducting their post-SV medical examinations, leaving women with no structural safety or support anywhere in society (Saleh, 2021). Really showcasing how deeply engrained this sexual and gender-based violence is in the culture, the literature made references to some women agreeing with notions that women deserved to be beaten if household responsibilities were not adequate (The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2020b). Similarly, an even larger percentage of women agreed that women should tolerate violence for the sake of keeping their family together (The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2020b). While this is an example of women assimilating to the prominent patriarchal thought, it is also an example of how much women must accept and endure for the sake of survival in Egypt.

Women in Egypt have very little, often no, place in decision-making, whether in the household or in government affairs. Protesting is often the only avenue in which women can

speak their mind, however, protests are commonly where mob SV takes place. SV, in this aspect, is used as a tool to silence and scare women, with the regime in Egypt being known for “dispatching thugs” to politically charged spaces, like protests, to “sexually assault women so that they would ‘reconsider participating in future protests’” (Principe, 2016). Recently, younger generations of women are standing up to the existing culture by using social media to bypass the lack of legal and societal resources and bring attention to not only the acts of SV themselves but also the specific perpetrators (Combs, 2021; Evans, 2020; Marzouk, 2022). While this movement has gained traction across media outlets, it still is nowhere close to uprooting this very deep culture of sexual and gender-based violence against women in Egypt.

### Summary

Looking at both the quantitative and qualitative methodological strands, two things are clear: first, there is an indication of a relationship between pre-conflict peacetime levels of SV and SV levels during armed conflict, and second, that the cultures and nature of SV are highly multidimensional. Due to the lack of data and resources, using the parallel mixed methods research design was the best methodological decision to best understand this relationship over time and internationally—even if that design also held limitations. Looking at the overarching integrated research question, it can be confirmed that there is a significant positive relationship between SV in pre-conflict peacetime and SV during armed conflict but until there is more data, the exact extent of this relationship is unable to be determined.

Although this study has some disclaimers, it gave a new insight into this relationship, which was only previously studied quantitatively with no significant findings and qualitatively, looking at only one country. This study was able to show the connection between peacetime SV

and SV during conflict, with significant findings for the independent variable. Overall, the strongest message that has come from this study is the necessity for not only more data, but better availability in already existing resources. While this topic is being examined more in research, it is often only examined theoretically, which although that is very important work, will not be able to influence change internationally regarding SV. One main takeaway from this work is that how SV and women are treated structurally and in everyday life is an important variable in the level and frequency of SV in and out of armed conflict. Although men can be and are victims of SV internationally, violence against women is often structurally engrained into, often very patriarchal, cultures. Therefore, SV during armed conflict will never be able to be lessened or eradicated without first examining and treating the source behind its use.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Limitations have been mentioned throughout each chapter, but it is necessary to collectively highlight the present limitations of this particular research endeavor. Due to the sensitive nature of SV, it is incredibly under-reported and under prosecuted, resulting in a huge under estimation of general SV prevalence. Victims of SV, especially during armed conflict, are often a hidden population, making it difficult to access or understand the issue at its core. On the other hand, perpetrators are often also a hidden population, making it difficult to understand the true reasons or mechanisms behind the use of SV in conflict. Similar to how some conflicts can only report estimated deaths and injuries at best, SV in conflict is rarely measured quantitatively and is always a rough estimation. This is why the available datasets only provide rough prevalence or intensity scores for SV because there is no specific, numerical data on SV in conflict available. There is not much that can currently be done to combat this limitation besides the hope that the reporting of SV and the prosecution for SV crimes becomes more normalized and widespread in the future, not just to aid in the availability of data but also for the sake of victims of SV.

When attempting to create a new data set, the sources from which to pull from are extremely limited and unorganized. Sources like the United Nations, and other organizations that collect data and report on SV, rarely possess a central database and often only have the data from recent years on their current websites. Even for the main source for this study, the U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, only the reports after 2016 remain on the State Department's website. For all other years, I had to rely on internet archives and reports that were available in the University library, which still was immensely time-consuming. For this

reason, data could be biased. Measures, like using supplemental reports, were taken to greatly minimize these risks but the limitations still exist.

Other controls like women's economic standings, specific laws or normative prohibitions in place, and gender inequality indexes seem like variables with available data; however, when looking across country-year boundaries, it is very difficult to obtain data with validity.

Organizations that report on gender inequality indexes often only have recent years on their website with little to no information on any possible existing archives, making it easy to get global indexes for the last five or so years but nearly impossible to obtain indexes for all the observations in the sample. With this being said, there are more controls that would be useful to this study aside from the controls I am currently examining but due to the limitations in existing data, it is very difficult to obtain the necessary information.

The control variable, normative prohibitions, was coded using the country reports, similarly to the independent and dependent variable; however due to the lack of continuity in key words that can be used, the normative prohibitions control is a little more subjective in its coding. With more time and collective resources regarding the legislation in place and the enforcement or lack thereof of such laws, this control should be improved on in future research to better understand the role normative prohibitions play in the presence of SV both before and during conflict. The quantitative data, itself, is limited in its generalizability. The sample size is small, and when partnered with the fact that the categorical ordinal variables are being treated as continuous, there is not enough data to be able to make generalized inferences about the initial findings of this study. The parallel mixed methodology was employed to better examine the umbrella hypothesis at hand, but with existing limitations in the resources, future research should aim to continue minimizing the limitations as best as possible with the currently available

resources. Additionally, future research should work on making more resources readily available while also working to unite existing resources that may be separated or hard to access.

Having recognized those shortcomings, it bears repeating what this thesis *does* accomplish. It illustrates how SV, both in times of peace and in times of conflict, is a widespread international issue that deserves more attention in society and, more specifically, in research. In this paper, I have discussed a few theories behind why SV is used in times of conflict and why SV in conflict is connected to SV in pre-conflict peacetime. Although scholars who make arguments for other causal variables behind SV in conflict hold validity and make great arguments, they fail to take in the full picture of SV in conflict by not examining it across the boundaries of conflict-year times. The scholars that have attempted to empirically connect pre-conflict peacetime levels of SV and levels of SV during conflict, while they have paved the way for current research, use data that desperately needs improvement and to be expanded.

Building on the frameworks created by SV scholars, I formed my argument within the continuum theoretical frameworks, which allows for a deeper understanding of the use of SV in conflict and how it can be better understood by expanding the limitations of time. I argued that the largest gap in the research on SV in conflict exists in the lack of examination across time and that the best way to understand SV in conflict is to examine times of peace. Therefore, I expected to see a positive relationship between pre-conflict peacetime levels of SV and levels of SV during conflict. The results of this study are significant, indicating support for my hypotheses, but still too limited to make any large generalizations or officially conclude support for the hypotheses.

While the country reports and qualitative grey literature are useful in providing some valuable information related to this topic, it still is very minimal, with many reports falling short

or failing to mention specific events or SV at all. Further research should focus on expanding the available data about past country-years. Although it is not necessarily possible to go back in time and recollect and reorganize past data and understandings of sexual violence, it is possible to expand what is currently available to aid in research that focuses on past years. Going forward, although SV is majorly under-reported, new systems of data collection and organization need to be put in place to ensure our understanding of SV, especially during armed conflicts, improves with time. Additionally, currently available resources, like the U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices need to be made more easily available to ensure researchers, students, and the general public do not have to go through so many obstacles to be able to access these documents. Overall, the organization and collection of data on SV must be improved for future research to be able to take place.

A major implication of this research is how it affects the current understandings of SV, both in peacetime and in times of conflict, and the possible relationship between the two. By better understanding these factors, not only can I build on and improve the available data on SV but also better understand if SV in conflict can be predicted, and eventually avoided, by examining times of peace. A hopeful indication of this research is that it sheds light on the extent of conflict-related SV and aids the fight to lessen the prevalence of SV both in times of conflict and in peace. Future research should expand upon this study, adding more controls and utilizing more sources for the quantitative data to continue expanding and building on the validity of this study. More work should be done on consolidating and organizing currently available data on SV and violence against women to ensure future research is able to continue moving forward. Future research should also work on the development of data on conflict-related SV across an even

larger time period and expanding on the databases that already exist so that better analyses of the reasons behind and relationship between aspects of conflict-related SV can take place.



## **APPENDIX: EXPANDED TABLE 1 MODEL**

*Model 1: Ordered Logit Regression of pre-conflict SV score and SV score during conflict with added controls*

SVscoreFYOC	Coefficient	Standard Error	z	P >  z	95% Confidence Interval	
SVscore5YBC	7.1997	1.8545	3.88	0.000	3.5649	10.8346
Intensity Score	2.8385	1.6682	1.70	1.089	-0.4311	6.1081
TypeofConflict	1.9673	1.5490	1.27	0.204	-1.0687	5.0032
NPFirstYOC	2.2145	1.4464	1.53	0.126	-0.6204	5.0495

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