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**What forms of denial of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide are prevalent within Sri Lankan society? A focus on media discourse in Sri Lanka.**

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# MSc Public Administration Thesis 2022

What forms of denial of war crimes,  
crimes against humanity and genocide  
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A focus on media discourse in Sri Lanka.

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## 1.0 Introduction

May 18<sup>th</sup> 2009, marked the end of the 26 years long Sri Lankan civil war between the government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil militant organization known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The victory was celebrated throughout the South of Sri Lanka, and the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) were paraded as war heroes along with a victory monument erected in Puthukkudiyiruppu, Sri Lanka, where the leader of the LTTE, Velupillai Prabhakaran, was killed in action and the LTTE were defeated. What occurred in the final phase of the war marked not only the end of the civil war. The final stage of the Sri Lankan civil war was not as straightforward as the SLA militarily defeating the LTTE. The Tamils commemorate May 18th as Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day (The World Sikh News, 2020). It has been reported that between 40,000 (UN Security Council, 2011) to 70,000 – 169,796 (PEARL, 2021) innocent Tamil civilians were killed by the Sri Lankan Army in the final stages of the war.

To this day, actions attributed to the government have shown that though it has repeatedly stated an investigation into war crimes would be conducted, they are discriminating Tamils to this day. Recent examples include the application of pressure from the government to the Vice-Chancellor of Jaffna University for the removal of the Mullivaikkal memorial, dedicated to the loss of thousands of Tamil lives in the final stages of the civil war (CityNews Toronto, 2021; BBC, 2021; The Times of India, 2021).

Such controversies caught the attention of the international community, who pressured investigations into the alleged war crimes. A report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, has recommended that Sri Lanka be referred to the International Criminal Court and that member states should take "steps towards the referral of the situation in Sri Lanka" (UN Human Rights Council, 2021). With such a report created by the UN High Commissioner, with the ultimate aim of impartiality, confusion arises with regards to the Sri Lankan government's response, by stating the report was "speculative, presumptive" with "unsubstantiated opinions" according to a draft version of a report sent to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Tamil Guardian, 2021b). The Sri Lankan government, keen to maintain their sovereignty, refused an international investigation but implemented a domestic mechanism known as the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC). The Sri Lankan government appointed the members of the commission since they refused an international intervention in any of their processes. The report ultimately failed to provide a thorough

and independent investigation of the alleged international humanitarian and human rights law violations that the UN and other member states called for (UNSG, 2011). The failure of the LLRC, the pardon of the only convicted war criminal, Sunil Ratnayake, sentenced in 2015 for blindfolding, slitting the throats and dumping the bodies of eight Tamil civilians into a sewer in 2000 (The New York Times, 2020) clearly shows that Sri Lanka has no intention of showing accountability for its war crimes. In the final stages, the government blocked access for humanitarian organizations such as the Red Cross (Human Rights Watch, 2010).

The government of Sri Lanka told 400,000 internally displaced civilians to gather in three 'No Fire Zones' (NFZs) whom were then subjected to ruthless, indiscriminate shelling. The shelling was so bad that it was called "one of the most dangerous places in the world" by the Asia direct at Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch, 2009a). The LTTE violated laws of war by using these civilians as human shields, preventing them from escaping the No Fire Zone, and subsequently shooting at them if they continued to run, in some cases killing civilians (Human Rights Watch, 2009a). This was exploited by the SLA to justify its own atrocities (Coles, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2009b) whom shelled the densely populated areas in the NFZ without regard for human life, including hospitals, despite receiving the exact coordinates of hospitals from the Red Cross (Human Rights Watch, 2009a). The NFZs were described as concentration camps when Tamil men and boys were kidnapped and butchered (Coles, 2011). The government of Sri Lanka pledged to provide a sufficient amount of food and medical supplies to people in these camps and in the NFZ but there was a significant lack of supplies to the point where six people were in a coma from eating poisonous plants with civilians also dying from starvation (U.S. Department of State, 2009).

Three UN reports on Sri Lanka (Report of The Panel of Experts, The Internal Review Report ("Petrie Report" and OISL Report) stated that credible evidence exists to show the international crimes (against humanity and war crimes) committed by the Sri Lankan government on the Tamil population of Sri Lanka (UN Security Council, 2011; Petrie, 2012; UN Human Rights Council, 2015). The fact that tens of thousands Sri Lankans (non-Tamils) protested the publication, in the form of a large rally where they shouted slogans and burned effigies of the UN secretary general at the time, shows that domestic processes for accountability should not be an option (Höglund, K. and Orjuela, 2012), but this has been the case thus far. With such clear crimes against humanity outlined and attributed to the government of Sri Lanka, one could say that it is almost absurd that the government can be in such denial of their crimes.

Former defence secretary, now President of Sri Lanka, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, claimed the civilian casualties were LTTE fighters who shed their uniform (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Gotabhaya asserted that the military's involvement in the final stages of the war was a "humanitarian intervention" where the military took great care to avoid civilian deaths. What is clear is that the Sri

Lankan state is in denial with regards to the war crimes, crimes against humanity and violations of international human rights law.

To investigate whether the views of government represent society, a key variable of interest is the media coverage of the last phase of the Sri Lankan civil war and the ensuing aftermath. Analysing news coverage is essential to discover media practices during this period, since the government denied Tamil civilians' killing (Al Jazeera, 2021; The Times 2010), as well as the forms of denial, if the phenomenon exists, in Sri Lankan society.

## **1.1 Research Methods**

As noted, an analysis of media coverage during the final phase of and the aftermath of the war is warranted to uncover the role of media in its coverage of the conflict and the extent of denial portrayed. This study aims to examine the types and extent of denial presented in the coverage of the Sri Lankan conflict. This study will be using a specific typology of denial to cover the media representation of the conflict. Denialism is a very contentious topic that has differing views and narratives. This study will use the typology of Israel Charny (2003) and his six categories of denial to uncover the presence of denial in Sri Lankan media and, if so, which category is the most prevalent. The primary purpose of this study is to diligently analyse how news media covered the Sri Lankan conflict during and after by solely using Sri Lankan newspapers.

Using a discourse analysis is an ideal method for evaluating newspaper coverage during periods of conflict. With the use of top-down deduction, this analysis necessitates realizing the coherent configurations of selection, emphasis and exclusion, which create an interpretation and evaluation of events. The use of codes in this analysis will structure the hundreds of articles involved, simplify their stories, and highlight which forms of denial take precedent over others. An event at a certain period during the war can be interpreted, perceived and presented in different ways. The use of coding assigned to each category of denialism will help realize the stance of a particular newspaper even though it may not outright state its denial of specific war crimes.

The 111 newspaper articles are selected from mainstream Sri Lankan papers. After completing top-down coding of the articles using Charny's categories, the articles will be analysed based on the denial displayed. This study will benefit newspaper editors and decision-makers by providing a discourse analysis of content produced from the coverage of war and conflict during a difficult period for journalists and the victims of the war.

### **1.1.1 Research methods justification**

The intentional misuse of news coverage of conflicts is not a new spectacle; even as early as the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, media institutions turned war into a phenomenon for mass intake purposes. Media has been utilized historically in genocide denial. Obradovic-Wochnik (2009) states that both the political and media spheres can be viewed as a microcosm of attitudes towards the war crimes attributed to Serbia, who are responsible for the Srebrenica genocide, who portrayed the genocide with abstract and hindered accounts in Serbian media. Holocaust denial from the Middle East is transmitted predominantly with the use of the internet, as well as print media and television (Whine, 2009). What has been suggested is that the Sri Lankan government has general control over newspapers and what they can publish. This is shown through the continued intimidation and killing of journalists. The murders of renowned journalists Taraki Sivaram and Sinhalese Lasantha Wickrematunge who both spoke out against various government actions shows actions the state is willing to take if journalists do not obey their orders. To date, no one has been caught for the murders of either journalist (Reporters Without Borders, 2006; Vidanage, 2009; Natarajan, 2012). This offers many strong possibilities. Media can attract and direct attention to people, problems and solutions to favour those in power. Media can also be used to confer status and confirm the legitimacy and become a channel for persuasion, mobilization, and ultimately, an instrument of social power (McQuail, 1997). Mass media ultimately has severe consequences for individuals and society (McQuail, 1997). Newspapers are seen to have various consequences; one paper found that endorsements of candidates in election proving to be influential in that voters are more likely to support the recommended candidate following the publication of approval (Chiang and Knight, 2011). Newspaper coverage affects consumer confidence and can also influence smokers' support for legislation and harm awareness (Hollanders and Vliegenthart, 2011; Nagelhout et al, 2012). This does, however, depend on the endorsement's credibility. Still, if the entire nation's newspapers follow the same agenda, one would question how one would distinguish right from wrong.

Therefore, realizing the extent of denial of newspapers in Sri Lanka is essential to understand how the war was portrayed in its durations and how the ensuing consequences were interpreted and discussed following the climax of the war.

## **1.2 Academic relevance**

From a theoretical perspective, this descriptive research hopes to add to the existing denialism literature by identifying specific subframes of the categories presented in Charny's typology, particular to the Sri Lankan media war reporting. Tamils inhabiting the island can only place limited attention to justice since they have effectively been silenced since the ending of the war (Höglund and Orjuela, 2013). Rubaii, Appe and Castro (2019) argue that the practice, research and teaching of

public administration should be more 'grounded in normative values and the public interest and that it is the duty of public servants, all the way down to street-level bureaucrats to become aware such that they are part of the solution rather than the problem (p.175). Camila Stivers, in her book *Governance of Dark Times*, advocated for more resources devoted directly to the issues of war and terrorism. Using the literature of administrative evil, which will be discussed in depth, scholars state that bureaucratic institutions are measured on and interested in financial impacts of actions making dehumanization common in bureaucratic hierarchies such as governments (Kelman, 1973; Dillard and Ruchala, 2005).

## 2.0 Literature review and Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Discussion of typologies of denialism

The different typologies of denialism are essential to discuss the typology which is most pertinent to the specific case of Sri Lanka. Denialism is incorporated in different settings around the world at different periods of time and will be discussed accordingly. This section aims to primarily discuss Israel Charny's (2003) theory of denialism by critically discussing its importance relative to other competing theories as well as highlighting various examples of historical denial.

Israel Charny (2003) offers a detailed typology which is more suitable for this study. Charny stated that gross denial of the holocaust was increasing, similarly to recurring themes in Bosnia and Sri Lanka, where, despite the fact state-organized 'genocidal massacres' were being reported accurately by world news media, denials by the states continued to exist. Charny (2003) states that simply reporting on genocide is not enough to prove denials wrong; what is required is to base the denials on a thorough model of different types of denial which correctly and accurately interpret the political purposes, cognitive structures and communication strategies of the various types of denial. Thus, Charny designed six different types of denialism to help cope with denial as well as help one to plan interventions and policies by first, understanding thought processes and the dynamics of the disputes and language of deniers, which one needs to overcome (Charny, 2003). Of the six categories, this review will cover all categories in brief but go into detail with regards to the categories that are more applicable to the research.

Malevolent bigotry is the first category which constitutes denials by perpetrators and denial by non-perpetrators in the traditions of fascism and bigotry. Denials by perpetrators is with regards to the denials of ongoing or past genocidal events by perpetrator governments and perpetrators. Under this also includes denials of past genocidal events, by Machiavellian governments whom would use the power invested in government to destroy and rewrite historical record. An empirical example Charny (2003) uses is the denial of the massacre of 3,000 student in Tiananmen Square by the Chinese

massacre, just days after it happened. Such outright denials are similar to what has occurred in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan government is on record for stating that ‘there were no civilian deaths at all’ in the final phase of the war, the day after the end of the war (K Höglund and C Orjuela, 2013, p.30). Denials by non-perpetrators includes continued denials by government and sponsored bodies to encourage the genocide. Many non-perpetrators grossly denied the Holocaust by claiming there was no organized killing of Jews ‘not a single German document was ever found referring to an extermination program’ claimed Mark Weber of a known neo-Nazi institute (Charny, 2003). Fascists claimed the victims were the victimizers who really did the genocidal killing. For example when Chaim Weizmann declared war on Germany by world Jewry; this being stated as a reason for genocide (Charny, 2003). In this sense, the interpretation of media articles written and published in Sri Lanka is warranted who, according to Charny, can be classified as non-perpetrators. What may also be the case is media articles taking a specific stance, repeating the same rhetoric as government.

The third category is with regards to “innocent denials” which maintain views of one’s society as just and not evil. The section of innocent denials which deny knowledge or believability of genocide; among other points, includes denials on a continuum from possibly “innocent” lack of knowledge and disbelief to more malicious denial of available knowledge. This specifically entails the denial of the factual history of a genocide – such as the denial of gas chambers during the Holocaust (Charny, 2003), which can be linked to other categories of denial such as malevolent bigotry. The innocent denial of known genocides was established through the course of a study of Middle Eastern scholars recruited to sign a notorious advertisement which initiated a new version of denial of the Armenian genocide, which was importantly sponsored by a Turkish government association (Charny, 2003). Intentions of these scholars are seemingly innocent but importantly cannot be seen as entirely innocent with the questioning of the validity of the genocide. It can be said that most of this denial is not consciously malevolent nor self-serving. Charny created (2003) two continuums to explain the emotional rewards inherent in adoption of denials of known genocides when denials are not linked to malevolent bigotry, political, economic or personal power. Many revisionists repeat the refrain given to them, rather than finding out the facts themselves, since it feels as a way of attacking people they hate; nevertheless degree of lack of knowledge of fact should be recognized (Charny, 2003).

The second continuum is the continuum of celebration of violence refers to the extent to which the denier pursues to implicitly celebrate the deaths of the victims through the denial of a genocide. Charny (2003) says the denial of a past genocide is a tool used to humiliate the remnants of the victim people.

Charny (2003) states it is essential to evaluate all ‘innocent denials’ for possible degrees of manipulation and lying. Deniers can insist on listening to the ‘other point of view’ when in truth they are taking advantage of free speech to disguise their motives/propaganda. Manipulation can be

achieved by acknowledging facts of a denial and/or expression of regret of violence with various lies and denials used to cripple the factual basis of the denial (Charny, 2003). One may regret deaths of many Armenians but couple this with statements that wartime conditions were prevailing and no fewer Turks and Kurds died than Armenians; and that they died at the hands of the warring Armenians (Charny, 2003). Deniers can also have goals of making people believe that all sides were equally at fault and even to the point of reversing roles, claiming that Armenians were the authors of the real genocide. Journalists deemed capable of writing and producing news articles for the nation could very well be capable of doing the same or something similar in Sri Lanka.

The next category is “Definitionalism” or insistence on defining cases of mass murders as not genocide is the next category. The most common way to attempt to refute charges of genocide is to argue for the inclusion of events of mass killing under the definitional rules of war (Charny, 2003). He uses the argument of Markusen and Kopf (1995) who believe that bombings of civilians constitute genocide. The definition of genocide is also heavily contested with purists arguing a mass killing was not ‘really’ a genocide if the goal was not to kill all of a given people, despite the UN convention of genocide referring to intent to destroy in whole or in part (Charny, 2003). This became the basis of the Armenian genocide denial with Turkey saying the majority of Armenians in Turkey were not killed which lead to some saying there was no true genocide of Armenians; what should be realized is that is that Turks killed Armenians later on following the round of original leaders and intelligentsia in Istanbul (McCarthy and McCarthy, 1989; Charny, 2003). They could not reach the total transfer of population in Istanbul just like Germans could not kill all Jews, for various reasons. Among others, one such aspect of this point is the denials based on insistence that a case of mass murder classed “only” as another and in effect lesser category such as “accepted acts of war”. Various reasons can be provided for classifying events in these categories such as response to an attack, counter-terrorism or retaliation (Charny, 2003). Denials can also occur through the manipulation/minimization of statistics; in a way such that numbers were not high enough to be classed as a genocide (Charny, 2003). An example provided by Charny is when a scholar of the Holocaust, Yehuda Bauer, revised downwards the number of Jews killed at Auschwitz, to the delight of the denial industry.

Flagrant forms of racism can be used by deniers to stigmatize the victim group as unlikeable, provocative, rebellious and disloyal to a host nation to justify their deserving to be attacked (Charny, 2003). At start of the war, Tamils became the generic threatening figure of the Tamil terrorist in Sri Lanka (Spencer, 2000), in the final year of the war, Tamils were unequivocally seen as Tigers, due to their protesting of the massacre of innocent civilians in the NFZs in Canada (George, 2012) so it is clear Tamils were seen as the enemy of Sri Lanka. Deniers also use various devices of rationalisations and deconstruction of meaning to avoid placing themselves in bad lights unlike bigots. Professor Bernard Lewis revised his earlier writing on the genocide of the Armenians, based on new researches

he was never able to cite. The meta-meaning however is to normalize, relativize and deconstruct the Holocaust, as well as engage in partial denials of central facts of the Holocaust (Charny, 2003).

Charny's (2003) next category is nationalistic hubris. States that denial is at work when people of any one ethnicity declare themselves indifferent to the fates of other people and their claims for historical justice. When one is engaged in discussing the uniqueness of the Holocaust or the legitimate statements of the uniqueness of the Holocaust without paying attention to meta-meanings making others perceive claims of superiority over other genocides, one is also engaging in denial of the tragedy and significance of others, and by doing this, we end up joining the larger body of revisionists.

Denials also derive from legitimate criticism of a victim population's policies including the violations of human rights of others, which is seen to minimize the genuine tragedy and significance of the victim people's original genocide.

One appropriate aspect being denials of the significance of the genocide of another people. Used as a method to distance Serbia from the Srebrenica genocide, Serbia also used Holocaust experts who were eager to argue that Srebrenica did not qualify as a genocide due to its lack of accordance with the UN genocide convention (Subotić, 2021).

The final category of this typology is human shallowness; the dulling and depletion of a genuine sense of tragedy and moral outrage. This includes denials deriving from routinization, desensitization or banalization of events of genocide meaning denials are based on acceptance of genocide as a routine event of history. Denial includes the failure to maintain deep moral concern, talking only of survivors and trying to pass off genocide as a routine event (Charny, 2003).

This thesis seeks to identify different forms of denial; due to the sheer complexity and extensive nature of this typology, Charny's theory of denialism would be able to capture all forms of denial within it in a way that other typologies would not allow. That, other typologies such as Stanley Cohen's (2001) is not refined to a level that identifies a form of denial sufficient to this paper, despite its use and application in other papers such as Del Russo's (2018), Charny's theory is the most complete typology for this paper. The research ultimately has one hypothesis; that definitionalism is the most prevalent form of denial in Sri Lanka due to the numerous times government officials have either attempted to deny killing of civilians, downplayed the number of people actually killed and attempted to justify the final phase measures as an attempt to eradicate terrorism (Al Jazeera, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2010).

Obradovic-Wochnik focuses on the responses to the Srebrenica massacre of around 8000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys in the United Nations (UN) declared 'safe zone' of Srebrenica (Obradovic-Wochnik, 2009). The paper details the strategies of denial which attempt to either explain or justify the genocide without engaging critically with the massacre. Obradovic-Wochnik states that both the political and media spheres can be viewed as a microcosm of attitudes towards the war crimes attributed to Serbia, who are responsible for the genocide, who portrayed the genocide with abstract and hindered accounts in Serbian media as well as politics and its education system. Contrastingly to the Sri Lanka case however, external intervention on Serbian affairs has ensured that war crimes can no longer be outright denied. Parties who were accused of implicit involvement in war crimes focused on the credibility and legitimacy of the ICTY rather than the responsibility of the Serbs. The author delves into the denial further with Tomislav Nikolic, general secretary of one of the parties implicit in war, the SRS, who stated that the war crimes were not the fault of 'us', rather the production of false reports of various conspirators. The paper then discusses mainstream media's attitudes towards the genocide; close to the time of the 2006 anniversary of Srebrenica the newspaper, *Vecernje novosti* produced series of articles regarding the war in Sarajevo with very limited mentions of Srebrenica. The papers preferred to discuss crimes against Serbs in Yugoslavia indicating media discourse in this case fails to distinguish crimes committed against versus by the Serbs. The paper, along with describing certain examples of how media denies war crimes, lacks in terms of describing the extent of denial.

Subotić(2021) states that despite the designation of the Srebrenica as genocide by the ICTY, Serbians still reject the finding, which includes the Bosnia Serb population. Serbia claim to be a victim nation that suffered as much as the Jews as a method to protect themselves from war crimes and genocide in the 1990s (Subotić, 2021). Holocaust experts were used to deny what occurred in Srebrenica as genocide, of which some experts were involved to establish the uniqueness of the Holocaust including those whom supported the Israeli government with anti-Arab sentiments, who argued the lack of accordance with the UN genocide convention. With the argument of notable Holocaust scholars, Serbian and Bosnian Serb media used this as evidence as the views of Holocaust survivors as well as the Jewish judgment of Srebrenica was not a genocide, adopting the Serbian political narrative (Subotić, 2011). Subotić (2011) rightfully, states that 'the ethical responsibility of studying the Holocaust also involves ethics of comparison, and the commitment to recognizing violence wherever it takes place, and treating victims of mass violence with respect and their memory with dignity. Echoing Charny's (2003) classification, this denial for example can be placed in the category for nationalistic hubris since Holocaust experts believe that this genocide cannot qualify for the same designation of genocide as the Holocaust due to it being so unfathomably unique. The rejection of the Bosniak people's tragedy as genocide is indeed denial which denies their tragedy and significance.

What is required however is a classification of denial to figure out the underlying positions of genocide deniers.

Another example of genocide and war crime denial is in the case of the Holocaust. Six million Jews fell victim to the Holocaust; the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder conducted by Nazi Germany as part of the 'Final Solution' to the Jewish question; to murder all Jews in Europe who were seen as inferior to the Germany community. Whine (2009) writes on Holocaust denial in Middle East countries and legislation. He notes that, since outright denial is criminalized in many areas, Holocaust trivialization and inversion is more common. Trivialization argument of the Holocaust was far fewer died than the commonly agreed figure of six million (Whine, 2009). The inversion argument shows behaviour of the Jews in Israel towards Palestinians as being at least as bad as the Nazis treatment of Jews (Whine, 2009). What Michael Whine correctly acknowledges is that the logic in denial ranges from outright deniers to shift the moral responsibility for genocide and portray the victims as the perpetrators. What Whine does, correctly, is write on exactly what is being denied. What would further the understanding of the denial is a framework whereby, similarly to the Bosnia case, denial can be categorized to provide a clearer understanding of the denial, make us aware of its prominence and existence. Using Charny (2003), this denial can be appropriately categorized by placing the trivialization argument, for example, in the category of definitionalism since the argument seeks to minimize the statistics to deconstruct the meaning of the genocide.

Other typologies of denial also deserve further discussion. Zerubavel (2006) focusses on the social organization of denial, on the cognitive and behavioural skills which enables a society to participate in conspiracies of silence. Zerubavel states these skills enable denial to take place and thus calls them the rules of denial. The rules of denial being *Attention and Culture*, *Learning to Ignore* and *Tact and Taboo*.

*Learning to Ignore* is a section where Zerubavel states that ignoring something is more than failing to notice it; but is also often pressured to disregard it. By watching others ignore certain aspects of a genocide, such as the Sri Lankan government's unwillingness to cooperate in an external investigation of war crimes, we too would learn to ignore them. Despite this being a vital point, it would be difficult to identify society's adoption of denial through government denial. What can be inferred through media articles, however, is their use of terminology, to identify the forms of denial, knowing that most of media is controlled by the state.

*Tact and Taboo* is characterized with a strong emphasis on avoidance. Taboos make up the form of strict prohibition against looking, listening or conversing on a certain topic, which could be the mention of extermination of Jews in concentration camps in Nazi Germany or the refusal to acknowledge the hardship of Tamil civilians. Those ignoring the taboos would be recognized as social deviants (Zerubavel, 2006). Unfortunately it would prove difficult to quantify this through media

articles as it is more of a strategy of denial used in everyday conversation rather than through written pieces.

Zerubavel's (2006) views on media are also something to consider. He believes that the media is not very successful in telling us what to think but it is in terms of telling us what to think about. Mass media does play a significant role in deciding which issues and events make headlines; by not covering stories, media is seen to keep certain things out of our awareness deliberately. Zerubavel very rightly also states that Germans "knew enough to know it was better not to know more" and tried to "look innocent by not noticing" the stench coming out of the crematoria (Zerubavel, 2006, p.40). Though Zerubavel gives a clear indication as to why individuals are in denial, his logic is more about why denial exists rather than describing the denial in detail.

What cannot be argued thus far is that research in other domains have used Stanley Cohen's typology of denialism, with regards to atrocity and suffering, and have either extended, tested or used the typology in some way. Cohen (2001) states that denial is an unconscious defence mechanism for coping with guilt, anxiety and other disturbing emotions instigated by reality. With regards to the denial of war criminals, Cohen (2001) documents that human rights investigators, in order to avoid bias, pre-empt attacks on their credibility through the assertion that they are equally critical of the offending state's enemies. Similarly, this research expects to uncover that media articles deliberately divert attention away from state sponsored genocide and war crimes to the crimes attributed to the opposition, the LTTE. Stanley Cohen's typology has three main varieties of denial; literal denial, interpretative denial and implicatory denial. Literal denial is the complete negation of the fact of an atrocious situation; stating 'it did not happen'. Interpretative denial is claiming what happened is not what you think it is, that it is not what it looks like and is accompanied with jargon, euphemisms and other misleading rhetoric to dispute events. Implicatory denial is to do with the acceptance of the facts of an atrocious event but facts are not seen as psychologically disturbing or not seen as carrying a moral incentive to act, somewhat similar to Charny's (2003) human shallowness category.

Cohen (2001) takes the typology, further by stating the different ways in which denial is organized; in private forms as well as officially and culturally. Official denial is a discourse which is highly structured and organized by the state. Cultural denial is neither wholly private nor officially organized by the state but has a shared character. Necessarily, Cohen notes the troubles with accountability, noting it can genuinely be difficult to find out the truth about atrocities due to the complex circuit of claims and counterclaims made by government, human rights critics and opposition forces (Cohen, 2001). Cohen believes the most useful form of denial may not be a matter of telling the truth nor intentionally. For example, nation-states who turn a blind eye to concentration camps in neighbouring countries. Though very relevant and discourse must be taken with regards to this, the scope of this thesis is primarily to focus on the denial within the perpetrator state. For this reason, Cohen's theory

of denial is too broad, to an extent, to uncover denial within the state. Conversely, Charny (2003) and his theory of denial can be used explicitly to show the different types of denial existent within media, and thus society.

Sutton and Norgaard (2013) investigate the atrocities committed by Argentinian and American forces, authorized by both countries' state officials. This paper takes a different approach with regards to denial, investigating whether living in a democracy or dictatorship can matter for individual and collective responses to such knowledge of atrocity. The paper takes a sociological lens to gain an insight into the dynamics of avoidance, denial and inaction in the face of atrocities. Sutton and Norgaard (2013) believe the lens helps provide an understanding of socially and politically mediated processes which shape the denial phenomenon.

Sutton and Norgaard (2013) state that citizen acquiescence, inaction and silence serve to legitimate brutal state policy and action. With regards to the social organization of denial, the authors make references to many other scholars including Zeruvabel (2006) and Cohen (2001) and note that the positioning of ordinary people as third parties, as 'spectators' of state violence or as indirect targets of disciplinary procedures from state discourse is important in understanding social processes of silencing and denial. The paper found that two sets of cultural practices enabled state violence to be legitimated. Firstly, the ideology of patriotism and national security, which provided tools to justify, minimize and normalize human rights violations; facilitating Cohen's (2001) interpretive and literal denial (Sutton and Norgaard, 2013). The cultural practices of not asking questions and euphemistic speech also contributes to keeping human rights violations out of mind and sight. The literature of administrative evil demonstrates that euphemisms are used to cover the evil they are implementing. Whereas Charny (2003) does not make explicit reference to euphemisms unlike Cohen (2001) and Sutton and Norgaard (2013), the ideology of euphemisms can certainly be used in categories such as *innocent denials* where the state refers to the final stages of the war as a humanitarian operation. Media is clearly highlighted as a significant tool for denial; the paper states that media as well as state officials have manipulated the fear of terrorist attacks and provided misleading information (Sutton and Norgaard, 2013). The role of media in emphasizing denial is clear and thus warrants further research. This paper discusses why denial takes place, which is important, but the thesis seeks to explicitly seek the prominence of denial.

Further criticisms of Cohen's typology are described by Del Russo (2018) who states that Cohen (2001) does not develop a complete typology of the rhetorical strategies whereby claim-makers acknowledge and delegitimize state violence as human rights crimes. Del Russo (2018) does however note the influential status of Cohen's theory. Del Russo's completed analysis of newspaper articles found that military denies the extent of their violations of human rights through euphemisms, linked to the cultural practices of Sutton and Norgaard (2013) and Cohen (2001). Cohen's theory is observed

to be remarkably adaptable due to its use in different environments, such as its use with its application to media elites and citizens (Sutton and Norgaard, 2013) however Charny's typology is just as applicable due to the number of references it makes to different genocides and the different techniques used to deny. Del Russo (2018) states that Cohen's typology is necessarily generic but advises scholars using the typology to seek the subtle but important differences of the denial in action under the types of denial. Del Russo's suggestion is contradicting since he is advising to notice the subtle differences, when in some cases it could be hard to notice but important yet not noted in the typology. Therefore, a more detailed typology is required, which is why this study will utilize the typology of denialism per Charny (2003).

## 2.2 Administrative Evil

To further the understanding of denialism, an understanding must be made to the public administration scholarship to help discover why the topic warrants further research.

State governments have in the past committed atrocious acts violating international human rights law. The 'modern, technical-rational approach to public administration was adhered to in every aspect' in the destruction of Jews (Adams and Balfour, p.66, 1998). Whilst the acts were committed, various techniques were employed by governments to legalize and convince, both the general public as well as the workers it directly employs, that their actions were appropriate. The discourse of administrative evil helps explain how states use all means necessary to commit these acts and hide the true evil intentions behind the actions.

What this section discusses are the various techniques used by governments involved in mass atrocities to mask the true intentions of bureaucratic actions. This section makes explicit reference to the Holocaust of 1941 to 1945, the genocide of six million European Jews during World War II committed by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. Though no event in history was ever as destructive and dehumanizing as the Holocaust, stark comparisons can be made with regards to the implementation of the genocide.

Adams and Balfour (1998) introduce the topic of administrative evil and its connection with the genocide perpetrated by Nazi Germany during World War II into public administration literature. Adams and Balfour (1998) argue that the move towards administrative evil, through acts of genocide and dehumanization, is profoundly intertwined with the identity of public administration. The evil referred to here is the deliberate and intentional infliction of pain and suffering on other human beings, administrative evil is seen as a 'new' evil as it is masked due to modernity (Adams and Balfour, 1998). Technical rationality is a culture which emphasizes a scientific-analytical mindset and

the belief in technological progress. This mindset and belief is what is said to have created a new form of evil; administrative evil (Adams and Balfour, 1998). Technical rationality became prevalent in the socio-political world before WW2, thereby prompting public administrators to take a view in which human conflicts appeared as problems which could be fixed through engineering solutions. As a result, there is a tendency to downplay and ignore history and context in public administration. For this reason, history and culture is not included in active decision making; this is deeply embedded within the culture at large (Adams and Balfour, 1998). Therefore, we are prone to calls for science and rigor as we are unable to take present historical and cultural circumstances, creating conditions for modernity (Bauman, 1989).

Administrative evil can be distinguished from other notions of evil and ethical failures as its appearance is masked, people engage in acts of evil unaware that anything they are doing is wrong. Ordinary administrators may simply act appropriately in their organizational role, contributing to actions that the critical observer, would deem morally wrong (Balfour and Alibašić, 2016). There are three key reasons for the difficulty in unmasking this administrative evil. The modern tendency to not label things as evil as it does not suit the modern scientific mindset. Compartmentalization, where modern organizations diffuse individual responsibility and create role expectations to perform on a daily basis, and the streamlining of public policy processes, as well as their implementation, which leads to ordinary people being more prone to moral inversion, where one is convinced the evil they participate in, is good (Hoffman and Gajewski, 2012; Dillard and Ruchala, 2005; Reed, 2012; Adams and Balfour, 1998).

There are many ways to mask administrative evil, thus ensuring well-intentioned ordinary people also participate in the evil. Hoffman and Gajewski (2012) believe there are ten ways to mask administrative evil, which are seemingly extended from Adams and Balfour (1998) who believe that language and dehumanization are two elements which make people vulnerable to participation in evil. Both papers believe language is a core tool used to mask evil. Within language, euphemisms and technical language are used to provide emotional distance from what these people are really doing (Hoffman and Gajewski, 2012; Adams and Balfour, 1998). “Collateral damage” is used to describe the killing of civilians from bombing raids, or in the case of the Holocaust, code words such as “evacuation”, “special treatment” and the infamous phrase “final solution” were used for the killings (Adams and Balfour, 1998). To mask the true intentions behind the Sri Lankan state’s actions in 2009, euphemisms were used. The Sri Lankan government went on record to state that what was happening in the final stage of the war was a ‘humanitarian operation’ to save the civilians from the LTTE (Keen, 2009).

Dehumanization refers to actions against those who are not “normal” according to the majority, do not belong to an organization’s members or client population, making the action of inflicting pain easier

and thus treated as outsiders (Adams and Balfour, 1998; Dillard and Ruchala, 2005). Legitimizing the actions against the 'surplus' is required in order to mask the evil (Adams and Balfour, 1998; Hoffman and Gajewski, 2012). The first basic statues passed under the Enabling law was the "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service," which removed Jews and others from important government posts (Browning, 1983). The Tamil population of Sri Lanka were systematically marginalised post-colonialism. Due to young Tamils' willingness to embrace the English language, the British hired Tamils disproportionately compared to the majority Sinhalese.

S.W.R.D Bandaranaike, then prime minister of Sri Lanka, enacted the Official Language Act of 1956, making Sinhala the sole official language of Sri Lanka. Crucially, this meant that Tamils who could not speak Sinhala were no longer allowed to apply or keep their roles in the civil service (DeVotta, 2005).

Public administrators were given considerably less attention than the SS, Gestapo and concentration camps' doctors and guards. German bureaucracy adapted from legislative discrimination of the Jews to the deportation and extermination (Browning, 1983, p.147). The SS and Gestapo could not get away with carrying out their horrifying missions in concentration and death camps without the help of public administrators who helped create and maintain ghettos and deaths camps across Germany and Eastern Europe (Adams and Balfour, 1998). The death and slave labour camps, gas chambers and crematoriums were the final solution to the "Jewish problem" and were relatively brief steps to take down a long road towards gruesome administrative evil (Bauman, 1989; Browning, 1992). By following German procedures at the time, the German public administrator could feel satisfied that his actions were legal (Adams and Balfour, 1998). The Sri Lankan bureaucrat would feel the same to this day considering the delay in justice to the Tamil people.

Just as Germany viewed the Jewish population as the problem, Sri Lanka viewed the Tamil population as the problem. From what started as legislative discrimination through the official language act and policy of standardisation turned to attempts of silencing Tamil rebels with the passing of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1979. This act permitted security forces to arrest, imprison anyone deemed to be a national security threat, without trial, of which Tamils, regardless of their innocence, were abused and tortured (DeVotta, 2005).

Critiques exist with regards to public administration and its place in public administrative ethics. Scholars take a faint view towards nonscientific notions such as evil and research that is not consistent with standards of technical rationality (Dubnick, 2000). Warrant-establishing arguments offer backing for prepositions used to link evidence to the statements of the claim maker. Dubnick (2000) states that it is the lack of use of warrant-establishing arguments and the fundamental expectation of its use in scholarship which administrative evil does not meet, specifically the claim that the world is today suffering from a new form of evil. Lack of backing for this claim, coherently establishing the warrants

of claims through authoritative and evidentiary backing, show the shortcomings of the claim (Dubnick, 2000). Frederickson (2012) argues that focussing on administrative evil diminishes the good done by public servants and institutions. He states that focussing on evil diverts from the actual challenges facing public administration, and a useful framework should be created and based on what should be done rather than what should not be done, as well as catastrophic events such as the Holocaust (Frederickson, 2012). Reed (2012) however explains that concepts such as evil and unmasking in fact suggest implications for leadership study and ethical practice.

Other scholars utilised in Dubnick's criticism of administrative evil show other potential reasons for ordinary people taking part in evil. Inhumanity is always a human possibility according to Sofsky (2013) and men at war were subject to peer pressure, constant call to arms under notions of patriotism and a siege mentality (Browning, 1992). Deep rooted anti-Semitism, rather than a scientific-analytic mind-set was what directed the Holocaust (Goldhagen, 1996). What is incoherent about this analysis however is that, Adams and Balfour (1998) never stated that anti-Semitism was non-existent in German society at the time, rather that administrative evil played a significant role in continuing the genocide. Dubnick (2000) does not help his argument by referring to other explanations for the Holocaust, without commenting on their evidence-based warrant-backing approach to their claims.

Scholars question if technical rationality is the main causal factor for administrative evil, believing that both were created because of modernity's failure to take into account issues regarding freedom, human dignity and being as core aspects of modern organizations (Moreno-Riano, 2001; Garcia-Zamor, 2003). Reed (2012) believes that since task delineation and specialized functions are building blocks for modern organizations, with the negative impact of an effort only known to a few, he understands technical rationality's part of Adams and Balfour's analysis.

It is also argued that no viable alternatives exist compared to a technical-rational society and that a drastic change of society is needed to implement alternatives which may be alarming (Dillard and Ruchala, 2015). Despite critiquing the difficulties of alternatives to a technical-rational society, Dillard and Ruchala (2015) believe change can also be brought by further emphasizing the importance of human agency to create change in organizations as well as the explicit need to look at the use of metaphors and euphemisms in organizational environments in order to mask administrative. To their credit however, Adams and Balfour (1998) do refer to the use of euphemisms in great detail and, as discussed above, scholars, including Adams and Balfour, have discussed several ways to unmask administrative evil, critiquing technical rationality's use in public administration in the process.

Ultimately what should be realized with regards to the contribution of administrative evil to public ethics and public administration is that not all ethical failures are caused from failure to comply with standards and norms of a technical rational mindset. Whilst administrative evil can be built from the outside, administrative evil can also originate from within. Public administrators need to be aware of

their present historical situation, considering both personal and professional ethics to refuse to act as accomplices. As the review has now shown, it can be extremely difficult for ordinary workers to realize when this is the case, but it is clear more can be done, with extreme cases like the Holocaust, to distinguish right and wrong. The theory of administrative evil can go a long way to describe societal denial, thus denial of ordinary people, in Sri Lanka; with no war criminals held accountable for war crimes attributed to the Sri Lankan state, the evil is still masked, but it can explain why denial persists to this day.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This study aims to investigate the extent of the prevalence of denial of war crimes and genocide within Sri Lankan society. To achieve this, the study will take a specific focus on media discourse within Sri Lanka by looking at various newspapers.

#### **3.1 Case selection**

When it came to the selection of this case with regards to denial; what was sparsely written about in academic literature, but necessitated research was the case of Sri Lanka. A country which has the highest cases of disappearances, according to Amnesty International, following the end of the conflict should be enough of a justification on its own to conduct further research (Amnesty International, 2021). Past research has been conducted with regards to the language used in official reports from the Ministry of Defence, where independent media was prevented from entering the war zone (Seoighe, 2017). This paper noted the state undermined the “reliability, objectivity and credibility of the observer” (Cohen, 2001, p.105) by launching attacks on human rights activists and NGO, using the rhetoric and labelling them as “pro-Tiger” (Seoighe, 2017). To the best of the research conducted, this is the only academic source to have performed research of the Sri Lankan civil war through a typology of denial, yet no research has been undertaken on newspapers. The fact that not much has been written on a phenomenon which requires an in-depth analysis of how a whole country denied and re-interpreted atrocities to achieve its goals, shows that further research is required to expose this complex phenomenon of denial.

### 3.2 Data Collection and analysis

In this study I will conduct a Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) to determine the prevalence of denial within Sri Lankan society from the period of January 2009 – March 2021. What will be discussed in the section are the sources used, justifications for the chosen time period and how the QDA will be performed.

#### 3.2.1 Data sources

The analysis aims to identify the categories of denial which are of most prominence within Sri Lankan society. This will be achieved through the use of primary sources; newspaper articles. The analysis of the following publications will take place, along with a brief description regarding their ideologies:

Newspaper Publication	Ideology
Daily News	Daily newspaper which belongs to the the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd which covers mild criticisms of government activity (Natarajan, 2012). Is a government-owned newspaper publishing house.
Sunday Observer	The weekly counterpart of <i>Daily News</i> (Natarajan, 2012).
Daily Mirror	Describes itself as the “largest selling independent English daily in Sri Lanka,” with a readership of approximately 150,000. States itself to providing an “independent editorial stand” as well as a “reliable and balanced presentation of the news” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2013).
The Sunday Times	The weekly counterpart of <i>Daily Mirror</i> (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2013).
Daily FT	Also owned by Wijeya Newspapers Ltd, though primarily focussed on business (Daily FT, 2021)
Colombo Times	According to its official Facebook page, Colombo Times is an independent newspaper, which “will be the beginning of a new era for readers to get independent news and reports”.
Colombo Gazette	Launched in 2012. From its about us page, “well-received by the diplomatic community in Sri Lanka and recommended for its content.”(Colombo Gazette, 2021).
Colombo Post	Is a Sri Lankan English-language weekly newspaper. According to their twitter handle, “a news and current affairs site committed to preserving democracy and free media.”
Lanka Business Online	An independent newspaper focussed on production services, business media, digital/online media, print and content mobilization & telecommunication partnerships (Lanka Business Online, 2021).
Ada Derana	In their about us page claim to deliver the most unbiased and comprehensive news property on offer. Available on a multilingual platform and ranked the number one news site by Sri Lankans (Ada Derana, 2021).
News.lk	The government’s official news portal (Department of Government Information Sri Lanka.lk, 2021).

**Figure 1 – Ideology of Sri Lankan newspapers.**

Leiden University’s news search engine ‘LexisNexis’ does not provide access to any Sri Lankan newspapers so I have opted to use the database of Factiva through Leiden University. Factiva provides access to the databases of the aforementioned newspapers.

Factiva is not as user friendly as LexisNexis; each time I log back in, I am required to input the search dates and filters to the newspapers accordingly. There are generally two ways of searching in Factiva. The simple search allows the use of the search bar at Factiva's homepage, which can then be refined based on date and companies and sources. Using the free text search function, I will then enter the word 'LTTE'. The free text search function requires specificity such as date and newspapers.

Upon a simple search in Factiva for *LTTE*, the abbreviation of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, for the specified time period, a total of 19,742 results came up from the filtered newspapers mentioned above. Denial could be interpreted from opinions expressed, despite being only brief mentions in some articles.

To essentially quantify the extent of certain forms of denial based on the typology of Charny (2003), top-down coding of the 111 articles will take place. The idea behind top-down coding based on Charny's theory of denialism is that codes reflect denialism which would be a good indicator as to the narrative the newspaper article is attempting to portray.

National newspaper articles are also more likely to be read by practitioners or adopted as a source by other forms of media (e.g., television news) due to their large reader bases. Colombo-based newspapers tend to be read by a wider audience than just the city itself, being the commercial capital of Sri Lanka.

### **3.2.2 Time**

The reason for the start date, 01/01/2009 is to signify the beginning of the year of the end of the civil war. The period of time ranges from the beginning of 2009, where 40,000 were estimated to have died in May 2009, the final stage of the war, to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2021, when the United Nations Human Rights Council was given the mandate to collect and preserve information and evidence of crimes related to the civil war for future war crimes trials (UN News, 2021). Though thousands of documents are bound to arise from a search in this time period, it would only mean a significantly large sample size to ensure no specific dates are missed.

### **3.2.3 Qualitative Data Analysis**

Using data and research software Atlas.ti. This thesis will import text from Factiva to code sentences belonging to articles. Prior to the importing of text, a sampling strategy is required to obtain 111 newspaper articles representative of the broader sample of 19,742 articles. The sampling strategy was calculated as seen below:

Strata	Daily News	SL Govt News	Sunday Observer	Colombo Times	Daily Mirror	Daily FT
Population Size	8,020	2,993	2,702	1,837	1,519	1,329
Sampling Fraction	0.406240502	0.151605714	0.136865566	0.09305035	0.076942559	0.067318407
Final Sampling Results	45.09269578	16.82823422	15.1920778	10.3285888	8.54062405	7.472343228

Strata	AdaDerana	Sunday Times	Colombo Gazette	Lanka Business Online	Express Business
Population Size	425	424	320	89	61
Sampling Fraction	0.021527707	0.021477054	0.016209097	0.004508155	0.003089859
Final Sampling Results	2.389575524	2.383952994	1.799209807	0.500405227	0.342974369

The population size refers to the total number of newspaper with the filters and time period selected. Of the population, the sampling fraction is the fraction of the newspaper relative to the entire sample. The fraction is multiplied with the population size to achieve the final sampling results which is rounded down or up to the nearest whole number, reflecting the number of articles to select per newspaper. Following this, random sampling is used to select the article from the Factiva database. Sampling is conducted using the =RAND() function in Excel where the articles have a corresponding number based on their order in Factiva, which is filtered on ‘oldest first’. Following the random sampling in Excel, the articles are listed in order of random number and thus the number furthest away from 1 are picked based on the number of required article via ‘final sampling results. The results of the sampling can be viewed in Appendix A. Atlas Ti would be utilized through the use of quotations as codes which is applicable to the imported text. Following the completion of coding, the program can generate a variety of reports ranging from Excel reports to word clouds.

The benefits of the program are that it allows the coding of material in a user-friendly manner. The material subjected to coding will be taken by sentence and in some cases, phrases; as words on their own sometimes may not suffice in some occasions due to differing contexts of the newspapers.

Essentially a discourse analysis will be undertaken, through top-down coding, to understand articles within the context surrounding the war both during and the aftermath when written.

A discourse analysis will be conducted in order to understand written language in relation to its social context. The context matters significantly as stronger choice words are observed following events such as the end of the war.

It is essential to include the thirteen newspapers as ideologies of newspapers may differ in Sri Lanka, and the opinions expressed may differ based on who was in power at the time of publication as well as proceedings in the international environment in terms of attaining accountability. Due to being a descriptive research project, this thesis will not have explanatory variables.

### **3.2.4 Validity and reliability**

When considering the validity and reliability of an instrument or measure, various considerations are required to be taken when conducting research.

There are many forms of measurement validity of which the most applicable form of validity in this case is content validity; the precision in which the findings accurately reflect the data (Toshkov, 2016). The findings should be representative of the broader sample due to the sampling strategy in place to ensure that the quantity of articles analysed per newspaper reflects the same ratio as the entire sample of 19,742 articles. With most codes aligned to the typology of Charny (2003), a similar outcome should be expected when using a broader sample. Positionality and Ethics are both essential when conducting primary research. Positionality is associated with phenomenology, the fact that all researchers, have come to approach their topic with certain beliefs and assumptions about the topic itself and the results it will produce. Therefore, it is necessary to state my assumptions and beliefs about the research clearly.

It is also vital to consider the ways in which the stance I have prior to research does not affect my perspective of the study. I myself no doubt have a personal motivation in this research paper. Being an ethnic Tamil growing up in an environment which raised awareness on the issue, I believe it is essential awareness continues to raise. However, research was conducted with utmost impartiality and to the best of capabilities, by looking at both sides of the issue. As this is a qualitative research project, I recognize that multiple realities exist and coding would be different with every user.

Reliability concerns the consistency of analytical procedures including various biases that may influence the findings (Toshkov, 2016). Consistency is ensured through following a clear description of the research process from the original plan. By coding articles based on the definitions of categories of denial. Emerging themes are noted by highlighting aspects of denial in articles which do not fit in the same categories entirely thus keeping an open process where assumptions are challenged.

## 4.0 Results

### 4.1 Top-down coding

Top-down methodology is used in this research using a deductive approach. The approach identifies keywords and expressions which deductively correspond to the relevant denial category in Charny's typology. Research suggests that the best method of approach is through directed content analysis as the approach is seen to be used to validate/support a theory, in this case Charny's (2003) (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Delve). It helps provide predictions regarding variables of interest and therefore aid an initial coding scheme (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Further justification for the use of this approach are that qualitative research allows for one to conduct research with phenomena with little understanding (Stake, 2010). To date, there is a lack of understand of the exact types of denial that exist in Sri Lankan media discourse and so this qualitative approach therefore enables one to gain a deeper understanding of the perspective of newspapers in Sri Lanka (Johnson, 2015).

Articles may fit in more than one category; an article may fit in one category more than another, but analysis is not conducted through the frequencies of codes rather than prominence of denial per article.

Initial coding categories are created using Charny's typology whereby codes are determined using the definitions of each category in the typology.

The Factiva database was filtered from the dates 01/01/2009 – 23/03/2021 with filters on the relevant newspapers. Articles are selected through proportionate stratified random sampling to avoid a biased selection sample, using a random number table. Using the keyword 'LTTE', there are in total 19,742 publications which are all produced by Sri Lankan newspapers. 111 articles are chosen at random through 11 different newspapers, using the sampling strategy based on this total number of articles, 19,742. The newspapers were selected as a result of sampling.

Using these filters, articles are selected in order based on the proportion required as per the sample. The articles were also chosen randomly through the sampling strategy and so articles were selected in Factiva corresponding to their assigned number in the sampling strategy. The articles in Factiva were all ordered based on 'Oldest First'. Following the filters, a search of the word 'LTTE' was used to ensure results were directly relevant to the denial of war crimes attributed to the Sri Lankan government. This is because the government is known to avoid any blame for the deaths of civilians, by blaming this on the LTTE. Another reason is that the war involved the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government; thus, any mention of war ongoing events and crimes would include the mention of the LTTE.

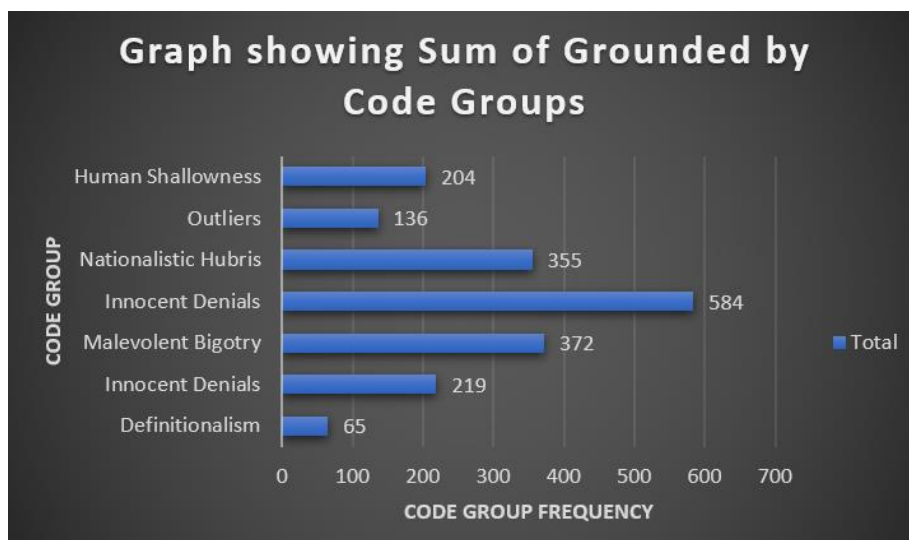


Figure 2 – Prominence of Code groups from Atlas Ti, made using Excel.

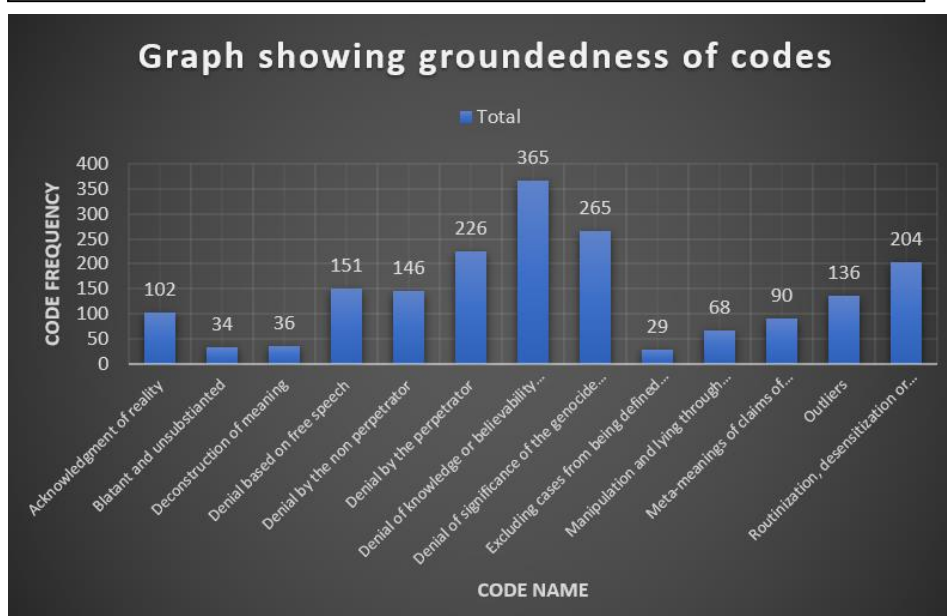


Figure 3 – Frequency of code use from Atlas Ti, made using Excel.

Over the 111 articles, a total of 634 quotations were coded using the 13 codes in Figure 3 which were placed in 5 group codes as can be observed in Figure 2. Ten of the thirteen codes are specifically derived from Charny’s typology, as seen in Figure 2. The breakdown of denial categories and their codes can be seen below in Table 1.

Denial category	Codes
Definitionalism	Deconstruction of meaning; Excluding cases from being defined as genocide
Innocent denial	Denial based on free speech; Denial of knowledge or believability of genocide; Manipulation and lying through seeming "innocent denials"
Malevolent Bigotry	Denial by the non-perpetrator; Denial by the perpetrator
Nationalistic Hubris	Denial of significance of the genocide of another people; Meta-meanings of claims of uniqueness of other genocides
Human Shallowness	Routinization, desensitization, or banalization

**Table 1 – Showing the codes assigned to the category of denial**

Figure 2 highlights the frequency of a particular code whereas Figure 3 highlights the frequency of a particular code used on quotations.

## 4.2 Malevolent Bigotry

The first category, or code group that will be analysed is malevolent bigotry, as per Charny. As Table 1 shows, the codes within the seen in Table 1. There were a total of 372 instances.

### 4.2.1 Denial by the non-perpetrator

Codes for ‘denial by the non-perpetrator’ were assigned when denial was used to celebrate violence and death to human life. This could be through claiming the genocide never happen or was due to something else. The fascist could claim that victims were really the victimizers who did the real killings (Charny, 2003).

Examples of such bigotry are the quotes in the following table:

ID	Quotation/Article Name	Quotation Content
10:104	In fact, the Gash report repeatedly points to the compassionate way in...	In fact, the Gash report repeatedly points to the compassionate way in which the armed forces acted in the

	Daily FT - Revelation on TV: UK fake news in collusion with Core Group in UN Human Rights Council	heat of the moment, often putting themselves at risk to rescue people even when the LTTE sent in suicide bombers among civilians to deter any humanitarian operation.
13:22	It was then and then alone they came down heavily on the JVP, branding...  Colombo Gazette – Speaking for the Dead	It was then and then alone they came down heavily on the JVP, branding them as militants, which they had become anyway, and crushed them under military boots, the same way they handled Tamil youth militancy, through three decades from the eighties. There is thus something structurally wrong in the Sri Lankan State's approach, especially since Independence, considering that the British colonial masters did not have to use force for centuries after 'unifying' the three kingdoms forming Sri Lanka, then Ceylon.
9:22	However, the government has been successful in re-establishing peace a...  Daily Mirror – MR challenges Tamil Diaspora	However, the government has been successful in re-establishing peace and harmony between the two after winning the war against terrorism.
7:59	To this day he has not apologised to the Tamil people for collaboratin...  Sunday Observer - 'Wanted: Truth and Justice at UNHRC now'	To this day he has not apologised to the Tamil people for collaborating with the Tamil Pol Pot and willingly being a part of his killing machine. At least Adolf Eichmann had a rather tenuous excuse for being a part of Hitler's killing machine.
7:20	Thus President Rajapaksa became determined to militarily crush the mov...  Sunday Observer - 'Human rights violations'	Thus President Rajapaksa became determined to militarily crush the movement and liberate the people from their clutches.

**Table 2 – Showing examples of denial by the non-perpetrator in Sri Lankan media**

Quote ID 10:104 refers to a quotation from *Daily FT* which makes explicit reference and attempts to signify the importance of ‘The Gash report’ by Colonel Gash, who was the defence adviser to the British High Commission from 2007 to 2009 in Sri Lanka. He is alleged to have written a report describing the first-hand situation he experienced in which he talked favourably regarding Sri Lankan soldiers. Yet, the article attempts to exonerate SL state forces from war crimes by emphasizing the report as well as portraying the armed forces as saviours with no mention of accusations against government forces.

One could argue that the article was written to show how ‘compassionate’ the government forces were, which would make the reader question whether the soldiers really were capable of massacring tens of thousands of civilians.

Quote 9:22 discusses how there is peace and harmony in Sri Lanka after ‘winning the war against terrorism’. Denial is evident here through claiming that peace and harmony exist in Sri Lanka because of the war. The nation has not acknowledged the war crimes, crimes against humanity and violations of humanitarian law; and so it begs the question how peace exists when a significant proportion of the population are begging for answers on what happened to members of their family to this day (Amnesty International, 2022). By misinforming their readers, falsely claiming that the defeat of the rebels meant peace in the country, media is shown to portray instances of denial of the non-perpetrator, by placing all blame for devastation on the Tamil rebels.

However, the most significant quote of misinformation with regards to the LTTE is quote ID 7:59. This quote, made in the *Sunday Observer*, compares the LTTE leader to Adolf Eichmann, who contributed significantly to the Holocaust. The *Sunday Observer* claims that Velupillai Prabhakaran has killed more of his own people than anyone else. By comparing the LTTE to the Nazi regime is unfathomable; accusing the LTTE of essentially committing its own genocide.

#### 4.2.2 Denial by the perpetrator

The other aspect of denial within malevolent bigotry is denial by the perpetrator. This denial includes killings due to resistance to occupation and the employment of means to destroy and rewrite historical record (Charny, 2003). Though the category is associated with government, the category has been utilised in this thesis to show how far media would go to rewrite historical record to cover up massacres committed by the government.

ID	Quotation Name	Document	Quotation Content
4:50	President Mahinda Rajapaksa told the UN Secretary-General	Daily News - LTTE to blame	President Mahinda Rajapaksa told the UN Secretary-

	Ban Ki-moon...		General Ban Ki-moon that the suffering undergone by the Tamil civilians in the No Fire Zone in the North is the sole responsibility of the LTTE that was holding them as a human shield, despite many calls for their freedom.
4:60	On the contrary we have set up a humanitarian army and that is the ve...	Daily News - Our forces lead global war on terror	On the contrary we have set up a humanitarian army and that is the very reason why we could emerge victorious in this anti-guerilla war.
6:29	Though 2009 May 19th marked the end of the mission, the Sri Lankan Gov...	SL govt News - Image of motherland will not be allowed to be tarnished for political ends- Sri Lankan minister of disaster management and human rights	Though 2009 May 19th marked the end of the mission, the Sri Lankan Government had to face allegations made by western countries on December. There allegations of violalations of Human Rights and war crimes against the Sri Lankan government. Some sections of the international community had suggested that the war heroes be hauled before international courts.
3:997	Ananthi's accusations of rape prompts any to ask why she or her three...	Daily News - Ananthi Sasitharan - How humanitarian is she?	Ananthi's accusations of rape prompts any to ask why she or her three daughters were never victims themselves if such mass rape is taking place as alleged? This question needs to be directly placed before her and she must be forced to answer. Question her repeatedly until she answers. We want numbers, even the Human Rights Watch could come up with only 75 of which the majority were rapes by Tamils upon Tamils and had

			nothing whatsoever to do with the military. Sri Lanka needs to come out with the facts and embarrass those making allegations.
9:29	The census however does not include death due to natural causes, indiv...	Daily Mirror - Civilian casualty report to be released soon	The census however does not include death due to natural causes, individuals killed by the LTTE due to resistance, individuals who were forcibly recruited and were killed, LTTE cadres, deaths due to accidents and those who fled the country illegally, It is the remaining number that the Military can take responsibility for” he said.

**Table 3 – Showing examples of denial by the perpetrator in Sri Lankan media**

Quote ID 4.50 in Table 2 displays denial from the perpetrator as it places all responsibility for the war crimes in the final stages of the war, on the LTTE. This, however, should never be a justification for harming the Tamil civilians. In fact, this quote can be interpreted as President Rajapaksa indirectly admitting that his forces attacked the NFZ whilst attempting to shift all responsibility on the rebels.

Similar to quotations made in denial of the non-perpetrator, quote ID 4.60 shows how the article believes the aim of the Sri Lankan state forces were purely humanitarian means. This in fact was used as a false-flag operation to justify their actions in the final stage of the war. By claiming it to be a humanitarian operation, pre-empts the potential consequences of the operation such that it can be used in the future to avoid any blame for its actions, instead placing it on the rebels, as can be seen in this quote.

In quote ID 3:997, the article states that 75 cases of rape occurred, according to Human Rights Watch, of which the ‘majority’ that took place were not committed by military, but by Tamils, on Tamils. However, further research of the same report the 75 cases the article refers to, is only investigated offences against women and men in state custody from 2006 to 2012 (HRW, 2013). This does not include the offences which took place in the battlefield. Humanitarian workers present in the conflict zone in the final stages of the war described widespread rape of women by the SLA, with a former UN field officer stating that the abuse was so extreme and extensive that women who fled conflict zones fled back to the theatre of conflict to escape the abuse with evidence that abuses were

widespread and systematic in the final years (HRW, 2013). The same report the article refers to also issues a caveat, that due to government restrictions, HRW could not conduct open research and thus were only able to interview a small fraction of detainees held by Sri Lankan authorities.

The article can be concluded to have intentionally misled and misinformed its readers, and intentionally disregards important aspects of the report, most important being that the 75 cases were only a small fraction of what it stated as widespread sexual abuse.

### 4.3 Definitionalism

Quote ID 9:29 is also an aspect of the definitionalism category of denial. Definitionalism is a form of denial based on the insistence of defining cases of mass murder as not genocide. As seen in table 1, it is split into two categories based on Charny’s definition. Due to the narrowness of the definition, not many examples (65) of definitionalism were apparent.

#### 4.3.1 Deconstruction of meaning

Deconstruction of meaning involves the manipulation of definition or statistics to classify cases of mass murder as not genocide. This includes the minimization of statistics to ‘prove’ numbers were not high enough to be classed as genocide with the meta meaning of the approach to relative and deconstruct the genocide (Charny, 2003). In total, there were 36 instances of deconstruction of meaning in the dataset.

Quote ID 9:29 in Table 3 as discussed in the previous section, the article attempts to manipulate and minimize the statistics by directly refuting the number of at least 40,000 war dead civilians as stated in a UN report in the final stages (UN Security Council, 2011). The article misinforms its readers by calling the state forces operation during this time as a ‘humanitarian operation’. The quote attempts to minimize the internationally agreed statistics by attempting to explain some of deaths as those forcibly recruited by the LTTE for example. By attempting to discredit statistics provided by an internationally reputable organization, which Sri Lanka is a member of, shows the lengths Sri Lankan media is willing to go to save their ‘war heroes’. Other examples are seen below:

ID	Quotation Name	Document	Quotation Content	Comment
9:38	Ambassador Amza further elaborated that when a question was posed in E...	Daily Mirror - Amza intervenes at EU Channel 4 screening	Ambassador Amza further elaborated that when a question was posed in English to an unidentified victim	How are they to know if it was intentional or not?

			<p>regarding an alleged attack on a hospital by asking “do you think this was an accident?” the answer from the victim in Tamil was, “Athavathu aaspaththirikku aim pannithan adichchiruppinam” which literally means “they may have aimed and attacked the hospital”. The Ambassador condemned the Channel-4 of translating it as “the hospital was targeted”, giving the implication to viewers that it was done by the Sri Lanka Army.</p>	
9:28	The numbers are too small to give any credential to absurd accusation...	Daily Mirror - Civilian casualty report to be released soon	The numbers are too small to give any credential to absurd accusations of genocide.	An exact form of definitionalism; from the mouth of the perpetrator himself.
10:87	The proxy LTTE has been financially sponsoring politicians in the Wes...	Daily FT - Revelation on TV: UK fake news in collusion with Core Group in UN Human Rights Council	The proxy LTTE has been financially sponsoring politicians in the Western hemisphere including the UK, Canada and America to bring these trumped-up charges against Sri Lanka.	Calling the charges 'trumped up' when the international consensus is that more than 40,000 were massacred.
10:103	Another important part of the discussion was the number of civilian ca...	Daily FT - Revelation on TV: UK fake news in collusion with Core Group in UN Human Rights Council	Another important part of the discussion was the number of civilian casualties that is often touted in such conversations, with some	There is even debate amongst newspaper on how 'low' the civilian casualties were in the final stage; putting into questions how credible these numbers. By reducing the numbers to these numbers immediately diminishes the significance of the Tamil Genocide.

			<p>accusations bloating up to 40,000. Sarath Silva once again used the report to demonstrate how such numbers are beyond the realm of what was actually being discussed at the time. As a matter of fact, Colonel Gash even reveals that the UN-estimated numbers themselves were around 6,000 civilian casualties, a far stretch from the figures being thrown out now.</p>	
4:31	<p>With regard to the main hospital in the area east of Kilinochchi, that...</p>	<p>Daily News - Addressing more concerns of the international community systematically</p>	<p>With regard to the main hospital in the area east of Kilinochchi, that at Puthukkudiyirippu, there were only two allegations of attacks on it between the beginning of January and the closure of the hospital.</p> <p>The first was on January 12th, when Tamilnet claimed that one person was killed when the 'hospital premises and its environs came under artillery fire'. After that there was nothing till the very end of January, when several claims were made, though according to the American State Department Report, 'According to satellite imagery taken on January 28, the</p>	<p>In total 5 attacks dated to 13th January, 31st January, 1st February, 2nd February and 3rd February. Getting the dates as well as number of attacks would not be seen as just an innocent denial.</p> <p><a href="https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/05/08/sri-lanka-repeated-shelling-hospitals-evidence-war-crimes">https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/05/08/sri-lanka-repeated-shelling-hospitals-evidence-war-crimes</a></p>

			Puthukkudiyirippu Hospital did not appear to show visible damage and appeared to be functioning'.	
7:70	UN-sanctioned naval cordon thrown around Iraq killed 600,000 children...	Sunday Observer - Wanted: Truth and justice at UNHRC now	UN-sanctioned naval cordon thrown around Iraq killed 600,000 children and when Madeleine Albright, America's State Secretary, was asked whether the price was worth for achieving the aims of the West in Iraq she replied that the price was worth it. This figure of 600,000 amounts to more than all the children killed in Hiroshima. UNHRC is crying its heart out, wringing its hands, on an unverified figure of 40,000 dead between September 2008 and May 2009. Leaving all other factors out, at least on the principle of proportionality will Bachelet report Albright to the ICJ? She can do it because there is no statute of limitation for crimes against humanity. Will she do it?	Most definitely denies the significance of the genocide of the Tamils. By comparing the 40,000 to the 600,000 children. If comparing numbers is relevant then the article is saying that the Srebrenica genocide also is not applicable. The 600,000 has also been heavily contested post-war.

**Table 4 – Showing examples of denial by deconstruction of meaning in Sri Lankan media**

Quote ID 4:31 also focusses on the bombing on hospitals written by the *Daily News*. The article attempts to minimize the number of attacks on the main hospital in Puthukkudiyirippu by claiming that there were only two alleged attacks on the hospital (Daily News, 2011a). However, HRW reports in total there were 5 attacks dated to 13th January, 31st January, 1st February, 2nd February and 3rd

February (HRW, 2009). Not only did the *Daily News* get the dates wrong of the attacks, but also the number of attacks. All attacks occurred despite given exact co-ordinates of the hospitals in the NFZ (UNSG, 2011; HRW 2009). By calling the attacks ‘alleged’ means that it is not confirmed, but the report by HRW shows that these attacks were documented with reports of casualties. By attempting to both minimize the number of attacks and manipulate statistics by getting the date of the only attack it mentions wrong, this quote is evidence of denial by deconstruction of meaning.

Quote ID 7:70 by the *Sunday Observer* attempts to reduce the significance of the genocide of Tamils by comparing it to the number of children killed in the UN sanction naval cordon of Iraq which is said to be 600,000. The quote compares the ‘unverified’ 40,000 to the 600,000 children to reduce the importance of the genocide. The 600,000 figure has also been heavily contested post-war, to show the exaggeration tactics used by Sri Lankan media by comparing it to an event of more deaths with the sole aim to minimize the deaths of the Tamil civilians. The article does not compare numbers to other genocides such as the Srebrenica genocide, the deaths of more than 8,000 Bosniak men and boys, since it would not reduce the significance of the genocide. The illogical comments on the number of dead aim to minimize statistics in such a way that numbers were not high enough to be classed as a genocide (Charny, 2003).

### 4.3.2 Excluding cases from being defined as genocide

The next section of definitionism is the exclusion of cases from being defined as a genocide. In total there were 29 instances of this type of denial. Instances of this denial are classified based on its definition being the attempt of classifying cases of mass murder as a lesser category i.e. an accepted act of war. It could also be classed as the inadvertent destruction of the war. Contextualizers attempt to say the case was that of a civil war, or disease whereas justifiers attempt to give credible explanations for the killing such as counter-terrorism operations or a response to a rebellion. Using this definition, the following instances were captured in newspaper articles:

ID	Quotation Name	Document	Quotation Content
6:34	The government would never allow the generals attempt to succeed and p...	SL Govt News - Image of motherland will not be allowed to be tarnished for political ends- Sri Lankan minister of disaster	The government would never allow the generals attempt to succeed and put the motherland in danger. The government will never allow war heroes to be tried

		management and human rights	for war crimes, the Minister stressed.
7:90	While the LTTE was killing the civilians who were fleeing, it was the...	Sunday Observer - No civilians were killed - Dy. Minister Muralitharan	While the LTTE was killing the civilians who were fleeing, it was the military which rescued them and saved them. We maintained a zero casualty policy throughout the battle and the world has forgotten that it was a battle against ruthless terrorists. The military had never harmed civilians. All those who surrendered have been rehabilitated. Nearly 7,000 of them who have been reintegrated into the mainstream society are leading normal lives today.
11:1	President Maithripala Sirisena said that he is not prepared to make an...	Ada Derana - I am not ready to make any war hero a suspect - President	President Maithripala Sirisena said that he is not prepared to make any war hero a suspect in the charges leveled against the armed forces and the government on the alleged violations of human rights during the war against terrorism.

**Table 5 – Showing examples of denial by exclusion of cases from being defined as genocide in Sri Lankan media**

The article from Quote ID 6:34 comes from *News.Lk*. The newspaper discusses the statement of a former Commander of the SLA, Sarath Fonseka. Since his retirement, he has gone on record discussing the infamous white flag incident, where members of the LTTE and family members were promised safety providing that they hoisted a white flag as clear proof of surrendering. Though then

President Mahinda Rajapaksa had assured their safety to the UN, the surrendering party were found dead hours later. Fonseka went on record to say that then defence minister, now President of Sri Lanka, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, had told commander of division 58, Shavendra Silva, a suspected war criminal banned from entry into the United States, to kill the surrendering members. The article highlights several issues with Fonseka's statement. The article goes as far as to say that the statement had potential to 'put the motherland in danger' (News.lk, 2009b) clearly showing its stance that it does not believe the accusations of a former commander of the army. The denial goes further by saying 'the government will never allow war heroes to be tried for war crimes'. Though the sentence is quoted from a minister, the article does not refute the 'war hero' reference therefore showing that it does not disagree with the statement. By doing this, the newspaper justifies all actions of the state forces in order to not taint the 'war hero' image.

Quote 7:90 shows similar but more bigoted denial by saying 'the military never harmed civilians' (Sunday Observer, 2011d). Despite countless pieces of evidence of the massacres of Tamils by the SLA, the paper is brazen enough to include this in their piece. By emphasizing the 'zero casualty policy', as other articles have done, stating the 'world had forgotten' it was a conflict against 'ruthless terrorists' shows two denials. First, being the outright denial of the deaths of civilians and secondly justifying government actions with the aim of defeating 'terrorists' portraying the same narrative that the state forces were 'war heroes'. In the specific case of definitionalism, by claiming the military did not kill any civilians and justifying actions as counter-terror operations are all stated to exclude this case from being defined as a genocide.

Quote ID 11.1 shows the views of the government, that they are not willing to hold any member of the state forces a suspect of human right violations because 'the war is against terrorism' (AdaDerana, 2017). This was said by a former President. The quote justifies violations of human rights by claiming it was a war against terrorism. So the article can be seen to display denial of excluding cases from being defined as a genocide through the justifier mechanism of 'credible explanations' of counter-terrorism operations despite the massacre of innocent civilians.

#### **4.4 Human Shallowness**

The next category of denial as per Charny (2003) is human shallowness. Any instances of human shallowness were coded as 'routinization, desensitization or banalization' of which the total went to 204. Articles would be coded under this category when they show a failure to maintain a deep moral concern due to desensitization and display boredom for repeated mention of an event. Other instances include passing off events as a routine event, a part of history (Charny, 2003). Denial is also shown

through the mention of survivors rather than victims and through the transformation of memorial events to one of celebration. In total, there were 204 instances of human shallowness in all 111 newspaper articles. Below are a few instances of this denial which will be discussed further.

ID	Quotation Name	Document Name	Quotation Content
3:1395	Canada should do well to remember that 30 years of terror means that t...	Daily News - Why Canada is heading for Eelam	Canada should do well to remember that 30 years of terror means that these terror elements whether with arms or not are pathological serial killers and murderers; even those who had been linked to them for personal commercial benefit. They all suffer from the same syndrome and this means that they will not hesitate to unleash terror in any part of the world at a future date too and all that would depend on who will handle them at the next stage. So good luck to Canada for the journey it is about to take.
4:71	Approximately 5,120 of the 11,696 LTTE cadres who surrendered themselv...	Daily News - Emergency and trauma centre	Approximately 5,120 of the 11,696 LTTE cadres who surrendered themselves at the end of the conflict in May 2009 have already been rehabilitated and integrated in the society.
6:23	According to him it had also given the people there the idea that they...	SL Government News - Cabinet of ministers meets in Kilinochchi	According to him it had also given the people there the idea that they are part of a united Sri Lanka. External Affairs Minister GL Peiris described it as an opportunity for the whole Cabinet to witness the ongoing development in the North and discuss matters with local officials and the public.

8:42	Minister Sirisena said there were many LTTE suspects who are in custo...	Colombo Times - Too premature to lift emergency, Minister Sirisena	Minister Sirisena said there were many LTTE suspects who are in custody being held under emergency regulations and these laws were needed to deal with them as well as those still surrendering to the troops.
9:19	He was glad to see today that the plans drawn for development had been...	Daily Mirror - MR challenges Tamil Diaspora	He was glad to see today that the plans drawn for development had been fruitful and the Kokavil transmission plant had been restored at a cost of Rs. 330 million.
10:29	How confident are you that they will not engage in violence or promote...	Daily FT - Ex-LTTEers to campaign for lasting solution within a united Sri Lanka	How confident are you that they will not engage in violence or promote the LTTE's separatism ideology?
11:4	While there is an unprecedented goodwill for Sri Lanka among the inter...	I am not ready to make any war hero a suspect - President	While there is an unprecedented goodwill for Sri Lanka among the international community today and many people question as to what benefit could be derived to the country from this, President Sirisena said. "We are utilizing that goodwill and friendship for the protection of the honour and respect of our war heroes," he said.
13:18	The post-war Tamil community, or many of them, observe it as 'Martyrs...	Colombo Gazette - Speaking for the Dead	The post-war Tamil community, or many of them, observe it as 'Martyrs Day' in memory of their dead. In a way, no Tamil, living or dead, can be blamed for the Deepam festival and their observances falling on the same day. But they can be asked, if this was their traditional way of remembering their dead, including those who died in

wars. Lighting lamps and candles was the LTTE's way of doing things.

**Table 6 – Showing examples of denial through human shallowness in Sri Lankan media**

Quote ID 3:1395 shows significant aspects of human shallowness by talking of survivors (Charny, 2003) through worrying about the LTTE revival in Canada, where the biggest portion of Tamil diaspora reside. The article portrays exaggerations by claiming the diaspora, most of whom went to Canada to escape the conflict, would plan their next 'terror' attack in foreign lands. This is clear exaggeration, since the LTTE have never committed acts of terror on the general public in the West. Further exaggeration is observed by claiming that Canada unbanned the LTTE as a proscribed organisation in 2014. By intentionally portraying the entire Tamil people as 'LTTE sympathisers', by not separating civilians from the rebels, fits the narrative in order to turn the international community against Tamils who demand justice. The fundamental issue with this quotation is that the article prefers to portray the entire Tamil population as terrorists/sympathisers instead of focusing on the tens of thousands dead innocent of any armed activity in the final stages.

ID 4:71 and 10:29 displays human shallowness through mention of rehabilitated or surviving LTTE cadres. Similarly, ID 8:42 displays human shallowness with discourse surrounding 'surrendering' cadres and those held 'in custody' (Colombo Times, 2009g) rather than those enforcedly disappeared and slaughtered (Amnesty International, 2022). Media is observed to be attempting to disregard the deaths of Tamil civilians by moving discourse with discussions on unity focussing on the 'rehabilitation' of cadres. ID 11:4 talks solely about survivors with a reference to war heroes, with no mention regarding what the 'alleged violations of human rights' are (Adaderana, 2017). The motivations and ideas behind the government as well as the newspaper are clear; with no intention of acknowledging the war crimes attributed against the Sri Lankan government forces by showing no wilful attempt to discuss the human rights violations levelled against the government and armed forces.

ID 9:19 shows human shallowness with a focus on the development of the country post-war than the victims that are still suffering in the country. The article deliberately focusses on how the state is helping the Tamil people with the restoration of a transmission plant, yet there is no reference with regards to the intentional land grabs of previously Tamil held land by the state (The Oakland Institute, 2021; GHRD, 2022).

## 4.5 Nationalistic Hubris

Another section to be discussed is nationalistic hubris; denial whereby people of one ethnicity declare themselves indifferent to the fates of others and their claim for justice or where one fights back against claims of genocide uniqueness of a given genocide (Charny, 2003). For the ease of coding, this category was broken down into two sub-categories as seen in Table 1. Total instances summed to 355.

### 4.5.1 Denial of significance of the genocide of another people

The first category to be investigate is the denial of significance of the genocide of another people; denial shown through indifference.

ID	Quotation Name	Document	Quotation Content
5:21	Commenting on the LTTE's demand for an inquiry and intervention by the...	Daily News - No rest in hunt for LTTE remnants - Dr. Kohona	Commenting on the LTTE's demand for an inquiry and intervention by the international community as to how their leader was apprehended and ensure proper legal representation for KP, the Foreign Secretary said he could only laugh at this request by a terrorist organisation. "Provoking laughter is not a specialty of the LTTE but on this occasion they have done it," he said.
6:29	Though 2009 May 19th marked the end of the mission, the Sri Lankan Gov...	SL Govt News - Image of motherland will not be allowed to be tarnished for political ends- Sri Lankan minister of disaster management and human rights	Though 2009 May 19th marked the end of the mission, the Sri Lankan Government had to face allegations made by western countries on December. There allegations of violalations of Human Rights and war crimes against the Sri Lankan government.

				Some sections of the international community had suggested that the war heroes be hauled before international courts.
9:22		However, the government has been successful in re-establishing peace a...	Daily Mirror - MR challenges Tamil Diaspora	However, the government has been successful in re-establishing peace and harmony between the two after winning the war against terrorism.
9:64		In simple terms the ICC cannot investigate or prosecute crimes committed...	Daily Mirror - The ICC doesn't have jurisdiction over SL	In simple terms the ICC cannot investigate or prosecute crimes committed on the territory of a state, or by a national of a state, which is not a State Party to the Statute of the ICC.
12:11	The TNA has recognised this fact and is, therefore, continuing to rema...	Sunday Times - Solution to the ethnic problem through constitutional reforms: It's time to seize the moment	The TNA has recognised this fact and is, therefore, continuing to remain engaged in the process knowing fully well that it is probably the best opportunity to resolve this contentious issue which has held back the country's progress.	

**Table 7 – Showing examples of denial by indifference in Sri Lankan media**

It is not only the 'ethnic problem' which impedes the country's progress, as Sunday Times believes in ID 12:11. The mass killings of tens of thousands of Tamil civilians also inevitably impedes the country's progress because without any justice or accountability, the country simply cannot move forward. With state showing no willingness to acknowledge the crimes aside from the setting up of a commission, the LLRC, which was found to be flawed (Amnesty International, 2011; HRW, 2010), it is clear external intervention is required.

6:29 calls the state soldiers 'war heroes' yet acknowledges allegations of human rights violations towards the same suggests the newspaper does not believe these claims. A lack of care is shown by

portraying the soldiers as war heroes. Indifference is observed here due to the paper's intention of highlighting state forces as 'war heroes' thus refuting allegations of human rights and denying the justice Tamils deserve.

9:22 purposely misinforms its readers. By saying there is harmony in the country when the Tamils have been silenced because of the war, still seeking justice to date highlights the disregard this paper has towards the Tamil population living in Sri Lanka.

#### 4.5.2 Meta-meanings of claims of uniqueness of other genocides

The second category of denial under nationalistic hubris is the meta-meanings of claims of uniqueness of other genocides. Denial is typically observed in this category through criticisms of the victim's policies. Since the LTTE fought for the rights of the victims, and since newspapers have a tendency to class Tamils as LTTE/terrorist sympathizers, allegations against the LTTE may be acknowledged as 'victim's policies'.

ID	Quotation Name	Document	Quotation Content
3:1003	Despite the allegations of associating with a terrorist outfit and bei...	Daily News - Ananthi Sasitharan - how humanitarian is she?	Despite the allegations of associating with a terrorist outfit and being married to a terrorist leader the UNHRC head Navi Pillay on her visit to Sri Lanka had all the time to meet her but could not spare a minute to visit any of the families of civilians killed by LTTE outside the war zone over 30 years who constitute a large chunk of civilians?
6:4	It said the LTTE had violated Articles 3, 5 and 13-1 of the UN Declar...	SL Govt News - National rights organization submits letter of protest against U.S.	It said the LTTE had violated Articles 3, 5 and 13-1 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights one of

		sponsored resolution against Sri Lanka	which is the right to freedom of movement.
7:21	Of course, when there is a ruthless war against a legally-elected gove...	Human rights violations	Of course, when there is a ruthless war against a legally-elected government, there may be human rights violations in the battlefield. The LTTE not only violated basic human rights, but also slaughtered well over 70,000 people including the National Leaders of two countries, named, Ranasinghe Premadasa and Rajiv Gandhi.
9:76	Thousands of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims have disappeared. People ha...	Daily Mirror - The ICC doesn't have jurisdiction over SL	Thousands of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims have disappeared. People have disappeared from all parts of the country, South, North, East or West. It has affected, the rich, the poor, students, journalists. Thousands of children have been abducted and conscripted by the LTTE and consequently disappeared. The highest number of disappearances is from among the security forces (over 5000 members of the military are still missing).
10:69	In Sri Lanka, we know all too well the crimes committed by the Tamil T...	Daily FT - Realism to surrealism: The Government's Geneva game	In Sri Lanka, we know all too well the crimes committed by the Tamil Tigers but also the thousands and probably tens of thousands of

			civilians killed in the final months of the war.
10:58	After a heavy day, filled with blood and flesh, where hostages were st...	Daily FT - The final hours of war	After a heavy day, filled with blood and flesh, where hostages were struggling to escape, we were at the small military base, just few hundred meters away from the NFZ.

**Table 8 – Showing examples of denial by the meta-meanings of claims of uniqueness in Sri Lankan media**

ID 10:58 describes scenes in the final hours of the war stating civilians wish to escape war zones, which should be obvious. A UN official who was at Sri Lanka in the final stages of the war, in an interview with Human Rights Watch, stated that 'a large number of women fleeing from conflict areas during the peak of fighting were sexually assaulted' where the abuse was so 'extensive' by the SLA that it caused 'a large number of civilians to flee back to the theatre of conflict to escape the abuse' (McKay, 2011; HRW, 2013). The article writes only one side of the story by not mentioning the abuse and massacres of Sri Lankan state on Tamil civilians thus refusing to show concern for the crimes.

10:69 does not acknowledge the ethnicity of the tens of thousands which significantly deteriorates significance of the Tamil Genocide. The paper also acknowledges crimes committed by the LTTE but not the Sri Lankan state.

Most forms of denial are prevalent ID 7:21; going on about the rehabilitated cadres and no civilians harmed is a vast understatement in reality. The paper solely points alleged crimes of the LTTE but not those of the state. The paper falsely claims that the LTTE is responsible for 70,000 deaths, misinforming its readers in an attempt to refute allegations purported against the state.

## 4.6 Innocent Denial

The final section as per Israel Charny is the denial through innocent denials. Arguably the largest section in the typology, this category is split into three further categories; as seen in Table 1. There were a total of 584 instances.

### 4.6.1 Denial of knowledge of believability of genocide

The first aspect of this category to be discussed is denial of knowledge or believability of genocide. The sub-category did have the most instances of denial of a sub-category, at 365 instances. The deniers however achieve the ‘innocent’ aspect of denial by not looking to specifically commit the revision of a history of a genocide but they benefit through the denial somehow (Charny, 2003). A few examples will be discussed below to demonstrate why it has been placed in this category of denial.

ID	Quotation Name	Document	Quotation Content
4:28	The report does not take in to account the ground situation prevailed...	Daily News - COYLE rejects controversial Darusman Report	The report does not take in to account the ground situation prevailed in the country in early 2009 and the ruthless terrorist activities done by the so called Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE).
4:56	Sri Lankan Armed Forces have brought unprecedented fame to the country...	Daily News articles - Our Forces lead global war on terror	Sri Lankan Armed Forces have brought unprecedented fame to the country. Terrorism which the most powerful Armies in the world failed to crush, was made to kneel down by our Forces
7:93	Q: However, the human rights groups still accuse the government for th...	Sunday Observer - No civilians were killed - Dy. Minister Muralitharan	Q: However, the human rights groups still accuse the government for the alleged human rights violations during the last days of the battle. What do you have to say?
8:57	Government Defence Spokesperson Minister Keheliya Rambukwella rejected...	Colombo Times - Lanka suspicious over UK	Government Defence Spokesperson Minister Keheliya Rambukwella rejected the concerns raised by Miliband in his special video statement released yesterday

			saying it seemed Britain was attempting to suppress the victories achieved by the Sri Lankan government against the LTTE.
6:34	The government would never allow the generals attempt to succeed and p...	SL Govt News - Image of motherland will not be allowed to be tarnished for political ends- Sri Lankan minister of disaster management and human rights	The government would never allow the generals attempt to succeed and put the motherland in danger. The government will never allow war heroes to be tried for war crimes, the Minister stressed.
10:7	Because of this misreading of the nature of the LTTE threat either thr...	Daily FT - Peace exists today due to President's political will, determination and courage: Defence Secretary	Because of this misreading of the nature of the LTTE threat either through innocence or wilful ignorance, and also as a result of certain geopolitical agendas, some influential foreign governments did not quite support the Government's decision in 2006 to pursue a military solution to the terrorist conflict.
12:13	These hardline groups who are averse to addressing the concerns of th...	Sunday Times - Solution to the ethnic problem through constitutional reforms: It's time to seize the moment	These hardline groups who are averse to addressing the concerns of those in conflict areas such as returning private lands acquired by the armed forces during the war only provide grist to the mill of those groups in the North who say that one cannot accept justice from the Government.

**Table 9 – Showing examples of denial of knowledge or believability of genocide in Sri Lankan media**

The use of the word 'still' in ID 7:93 is key. The subtle notion that the government should not have been accused of any wrongdoing. The subtlety of this question can be thought of as an innocent denial and the denial of believability of genocide.

ID 6:34 clearly shows government does not want its soldiers to be identified as mass murderers/ war criminals. Excludes cases from being classed as genocide; by classing the war criminals as war heroes, this suggests that the soldiers did what they had to do in order to win the war. Thus making them ineligible to any war crime trial.

4:28 questions the validity of a report, the Darusman Report, produced by an international actor with no bias. The report also discussed crimes against humanity perpetrated by the LTTE so the claim the report made no allegations is false. Questioning the validity of reports is observed as an innocent denials, such as questioning the validity of the Talaat telegrams (Charny, 2003), is observed in other instances where articles dispute the number of civilians found dead, putting UN and internationally recognized reports into disrepute.

#### 4.6.2 Denial based on free speech

The next sub category of innocent denials to be discussed is denial by free speech. This denial includes the insistence of revisionism in all forms of media promotion whereby a trap exists when giving 'the other point of view' a listen leads to totalitarian ideas or 'equals' with a genuine diversity of opinion.

ID	Quotation Name	Document	Quotation Content
4:9	The innocent Tamil people were those who suffered very much from the b...	Daily News - Parliament immune from Court actions - Minister Prof G L Peiris	The innocent Tamil people were those who suffered very much from the brutal terrorism of the LTTE. During that period the independence of Judiciary was threatened. Those who talk of the independence of judiciary today did not talk a single word when the LTTE maintained a terrorists' Court.
7:10	That is why the Tamil Diaspora sponsored media are continuing their ad...	Sunday Observer - Changes in defence sector and challenges ahead	That is why the Tamil Diaspora sponsored media are continuing their adverse propaganda against the Government run welfare villages to exert pressure on the Government to expedite the process resettling

			civilians. That was why the London Times last week carried a false report saying that 1,400 civilians living in welfare camps are dying weekly due to poor health conditions.
7:43	He was among the 804 people who lined up at the Harmony Centre in Kili...	Sunday Observer - 'Where have all our lost ones gone?'	He was among the 804 people who lined up at the Harmony Centre in Kilinochchi to participate in a mobile camp that was organised by the State to help missing persons' families. Families who lost children and dear ones to the LTTE.
9:44	He explained that people in the North were extremely happy about the...	Daily Mirror - We are keeping KP 'on ice' to use him at the right time: Premajayantha	He explained that people in the North were extremely happy about the government's development programme in the North. They had welcomed the resumption of train services from Mt. Lavinia to KKS last Friday after 25 years as a gift to the North from the government.

**Table 10 – Showing examples of denial by free speech in Sri Lankan media**

ID 4:9 shows revisionism of historical record with the portrayal of the LTTE as the only persons who imposed violence on Tamil civilians, when they were created to establish a separate Tamil homeland. In fact, this was exploited by the Sri Lankan state who used this to justify their own atrocities (Coles, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2009b) by placing blame on the LTTE.

ID 7:10 shows that revisionism is implemented at a severe scale. The quote from the *Sunday Observer* states that the reported 1,400 deaths a week at displacement camps were false. However there is proof

that people were actually dying in these camps (UPI, 2009; Blakely, R, 2009; Ani, 2009). By revising historical record here shows the paper will stop at no cost to protect its people from exoneration.

Quote ID 9:44 suggests that supposed investment in infrastructure means that the people must forget about the alleged war crimes, or that they already have. By stating Tamils were happy with a programme without asking the community itself is to misinform the readers that Tamils are content and willing to move on. This is simply not the case; protests occur on a weekly, sometimes daily basis (Tamil Guardian, 2021).

### 4.6.3 Manipulation and lying

The final sub category of innocent denials to be discussed is manipulation and lying through seeming “innocent denials” (Charny, 2003). Denial is used here as a strategy of appealing to listen to the "other side" using this as a disguise to hide their ulterior motives/propaganda. Manipulation and lying to essentially confuse the thinking of a person with good intentions. Below are some instances of this denial:

ID	Quotation Name	Document	Quotation Content
6:37	It was the problem of resettlement of IDPs that was used by certain in...	News.lk - Image of motherland will not be allowed to be tarnished for political ends- Sri Lankan minister of disaster management and human rights	It was the problem of resettlement of IDPs that was used by certain international media to make allegations international media to make allegations against the Sri Lankan government. Since the IDP problem is being gradually solved. There are no allegations now.
8:15	Tiger terrorists' long list of bizarre network of underground bunkers,...	Colombo Times - LTTE's Visuamadu 'Auschwitz' Uncovered	Tiger terrorists' long list of bizarre network of underground bunkers, luxurious homes, storages, camp complexes, etc received a new dimension on Tuesday (3) morning when the troops uncovered a far-fetched colossal Torture Chamber cum an Open Prison of the LTTE in the west of VISUAMADU area, reminiscent of the yesteryear Nazi Era torture chambers, Auschwitz, the Jews death camp.

9:13	Ex- LTTE combatants have fought the armed forces during the humanitari...	Daily Mirror - MR challenges Tamil Diaspora	Ex- LTTE combatants have fought the armed forces during the humanitarian operations. They have been given skill development training and self employment during their rehabilitation programme.
10:55	The civilians who were strong enough to carry a member of their famili...	Daily FT- The final hours of war	The civilians who were strong enough to carry a member of their families fled with them. But the old and the sick, mostly the parents, were left in the Puthumathalan Hospital. The soldiers in their humanitarian operation rescued them.

**Table 11 – Showing examples of denial by manipulation and lying through seemingly “innocent denials” in Sri Lankan media**

Manipulation is observed in the case of ID 6:37 as they accept the issue with regards to the IDPs (Internally displaced persons) yet state no more allegations are placed against the State as a result of solving this issue, which is a lie. The Permanent People's Tribunal (PPT) found that violations committed in the IDP camps included: shooting of Tamil citizens and Tamil Tiger supporters; forced disappearances; rape; malnutrition; and lack of medical supplies (PPT, 2013). The article attempts to falsely imply that the allegations were never proved with there being progress in the 'IDP problem' thus confusing a person with good intentions whom may think one should forget the previous allegations since there are none anymore, which was not proved either, thus potentially making one believe the previous allegations may not have even occurred.

The article from quote 8:15 attempts to 'reverse the roles' (Charny, 2003) by claiming the LTTE were the real authors of genocide. By comparing apparatus of the LTTE to the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz, accuses, perhaps not innocently, the 'victims' of being the real authors of genocide. Openly suggesting that the LTTE is capable of genocide is not by mistake but without brazen accusations of actions against civilians, this is therefore an innocent denial.

The papers such as in ID 9:13 call the final stage of war a 'humanitarian operation' as a part of its rhetoric into believing state forces were sent to the North and East to rescue Tamil civilians. Calling it a humanitarian operation is a false flag reasoning to fight the LTTE and an innocent denial through directly and intentionally confusing a person with good intentions into thinking the forces were sent to

purely defeat the LTTE despite the indiscriminate shelling of civilian designated areas some where there were no evidence of military installations (HRW, 2009; UNOCHA, 2006). Denying the facts of the genocide innocently, by stating it was a humanitarian operation as a matter of fact shows the intentions of article, to confuse and manipulate its reader into thinking no genocide took place.

Quote 10:55 attempts to innocently call Sri Lankan state soldiers war heroes who rescued suffering civilians. What the article fails to mention is that it is this very same hospital, Puthumathalan Hospital, that was also attacked by state forces, yet still the article determines state soldiers as saviours (HRW, 2009).

## 4.7 Outliers

The final two categories are outliers from Charny’s (2003) categories. In total, there were 136 instances of outliers which were split into two categories; blatant and unsubstantiated and acknowledgment of reality.

### 4.7.1 Blatant and unsubstantiated

Blatant and unsubstantiated is used to show outright lies told by media with no evidence to back up claims. Blatant refers to lies and exaggeration, in some cases. It is deserving of its own category to show the lengths media go to portray lies as reality, to ultimately discredit the genocide. All instances in this category display other aspects of denial as per Charny’s typology. A few instances are discussed in more detail:

ID	Quotation Name	Document	Quotation Content
4:57	The terrorists whom our Forces are fighting, have been designated as t...	Daily News - Our forces lead global war on terror	The terrorists whom our Forces are fighting, have been designated as the most ruthless outfit of the world.
5:6	Political analysts said the signatories to the call for this special s...	Daily News - Ill-timed - Human Rights Minister	Political analysts said the signatories to the call for this special session had a clear Euro-centric political alignment, which showed the

			<p>electoral pressures of the pro-LTTE Tamil populations in those countries, and the pressures that such countries can bring on their neighbours and on countries coming under the direct political and economic influence. They were of the view that this line up of countries, showed a clear division of the Afro-Asian and Non-Aligned nations against the western powers and countries under their influence, as well as the different position taken by the new emerging economies of Asia and Latin America against the traditional, and former colonial centres of power of the West.</p>
8:14	A humanitarian truce can lay the ground for mutual dialogue and confid...	Colombo Times - Plight of displaced Tamils set to continue	A humanitarian truce can lay the ground for mutual dialogue and confidence, save the lives of the internally displaced civilians and reduce the social and psychological pressures that will otherwise occur in the long run. But the difficulties in promoting this idea cannot be underestimated. The

experience of the past, in which periods of negotiation and ceasefire were utilized by the LTTE to rearm and reposition itself is a lesson that most people in Sri Lanka remember with both anger and dismay.

**Table 12 – Showing examples of denial through blatant and unsubstantiated claims in Sri Lankan media**

The paper from quote ID 5:6 discusses those who called for a special session in the UNHRC to discuss the human rights situation in Sri Lanka. The article attempts to justify reasons as to why some nations voted in favour of the session. Claims the diaspora is at fault for these 'false' claims. The article claims that those who voted in favour of this UN session had only done so due to 'the electoral pressures of the pro-LTTE Tamil populations in those countries' (Daily News, 2009d). However, amongst those who voted in favour, Slovenia, Slovakia and Bosnia and Herzegovina do not have a significant Tamil population nor do they neighbour countries with significant Tamil populations. This reasoning is essentially delegitimising the positions of countries that voted in favour of this session. Comment seems to suggest that nations only voted due to diaspora pressures, rather than for human rights, which is not right. Furthermore, does not go on record to write on the facts of the massacre. The last part of this quote is especially confusing; does not the fact that there are differing positions mean that there is just a difference of opinion, rather than implying that certain positions were taken due to being former colonies of the West. African countries were also colonized by the West yet did not call for this session.

ID 8:14 accuses the LTTE of solely breaking ceasefire agreements, the paper attempts to excuse the actions of the SLA. There should never be an excuse for the slaughter of thousands of innocent civilians; even if it meant a longer war. Furthermore, the state is also known to have broken ceasefire agreements, so the blame should not be solely placed on the LTTE.

#### **4.7.2 Acknowledgment of reality**

The final category to be discussed in this section is the outlier of acknowledgment of reality. Instances are placed in this category when articles produce pieces of impartiality with regards to the war, with no apparent agenda apart from reporting the truth. In total there are 102 instances of this outlier.

ID	Quotation Name	Document	Quotation Content
4:70	It is significant that even during the thirty-year Eelam war when bomb...	Daily News - Vortex of confusion	It is significant that even during the thirty-year Eelam war when bombings and massacres were the norm, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were unable to inflict so many casualties in a single day.
12:1	The Human Rights Council adopted a string of resolutions on Sri Lanka...	Sunday Times - It's heartening to see something has begun in Sri Lanka: US envoy	The Human Rights Council adopted a string of resolutions on Sri Lanka—highlighting human rights abuses, urging accountability for alleged war crimes and calling for a restoration of democracy—largely on the initiative of the US.
13:8	An eyewitness says he saw Silva shake hands with the political leader...	Colombo Gazette - Sooka slams decision to give top post to Shavendra Silva	An eyewitness says he saw Silva shake hands with the political leaders of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as they surrendered to him; their corpses were seen on the roadside a few hours later. The UN's Investigation said the leaders were summarily executed, despite assurances from the Government that they could safely surrender under a white flag.
13:21	It may have started with the Tamil issue since Independence, but its b...	Speaking for the Dead - Colombo Gazette	It may have started with the Tamil issue since Independence, but its brutal face was scene first in the

suppression of the JVP,  
when founded by Rohan  
Wijeweera, in the sixties.

**Table 13 – Showing examples of acknowledgment of reality in Sri Lankan media**

ID 4:70 somewhat puts into question the label of the LTTE as terrorists, which is contended to this day despite designation. By saying the LTTE were unable to inflict the number of casualties as the Easter Sunday bombings should make one question whether the LTTE set out to terrorize the nation or to defend the rights of an oppressed community.

ID 12:1 shows articles can be impartial. This is observed in this quote of the Sunday Times why does not talk about just the LTTE; and acknowledges that there are allegations of war crimes for both sides. Objective reporting should be commended in comparison to what has been observed in other papers.

ID 13:8 does not display denial of war crimes when it lists all the war crimes Shavendra Silva and the Government have been accused of. Unbiased reporting with no agenda apart from reporting the truth like this is unfortunately missing in most other newspapers.

## 5.0 Discussion

This section of the dissertation will discuss the analysed results in a broader context through the application of the theoretical framework while also answering the hypothesis stated in the introduction.

The key findings to this thesis are that denialism in the form of malevolent bigotry, innocent denials and nationalist hubris are the most prominent forms within the media discourse of Sri Lanka. All newspapers portray denial of war crimes, crime against humanity and genocide attributed to the Sri Lankan government regardless of its ideology.

### 5.1 Overview

One cannot question whether denial of alleged war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide exist in Sri Lankan media. Charny's (2003) theory and categorization of denial have proved its merit with the ability to interpret the exact forms of denial present from deniers due to the complexity of the

classification. The hypothesis that definitionalism would be the most prominent form of denial is rejected, with other forms, exhibiting more denial in Sri Lankan media discourse.

There are significant comparisons regarding the key findings of Sri Lankan media and between the genocide denials of the Holocaust and Srebrenica. Similarities can be drawn when investigating the types of denial amongst the different cases, and not just in the sphere of media. Obradovic-Wochnik (2009) highlighted the evident denial from the Srebrenica genocide, where a UN declared safe zone was attacked, drawing incredible similarities to the No Fire Zone massacres in Sri Lanka. Serbian media are accused of portraying abstract and hindered accounts of the genocide despite its criminalization. Despite this, Serbian media resorted to attacking the credibility and legitimacy of the ICTY. By attacking these aspects of the ICTY, Serbian media are attempting to discredit Srebrenica as a genocide since the ICTY was the very tribunal which designated Srebrenica as a genocide. This form of definitionalism, as according to Charny(2003), in this case, is the aspect of denial of the tragedy through manipulation and minimalization of the tragedy. Results in this thesis have shown Sri Lankan media directly attacking the credibility of the number of deaths; claiming the numbers to be much less than the 40,000 as stated by the United Nations showing this to be a common defence mechanism of the perpetrators.

Furthermore, the constant narrative of portraying the entire Tamil population as ‘terrorists’ links to the literature of administrative evil whereby the Tamil are seen as the ‘surplus’ population (Adams and Balfour, 1998; Hoffman and Gajewski, 2012).Charny also hints at this stating deniers use forms of racism which can be used to stigmatize the victim group as unlikeable, provocative, rebellious and disloyal to a host nation to justify their deserving to be attacked (Charny, 2003).

What has also been observed is that Sri Lankan media refuses to remotely discuss allegations against itself, but instead plays the role of the non-perpetrator but *victimizing* the Tamil population with baseless accusations.

The narrative found when going through just this small selection of articles is that articles focus heavily on either deflecting blame on the LTTE, which is more focussed on the denial category of definitionalism, by justifying any government actions. Yet at the same time, much of the denial, despite many brazen denials, come across subtly through the 3 categories of innocent denials.

Subotić (2021) highlighted how Serbia prefers to play themselves as the victim nation through the Holocaust, portraying themselves as genocide victims through the deaths of Serbian Jews during the Holocaust by the Nazi regime. Alike to the Srebrenica genocide, Holocaust denial is also criminalized in many jurisdictions but that has not stopped the trivialization of the Holocaust through arguments that Palestinians suffered more than the Jewish population (Whine, 2009). In a similar lens, the Sri Lankan government, with their conflicting reports, have justified the attacks in the NFZ as a means of

self-protection, liberation of the Tamil civilians and ultimately portraying the SLA troops as war heroes who defeated terrorism. This shows another classic denial strategy typically used when defending actions or deflecting blame, is mostly reflected in Charny's (2003) category of malevolent bigotry with both nations in this case claiming to be the victims rather than the victimizers. Results show Sri Lanka follows the narrative of heroes that overcame terrorism and saved the entire country; that 'rehabilitated' the cadres of the LTTE such that they became law abiding citizens. Questions need to be asked here; why the cadres need to be rehabilitated from the vision of an independent Tamil nation when civilians went through decades of treatment as second-class citizens prior to the war. The very fact that many peaceful attempts to grant a level of power and authority to the Tamil population were rejected, culminating in the deaths of thousands of civilians in the state-sponsored riots of 1983 could lead one to question why a cadre is not allowed to have the opinion of an independent Tamil nation, where everyone is treated equally.

## **5.2 Charny's categorization**

As far as Charny's classification of denial goes, it has covered every aspect of denial to the level that is required. Considering that not one aspect of denial the most prominent, the categories presented by Charny has enabled to pinpoint the exact forms of denial existing in Sri Lankan media. Self-serving opportunism was omitted from the research due to its details not sufficing the criteria analysis. This category could go a long way to explaining why Sri Lankan media discourse preaches denial.

Charny's category bears a similar resemblance to Zerubavel (2006) on the social organization of denial. Where Zerubavel classifies denial in terms of rules and people's behaviour rather than classifying the exact denial that exists. What Zerubavel does compared to Charny however is he portrays, clearly, his views on media. Zerubavel (2006) believes that mass media does play a significant role in deciding what issues make headlines and thus is influential in telling us what to think about.

By portraying the operation as a rescue mission, Sri Lankan media have ultimately manipulated free speech to manipulate and propagate the denial agenda. By negating the fact that tens of thousands were killed in May alone, Sri Lankan media portray a form of literal denial as per Cohen (2013). It is the deliberate deception to whitewash, spin and cover-up the atrocities the Sri Lankan government and the SLA are complicit in (Cohen, 2013). This thesis uses Charny's (2003) typology as a means of classifying the existent denial within Sri Lanka. This however should not disregard the typology of Stanley Cohen as both author's raise very relevant points with regards to this case study. Charny's typology should perhaps be extended, to ensure a category exist for denial of baseless allegations.

### 5.3 Media freedom in Sri Lanka

A brief focus on media freedom is warranted, to help understand the prominence of denial in Sri Lankan media discourse. As a government owned newspaper Daily News as well as the Sunday Observer would voice arguments strongly in favour of those in power rather than criticize and results have showed exactly that. Considering the sampling strategy, Daily News have the most articles in the sample and show by far the most bigoted forms of denial. One should question however if the views of newspapers are of theirs alone.

A 2012 paper indicates that Sinhalese journalists are pressured into taking a pro-government stance (Nataraja, 2012). The media minister himself suggested that the media should desist from reporting on issues which would ‘damage the integrity’ of Sri Lanka (Nataraja, 2012). Freedom House (2012) states that out of 180 countries, Sri Lanka ranks 146<sup>th</sup> even 13 years after the end of the war. With the Sri Lankan government accused of kidnapping and enforcing the disappearances of journalists such as Taraki Sivaram, it would not be difficult to figure out justifications for pro government media in Sri Lanka. As administrative evil was inherent in every aspect of the Holocaust (Bauman, 1989), one could also argue the street level bureaucrat is aware of the ongoing atrocities but believes the ‘surplus’ should be treated as such.

## 6.0 Conclusions and recommendations

Implications of the research highlight that prominence of denial shown in Sri Lankan media discourse should not be ignored. The top-down analysis on primary documents based on the classifications of denial show that Sri Lankan media discourse is willing to ultimately manipulate its readers into thinking their self-proclaimed war heroes defeated the LTTE without a single civilian casualty. All newspapers displayed some forms of denial except for *Lanka Business Online*. Government owned media, specifically *Daily News*, *Sunday Observer* and *News.lk* portrayed the overarching forms of denial. Further research into the phenomenon is required despite the several limitations that exist due to qualitative analysis. The findings of the thesis should be a cause for concern for the international community and by highlighting the prominence of the denial through Israel Charny’s (2003) typology, scholars can use this research to investigate how widespread it is with an even bigger sample size. Impartiality was conducted throughout this research process, but the sheer subjectivity of the research shows that no qualitative data analysis can be impartial.

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## **Appendix A – Codes implemented in newspaper analysis**

Available on request.

## **Appendix B – Random sampling of newspaper articles**



Simple Random  
Sampling for Newsp

## Appendix C

Word cloud assembled through Atlas Ti, ranging from most to least frequently used words, from the codes put in myself.

Itte sri lanka government tamil rights said people civilians will also lankan reserved  
war page military factiva inc international one forces security tamils president human now country north political  
time troops us terrorism may can army many cadres terrorist even two prabhakaran colombo minister made well years  
news un st<sup>Word</sup> ajapaksa areas support foreign community battle leader peace east soldiers media leaders tiger new Itte's  
general nati<sup>372 Tokens</sup> d defence words terrorists including killed document english ht countries three first division eelam copyright  
however area<sup>Word</sup> many given operation humanitarian like tna world group diaspora former members tigers report take force canada  
must development front operations secretary civilian india children since overseas still police taken conflict held information  
intelligence leadership permission come due groups never sunday end lives activities law within think year crimes indian fighting  
march south day armed came several syndication terror suicide another article get situation according final party without part place  
just council observer contact dead power fire lanka's make much number process towards attack court long control past sea respect  
took need please times today way command jaffna victory want work network high violence back newspapers continue living uk west  
zone among public published defeat nadu air following kp major pro attacks organization chief wanted around life commander days use  
found mahinda see associated clear every fight hindustantimes.com htsyndication based future give land weapons money organizations  
campaign killing rehabilitation important propaganda say fact ltd present parliament canadian committed nation controlled know western  
ceylon ministry road ground key special content others threat able despite governments kilinochchi lost training using although going  
politicians arms artillery australia away go head started eastern therefore global next youth centre counter election funds innocent  
northern united called entire eu help led taking right small thousands went allegations april sent strategy task case editor later  
requirement though heavy july limited set european food freedom member movement nfz face forward geneva million silva carried death  
economic navy prof query got large order post resolution sinhala liberation old role services continued ex families persons policy statement  
live main move mr mullaitivu nations justice known making man outfit question territory officials provided strong trying working act  
education point solution along done needs talks added decision family mission months sinhalese unhrc assistance ensure europe free recent  
attempt attempts august ceasefire close engaged gave issues left together always appointed become brought fleeing fronts january possible  
reconciliation unp bring captured create efforts especially hand mannar prabhakaran's put young action build dainsl four population re wanni  
water colonel good It period british criminal organisation alias arrested certain communities ethnic parties prime safety second different  
elections home proposals camp capture evidence failed idps provide separate service vavuniya assets displaced fought kept schools senior  
stop whether best earlier far icrc keep majority means welfare affairs casualties five meeting officers organisations reach sources town  
balasingham forced lagoon operating phase pressure prevent safe told trained agreement base became change commanders december  
elements full june lankans look maintain person plan single smuggling activists banned camps created escape happened injured investigation  
ships suffered early enough fonseka inside issue legal list personnel reported society ban hold isga level says states tried yet alleged coming  
decades died identified issued presence allow already body constitution find gandhi tro vanni nothing open presidential reason top villages  
ambassador authorities bodies citizens clearly flee government's hands hospital least nearly november office remain save thought university  
violations wing achieve asked aware cause central defeated district effort house interview involved local ngos non outside powers self sunosl