SANCTIONED VIOLATIONS: MASS RAPE AS A STRATEGY OF WAR IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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INTRODUCTION

Rape is widely recognized as a crime in societies around the world, whether as a crime against a woman and her intrinsic right to her body or as a crime against society either because a woman is viewed as a man’s property or because rape is a violation of cultural norms. The condemnation of this act is evident in the fact that states have laws, to varying degrees, or societies have customs to protect victims and punish offenders. However, in many wars and armed conflicts in the twentieth-century, rape has ceased to be viewed as a crime by typically law-abiding individuals. In many cases it has even become a form of policy or warfare strategy. How and why this transgression occurred in wars of this century has concerned many scholars and politicians world-wide.

This thesis focuses on the use of mass rape in war, specifically its causes. I approach the topic using two documented case studies: the Japanese military during World War II in the 1930s and 1940s and Serbian forces during the fall of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. These militaries operated systems of mass rape that

1 For the purposes of this thesis, I define rape as sex acts with an unwilling person by coercion or force or threat of force against the victim or a third person. Regardless of where this act takes place (in a brothel, camp, or a home) or if the victim has been labeled a prostitute, if the victim is not a willing participant than it is rape.

2 Scholars from the fields of history, sociology, psychology, law, women’s studies, and even biology have addressed the issue of wartime rapes, and politicians, activists, and officials with The Hague have been focusing seriously on the topic in the past twenty years. Cynthia Enloe, Susan Brownmiller, Jerry A. Coyne, and Catharine MacKinnon are just a few scholars who have addressed wartime rapes as well as activist organizations such as Women for Women International and Amnesty International.
were structurally quite different, but both systems were organized and institutionalized. Through a comparison of these two cases I argue that these perpetrators shared significant cultural conditions that contributed to their decision to use mass rape, but that ultimately their perception of organized mass rape as strategically useful led them to adopt it as a policy.

The international community expressed disbelief, followed by disgust, as the truth about mass rape as a policy in the former Yugoslavia began to surface in 1992. Journalists and politicians declared the mass rapes by Serbian forces "unprecedented in the history of war crimes."³ The United Nations began an investigation into these allegations in 1993 and concluded, along with the European Community, that somewhere between 20,000 and 50,000 women were victims of organized rape warfare.⁴ The Hague established war crimes tribunals to prosecute the originators and perpetrators of these rape policies over the next several years. Later in the 1990s, UN war crimes attorneys responded to mass rapes in Rwanda by voicing a greater commitment to ending rape warfare.⁵

While these are much needed and welcomed efforts, they are long overdue. Susan Brownmiller, a journalist and feminist, has tried to point out that

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“for women, there is nothing unprecedented about mass rape in war.”6 While the Yugoslav and Rwandan cases have received a fair amount of international attention, they were not the first, nor the worst, campaigns of rape warfare in this century. During the Bangladeshi war for independence in 1971, an estimated 200,000 women were raped by Pakistani soldiers. German forces raped tens of thousands of women as they marched through Russia during World War II. In retaliation, Russian soldiers raped hundreds of thousands of women during the fall of Berlin in 1945.7 Regardless of the time and place in question, each of these societies went through an extensive transformation from viewing rape as an illegal and immoral act, to perpetrating it on a mass scale. How that transformation was possible, and for what purpose, are significant factors in understanding rape warfare. Also significant is whether or not rape strategy has been “successful.”8

When journalists began to report in the early 1990s on the mass rapes occurring in the war in the former Yugoslavia, one of the most asked questions was: “how could this happen?” Other questions followed: what preconditions existed to allow for the implementation of a campaign of mass rape? What made combatants believe that mass rape was a viable option? These questions might

6 Brownmiller, 181.
8 I use the term “successful” to denote how rape strategies helped a military/government achieve their specific goals. I do not mean for it to suggest approval of such policies.
logically lead historians to ask why mass rape happened. What purpose did it serve? Humans do not wage war simply for war's sake. Participants in wars have end-goals in mind; whether those goals are rational or irrational, ideological, religious, political or economic, it can be argued that organized acts of war are related to those larger war goals and that mass rape, as an organized act of war, is not merely a by-product of war, but a strategy for victory. World leaders and organizations interested in eliminating war crimes must first understand how and why perpetrators commit these organized acts of war. The goal of this thesis is to discover how decision-makers came to such a decision and why they implemented it.

A historical analysis of the phenomenon of mass rape during war has not been a common endeavor. A fair number of scholars have focused on specific cases of mass rape, but few have addressed the topic comparatively within a historical context. This is unfortunate, as I believe that historians can contribute a great deal to the topic. Through a historical lens, wartime rapes may be seen in a larger context, which will expand and clarify perceptions of mass rape, how it is defined and how it is combated. Historical scholarship is essential to the study of any phenomenon, especially when seeking to understand causes and solutions. In order to understand a reoccurring event, one must investigate similar events. One must also examine how those past similar events transpired, played-out, and how the actors involved addressed them. This is part of the very nature of historical analysis.
The politicians and activists who drew attention to the cases of mass rape in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda in the 1990s were not equipped to or not willing to provide the useful historical perspective that those cases desperately needed. And scholars in fields such as sociology, women’s studies, and international law followed the methods of their disciplines and focused on the cases at hand. Politicians focused on issues of legal justice and activists on how to address the needs of the victims. These are all important roles to play, but without the contribution of historians we cannot place these events in a larger context. Susan Brownmiller may be correct that “there is nothing unprecedented about mass rape in war,” but if historians do not join in addressing the issue many decision-makers may not remember that fact. And by focusing on the historical trends of this phenomenon and the past attempts or lack of attempts to end it, present day decision-makers find viable solutions. Historical analysis of mass wartime rapes may have a powerful impact on policy. How women’s histories and violations are presented and compared will affect the treatment of women’s human rights in legal and political arenas.\footnote{Catharine MacKinnon, \textit{Are Women Human?} (Cambridge, USA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 78-79, 181.} It is with this in mind that I approach a history of mass rape.

The first chapter is a brief overview of the four main approaches to understanding rape warfare: the psychological, the evolutionary, the feminist, and the political. I look at the influences and ideas of each approach and their
contributions to the topic, as well as their drawbacks. This not only provides background, but also lays the framework for my own approach. As opposed to subscribing to just one theory, I find that a large degree of synthesis is necessary to truly appreciate the causes and complexities of rape warfare. By blending ideas proposed by the feminist, psychological and political approaches, one gains a broader view of the many influences and factors involved in such a war tactic.

In chapters two and three, I focus on two documented wars involving mass rape as case studies: the Japanese during World War II and the Serbs during the fall of Yugoslavia. I compare two cases that are temporally, culturally and geographically distinct in order to find any similarities that may explain the phenomenon of mass rape.

Chapter two covers the Japanese military and government’s culpability in the sexual slavery of hundreds of thousands of Asian women throughout the Asian-Pacific front of WWII. I define sexual slavery as serial rape. Therefore, while the comfort system was structurally different from the mass rape campaigns in the former Yugoslavia, it was still a form of mass rape. I look at the course and forms of the comfort system, how the brothels were run and how the women were treated. In the second section I delve into the social preconditions in Japanese society that allowed for and dictated a rape strategy. Understanding the aspects of a society that influenced the decision to rely on rape as a war tactic and

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elucidating the ways in which that tactic was implemented, help to explain how and why such an atrocity could take place. Finally, I focus on the direct, tangible benefits that the Japanese believed the comfort system would create. Through a combination of cultural influences and perceived direct benefits, one can begin to understand, without condoning, why the Japanese decided on mass rape as a strategy of war.

The third chapter follows the same method as the second. First, I give background on the Yugoslavian war and the forms of mass rape that Serbian forces perpetrated against tens of thousands of Croatian, Bosnian, and Muslim women during that time. In the second section I demonstrate how Serbian society possessed many of the same ideas about patriarchy, masculinity, and ethnicity as pre-war Japanese society. Once again, these ideas prepared a path to accepting mass rape. In the third section, I look at the perceived benefits applicable to Serbian forces. Also like the Japanese, Serbian forces believed that mass rape would aid the war effort, only they believed that it would benefit them for different reasons. At this point, the similarities between the Japanese and the Serbian cases, as well as my argument, become very clear: cultural ideas about patriarchy, gender roles, and ethnicity influenced the minds of decision-makers, but it was the view that mass rape would create direct, political and military benefits that ultimately led to it becoming a strategy.

These similarities may help explain how a military or government decides to use mass rape as a strategy of war and why. However, it is important to keep
in mind the differences that exist as well. The Japanese comfort system was an intricately organized system of brothels where women were forced to serve as sex slaves, as though they were prostitutes. While there were such examples in the Serbian case, the majority of rapes were improvised, though apparently part of a larger, if haphazard, plan. The Japanese forces primarily used Korean women to staff their comfort stations, women from a Japanese colony. Serbian forces attacked Croatian and Muslim women from their own country. Japan was engaged in a war of expansion, whereas the war in the former Yugoslavia was a civil war. It is possible that some may see these as two different phenomena because of these differences. I, however, believe that the similarities of these two cases are more glaring than their differences. Both Japanese and Serbian forces committed mass rape. How they used it may have been different, but why they used it was not. I am not arguing that these two cases are exactly alike, far from it. But they are both part of the same larger phenomenon: the intentional abuse of women in order to further military aims. A further examination of the differences that exist between these cases would undoubtedly be useful, but the focus of this thesis will be the similarities.

The existence of differences in these cases is not the only caveat. Readers should consider the fact that when making historical comparisons, a historian cannot be an expert in every case or subfield. That fact may hinder one's work. I am not a specialist in Japanese or Balkan history specifically, therefore, I am limited in my contribution to the analysis of each case. On the other hand, being
able to step back and look at the larger picture may be exactly what the study of mass rape needs. In order to end the phenomenon, we need to view it as an adaptable, world-wide contagion, as opposed to studying it case by case, which makes each case seem like an aberration instead of part of an epidemic. In any case, while I recognize my limitations, I see the need for a larger, historical view that will address both similarities and differences and have a significant impact on policy. This thesis is a contribution toward that end.
CHAPTER I

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF RAPE WARFARE

Scholars from a wide array of fields have attempted to explain and understand wartime rape using various approaches. This chapter will examine four different methodologies to studying rape as a war policy and their contributions to the dialogue: the psychological, the evolutionary, the feminist, and the political. These approaches to understanding mass war rape often conflate. I have found it useful to blend theories rather than adhere to strict categorization. However, some methodologies are more useful than others. Within these diverse methods and the blending of various theories, a broader understanding of rape as a war policy has emerged.\(^1\)

The Psychoanalytic Approach

Historical psychoanalysis is difficult due to the inaccessibility of one’s subject(s). This fact makes judging the accuracy of one’s claims extremely difficult. On the other hand, psychohistory can provide information that adds to the knowledge of a particular subject(s) and can open new avenues of understanding. Therefore, psychohistory should be seen as supplemental in nature rather than as an explanation within itself.

\(^1\) This thesis will not examine other sexually exploitative acts of war, such as sponsored prostitution (military support of willing professional prostitutes), sexual coercion (sex in exchange for food, money or goods), or other ambiguous areas of sexual interaction during wartime. I will only address rape and sexual slavery, which I define as serial rape.
Paul Parin, a scholar in ethnic psychology, has focused on the mass-psychology of perpetrators to explain the occurrence of war rapes. Parin’s approach, referred to as ethno-psychoanalysis, focuses on a group psychology and therefore avoids the problem of an exaggerated emphasis of the individual that is common to the psychoanalytical approach. Parin, who looks at the Yugoslav case, sees the brutalities of the war coming from the ethnic psychology of the region. He argues that there is an acute consciousness of the unresolved history between the Croats, Serbs and Muslims which was about struggles for freedom, dominance, resources and ethnic and religious differences. This consciousness developed a sense of “us and them.” “Us,” naturally, was defined as good and “them” as bad.

Along with this development of group superiority came political and economic instability, especially after Josip Broz Tito’s death in 1980. In this state of increased pressure and hardship, emotions ran high. Feelings of rage and bitterness led to a loss in values and social expectations and a need to blame. Around this time, aspiring, manipulative political leaders, such as Slobodan Milošević, emerged. These politicians were able to create an adept propaganda machine and exploit the psychology of the people. Propaganda, as well as the consciousness of “us and them” contributed to a high degree of group identity.

9 Ibid., 40-42.
This need for group identity, Parin argues, is a sign of a lack of self-esteem.

While group cohesion bolsters self-esteem and gives a person a sense of belonging, it also works to distort history, increase a sense of entitlement, reinforce a sense of loss and encourage behavior that demonstrates group superiority. In this setting one sees a decrease in rationality.\textsuperscript{14}

Another aspect of the ethnic psychology of the region that plays a part in explaining the rape campaigns for Parin, is child rearing techniques. Children learn patterns of aggression and love from their parents.\textsuperscript{15} According to Parin, Yugoslavian families show great love and tenderness toward children. However, these same parents tend to be very strict and use severe physical punishments. Parin believes that this may in part explain the brutal tendencies of the war (i.e. the mass rapes). He says:

To this [parenting styles] I attribute the open, direct expression of positive feelings and sexual desires of men and women . . . . Perhaps the same thing is true of aggressive deeds: they happen spontaneously, are uninhibited, and are often sustained by sadistic pleasure.\textsuperscript{16}

Another example of the psychoanalytic approach is the work of Stanley Rosenman, who also explains the occurrence of mass rape through histories that focus on group psychology and child rearing practices. To explain the sexual

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 40-44.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 46.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 47.
slavery of the so-called “comfort women” by Japanese soldiers during World War II, Rosenman looks at Japanese gender roles, parenting techniques, and feelings of inferiority. At the time of the war, women in Japan had been placed in an inferior position, presumably far more inferior than their counterparts in other countries. Usually married to those the family chose, in unloving and sometimes violent marriages, under the authority of a mother-in-law, and without much support from anyone, the Japanese wife had to be subservient and focus on her role as a mother. She was absorbed in her children, especially her sons. A son offered her a chance to be valued and to gain power. Through his success she would finally be honored. Due to the extreme imbalance in gender status, in Rosenman’s view Japanese women were obsessed with their sons. This obsession, so his argument goes, led to parenting methods that ultimately drove Japanese soldiers to rape and torture. He argues,

Abusive childrearing practices lead to aberrations of character that facilitate engaging in mass slaughter and shape the nature of its atrocities.18

Rosenman claims that Japanese mothers forced potty training on children at harmfully young ages in an attempt to begin teaching children the importance of control and achievement that would be necessary for them to succeed, success

18 Ibid., 8.
of a son being essential for the mother's advancement. He also claims that mothers often forced breast feeding beyond a child's need or desire. This Rosenman translate into "an oral rape." Here one can see the beginning of his understanding of the mass rapes as a response to "mommy." However, he goes even farther to argue that large numbers of Japanese mothers sexually abused their sons, as well. The mother's incestuous behavior was both a result of her isolation and yearning for closeness and her own mistreatment. It was also a way, rather counter-intuitively, to link herself to her son and his future. As a result of this treatment boys grew up resenting intrusion on their autonomy, as seen in forced potty training and breast feeding, and despising women because of forced breast feeding and incest, as well as the overall cultural misogyny. 19

Rosenman adds another ingredient to the Japanese male psychology of the time. In addition to his other childhood traumas, the Japanese soldier was socialized in an atmosphere of collective catastrophes, in a jealous and unquestioning culture. The collective catastrophes that Rosenman refers to are the frequent occurrence of typhoons and early humiliating military defeats, most notably the loss to Commodore Perry and the American fleet in 1854. These group traumas gave the Japanese a feeling of victimhood and a sense of resentment of more successful countries. Accompanying their desire to prove themselves superior, according to Rosenman, was a child-like, unconscious

19 Ibid., 9-11.
devotion to “the group.” Japanese boys, future soldiers, were conditioned to unquestioningly obey parents and the emperor.20

The ethno-psychoanalytic approach seeks to understand the forces that led a particular group of people to rape on a large scale. It allows the researcher to “understand” the rationalizing process going on in the minds of the aggressors, to possibly explain how such acts could happen. However, this approach has a few problems, as well. For one, Parin defines brutal behaviors as “spontaneous.” He fails to acknowledge the amount of consideration and planning that a campaign of mass rape may have entailed, therefore, removing the explanation for actions from the conscious to the subconscious. Parenting methods which encourage high, unchecked emotions may influence brutalities that are spontaneous and random, but they do not explain well enough the forethought and systematic conduct of rape warfare.

Another problem with Parin’s approach is that by focusing so much on the ethnic characteristics of a group or region one may see rape warfare as a phenomenon specific to an ethnic group. Parin’s argument begins to look like mass rapes occurred in the former Yugoslavia because of something inherently “Yugoslavian” or “Balkan.” Hence, not something that could happen in say, England. Simply, this approach is too narrow in the fact that it looks at individual occurrences of mass rape, rather than looking at various instances

20 Ibid., 4-7.
throughout time. Patin's approach still contributes to our understanding of the
topic, but it functions more appropriately as a supplemental interpretation,
keeping those caveats in mind.

Whereas Patin's argument has an ethnic determination to it, Rosenman's
argument is flatly western-centric. For Rosenman, Japanese psychological
responses to collective and childhood traumas stem from the fact that no

Renaissance or Enlightenment emerged in the insulated islands
nor, as a consequence, did a liberal movement appear. [Due to this]
The Japanese were unequipped to mourn that dim sense of having
failed to become free-thinking autonomous creatures.²¹

All of this supposedly caused the Japanese to envy more "liberated" nations.
Therefore, a lack of modern, western enlightenment, liberal, autonomous
thought and a jealousy of others contributed to mass rape.

Rosenman's reliance on parenting techniques by the Japanese mother is
also problematic. His evidence for the claim that many Japanese women
molested their sons is incomplete, to say the least. And his Freudian emphasis on
potty training and breast feeding goes beyond the realm of reason. It is one thing
for psychoanalysts to find some validity in the claim that potty training and
breast feeding can have damaging repercussions on an individual, it is another
thing to assume that they turn people into mass rapists and murderers. And it is
still another thing to generalize about an entire ethnic group's parenting
practices. Rosenman does not allow for variation.

²¹ Ibid., 5, 7.
The main problem with the psychoanalytic approach is that it particularizes the occurrence of mass rape, diminishing the significant fact that mass rapes have been a part of many conflicts in this century. Looking at the psychology of the various ethnicities of the Balkans or Japan may give some insights into how those specific perpetrators decided on mass rape, but it does not help us understand why rape warfare has been so prevalent. This approach also generalizes a great deal about the groups it seeks to understand. Not all parents raise their children in the same way within an ethnic group. Not every member of society experiences historical events in the same way. This approach does not take into account the possible variations in parenting methods or group experiences.

Evolutionary Explanations

The evolutionary explanation for rape, during war and in peacetime, has received a great deal of attention and has generated a great deal of controversy.\textsuperscript{22} This approach has attacked and attempted to countervail preexisting social scientific explanations. The basic reasoning of the evolutionary argument revolves around Darwinian reproductive drives. According to this theory, female mammals invest more in their offspring than do male mammals. This allows females more knowledge of the continuation of their genes. They give birth to and care for their offspring, and, therefore, know that they are reproducing.

\textsuperscript{22} Cheryl Brown Travis, ed., \textit{Evolution, Gender and Rape} (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 3-6, 10-12.
Since males are less invested, they are more likely to ensure that they pass on their genes by mating with as many females as possible. Females are more selective of their partners so that they have only desirable offspring for whom they will then be responsible.\footnote{Jerry A. Coyne, "Of Vice and Men: A Case Study in Evolutionary Psychology," in Travis, 171-189.}

Randy Thornhill and Craig T. Palmer have translated these basic evolutionary tenets into a theory about rape. For these two scientists, rape occurs because of the evolutionary, biological urge to reproduce. Women, according to them, have a less competitive role in acquiring mates and achieving reproduction. They may have to compete for more or less suitable males, but they do not have to compete for copulation. Men, who have to copulate more frequently to ensure reproductive success, have to compete more fiercely for mates.\footnote{Randy Thornhill, Craig T. Palmer, \textit{A Natural History of Rape} (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), 1-15.} It is within this setting of human mating and reproduction that Thornhill and Palmer see the evolutionary basis for rape: "But getting chosen is not the only way to gain sexual access to females. In rape, the male circumvents the female's choice."\footnote{Ibid., 53, 63-64.} In this sense rape has become a response to the desire to reproduce for unsuccessful men.

The authors do not consider rape to be an adaptation itself, therefore, they do not predict future generations of increasing numbers of rapists, but they do
see rape as a “by-product” of sexual adaptations. The difference is that an adaptation is favored by natural selection because it adds to a species’ survival and success. Rape is not necessary for human survival. A by-product is an effect that comes from adaptations. Due to stronger sexual selecting pressure put on males over human history, their brains and bodies developed differently than women. For example, their size increased and aggression and sexuality has heightened. Rape was a by-product of those changes. Rape is an attempt to pass on one’s genes. Though really, as their critics point out, Thornhill and Palmer are actually making an argument for rape as an adaptation because they are saying that “rape is not merely an aggressive or sexual act, but a reproductive act.” During war, an already aggressive male experience, rape is frequent because women are more vulnerable and war provides a relatively safe opportunity for men to reproduce with unwilling women.

Jerry A. Coyne agrees that men have evolved to be more aggressive and promiscuous than women and that this combination can lead to rape. In this sense he falls into the by-product camp. However, he also admits to cultural influences such as patriarchy. So he is actually attesting to the fact that an evolutionary argument alone cannot explain rape. Coyne also believes that Thornhill and Palmer are trivializing human phenomena by attempting to lump everything into a simple evolutionary explanation. Using evolutionary

26 Ibid., 13.
27 Coyne, 177.
reproductive drives as explanations for human actions contributes nothing to understanding things such as adoption, religious celibacy, or bestiality since these would be considered “maladaptive.”

One obvious problem with the evolutionary approach is that it reduces rapists’ motives to sex and reproduction. Thornhill and Palmer attempt to support this by stating that most rape victims are of child-bearing age and that most rapists do not kill or excessively “harm” their victims. In reality, victims of mass rapes span the full range of age. Girls as young as six and women as old as eighty have been raped during invasions, “liberations,” occupations, imprisonment, and in rape camps. Secondly, many women are quite harmed, other than the obvious fact that they were raped, during an attack. Beatings, torture, starvation and psychological torment often accompany war rapes. It does not fit with the evolutionary logic that rape is a way to pass one one’s genes if the rapist inflicts damage to his victims, since it can also harm his possible offspring.

Also problematic for this argument is the usefulness of rape as a reproductive strategy. For pregnancy to result from a rape, the women would have to be ovulating, not have any trouble with fertilization or miscarriage, and

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28 Ibid., 176.
29 There are multiple sources that support the assertion that many women of non-child bearing age have been victims of war rapes. Alexander Stiglmayer’s interviews with women in Bosnia and Yuki Tanaka’s work on the Japanese in Nanking, just to name a couple, relate accounts of very young girls and elderly women being raped. Stiglmayer, 101, 111; Yuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996) 103.
she would have to carry the child to full term. These are very significant obstacles to a rapist’s reproduction. Women are only fertile for up to five days in a month, often spontaneously abort, and, especially these days, have access to abortions.30

Another problem with this approach is that it makes all men potential rapists while at the same time absolving men of a great deal of responsibility. Men have been changed through natural selection to be aggressive and sexual and, quite often, sexually aggressive. They are, therefore, at the mercy of their genes. Thornhill and Palmer even suggest that boys should be educated about their nature and proclivity for rape so that they can learn to control themselves. The assumption that rape warfare is an unorganized result of hormones gone wild or evolutionary drives for reproduction is irresponsible and ignores the premeditation and political factors.

**Gender and the Feminist Interpretation**

While an evolutionary approach is in many ways oppositional to a feminist approach, the two have one thing in common: they both propose that rape occurs because of male characteristics. Evolutionary explanations explain rape in male biological terms, while feminist explanations look at rape in terms of male social constructions. The feminist approach considers gender and the

30 Cheryl Brown Travis, “Theory and Data on Rape and Evolution,” in Brown Travis, 214.
rule and maintenance of patriarchy and misogyny to be primary factors in war rapes.

Like peacetime, or so-called "normal" rapes, wartime rapes are an expression of misogyny and a result of patriarchy’s desire to dominate women. Patriarchy is an ideology that asserts male dominance and views women as subordinate. Patriarchy continues to perpetuate the myth of women as inferior to men, maintaining a conceptualization of women as property. According to feminist interpretations, this view of women allows for and encourages violence against women.\(^{31}\) In part this is because the violation of women, like the destruction of physical property, can be used as a symbol of the defeat of the enemy male population. As Susan Brownmiller argues,

Rape by a conquering soldier destroys all remaining illusions of power and property for men of the defeated side. The body of a raped woman becomes a ceremonial battlefield; a playground for the victor’s trooping of the colors.\(^{32}\)

With Brownmiller’s view in mind, rape and war are a logical pair. As Historian Joshua Goldstein says, “Rape is a crime of domination, and war has everything to do with domination.”\(^{33}\)

This gendered domination can be seen, Goldstein posits, in the fact that rape has historically represented the destruction of an enemy’s property. The

\(^{31}\) Christine Ball, “Women, Rape and War: Patriarchal Functions and Ideologies,” *Atlantis* 12, no. 1 (Fall, 1986), 84.
\(^{32}\) Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 38.
violation of a woman is viewed in relationship to men; when a soldier rapes he sends a message to enemy soldiers. He demonstrates his victory and enjoys his conquest. The concept of women belonging to men, father or husband, makes a woman vulnerable to rape because her violation is seen as an affront to other men, a way for one group of men to tell another group of men that they are the victors. In this way, the female body becomes another battlefield. And the use of rape functions to maintain patriarchy because it reinforces the concepts of women as inferior, as property, and as legitimate victims of male sexual violence. It defines and facilitates male supremacy.

Misogyny also plays an active role in the feminist interpretation of mass war rapes. Men do not just rape to maintain their elevated status. They also rape because of an inherent hatred of women. A state of crisis allows men to express their hatred. War is a state of crisis especially conducive to rape because it is a highly aggressive time when regular social norms have been suspended. The soldier is socialized by a gender-specific and hierarchical institution, the military, which is characterized by a cult of aggressive masculinity and the sexualization and denigration of women. Soldiers are taught to kill and encouraged to be aggressive. In the setting of war, aggression easily translates into other acts of violence which are encouraged, tolerated or simply ignored. Rape is often one of

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35 Ball, 85.
these “other acts” because, as Brownmiller believes, war “provides men with the perfect psychological backdrop to give vent to their contempt for women.”

This denigration and hatred of women can be witnessed, Goldstein argues, by the fact that armies feminize their enemies. They use gender to dominate symbolically, to feel superior to their opponents. The most common way in which this feminization is expressed is through insults. Soldiers often refer to enemies as “bitches,” “pussies,” or “queers.” Insults associated with women or homosexual males emasculate the enemy. Assumptions about an enemy’s impotence or castration are also common. These insults and images symbolically castrate the enemy, and in some wars, literal castration has occurred. The opponent, the enemy, the “other,” the perceived evil, is linked to the female gender. As proponents of the feminist interpretation argue, this pre-existing association between woman and enemy, woman and subordinate, leads directly to mass rape. Feminizing the enemy “effectively transforms the figure of the enemy into a woman and thus lays the groundwork for rape imagery to intensify the drive towards war.”

One problem with this approach is the universality with which this theory is applied. Scholars in the feminist camp are undoubtedly correct in their

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37 Brownmiller, Against Our Will, 32.
38 Such insults are also used on fellow soldiers to reassert hierarchies and humiliate those performing poorly. These insults also serve to unify soldiers through gender association and encourage macho, aggressive behavior.
39 Goldstein, 361.
assumption that most every existing society is patriarchal. Few would deny this point. However, this approach does not take into account the fact that there are varying degrees of patriarchy in existence. The mistake of viewing rape warfare as the direct result of patriarchy and misogyny is that even though almost every society in the world is patriarchal, not every war has included campaigns of mass rape. If patriarchy and misogyny were the only factors involved in explaining the existence of mass war rapes, then this tactic would have been present in every war and armed conflict in the twentieth century. Yet, history has not witnessed premeditated, organized campaigns of mass rape by the participants in every war involving patriarchal nations.

A second consideration that this approach fails to make is that a woman is chosen to be raped. How and why a woman is chosen is a significant aspect of rape warfare. The feminist interpretation only examines the decision of misogynistic men to rape any woman simply because she’s a woman. For this approach, the decision is merely a matter of gender. However, gender is not the only factor that contributes to mass war rapes. Soldiers generally do not rape just any women; they rape the enemy’s women. Thus, her racial, ethnic, or religious identity plays into her victimhood as much as her gender. If rape were just another way to reinforce patriarchy then soldiers would be just as likely to rape their own women as their enemy’s women. The feminist approach “can obscure
other characteristics of a woman's identity that determined which [sic] women are raped.” 40

On the other hand, a culture of patriarchy and misogyny predisposes a society to violence against women. If women are constantly sexualized, viewed as inferior and seen as viable outlets for male sexual aggression in peacetime, rape warfare is not an unimaginable outcome. The feminist approach, however, does not address the fact that there may be additional reasons, beyond the desire to reinforce patriarchy, for a nation to employ mass rape. Issues of power and politics may deem rape a useful strategy of war. There are degrees of patriarchy and a number of ways in which patriarchy can be, and is, expressed; rape is not always necessary. Therefore, misogyny and patriarchy are factors which are essential for mass rape to occur, but they are not main explanations for why it is used. They are necessary, but not sufficient.

The point of this comparison is to show that the attitudes that allow certain actions to occur are not necessarily the only explanations for those actions. Dorothy Q. Thomas and Regan E. Ralph have addressed this issue concerning mass war rapes. Viewing mass war rape through gender alone, according to them, results in it being depoliticized and relegated to the sexual or

personal level. They acknowledge the role and importance of patriarchy, but believe that to truly understand rape warfare and its designation as a war crime it needs to be viewed in terms of its political functions.41

Power and Political Theories

Political interpretations of rape warfare emphasize the use of rape as a political tool and means to power. If war is a battle of political power between two or more entities then the forms of warfare used are intricately related to that drive for power. Rape organized and perpetrated on a mass scale has actual or perceived political benefits for those instituting it. Essentially, mass rape serves a political purpose. In addition, framing rape in terms of political power facilitates understanding rape as a war crime.

While this approach emphasizes the political goals involved in rape warfare, it does not exclude the influence of patriarchy. In fact, the existence of patriarchy is precisely what makes rape useful as a strategy. The patriarchal tenets that dictate that women belong to their men and need male protection contribute to their vulnerability. Soldiers rape the enemy’s women, in part, because of the expectation of men to protect “their women.” The men who cannot protect their women are humiliated and demoralized. In this sense, patriarchy makes rape a useful tool because through the act of rape soldiers can break the spirit of the male community. Thomas and Ralph argue that “soldiers

41 Thomas & Ralph, 206.
do rape women precisely because the violation of their ‘protected’ status has the effect of shaming them and their communities.”42 The feminist argument states that patriarchy causes men to hate and degrade women and that rape serves to reinforce patriarchy. While patriarchy permits mass rape, the rapes themselves have meaning beyond issues of gender relations. They also have strategic advantages that contribute to the extension of an entity’s power.

Michel Foucault’s ideas about the use and maintenance of power have contributed to this theory’s focus.43 At the most basic level, rape is an act that is more about power than sex or sexuality. It is an act of power that takes a sexual form. In the larger power struggle between nations, rape is an expression of one military’s power over another. If military A is able to rape en masse the women military B is supposed to protect, then A has demonstrated superiority, and can continue to use rape as an expression and extension of its power.

Foucault addressed power itself and how it can be created or maintained, but he also focused on the use of the body in his analysis of the mechanism of power. By controlling and punishing bodies, those in power display their superior degree of strength and their dominant place within a hierarchy wherein:

[T]he body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies,

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42 Ibid., 210.
and to emit signs... the body is invested with relations of power and domination.\textsuperscript{44}

In addition, the public display of the manipulation of one's body also contributes to establishing power by the influence that visible punishment has on an audience. This ceremonial component exhibits representations of power within the community. For proponents of political theories, mass rape can be seen as a "policy of terror: to make everyone aware, through the body of the criminal [in this case a rape victim], of the unrestrained presence of the sovereign [or invading army]."\textsuperscript{45}

Foucault's concept of the knowing subject is also a factor in the political interpretation of mass war rapes. In his study of the penal system, he argues that to truly control and manipulate a criminal he must be known. The power apparatus should have knowledge of him, his history, and his psychology. The same is true in war. Knowledge of the enemy, their history, culture, and belief systems, are advantageous for seizing power. Advocates of a political explanation for mass rape recognize the conscious use of information of one's enemy in strategic decision making.

Vera Folnegovic-Smalc utilizes Foucaultian ideas in her attempt to explain the use of rape policy by defining it as a mental and emotional weapon, as well

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 49.
as a physical one. According to Folnegovic-Smalc, the goal of rape is to cause massive psychological suffering and shame for the victim and her family. Mass gang-rapes are not about sex, they are about power. They are spectacles through which an army can demonstrate its power over their enemy and make that enemy very aware of their own powerlessness. Shame is wrapped up in this powerlessness in that women who are raped are often stigmatized, even by their own family members, and men feel shame because of their inability to protect “their women.”

In some cases, especially during the Yugoslavian war, gang-rapes are done publicly, in front of the women’s family, friends and neighbors. This adds to the shame the victim and her male relatives feel because of the public view. In addition, this visibility of the act serves to spread fear throughout towns and, according to Folnegovic-Smalc, it is through this fear, powerlessness and shame that an army can subdue and eventually conquer a population. The ceremonial nature of these rapes reinforces the army’s power and instructs the entire community. The psychological aspect of rape leaves an unhealed wound for years to come and serves to drive people from their homeland and leaves them without any desire to return, securing possession of the land for the invading

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army. Due to the psychologically destructive nature of rape, it would make a useful war tactic.  

Reminiscent of Foucault’s concept of “the knowing subject,” Folnegovic-Smalc recognizes the conscious decision to make rape a war policy. In fact, she attributes a hyperawareness to decision-makers. Her emphasis on the intense psychological warfare going on in a war with rape as a strategy suggests that, one, the perpetrators of such policy are educated in the psychological affects of rape on women, and the reactions that can be expected from their male relatives; two, that they have a pretty good concept of how their enemies are going to respond to this method; and three, that they have systematically and consciously decided on rape as their strategy, likely comparing and contrasting it with alternative strategies. In this way, Folnegovic-Smalc is offering a political explanation for the use of rape in warfare. By arguing that psychological damage from rape gives an army an advantage, she is implying that rape is a tool of power, a tool that will help one political enemy destroy another. Used in this way, a psychological interpretation can be beneficial.  

Another facet of the political nature of mass rape is its connection to torture; rape, like torture, is being addressed in war crimes trials. Torture is a

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48 This could be debated, of course. Different cultures view rape differently, which will change the effect that it has on the victim and her family. Rape may not be an effective tool of war in a society where rape is not seen as devastating, though I am unaware of any such society. In addition, rape may provoke revenge rather than just shame.
political act that is designated as a war crime.\textsuperscript{49} The political approach argues that rape should be viewed and treated in a similar manner as torture.\textsuperscript{50} Like torture, rape can be a tactical weapon. Both aim to utterly destroy those subjected to it, to inflict mind-altering pain and suffering. Torture is meant to create a loss of self in the victim and convert his or her "suffering into a display of power."\textsuperscript{51} Rape has the same effect. Rape and torture also have more concrete objectives. For example, in Peru rape was used by both the counterinsurgency forces and the guerillas to extract information, frighten civilians, and discourage involvement with their enemy forces.\textsuperscript{52} Due to the similarities in the goals and methods of torture and rape, the political approach believes that rape should be interpreted in terms of power and political moves.\textsuperscript{53}

Rape warfare is not only an expression of one army's dominance or an attempt at psychological destruction. It also strikes at the enemy culturally. Thomas and Ralph, as well as Ruth Seifert, argue that wars are won not only through military might, but through the destruction of the enemy's community and culture. Targeting civilians can be a quick way to end enemy resistance or to


\textsuperscript{50} The Akayesu case in Rwanda is one of the first war crimes trials to formulate mass rape charges in relation to definitions of torture. Coalition on Women's Human Rights in Conflict Situations, International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development, March 23, 2008, \url{http://www.ichrdd.ca/english/commdoc/publications/women/akayesuSentencing.html}.

\textsuperscript{51} Seifert, 40.
\textsuperscript{52} Thomas & Ralph, 204.
\textsuperscript{53} Seifert, 40-41.; Thomas & Ralph, 208.
break their spirit. These scholars explain that during a time of war women are those who keep the community and families functioning and alive. They maintain cultural practices and symbols that represent their ethnic group.\textsuperscript{54}

Women also represent the community symbolically. According to Seifert, women have often been associated with the nation in such figures as the Statue of Liberty in the U.S., Marianne in France, or the statue of Bavaria in Germany. She explains:

\begin{quote}
In societies woman represents the symbolic system of a group, the construction of the community being produced and made visible in her person, body, and life. . . . The rape of women of a community, culture, or nation can be regarded — and is regarded — as a symbolic rape of the body of that community.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

Therefore, the rape of the women of a nation serves the purpose of destroying the politico-cultural identity of the enemy.

Utilizing Foucault's discourse of power, the political approach to mass rapes has provided a complex explanation that also draws on feminist and psychological theories. Public displays of power, gender relations, knowledge of one's enemy, torture, and women as cultural symbols all have political implications. And this approach associates mass rape with each of them. It connects rape to patriarchy, psychological warfare, torture, and cultural concepts of women to validate the assumption that mass rapes are politically charged.

\textsuperscript{55} Seifert, "Second Front," 39.
Conclusion

These four approaches to understanding mass war rape have contributed to a necessary dialogue concerning the practice of rape warfare. For rape to receive the attention it deserves and be countered effectively it must first become a subject of discussion. While the evolutionary approach is highly suspect and the psychological and feminist approaches have some drawbacks, the political approach has addressed previously ignored issues and drawn on the strengths of the psychological and feminist approaches to enhance its own claims.

The psychoanalytic approach addresses the mass psychology of groups involved in wars with campaigns of mass rape. It seeks to “understand” rape warfare. However, psychohistorical interpretations have focused so narrowly on one instance that they have failed to address how or why rape warfare has been so pervasive. The feminist approach avoids the particularization issue because it attempts to explain mass rape as a phenomenon, addressing its various incarnations. On the other hand, this method has emphasized the importance of patriarchy and misogyny to such an extreme that any issue other than gender has been largely ignored.

The political approach to mass rape has looked beyond generalized theories of gender and narrowly focused ethnopsychology to define rape in terms of torture and communal destruction, explaining mass rape as a tool of power. This approach is useful because it seeks to understand the actual or
perceived benefits of rape warfare that help to highlight its definition as a war
crime. It is essential to examine multiple factors involved in a phenomenon.
Therefore, in my examination of the Japanese during World War II and the
Serbians during the fall of Yugoslavia I utilize aspects of the psychological
approach and the feminist approach within a political framework. I believe that
only through synthesizing theories, can one come to a better understanding of
mass rape.
CHAPTER II
JAPAN’S COMFORT WOMEN

He played with me like a cat with a helpless mouse. This game went on for a while, then he started to undress himself. And I realized that he had no intention of killing me. . . . He threw himself on top of me, pinning me down under his heavy body. I tried to fight him off, I kicked him, I scratched him, but he was too strong. The tears were streaming down my face as he raped me. It seemed as if he would never stop . . . .

-Jeanne Ruff-O’Herne, Dutch-Indonesian “comfort woman”\(^{56}\)

This was only the first of dozens of rapes that Jeanne Ruff-O’Herne suffered during more than three months as a “comfort woman.”\(^{57}\) She was twenty-one, a virgin, and studying to become a nun. This memory demonstrates the severity and horror of the sexual slavery that the Japanese military forced onto hundreds of thousands of young girls and women during its campaign across Asia. This sexual slavery was known as “the comfort system.” It was an institutionalized system of forced prostitution operated by the Japanese military in their occupied territories in the 1930s and 1940s. The first comfort stations developed in China in the early 1930s, but spread as far as Indonesia and the

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\(^{57}\) The term “comfort women” is an overly simplified euphemism that does not express the true nature of the lives that these women were forced to live. Some victims, activists, and academics find this term insulting. Yet, this has been the recognized term for over seventy years. It is commonly understood and used by every participant in the dialogue about these victims. Therefore, I continue to use this term, but I include the quotation marks initially to express the term’s euphemistic quality.
Philippines as the Japanese army spread across Asia. A large number of local women were forced into the comfort system, but of the estimated 80,000 to 200,000 women who were enslaved in the comfort system, roughly eighty percent of them were Korean. 58

There are hundreds of available stories like Ruff-O’Herne’s. Yet, the Japanese government has spent the last sixty years attempting to evade responsibility, to avoid apologizing for its complicity, and to deny official compensation to the victims, even after international conferences with victims, women’s groups, foreign governments, and victims’ supporters calling for acknowledgment. 59

Comfort women received little attention from governments, humanitarian and feminist organizations, and academics until the late 1980s. This was due to several reasons. For one, Japanese officials destroyed almost all documents referring to their implementation of the “comfort system” during the war. When the Allies conquered and eventually occupied Japan there were no documents found to prove Japan’s culpability. This did not stop the Allies from attempting to prosecute the Japanese for sexual enslavement. During the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, the Allies charged officials in the Japanese military and government with rapes as well as with the sexual slavery known as the comfort system. The

59 The Executive Committee International Public Hearing Report, War Victimisation and Japan, 9 December 1992
Allies succeeded in demonstrating the large numbers of rapes that occurred, especially during the now infamous “Rape of Nanking,” but they did not convince the tribunal of the institutionalization of sexual slavery.60

Secondly, after the tribunal, neither the Allies nor the nations victimized by Japanese imperial expansion pursued the issue of comfort women because of a lack of government interest. While all of these societies wanted compensation for the injustices they felt had been done them by Japan, they cared far more about issues affecting the larger nation than women alone. They focused on rebuilding after the war and seeing to the needs of male prisoners of war. In addition, many of these nations did not want to address the crimes of the comfort system because they saw it as a shameful experience, one in which some of these nations had been complicit. For these governments to address the needs of former comfort women, they would have had to address the collaboration of some of their own people.61

A third reason for the lack of attention that comfort women received until the late 1980s was that the victims themselves were often not eager to pursue justice. Most of the former comfort women came from societies that placed a high value on a woman’s chastity. To expose what they had suffered would have

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brought shame upon themselves and their families, often making it impossible for them to marry or remain in their home towns. In some instances, men left their wives because they had been raped.\textsuperscript{62} Therefore, it was usually in the victim's best interest to remain silent and suffer alone. Due to patriarchal expectations for women and the general lack of interest in their rights, the shame women felt, and the lack of information available, women stayed silent and humanitarian and feminist groups remained unaware of comfort women and thus unable to speak on their behalf. While knowledge of the existence of the comfort system was not uncommon, only two authors addressed the issue before 1988, Senda Kako in 1973 and Kim Il-myon in 1976, and their books were not widely accepted.\textsuperscript{63}

This silence began to end in 1987, when Korean feminist scholars and activists started to speak out. Professor Yun Chong-ok revealed her many years of research on comfort women, and Korean women’s groups demanded attention and investigation.\textsuperscript{64} Over the next four years, interest in the comfort women increased dramatically. Women’s groups from around the world, and even politicians and scholars in Japan, requested a response from the Japanese government. In April 1991, they received that response. The Japanese


\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 13, 15.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 14-15.
government flatly denied taking part in the comfort system and refused to apologize or compensate the victims.  

In response to such denial, Professor Yun issued six demands, including official recognition of Japanese military and government involvement, a formal apology, full disclosure of the comfort system, a memorial to the victims, compensation to them and/or their families, and the inclusion of the comfort system in official history books. In addition, three former Korean comfort women filed suit against the Japanese government, and Kim Hak-sun gave the first public testimony. This sparked a response from women’s groups and former victims throughout Asia. Soon, many more women came forward to expose the violence and trauma they suffered because of Japanese military policies.

In December 1992, scholars and activists in Japan held a tribunal at which several former comfort women testified to their experiences as victims of sexual slavery at the hands of Japanese soldiers. At the tribunal, these women related their experiences as comfort women and the on-going degradation of their lives due to those experiences. In addition, these brave women and the scholars and activists supporting them expressed their outrage at the Japanese government for its continued resistance to facing its past. This tribunal, and the many scholarly works on comfort women inspired by it, raised awareness to a higher level.

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65 Ibid., 15-16.
66 Ibid., 16.
67 The Executive Committee International Public Hearing Report, Ibid.
Scholars undertook new research and placed more pressure on the Japanese government to face the issue. During this time, Professor Yoshimi Yoshiaki of Chuo University in Japan found original Japanese documents from the war, buried in the archives of the Japanese Self-Defense Agency, which proved Japanese governmental and military involvement in the comfort system. His groundbreaking book, *Comfort Women*, is a significant, in-depth look at the operation of the comfort system. It is a seminal text in the field which revealed more about the system than had formerly been made public.

With many new facts exposed, the Japanese government began to change its tactics. In August 1993, the government apologized for what comfort women had suffered. However, this was a general apology for what had happened, not an official apology that admitted Japanese wrong-doing. Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi still argued that civilian business men operated the comfort system, and that soldiers had simply been customers. The government agreed to set up a general fund, voluntarily paid into by private citizens, to help relieve the current conditions in which comfort women lived. Japanese leaders did not compensate victims out of government funds as part of official recompense. The vast majority of the former comfort women refused to accept the funds. The Japanese government equivocated over the comfort system for over four more years. As late as January 1998, Prime Minister Hashimoto’s top aide still referred to

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68 Yoshimi, 7.
69 Oh, 16-19.
comfort women as prostitutes, claiming that the military comfort system was justified by the times. While organizations and governments around the world called for apologies and compensation, Japan avoided facing its wartime atrocities against women.

The enormous reluctance to admit guilt and to apologize to victimized women is a contemporary legacy of the patriarchal, racist culture of early and mid-twentieth century Japan. Imperial Japan created a militaristic society bent on Asian domination that was nurtured alongside masculine ideals, extremely patriarchal and misogynistic notions of women, and concepts of Japanese "racial" and cultural superiority. These factors contributed to the creation of an atmosphere conducive to sexual violence against women, especially women of other Asian "races." These conditions alone did not dictate a policy of institutionalized sexual slavery, however. The ultimate reasons for Japan's comfort system had to do with the perceived benefits to the war effort. Sexual slavery, in the minds of Japanese military and governmental officials, functioned as a means to an end. These officials believed that comfort stations would prevent the spread of venereal diseases, which soldiers caught in brothels staffed with professional prostitutes; would reduce the chance for spies, presumably rampant in civilian brothels, to gain access to military information; would provide "comfort" and "entertainment" to soldiers, who in return would fight

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70 Ibid., 20-21.
hard for the Emperor; and would prevent soldiers from raping women during
invasions because they had been allowed sexual release with comfort women.71

In the following sections, I address both the cultural pre-conditions in
Japanese society that provided decision-makers with attitudes accepting of
sexual slavery as a policy and the "logic" of mass rape as a military tactic. In
addition, I explain the general operations of the comfort system. This approach
makes clear how Japanese leaders conceived of a policy of sexual slavery, how
they instituted it, and why they found this policy "useful." It is my argument
that cultural constructions of gender and race existing and developing in Japan
for generations influenced the Japanese military government operating during
the war years. These beliefs about gender and race allowed leaders to be capable
of giving serious consideration to a policy that forced sexual slavery onto
hundreds of thousands of foreign women. However, in the end, I argue that the
comfort system was not merely instituted for the sake of misogyny, racial hatred,
or to reinforce patriarchy, but to serve very specific military and political goals.
And Japan's leaders believed that achieving those goals would help them win
the war in Asia.

71 Yoshimi, 9, 75.
Orders and Operations

Hostilities broke out between Japan and China on September 18, 1931, when the Japanese army blew up railway sections in Manchuria. In the following January, the Japanese army and navy started attacks in Shanghai, and eventually took control of the city. For some time the Chinese had been attempting to eliminate prostitution in Shanghai. In order to keep up the appearance of friendly relations, the Japanese did not allow their soldiers to visit local brothels. Rather, in March of 1932 the Japanese navy set up the first comfort stations of the war in Shanghai.72

At this time comfort stations were staffed with professional prostitutes from Japan. Both the Foreign Ministry and the military took charge of operating the stations. The Foreign Ministry ensured that comfort stations remained fully staffed and ordered doctors to provide the women with regular medical examinations to prevent the spread of venereal diseases. The navy, and later the army, were in charge of the day-to-day operations. Both branches of the military dealt with accommodations, prices, hours of operation, and other on-the-ground essentials.73 These practices continued with the spread of Japanese troops into Northeast China.

The number of comfort stations increased dramatically with the outbreak of full-scale war in July 1937. By the end of 1937, the Japanese army began

72 Ibid., 43-44.
73 Ibid., 44.
establishing military comfort stations everywhere its troops went. Inuma Mamoru, Chief of Staff of the Shanghai Expeditionary Force, Uemura Toshimichi, Vice Chief of Staff, and Major Yamazaki Masao, a staff officer in the 10th Army, all wrote in their dairies that they had received orders from top military officials to construct more comfort stations in China. But Japanese prostitutes could no longer fill the numerous stations, so the army had to look elsewhere to supply its troops with women. They went to Chinese villages where the Army's General Staff ordered the military police to round-up women for comfort stations. These were not willing prostitutes and Japanese statements demonstrate that point. In his diary Major Yamazaki Masao wrote,

Lt. Colonel Terada was sent ahead to take command of the military police and establish entertainment facilities in Huzhou. At first, there were four women, and from now on there will be seven. Because they are still terrified, it was difficult to gather seven women. I heard that they didn't "perform" their "tasks" very well. If we consistently assure them that their lives will not be in danger, that they will always be paid, and that they will not be treated cruelly, then more women who want to join up will come forward. The military police revealed that they are supposed to round up one hundred women... Soldiers must be warned about their tendency to lapse into abuse. Professional prostitutes would not likely have been "terrified;" nor would it have been necessary to abuse the women in order for them to perform their "tasks."

Clearly, the military took unwillingly women from these villages.
Other documents exist which prove that the Ministry of War was actively involved in the "recruitment" of comfort women and that it demanded that military forces act more clandestinely to avoid social unrest and bad press. In a notice entitled "Matters Concerning the Recruitment of Women to Work in Military Comfort Stations," sent on March 4 1938, the Ministry of War chastised the military for the lack of organization that it displayed in its handling of the comfort women. The Ministry felt that inappropriate people had been chosen to carry out recruitments, and that the military police had not provided enough supervision. The Ministry of War demanded that military personnel take more care when carrying out their orders so as not to damage the honor of the Japanese Army.\textsuperscript{76}

The Home Ministry also bore responsibility for the institutionalization of the comfort system. Tomita Kenji, Bureau Chief of the Home Ministry’s Police Protection Bureau, issued orders for the transportation on Japanese military ships sailing under military protection of Korean and Taiwanese women overseas to northern and central China. The Home Ministry, with the aid of police forces in Korea and Taiwan, organized the recruitment of women and girls, expedited the assignment of travel documents for them, and in so doing, gave tacit approval to the coercion, abduction, and illegal trafficking of women and young girls. Sometimes that process entailed dispatching an army

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 58-59;
representative to round up women, and other times the military contracted out to private procurers. Either way, it was the approval and cooperation of the Home Ministry and Japanese police forces that made possible the systematization of the comfort system.77

Military and civilian procurers used several methods to collect women. The most common was deception. Recruiters often arrived in rural areas or poor sections of cities claiming to have well-paying jobs overseas aiding the war effort. They told young women and girls that they could escape poverty, help their families, and experience adventure working abroad. Generally, as former comfort women have testified, agents told the women that they would work as nurses, secretaries, entertainers, cooks, or maids.78 Mun Pil-gi testified that when she was eighteen years old, in Korea in 1943, a Korean man told her that he could take her to a place where she could earn a lot of money and have the opportunity to study. Since she desperately wanted to attend school and needed a way to support herself, Mun agreed to work for the man. It was not until she arrived in northeastern China that Mun discovered the real nature of her job.79 In 1938, a man arrived in Yi Sunok’s town and claimed to be in Korea to offer jobs working in a silk factory in Japan. He told her that the job paid well and that she could leave whenever she wanted. Instead she was taken to China and raped.

78 Tanaka, Japan’s Comfort Women, 38-39.
79 Yoshimi, 104-105.
repeatedly for six years.\textsuperscript{80} There are many more examples of such deception in the testimonies of former comfort women.

Coercion and fear of coercion were also common tools for recruitment. Some recruiting agents gave advances to the parents of young girls and women for their future labor. The recruiters then convinced the girls that their families would suffer if they did not obey because they would require their parents to pay back the money. Due to the high rate of poverty and hunger in Korea, these women feared for their families. In one case, in 1941 in the Philippines, eighteen year old Ma Fe Yabut Santillan agreed to follow Japanese soldiers because they beat her mother when she tried to protect her daughter from the soldiers' advances.\textsuperscript{81} In some instances, girls and women followed Japanese police or soldiers out of fear. They believed they were being led to a police station and would simply be questioned. They hoped that they would not be harmed if they obeyed those in power. Yun Turi, a Chinese girl, obeyed a Japanese policeman who ordered her to follow him. He then placed her on a truck that delivered her to a comfort station.\textsuperscript{82} Mun Ok-chu, a sixteen year old Korean girl, was walking home when a Japanese man dressed in fatigues took her by the arm and led her away. She was so scared of policemen that she did not say a word.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{80} Tanaka, Japan's Comfort Women, 39.  
\textsuperscript{82} Tanaka, Japan's Comfort Women, 40.  
\textsuperscript{83} Yoshimi, 107.
The Japanese deceived or coerced the vast majority of women into becoming comfort women. However, Japanese soldiers, police, and their collaborators forcibly took a large number of women and girls, especially those in the Philippines and Indonesia. In 1943, Maria Rosa Luna Henson was riding in a cart with members of a local resistance group when Japanese soldiers stopped them at a check point. She was forced out of the cart and taken to a comfort station. In 1944, in Indonesia, the Japanese army ordered the forcible seizures of young local women for comfort stations. Several unnamed women have described the circumstances under which they were taken. All of them reported that Japanese soldiers took them against their will despite their physical resistance and the arguments and challenges of others.

If these documents and testimonies are not enough to convince one of a campaign of organized mass rape by the Japanese, then evidence of the daily lives of comfort women should suffice to express the uninvited horrors of their servitude. In general, the vast majority of comfort stations could be divided into two types. The most common type was built and directly managed by the military for the exclusive use of military personnel. A second type was managed by civilian businessmen, but under the supervision of military officers. The buildings ranged from opulent houses confiscated from the enemy to shacks

84 Ibid., 126.
85 Hicks, 32.
86 Yoshimi, 89.
where the “rooms” were divided by hanging bamboo mats. Each room contained a bowl of disinfectant for the soldiers and women to wash with after each encounter, and jars of Vaseline. 87

Hours and rates differed from one station to another, but a general pattern of rules and treatment did exist. Soldiers had to buy tickets for their turns with the women. Price was based on rank, with privates paying the least and officers paying the most. Officers took their turns in the evenings and had the option of staying over night, whereas lower ranking personnel visited the stations in the mornings and afternoons. In general, each man would get the opportunity to visit a station once a week, and, depending on the number of women being held in the station, they could have anywhere from a few minutes to an hour with a woman. Even considering the large number of women that the Japanese forced into sexual slavery, there were never enough to meet demand. Soldiers sometimes lined up for hours to take their turn to rape a woman. With this much business, comfort women rarely had a respite from sexual violence. 88

Comfort women generally had to service around ten men a day, but in some cases twenty to thirty. In one extreme case in Burma, the women there were occasionally forced to service as many as sixty men in a day! Even with painful, swollen, bleeding vaginas, comfort women were expected to please the soldiers. One former comfort women testified to this inhumanity:

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87 Tanaka, Japan’s Comfort Women, 51.
88 Ibid., 51-52.
Yet, even though I had no venereal disease, I had to have treatment, because I kept bleeding and couldn’t pass water. Perhaps it was a bladder infection. There were women whose vaginas were so swollen and were bleeding so profusely that there was no space for a needle to be inserted.\textsuperscript{89}

If this treatment were not horrible enough, if women refused to cooperate, even due to severe pain or out of sheer exhaustion, the soldiers often brutally beat them. Soldiers frequently showed up or became drunk at comfort stations, and this contributed to an increase in physical violence.\textsuperscript{90}

Comfort women suffered not only at the hands of Japanese soldiers, but at the hands of doctors, professionals expected to help victims. As stated earlier, the Foreign Ministry demanded that comfort women be regularly examined to prevent the spread of venereal diseases. The women were generally examined once a week, though during times of intense fighting more time elapsed between check-ups. For many comfort women the pelvic exams were as humiliating as the rapes. They were occasionally done in the open for any soldier walking by to observe. Jeanne Ruff-O’Herne, the Dutch-Indonesia woman quoted earlier, testified to this experience.

The door of the examination room was always left open, and to humiliate us even more, any other Japanese were allowed to look on while we were being examined. The humiliation was unbearable.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{89} Cited in Tanaka, \textit{Japan’s Comfort Women}, 52.
\textsuperscript{90} Yoshimi, 141.
\textsuperscript{91} Hicks, 37.
Rather than helping their patients, the doctors quite often raped them, as well.

Ruff-O’Herne also spoke of this experience.

One day a Japanese doctor arrived at our house. Immediately I thought that he would be able to help us. Surely, as a doctor he would have compassion for us. I requested to speak to the doctor. But he showed no interest, no signs of compassion or apology. Instead, the doctor ended up raping me on the first day of his visit. . . . Each time the doctor visited us he raped me in the daytime.92

Even with the use of doctors and these so-called preventative measures, venereal diseases were not controlled. Soldiers were instructed to use condoms, but they often ignored those orders. Some men were too drunk to care, and some simply could not find one. Due to a constant shortage of condoms, soldiers often reused them. Therefore, many former comfort women were infected with sexually transmitted diseases, and a significant number were never able to have children because of it.93 However, for some women pregnancy was unavoidable. So Shindo, a Korean woman who the Japanese held as a comfort woman for seven years, became pregnant several times. Usually, the military doctors performed abortions on comfort women, but in Shindo’s case she performed a few of her own abortions. She gave birth to two surviving children and one stillborn. During all three pregnancies she was forced to keep serving soldiers. And her two surviving children were taken from her.94 Jeanne Ruff-O’Herne also became pregnant. When she found out she told her guard who gave her a bottle

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92 Ibid., 37.
93 Yoshimi, 146-147.
94 Tanaka, Japan’s Comfort Women, 53.
of pills. Jeanne was terrified that she would be unable to love the child, but she could not bring herself to abort. Eventually the guard forced them down her throat and she miscarried soon after.\textsuperscript{95}

The women forced into comfort stations by the Japanese military and government suffered such horrors that no apology could suffice. But whether or not the Japanese government finally admits its full culpability, the documentary evidence proves that top government and military officials developed the comfort system and participated in the acquisition of unwilling women and girls for the purpose of sexual slavery. The only other evidence more damning is victims' testimonies about their daily lives. How could this happen?

The Pre-Conditions

The Cult of Masculinity

During the Meiji period, the government embarked on a vast program of modernization and industrialization to rival the West. In its campaign to mobilize the citizenry, the government utilized gender ideals. Concepts of masculinity were based largely on the old samurai code, \textit{bushido}, which stated that men should possess qualities like loyalty, strength, and courage.\textsuperscript{96} The samurai type of man was known as the "hard school" ideal. Austere, self-sacrificing, and aggressive, these men protected Japan. These qualities, not

\textsuperscript{95} Hicks, 37.

\textsuperscript{96} Romit Dasgupta, "Creating Corporate Warriors," Kam Louis, Morris Low, eds. \textit{Asian Masculinities} (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 120.
surprisingly, also made good soldiers capable of pursuing Japanese domination of Asia. 97

Before the Meiji period the “hard school” male was complemented by the “soft school” male. As one would guess, the “soft school” man was kind, soft-spoken, almost feminine, often the lover of a “hard school” man. However, during the Meiji government’s gender-centered drive to modernize, the “hard school” man was the only masculine image sanctioned, and heterosexual, reproductive relationships the only acceptable form. Homosexuality and gentle, “soft school” men were considered feudal hold-overs that Meiji politicians wanted to extinguish. And, with the intense militarization that utilized the school system, media, and the legal system, they were quite successful. 98

The power of Japan’s military, especially during the Taisho and early Showa periods (1912-1945), increasingly narrowed the scope of masculine identity. These rulers utilized the same traditional bushido rhetoric that the Meiji rulers used, but within an ever expanding modernizing military framework. And these cultural forces were tied to the role of the Emperor. As the ideal leading male figure to whom every Japanese citizen had pledged allegiance, the Emperor embodied the glory of service to the public and the Japanese armed forces. This allegiance created links between the state, military, and masculine ideals that

97 Henshall, 2.
98 Dasgupta, 120-121.
dictated the expectations and behaviors of men. Men were expected to be strong, in character and physical make-up, so that they could lead Japan, in both political and military roles. The average Japanese man would fight and die in the service of the Emperor and his country.

This dogmatic male identity, aggressive and determined, carried over into men's personal lives and their relationships with women, as well. Not only did a man have to prove his strength and worthiness by dominating other men, specifically on the battlefield, but they also had to completely dominate women. Yet this seemingly simple power imbalance was complicated by the fact that Japanese men were intensely dependent on their mothers. Henshall argues that male frustration and anxiety surrounding this contradiction led to a great deal of violence, physical and sexual, against women. Men grew up being told that women were inferior and existed to serve, that men should always take command of women. Yet, they had mothers, whom they loved, who held a degree of power over them. Attempts to reconcile this inconsistency could be confusing, and as Henshall argues, violent. Japanese scholar Morris Low agrees and connects this aspect of Japanese male identity directly to comfort women:

Masculinity is about both the power of men over men, and the power of men over women. . . . The oppression of women has been a significant part of being a man in Japan, and the wartime use of women as sex slaves shows the extreme forms that this oppression

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99 Morris Low, “Competing Masculinities in Modern Japan,” Kam and Low, 84-85.
100 Henshall, 38.
could take. Brothels and the battlefield were both sites for the production of gender.\textsuperscript{101} Low makes a powerful argument. In a society that is frantic about masculinity and male identity and in which women are devalued, a perceived inversion in gender relations could spark violent reactions.

Still, during the war Japanese soldiers did not rape Japanese women and girls en masse. It could be argued that that was due to the fact that soldiers were fighting on enemy soil. However, it had more to do with the fact that Japanese leaders found it easier and more appropriate to victimize foreign women. They decided that using young women “drafted” from Japan could harm morale. If soldiers believed that their sisters, mothers, or daughters may have been required to serve the war effort through prostitution they may have lost their zeal or, worse yet, revolted. Institutionalizing the mass rape of enemy women caused less concern because they were doubly inferior; they were women and foreign.

Ethnic Hatred

Some historians have compared Japanese “racial” policies prior to and during World War II to Nazi racial ideology.\textsuperscript{102} Perhaps the comparison is tempting because Germany and Japan were allied in the same war and both

\textsuperscript{101} Low, 91.
perpetrated wars of domination in their neighboring countries. And the Japanese, like the Nazis, used the term “race” when referring to their foreign enemies. They spouted such rhetoric as “The four races of Japan, China, Korea and Manchuria will share a common prosperity through a division of responsibilities . . . .” This referenced the much promoted Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, the seemingly symbiotic ideology of pan-Asianism propagated by Japan to cover its essentially imperialistic aims. Yet, as Japanese historian Saburo Ienaga argues, this ideology

assumed the innate superiority of Japanese . . . and represents the systematic formulation of an irrational Japanese contempt for their Asian neighbors fostered over several decades and the imperialist policies sanctioned by that attitude.104

In reality, Japanese attitudes toward other Asian nations were based more on notions of ethnic superiority. The vast difference between Nazi extermination plans and the Japanese hierarchy of ethnicities implies that Japanese “racial” policies are more aptly referred to as “ethnic” policies. While some scholars, like Kim Il-myon, have claimed that Japan aimed to eradicate Korean people, and eventually other Asian peoples, the majority of scholars agree that Japanese “ethnic” policies actually aimed at suppressing other Asian cultures, in order to assimilate those deemed worthy and to dominate completely those deemed

104 Ibid., 12.
unworthy of assimilation.\textsuperscript{105} This does not mean, however, that Japanese ethnic hatred did not have noxious effects.

Government and military rhetoric took on particularly chauvinistic qualities around the turn of the century. Japan officially took over Korea in 1910, and quickly set its sights on Manchuria (Manchukuo) and China. Throughout this time, the official ideology concluded that the Chinese, a nation of people who had greatly influenced Japan in previous centuries, had proven themselves weak and undeserving of honor because of their semi-colonial status to the West. Japan had avoided such a situation because it was far superior to other Asian nations. Japan saw China, Korea, Taiwan, Indochina, Indonesia, and the Philippines as pathetic examples of Asian abilities. Only Japan had the strength to thwart western dominance and bring “independence” to Asia.\textsuperscript{106} This contempt was so pervasive that it filtered down to school children, as well. Saburo describes how in his youth of the 1920s and 1930s, schoolchildren would speak of the “‘brave Japanese, the cowardly Chinks.’” Teachers also referred to the Chinese as “Chinks,” as pigtails, and how Japanese superiority towered over Chinese weakness.\textsuperscript{107}

This ethnic hatred appeared quite evident in Japan’s treatment of Korea and Taiwan. Since both territories operated under direct Japanese control long

\textsuperscript{105} Yoshimi, 153-154.
\textsuperscript{106} Louise Young, “Imagined Empire: The Cultural Construction of Manchukuo,” in Duus, Myers, and Peattie, 77, 92-93.
\textsuperscript{107} Saburo, 6.
before the war, Japanese officials had vigorously pursued ethnic policies for decades by the time the war began. These policies included denying Korean and Taiwanese citizens the right to speak their own languages and forcing them to speak Japanese, requiring them to give up their native names and take Japanese names, expecting loyalty to the Emperor, and forcing them to practice Shinto religious ceremonies. These policies insulted Korean and Taiwanese subjects who wanted to see their own ethnic traditions survive. In addition to attempting to phase out native ethnicities and assimilate the colonized, Japanese discrimination caused profound economic and political difficulties for these and soon other Asian nations. Japanese citizens occupied the highest levels of government and business, while colonial subjects earned far less than Japanese workers of the same rank. These practices led to increased poverty and famine and the drastic disenfranchisement of subjects from their own nations.

For other Asian nations, such as China, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Indochina, Japan envisioned a future of resource and labor exploitation. A sense of superiority allowed the Japanese government and military to feel justified in their behavior. They seized land, often with the intent of redistributing it to Japanese settlers, abducted men for forced labor, and carried out beatings and torture. The Japanese government entered some countries, particularly Indonesia, claiming to be a liberating force, but had no other intention than

108 Ibid., 158-159.
raping the land of its rich natural resources for Japanese benefit. The sense of superiority and self-interest that defined Japanese ethnic policies is clearly evident in a statement released by the Imperial Rule Assistance Association in March 1941, in reference to the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. It read, “Although we use the expression ‘Asian cooperation,’ this by no means ignores the fact that Japan was created by the Gods or posits an automatic racial equality.”

This disdain in which Japan held other Asian nations contributed directly to the atrocities of [the Rape of] Nanjing and to the recruitment of women for the comfort system. This ethnic prejudice dictated which women would be targeted for sexual slavery. As historian Yuri Tanaka points out,

Why were most comfort women almost invariably from Korea, Taiwan, China, or various places in Southeast Asia? This might seem odd at first given that the Japanese were notoriously racially prejudiced against the peoples of these countries. However, racial prejudice provides part of the answer to the question because that very racism helped make these women suitable for the role of comfort women.

Comfort women were not picked for their roles exclusively because they were women but because they were foreign women. They were women from allegedly inferior Asian groups, and, therefore, legitimate victims of sexual violence.

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10 Saburo, 163, 176-179.
111 Ibid., 154.
112 Yuri Tanaka, Hidden Horrors, 96.
However, issues of gender and ethnicity alone do not explain the institutionalization of mass rape.

**Reasons for Rape**

While patriarchy, masculinity, and ethnic hatred contributed to the formation of the comfort system, these cultural factors did not directly lead to large-scale rape. These factors helped to create an environment in which rape could be seen as a legitimate practice. What ultimately led Japan to implement rape on a massive scale was its perceived usefulness. The Japanese military had reasons, however indefensible, for their creation of the comfort system. They had a despicable “method” to their “madness.” The perceived needs of the Japanese military dictated the enslavement of an estimated 80,000 to 200,000 women doomed to repeated sexual violence.

The Japanese had four clearly stated goals for the implementation of the comfort system. The most commonly discussed issue concerned the fear of venereal diseases among the Japanese troops. As in all armies, Japanese troops frequented brothels. Brothels, staffed by professional prostitutes, however, meant that many soldiers exposed themselves to the danger of contacting sexually transmitted diseases. The Japanese military, Ministry of War, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs wanted to limit their soldiers’ exposure to such diseases. A “girl army” that could follow military forces and be regulated seemed a “logical” solution. Military leaders wanted women who were virgins
or at least so sexually inexperienced that they would not be infected with disease. While being held in sexual slavery, the women could be regularly tested.\textsuperscript{113}

Military leaders also worried about the large numbers of rapes occurring in Japanese-occupied zones. After the takeover of Nanjing, the world press noted the ferocity with which Japanese forces committed rape.\textsuperscript{114} Within the six weeks that the Japanese armies held Nanjing under scourge, soldiers committed about 20,000 rapes, or approximately 475 rapes a day.\textsuperscript{115} With the international press covering such atrocities, military leaders worried about the image of the Japanese forces. Officials within the army, navy, and Ministry of War became increasingly concerned about the bad press that their armed forces received. Their concern, however, did not mean consideration for the victims of such sexual violence. Policy makers believed that the comfort system, the institutionalized sexual abuse of women, would prevent soldiers from raping. The government and military leaders did not acknowledge the difference between sex and rape. Therefore, the comfort system did not stop Japanese soldiers from raping.\textsuperscript{116} However, they believed that it might and so considered the comfort system a solution to the problem.\textsuperscript{117} Essentially, the Japanese government decided on

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{113}Yoshimi, 69-70; Tanaka, \textit{Hidden Horrors}, 96.
\item \textsuperscript{114}Tanaka, \textit{Hidden Horrors}, 79-81.
\item \textsuperscript{115}Brownmiller, 60-61.
\item \textsuperscript{116}Cynthia Enloe, \textit{Does Khaki Become You?} (London: Pandora Press, 1988), 36.
\item \textsuperscript{117}Yoshimi, 54-55; Tanaka, \textit{Hidden Horrors}, 95.
\end{itemize}
institutionalized mass rape in order to reduce the random, unorganized rapes that were ruining their public image.

The appeasement of their soldiers also concerned military leaders. The Japanese military system was extremely harsh. It did not have a system of leave as in the American armed forces and Japanese soldiers lived very brutal, austere lives. Their time at brothels served as one of the only releases for soldiers. To make up for this, military leaders believed that comfort stations would provide much needed "entertainment" and relaxation. Hence, the name comfort women.

As historian Yoshimi Yoshiaki has pointed out,

The fact that comfort stations were considered necessary even in areas close to the front lines where there were few civilians and little opportunity to commit rape or threat of sexually transmitted diseases clearly demonstrates that comfort stations were considered necessary for 'comfort' alone.  

Soldiers could take time off, relax, and have fun with women, some just young girls, who had been forced to be prostitutes. Sexual slavery appeased hardened soldiers, as well those who were scared or bored.

A fourth reason for instituting the comfort system involved preventing spies from infiltrating brothels. Military leaders feared that when common soldiers visited brothels they would get drunk and reveal military secrets to prostitutes who would give information to local guerilla militaries. By providing controlled comfort stations, the Japanese would not have to worry about secrets

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118 Yoshimi, 73.
being leaked. Soldiers could get drunk and say anything they wanted around comfort women because those women could not leave. They could not interact with anyone outside of the Japanese war machine.\textsuperscript{119}

Due to their goals to eliminate sexually transmitted disease, end uncontrolled rapes, provide soldiers with “entertainment” and “comfort,” and frustrate spies, the Japanese military and government instituted and systematized a policy of sexual slavery that destroyed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Asian women. Mass rape became a Japanese policy to further political and military goals. Regardless of its obvious cruelty, the Japanese saw the comfort system as viable because of their severe beliefs in gender inequality and their noxious racial ideology. The socio-cultural atmosphere combined with a functional wartime rationale and created a hell for all of the women and girls doomed to be comfort women.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 74-75.
CHAPTER III

MASS RAPE DURING THE WAR IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

The worst was when they lost and came back angry and drunk. They would beat us hard; they had no sense of their own strength. . . I was raped with a gun by one of those men, along with another woman and her daughter, while the others watched. Some of them spat on us, they did so many ugly things to us . . . if they couldn’t rape me they would urinate on me.120

-Fatima, Bosnian Muslim

Fatima was a wealthy Muslim woman from Doboj, an ethnically mixed region of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serbian soldiers took her captive and held her in a large gymnasium with an estimated one thousand other women who were also victims of rape. Some nights, as many as ten soldiers raped Fatima, one after the other. Fatima’s story is, unfortunately, quite typical for the tens of thousands of women raped during the fall of Yugoslavia. Serbian forces, like their Japanese counterparts in World War II, perpetrated a campaign of mass rape throughout enemy territories. That the Serbian forces carried out such a campaign cannot be disputed as the United Nations and the European Community have estimated that somewhere between 20,000 and 50,000 women were victims of rape warfare between 1992 and 1995.121

Serbian officials attempted to deny claims of mass rape. However, unlike the Japanese, Serbian forces have not been successful in keeping their crimes hidden. There are several reasons for this. For one, journalists made public information about Serbian actions. The media descended on Yugoslavia as soon as fighting began. While the British and American governments pretended to be unaware, or at least neutral, journalists made the war in Yugoslavia impossible to ignore. Since media coverage was far more pervasive than it was during World War II, war crimes were far harder to hide.122 Another reason that information on the mass rapes has been accessible is that, for many victims, speaking about rape was not as taboo as it was in the 1940s. This does not negate the shame and humiliation that victims experienced, but the general population was more receptive and less condemning than in past generations. It should be noted, however, that there have been many women who have spoken out only under anonymity because of the negative reaction that they would receive from their families and communities. Yet, while rape was still by no means an easy topic for discussion, victims of rape during the fall of Yugoslavia spoke about their experiences more often than comfort women. Many women also sought justice soon after the war.123

Perhaps the most significant factor that contributed to the exposure of Serbian mass rape was that women were not the only ones interested in justice...
for those crimes. State governments, mostly in Western Europe, and the United Nations made the issue a priority after the war. The Hague tried many perpetrators of war crimes during the war in Yugoslavia, from low level service men to high ranking decision makers to President Milošević himself. The trials at The Hague highlighted ethnic cleansing, torture, and mass rape. The majority of these trials were for ethnic cleansing, but soldiers were also prosecuted for mass rape, as rape was one of the strategies of ethnic cleansing.124 Unlike the comfort women, victims of rape during the fall of Yugoslavia were able to speak about their experiences, testify at trials, and help put their rapists behind bars. Defendants and witnesses also spoke about rapes during the war and addressed orders to rape given by higher ranking soldiers.125

The UN defined mass rape as a war crime because it was part of Serbian war strategy. Like the Japanese in World War II, Serbian forces used mass rape to achieve the aims of the war; they just had different goals than did Japanese forces. Rape was not merely a violent by-product of war, nor was it simply a consequence of patriarchal violence, though these factors cannot be ignored. Serbian military forces carried out rape on such a large scale, like Japanese forces, because they believed it would be useful to rid desired areas of non-Serbians,

help extract information from victims, and, through forced impregnation, 
expand the Serbian nation.

Orders and Operations

On May 4, 1980, Josip Broz Tito, the long-time Yugoslavian president, 
died in Ljubljana, Slovenia, the northern most region of Yugoslavia. Some 
believed that his death might usher in a democratic era to the Communist 
country. However, Tito’s death created political confusion throughout the 
nation. Tito left a vaguely defined order of succession which left each republic
unsure of their political security and led to a decade of intense ethno-political
maneuvering. It was onto this stage that Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević and
Croatian leader Franjo Tudman stepped. Both leaders possessed strong
personalities and strong ethnically-driven language that persuaded their citizens.
Milošević, however, proved to be the greater opportunist.126

The Yugoslavian government contained eight presidents, one from each of
the republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia),
and one from each of the autonomous regions (Kosovo and Vojvodina). This
balance of power was upset by attempts to unite ethnic Serbs throughout
Yugoslavia. By 1987, Milošević had adopted the rhetoric of Serbian ethnic
nationalism. He imagined a pan-Serbianism that would dominate Yugoslavia. In
1989, he stripped Kosovo of its autonomy and attempted to gain influence over

Vojvodina and Montenegro. This would have given him control of four of the eight presidential votes. This led to a new, more significant struggle between and within the large republics of Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia.127

The Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, Ante Marković, could not compete with the power of the three large republics, nor could he rally citizens to focus on informed debate and avoid extremist rhetoric. The political power struggles between the republics stimulated nationalist organizations and contributed to an elevated extremism. The two most recognized nationalist organizations were the Ustaše in Croatia and the Chetniks in Serbia. These long standing, yet dormant, groups began to revive themselves during this era of nationalist agitation and political upheaval, which only created more fear and suspicion. Both groups had a long history of ethnic hatred and violence. Their renewed visibility invoked visions of war in the minds of Yugoslavian citizens.128

Milošević exploited these ethnic tensions by encouraging Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia to join in the fight for a greater Serbia. This created greater discord among Serbs and Croats in Croatia. Slovenia, on the other hand, was able to make a good case for independence and was able to avoid most of the war. However, as tensions mounted, the federal Yugoslav army (JNA), still loyal to the federal communist vision of Yugoslavia, threatened a military coup. The JNA was largely staffed with rural Serbs and Milošević thought that he could use the

127 Ibid., 628.
128 Ibid., 629-630.
Yugoslav army and state for his own ambitions. However, the JNA reversed their decision to overthrow Croatia because of tactical concerns, and Milošević announced his unwillingness to accept the current situation. Since the current turmoil was increasing, Tuđman and Milošević met to discuss dividing Bosnia along ethnic lines with half going to Croatia and half going to Serbia, but no agreement was met. War became inevitable, and fighting began in Croatia in May 1991.129

It wasn’t long before the mass rapes began. There is no clear-cut documentation to prove that the Serbian government or military officially ordered the rape of enemy women.130 Nonetheless, victim, eyewitness, and perpetrator testimony has pointed to high ranking military and paramilitary officers demanding that their soldiers rape.131 In addition, the existence of rape camps points to a high level of organization. The occurrence of rapes followed five main patterns: before invasions, during invasions, in detention centers, in rape camps, and in brothels. Rape victims also experienced beatings and insults, and the perpetrators often wielded knives and guns. Occasionally cameras recorded the rapes and preserved a public record of these war acts.

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129 Ibid., 632-633.
130 Italian journalist, Guiseppe Zaccaria, claimed to have seen photographs of Serbian documents from 1991 which prescribed ethnic cleansing and mass rape as war strategies. However, neither photographs, nor the original documents, have been released or examined. Therefore, it may be too soon to assume that there is documentary evidence, though the possibility is strong. Beverly Allen, Rape Warfare (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 56-60.
Local paramilitary troops generally committed the pre-invasion rapes. There were no organized camps at this point of a battle. Rather, local paramilitary troops committed most rapes in the homes of the victims, on the streets of town, or in empty public buildings. Soldiers often committed these rapes in front of the victim’s family members, or performed them publicly in front of members of the community. Though these rapes appeared to be “typical” random rapes that occur in all wars, it quickly became obvious that they were not. Rapes served as a real and symbolic preamble to the approaching invasions.

Once Serbian troops and the Yugoslav army entered predominately Muslim and Croatian towns in Bosnia, the real fighting began. As in any war, soldiers shelled, bombed, executed enemies, looted, and terrorized local populations. Serbians also organized and separated men and women for deportation. With a town fully assembled and already fearful, Serbian soldiers raped the women publicly to terrorize and humiliate the population further. Beatings and murders of other villagers took place, as well. Troops often accosted the women who did not leave or who were not deported after an invasion was complete. These rapes looked a great deal similar to pre-invasion rapes. However, they were being committed by official armed forces who took

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132 The Yugoslav army was the army of the Yugoslavian nation, but had always been primarily staffed with Serbian soldiers. When Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia attempted to secede, the Yugoslav army remained part of “Yugoslavia,” which Milošević controlled. The Yugoslav army ended up fighting for Serbia in Bosnia. Gutman, xxiii.

orders from officers and politicians high up in the Serbian government and who supposedly were required to follow a code of conduct.

Alexandra Stiglmayer, a journalist in Germany and the U.S., interviewed many of the women who were raped during and after invasions. One such young woman, twenty-year-old Emina (a pseudonym), told Stiglmayer that she and her little brother and sister remained in their home while their brother hid in the woods so as not to be killed. Soldiers soon entered her house:

They went to the house next door and came back an hour later. They brought our neighbor’s daughter Sanela, fourteen years old, and a girl from the neighboring village. They dragged us to the cellar and raped us there. Two of them held me tight, and the third one raped me. I tried to defend myself, but they used a knife on me [she shows a scar on her leg].

Emina’s experience proved typical of a rape in a home during an invasion.

Emina went on to describe the death and destruction that occurred in her village that day, as well. Soldiers took captured men and women to separate detention centers. They often held women, children, and some elderly folks in their own or nearby towns, usually in gutted schools, gymnasiums, or government buildings. Soldiers, paramilitaries, and even civilians raped the women housed in these centers whenever they wanted. Afterwards, they could return them to the centers or kill them. Twenty-year-old Azra and twenty-nine-year old Mirsada suffered rapes while being detained in the Partisans Hall of Foca. Chetniks, or Serbian soldiers, took Azra and Mirsada, along with their

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134Stiglmayer, 97-98.
children and two other Muslim women, to an apartment near the Foca police station. Azra described what happened:

Two of them raped me. Then more Chetniks came, and they wanted to rape me too. I didn’t want to do it. They said they were going to throw my baby out the window, I screamed and cried, and then they left me alone. . . . It was no normal rape. When it was over the blood kept flowing out of me. The other women in the apartment were raped some more by other men. 135

Mirsada also related her experience in the apartment:

They put their fingers into me all over, to see if I was hiding money anywhere. Then four of them raped me, one after the other. They told us we were going to give birth to Serbian children and they would do everything they could so we wouldn’t even dare think of coming back again. After the fourth guy I fainted. If I hadn’t fainted, they’d have kept on going. 136

Soldiers transported men and women from detention centers to a variety of locales. They sent some to the front to fend for themselves. Others had to flee by foot to Muslim or Croatian territories. The “lucky” ones were exchanged for Serbian prisoners of war and ended up in refugee camps. The “unlucky” ones ended up in concentration camps, such as the now infamous Omarska. For men these camps usually meant hard labor, starvation, beatings, and possible death. For women the camps also meant starvation, beatings, and possible death, but they almost always also meant rape. There were about 30 rape camps in Serbian-

135Ibid., 108.
136Ibid., 109.
controlled territories. In these camps, soldiers raped women repeatedly and brutally.\textsuperscript{137}

Detention centers and rape camps differed because of the amount of time that women were held. Detention centers were stop-overs. Women stayed in rape camps anywhere from a few weeks to several months.\textsuperscript{138} Stiglmayer presents the story of twenty-six-year old Ifeta, who offered testimony about life in a rape camp. Stiglmayer explains:

There [in Doboj] three drunken soldiers from the Red Berets, a special unit of the Serbian army, dragged her into a classroom on the fourth floor of the school building. The chairs and tables had been shoved aside, and in the middle of the room were a few mattresses.\textsuperscript{139}

Ifeta was then raped by all three men, ‘at the same time,’ she said, pointing to her mouth and backside. Ifeta continued:

And while they were doing it they said I was going to have a baby by them and that it’d be an honor for a Muslim woman to give birth to a Serbian kid.\textsuperscript{140}

From then on, at least two or three men raped Ifeta about every other day.

Serbian forces also maintained brothels which functioned like rape camps. They established brothels in hotels or official buildings, and they existed for the

\textsuperscript{137}Frederick, 35-36.
\textsuperscript{138}Some rape camps have also been referred to as rape-death camps. In these camps only about 20 percent of the women survived. Ibid., 36.
\textsuperscript{139}Stiglmayer, 117-118.
\textsuperscript{140}Ibid., 117-118.
purpose of sexually "entertaining" soldiers. Most of the women in brothels suffered death rather than release or exchange.

Abuses of all kinds accompanied the rapes. Serbians favored the use of knives on their victims, as Emina’s story demonstrates. Forty-year-old Kadira told Stiglmayer that she too was assaulted with a knife. Over her breast is a scar where a Serbian soldier knifed off her clothes. Many women faced severe beatings, sometimes leading to unconsciousness. Soldiers put out cigarettes on their bodies.\(^{141}\) Others were harmed so terribly it can barely be understood, as one survivor made clear:

They pushed bottle necks into our sex, they even stuck shattered, broken bottles into some women. . . . Guns too. And then you don’t know if he’s going to fire, you’re scared to death, everything else, the rape, becomes less important, even the rape doesn’t seem so terrible to you anymore.\(^{142}\)

The psychological terror accompanying war rape heightened the horror. Some women were forced to watch while soldiers raped their daughters. One such case involved the rape of a fourteen-year-old girl, while another victim was twelve years of age. Some girls were so young and small that the rapes killed them. Soldiers threw their bodies in front of the adult women.\(^{143}\)

Many witnessed the rapes of Muslim and Croatian women. Soldiers raped women in front of other women or in the presence of other soldiers (in the form of gang-rapes), in public view, and some times in front of a video camera. The

\(^{141}\)Ibid., 119, 126-127.  
\(^{142}\)Ibid., 118.  
\(^{143}\)Ibid., 119, 112, 120.
video tapes were made for private use and to be shown to other soldiers. As Catherine Mackinnon argues, "many tortures in the camps are organized as sexual spectacles, ritualized acts of sadism in which inflicting extreme pain and death are sexual acts, performed and watched for sexual enjoyment."144 Serbian television showed the video taped rapes of Muslim and Croatian women and used them as propaganda in yet another insult to the victims. Given the absence of visible physical differences to distinguish ethnic categories, the Serbian men's rapes of these women were televised and advertised as rapes of Serbian women by Croatian and Muslim soldiers.145

The Pre-Conditions

The Cult of Masculinity

Extreme masculinity formed one aspect of the patriarchy in Serbian society. Ironically, because of their strong emotional bonds with their mothers, Serbian men often felt the need to act out their machismo to demonstrate their separateness, as men, from their mothers. Through behavior like heavy drinking, fighting, and associating with so-called "bad girls," Serbian men displayed their masculinity. Serbs held masculinity, as a cultural concept, in particularly high esteem. Much of Serbian literature and folklore highlights the image of the

144 Catherine Mackinnon, "Turning Rape into Pornography," in Stiglmayer, p. 79-80.
145 Ibid., 76.; Frederick, 36. It should be noted here that Serbian women were victims of rape by Croatian and Muslim men. That fact must not be ignored. However, the numbers are much smaller. Serbians were the aggressors and there is little evidence pointing at Croatian and Muslim rape campaigns.
strong, honest, manly, and noble warrior.\textsuperscript{146} These heroes stand as the saviors of their people and their communities. Blindly brave, they protect “their” women at all costs. These visual and written images of the Balkan heroic male proved especially popular in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and often exuded a sense of eroticism. Features of a man’s body parts were mentioned specifically: the strength of his legs, the muscular shape of his chest, and his long flowing hair. Balkans constructed the male hero as sexual and virile, and he “remained unchanged by time,” according to Balkan historian Cathie Carmichael.\textsuperscript{147}

These glorified heroes secured the dominance and worship of masculinity, yet historian Maria Todorov suggests a different reality for Balkan men. In contrast, she notes “the standard Balkan male is uncivilized, primitive, crude, cruel, and without exception disheveled.”\textsuperscript{148} The forces of the new nationalism developing in Serbia under Milošević nonetheless invoked the earlier, classical and romanticized male images and used them to inspire and control soldiers. The military offered one way for men to confirm and reinforce their masculine identities and to channel Balkan heroism through war and conquest. As feminist scholar Ruth Seifert argues, “the military profession provides subjective

\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{148} Maria Todorov, \textit{Imagining the Balkans} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 14.
identities that are connected to masculinity... and that have connotations of power and dominance as well as eroticism and sexuality."  

Given Balkan society's patriarchal system and romanticized masculine representations, it is not surprising to find a fairly high rate of male violent behavior directed at women. Fighting, during times of war and peace, is a male gender marker. The fighting and bar-room brawling that men often use to establish their masculine dominance carried over into their homes. Domestic violence is not uncommon, and husbands and fathers subject both wives and children to severe corporal punishment. Living in a patriarchal society that worships masculinity and permits violence against women may have significantly contributed to the Serbian use of mass rape.  

Ethnic Hatred  
Another aspect of Serbian culture in particular that may have contributed to the campaign of mass rape during the war was the history of ethnic and religious conflict in the region. Ethno-psychoanalyst Paul Parin establishes an acute consciousness of the unresolved history between Croats, Serbs, and Muslims involving struggles for freedom or dominance or control of resources, as well as conflicts over ethnic and religious differences. This consciousness evolved into the drawing of sharp distinctions between the "in-group" and the

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149 Ruth Seifert, "War and Rape: A Preliminary Analysis," in Stiglmayer, 60.  
150 Parin, 47.
These divides issued from hundreds of years of history including battles, forced coexistence, and intense ethnic nationalism. Serbians imbibed deeply the struggles of their past, and they often invoked the battles over Kosovo, Belgrade, and Sarajevo that have been fought against the Ottomans, Hapsburgs, and others over the centuries as a means of rallying fervor. They had fought for a Serbian nation and had routinely opposed Croats and Muslims, fueling Serbian ethnic nationalism.152

Tito had identified such nationalism as a major concern earlier in Yugoslavian history. He worked very hard to extinguish nationalist sentiments because he knew that they divided Yugoslavians. After Tito’s death, however, nationalist movements sprang up across Yugoslavia once again.153 Tito’s death left a political power vacuum and economic uncertainty allowing nationalism to come to the forefront. Milošević encouraged Serbian dominance even while maintaining an image of cooperation with the other ethnic groups of Yugoslavia. Serbian party politics exacerbated already existing ethnic friction. This renewed nationalism led to movements seeking to reestablish ethnic separation.154

Serbians sought separateness in part by launching propaganda campaigns about the rape of Serbian women by Albanian men. Balkan scholar Silva

151 Ibid., 39.
153 Frederick, 32.
154 Ramet, 21, 26-27.
Meznaric argues that “the Serbian use of the discourse of rape and the media campaign against Albanians as rape perpetrators sharpened the ethnic borders between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians.”\textsuperscript{155} Kosovo, one of the historically most valuable Serbian territories, was 77 percent Albanian in the 1980s. Serbians attempted to demonize this population and inhibit ethnic interaction through claims about the danger of Albanian men. As Meznaric’s research shows, though, Serbian men perpetrated the vast majority of rapes committed against Serbian women. Likewise, Albanian men committed the vast majority of rapes of Albanian women.\textsuperscript{156} Nonetheless, this propaganda campaign based on ethnic hatred suggested how mass rapes during the war came into being as a strategy:

[W]omen and their bodies have been pawns in male-directed battles over ethnic identity. Rape as politics in the Serbian aggression in Bosnia in 1992-1993 has roots in the Kosovo conflict of the late 1980s. In both cases gender, ethnic identity, and political competition intersected, with tragic consequences.\textsuperscript{157}

The ethnic animosity infusing rape warfare also informed the insults that soldiers yelled at women during rapes which spoke to the rampant ethnic and gender hatred within the Serbian forces. Soldiers called rape victims Muslim whores or “Ustaschas” a reference to a band of Croatian nationals who were

\begin{footnotes}
\item[156]Ironically, these facts suggest that there already was a degree of ethnic separation in Kosovo.
\item[157]Meznaric, 76.
\end{footnotes}
extremely anti-Serbian in World War II. They spat on the women and told them they were trash, the whore-mothers of Croatian and Muslim scum. The soldiers also informed the women that they would soon be carrying little Chetniks, the nationalist Serbian counterparts to the Ustashas. Like Mirsada and Ifeta, women were told that they would be the mothers of Serbian soldiers and that they should be proud to give birth to Serbian children. In fact, women were often held in rape camps until after the point they could have a safe abortion. Only then were they released.158

Patriarchy, gender relations, politics, nationalism, and history all combined to create an atmosphere that not only worked against preventing rape, but actually encouraged its use. Rape may have been a matter of discourse in the 1980s in Kosovo, but during the war it became a devastating reality for tens of thousands of women throughout the former Yugoslavia. Historian Obrad Kesic acknowledges that “in order to mobilize for war, political leaders need to manipulate gender imagery. Deeply patriarchal in its essence, aggressive nationalism is based on warrior mythology.”159 The combination of attitudes about gender, nationalism, and history dictated that rape would be a form of warfare against Croats and Muslims.

Reasons for Rape

Like the Japanese during WWII, gender and ethnic relations influenced how Serbian forces conducted their war. Patriarchy, masculinity, and ethnic strife all influenced Serbian decision makers and soldiers. Yet, these were not the reasons that Serbia perpetrated rape on a mass scale. They decided on mass rape because they believed that it had utilitarian value in war.

One of Serbia’s main objectives was to reclaim land that they believed rightly belonged to Serbians. In order to claim that land, however, they had to “cleanse” it of Croatians and Muslims. One way to do this was to fight bloody battles for control of the desired land, another, was to use mass rape as a form of physical and psychological warfare. As discussed in the first chapter, rape caused such widespread fear and shame that whole communities would flee from their homes to avoid such a fate for the women of their communities. That was part of the strategy of public rape. The visibility of these rapes served to frighten the population and weaken resistance. Serbian forces banked on the fact that pre-invasion and invasion rapes would create such terror that they could “cleanse” whole areas with minimal effort. The psychological and physical horror of rape prompted migration, and this flight itself was one perceived benefit of rape warfare.

Another goal of Serbian mass rape was impregnation. Serbians did not employ the forced impregnation of Muslim and Croatian women as just another way to increase physical and psychological torture; pregnancy was their
intention as it became a form of ethnic cleansing. Since Serbian men already linked the status of “their” women to reproduction, they similarly saw enemy women as reproductive vessels. In a rather counter-intuitive fashion, Serbian forces perceived forced impregnation as a way to extend biologically the greater Serbia.\(^{160}\) As stories like those of Mirsada and Ifeta demonstrate, soldiers believed they would produce Serbian babies while at the same time they would prevent the reproduction of Muslims and Croats. Even though the child of a rape would not be raised by the father, Serbs remained convinced that the child would be Serbian. There is very little, if any, racial difference between Serbs and Croats and Bosnian Muslims, therefore ethnicity would mark the child’s identity. As they would be raised by the mother, their ethnic identity would derive from her. Serbs completely repressed the cultural identity of the mother and assumed the very Serbian superiority that shaped war rape as a strategy in the first place.\(^{161}\)

However lacking in scientific validity, this Serbian belief allowed rape to become a logical tool for Serbian ethnic cleansing. Ethnic cleansing for the purpose of gaining desired territories emptied of the enemy population served as the ultimate goal and justification of the war. Reconquering land that Serbian nationalists believed was rightly theirs constituted a main aim of the military


\(^{161}\) Frederick, 34.
agenda. The other aim involved making these territories Serbian by stopping the reproduction of non-Serbs, stimulating an increase in Serbian birth rates, by rape if necessary, and eventually relocating or killing the remaining non-Serbs. Todd Salzman argues that

While rape and sexual assault have frequently accompanied wars, the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict has utilized this atrocity to attain the object of the conflict itself, ethnic cleansing. In and through rape, and in particular rape for the purpose of forced impregnation, Serbs utilized the female gender violating her body and its reproductive capabilities as a ‘weapon of war.’

Among the many ways to “cleanse” an area ethnically is to rape. The Serbs chose this tactic not just because they thought that they could create Serbian children, but also because they wanted to force their enemy to cooperate.

Rape accomplished immediate goals for the Serbian forces. They intended rape to destroy utterly those subjected to it, to inflict mind-altering pain and suffering in order to discourage resistance and extract information. Hasiba’s story suggests these results. After she had already been raped by four Serbian men in a fire station, she was dragged out to a bridge in Visegrad. There Serbian soldiers had lined up ten Muslim men from her village. Hasiba was asked to give information about her hometown of Zepa. Even though she had been there many times since the war had begun and knew what the soldiers wanted to know she refused to speak. In view of all of the men, she was raped. She recalled the event:

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162 Salzman, 63-64.
And they started to kiss me right in front of them, they did everything, there wasn’t anything they didn’t do. . . . After that one of them took my chin and said, ‘So, you pretty thing, now tell me, how many people are there in Zepa, how many weapons do they have and how do you get there?’  

Serbian soldiers raped Hasiba in order to extract information from her. This is a very clear example of how Serbs used rape as a form of torture to coerce opposition forces and to cleanse acquired territories of them. 

Serbian forces chose to engage in rape warfare because it helped them to accomplish their war goals. Rape functioned as torture, caused massive psychological repercussions, and contributed to ethnic cleansing by causing flight and unwanted pregnancy. They could have chosen other means by which to fight the war, but due to their proclivities for viewing women through a patriarchal lens, glorifying specific forms of masculinity, and possessing a sense of ethnic superiority, they were capable of considering mass rape as a strategy. And because it appeared beneficial in helping them win the war, they chose organized mass rape as a strategy of war. 

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163 Ibid., 129.
CONCLUSION

Scholars have used several methods in their attempts to understand and explain mass wartime rape. Understanding where those methods have succeeded and failed is a crucial starting point. As I argued in the first chapter, no one approach has been fully able to explain this phenomenon. Only through synthesizing the psychoanalytic, feminist, and political approaches can one begin to address the multi-faceted factors involved in rape warfare. As the feminist camp points out, patriarchy and masculinity have played significant roles in the history of wartime rape. The psychoanalytic approach emphasizes culturally shared beliefs, practices, and experiences that shape the minds of historical characters, as well as the heightened terror and shame associated with rape. And the political approach focuses on the power relations and perceived benefits that result from mass rape.

In order to examine how much weight each of these approaches carries, I compared two instances of organized wartime mass rape. Understanding the common threads occurring in a phenomenon requires comparison. If one only addresses mass rape on a case by case basis many insights about causes and solutions may be lost. Therefore, I compared two very different cultures in an attempt to find what similarities existed between them that may explain their reliance on mass rape.
The Japanese culture of the Meiji and pre-WWII eras and the Serbian culture of the twentieth-century had several things in common. For one, both cultures adhered to a very austere form of patriarchal control. Women had few rights, narrowly defined standards by which to live, and received little respect. Secondly, both the Japanese and the Serbians worshiped the concept of masculinity. Men were ascribed hero roles and permitted, if not encouraged, to be violent. Thirdly, both societies possessed a significant sense of ethnic superiority. They were convinced of their own prowess and inherent right to dominate their neighbors, for whom they had a high degree of disdain. These similarities suggest a commonality among societies that perpetrate mass rape. Perhaps a larger study comparing more instances of mass rape will confirm this.

Cultural beliefs about gender and ethnicity are not the only similarities that pre-war Japan and pre-war Serbia share. Both governments organized mass rape because they believed that it would help them win their respective wars. Whereas, Japanese forces used organized mass rape in order to achieve an advantage over their enemies in the war by guarding their secrets, keeping their soldiers healthy and entertained, and avoiding bad press, Serbian forces utilized organized mass rape to extract information, frighten their enemies into emigrating, and cause forced impregnation. Even though their immediate goals and perceived benefits differed, both governments implemented mass rape because they viewed it as functional. There was a rational, goal-oriented thought process at work. Mass rape was not simply a by-product of an already violent
endeavor or the result of misogyny run amok. It was a despicable strategy in a struggle between nations. Women and their bodies became orchestrated battlefields in a bid for power.
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