Child Soldiers: Solutions from a Humanistic Lens

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Child Soldiers:
Solutions from a Humanistic Lens

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences
Master’s Program in International Studies

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in International Studies

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Ursula Wylan
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Child Soldiers: Solutions from a Humanistic Lens

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

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in

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Ursula Wylan
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UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

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Advisor                         Date

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Academic Director             Date

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Dean of Arts and Sciences     Date
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I wrote this thesis for my son Sean Ethan Wylan. I hope he will grow up to a world where children no longer fight in wars that adults choose to wage, a world where the innocence of a child is a right, not a privilege.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

*The use of child soldiers is probably the world’s most unrecognized form of child abuse.*

- *New York Times, 2002*

More than ever war is affecting children in a disturbing and direct manner. Not only are children affected by a conflict because they live near the violence that an armed conflict produces, but more than any other time in history we are seeing children directly participating as perpetrators of violence (Brett and McCallin, 1998). It is estimated that 300,000 children are participating in armed conflict around the globe (UNICEF, 2002). This fact makes the issue of child soldiers an increasingly urgent issue that needs to be addressed and eliminated. That children, as young as eight years old, have participated in violent acts associated with war, is a sure sign that there are significant issues that will affect developing nations for years to come. The Civil War in Sierra Leone, the Conflict in Uganda headed by the Lord’s Revolutionary Army (LRA), and the Civil War in El Salvador are just a few modern examples of children being exploited as soldiers.

The problem of child soldiers is not a trend that is unique to one country, let alone one continent. It is a global issue which requires a global response. The role that international law plays, and should play to a greater extent, in the protection of children holds the only hope for preventing the phenomenon of child soldiers. The prosecution of those who violate international conventions and statutes aimed
to protect the child, is how these instruments will affect change. This means these instruments must be enforceable. There needs to be a clear condemnation of countries which violate international law as it relates to children and conflict. Military and economic aid should not be provided to those countries found to violate those laws. The message needs to be clear: the use of children to fight in, or against, rebel movements is unacceptable and countries with international reach, such as the United States (US) have a responsibility in the fight to end child soldiering by choosing not to support governments who have children fighting within their borders. Military and economic aid should not be given to these countries until they eliminate child soldiers.

Furthermore, the examination of the context that creates the environment and conditions for child soldiers is just as important. Preventing the use of child soldiers could be the most critical aspect to eliminating the problem. While international law plays the part of condemning violators of international law and is meant to deter the use of children as soldiers, preventing developing countries from slipping into the conflicts that produce child soldiers, will prove to be the most effective way to stop the child soldier problem. Prevention includes economic and political stability as well as government transparency. This will be examined in later sections. Figure I illustrates how widespread the issue of child soldiers is on the African continent in particular. This paper will examine some of these case studies specifically.
The Child Soldier Prevention Act

The US has attempted to affect the problem of child soldiers through domestic legislation with international reach. The US Congress enacted the Child Soldier Prevention Act (CSPA) in 2008. This legislation, passed by Congress, is intended to eliminate military aid from the US to governments who have been found by the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, released annually from the State Department, to have child soldiers fighting in their borders. In the CSPA there is a clear condemnation of the use of children in armed conflict and it is the first
legislation of its kind in the US. There is also a clause in the CSPA, which provides for a national interest waiver. This waiver can be applied to the countries that would be affected by the CSPA and would be ineligible for US military aid. This activation of the waiver means those countries would still receive military aid which in turns funds the very conflicts in which the child soldiers were found to be fighting in. This waiver is issued by the President of the United States and would be based on US “national interest”. Section 404(c)(1) of the CSPA states: “The President may waive the application to a country of the prohibition in subsection (a) if the President determines that such waiver is in the national interest of the United States. The message that this waiver sends is: if a country is considered a national interest of the US, then the issue of child soldiers and the elimination of this global problem is overshadowed by what is solely best for the US.

The first year that the CSPA was set to go into effect was 2010. This meant that the countries on the TIP report, found to have child soldiers fighting within its border, would not receive military aid in FY 2011. Those countries included: Burma, Somalia, Yemen, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sudan. On October 25, 2010 President Obama made use of his powers under the waiver provision of the CSPA releasing a Memorandum which waived Sudan, Chad, DRC, and Yemen from the CSPA (Obama Memorandum, 2010). In summary: the TIP report identified six countries in total which would then not receive military aid in FY 2011. With the waiver of four countries, only two were left: Somalia and Burma. Interestingly enough neither of these countries receive
US military aid anyway and so would not be affected by the CSPA (LaFranchi, 2010). The result of the national interest waiver is that any meaningful affect that the US may have hoped to have on the issue of child soldiers, by enacting this legislation, has been nullified. By waiving these four countries, the conclusion has been drawn by some that the CSPA is a document which may look good in theory but is has no effect (Becker, 2010; Fortenberry, 2010; LaFranchi, 2010). US national interest trumps the rights of children and this is not a message that should be sent to the rest of the world. The US should not be funding governments with military aid when those governments have been found guilty, based on the US’s own State Department Report, of failing to eliminate child soldiers within those countries borders.

**Background and Need for the Study**

Human rights in general have been a concern on the forefront of global politics since World War II. The United Nations has adopted many resolutions and conventions aimed at protecting the human race as a whole from the violence and injustice that occurs in times of war as well as in times of peace. When it comes to the child, human rights have found a place in protecting this vulnerable population. Many documents have been created and passed as international laws which aim to enforce this protection. For instance, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was one of the first of its kind to address the rights of the child. Article 25 of this 1948 document states: (1) Everyone has the right to a
standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection (UDHR, 1948). In 1989 the rights of the child were revisited with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC declares: “Considering that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity (CRC, 1989).” Child soldier involvement in armed conflict violates the very rights that the global community has tried to protect for all children. In order to ensure that a child is free and safe from participation on any level in the affairs of war, the international community must make sure that children are protected from participation in armed conflict. The thought of a child as young an age as eight years old participating in combat is an appalling notion but it is precisely what occurred in Sierra Leone’s Civil War (Zack-Williams, 2006), in Uganda’s conflict with the LRA (Children in War, 2000) and in Sudan’s Civil War (TIP Report, 2010).

The CSPA is a progressive and important document, but the presence of presidential waivers such as the one issued on October 25, 2010 reverses this very
progress. When Congress takes the important first steps by passing the CSPA, implementation is the other half of its relevance. This progress, which has been documented in the CRC and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and now the CSPA, has an important place in politics and politicians and policy makers need to follow through. Voiding these documents purpose with waivers is doing children in these countries an injustice as well as American taxpayers who are funding these governments with military aid rather than that money being used for more positive issues domestically or abroad. These four countries: DRC, Yemen, Chad and Sudan have been found to have child soldiers fighting within their borders and so US taxpayer money should not be supplied to those governments. Military aid will supply the funds needed to continue the conflicts that children are a part of. The pragmatism of realpolitik has made national interest more important than protecting children globally and in this paper I will demonstrate why this needs to be corrected. Children should not be fighting in wars which adults decide to wage and the US should not be funding the continuance of those wars.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research project is an examination which is threefold: the current research around Child Soldiers, the case studies of conflicts which have included the use of child soldiers and the current solutions and their shortfalls. In the end I will synthesize these topics and come up with
recommendations moving forward. These recommendations are meant to provide insight into the elimination of the global problem of Child Soldiers. I will argue that children should not fight in wars which adults decide to wage and the US should not be funding governments with military aid when those countries have been found guilty, based on the US’s own TIP Report, of failing to eliminate child soldiers. Children should not be fighting in internal conflicts /civil wars or in international conflict including the War on Terror. On paper governments have come to the consensus that child soldiers are a problem which all countries need to work to eliminate. International documents which outline this moral imperative are the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as well as the Optional Protocols I and II to the CRC. By enacting the CSPA the US has created national legislation which says the US will not support governments in their wars in which child soldiers are employed. Yet with the waiver of the only four countries found on the TIP report who receive US military aid, in practice there is no actual progress on the issue. From my research I believe that this disconnect between policy and implementation can be outlined in regards to child soldiers and hopefully this can lead to better enforcement of such policy documents as the CSPA.

**Research Questions/Hypothesis**

The research question that this thesis seeks to address is how the global community can eradicate the use of child soldiers. Regardless of the rationale
behind the use of children in armed conflict by a rebel group or a State military force, how can the global community affect this problem on a domestic and international level? Is legislation, such as the CSPA a necessary force for this change? If so, by including a national interest waiver, how does a country such as the US send the message that unilateral interest trumps an international problem? No matter what interest the US has in another country, are the human rights of children more important or less? A country with as much power as the US should be using its bargaining power to advance humanitarian issues like child soldiers no matter what the personal, unilateral interest of the US may be.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework from which I have approached this research project from takes into account the realpolitik and pragmatism associated with US foreign policy and how this pragmatism is often used to explain the need for, and the use of a waiver in legislation such as the CSPA. Realpolitik says that the reality of politics is “based on practical and material factors rather than on theoretical or ethical objectives” (Merriam-Webster, 2011). National interest is the validation for the waiver of four countries who otherwise should not receive US military aid. The influence that US military aid has in the continuation of the conflicts that employs these child soldiers is a critical piece of the puzzle in the prevention of contexts that create this global problem. The realpolitik of US foreign policy cannot be paramount to the elimination of an ethical/moral issue
which affects the globe. I argue for a humanistic/cosmopolitan understanding of this issue which sees the need for all children in the world to have the right to be a child and that it is an international moral imperative to end the use of children as soldiers. Realpolitik cannot outweigh human progress in such vital areas as protecting children from becoming the tools of governments and rebel groups as they wage wars against each other.

**Methodology**

The methods used in my research were text analysis, policy analysis, content analysis and discourse analysis. I examined texts which discuss the issue of child soldiers and texts which describe the international movement to end the problem. I examined the text of reports published by international organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, World Vision, UNICEF and Save the Children.

Within my policy analysis I looked closely at the CSPA, the State Department Trafficking in Persons Report, the Presidential Waiver of October 2010, and foreign policy documents relating to the countries in question. This helped to connect the US national interest in Sudan, Chad, DRC and Yemen. I looked at the drafts of the CSPA, the minutes of the congressional sessions in which the CSPA is discussed and from this understand the process for inclusion of the Waiver condition in the Act. I also examined the countries in questions official stance on the issue of child soldiers and their actions in practice to find out how
serious their attempts to end the problem of child soldiers are. I also analyzed
international law documents related to child soldiers that the US has and has not
signed and/or ratified in order to find themes from the official US stance on the
child soldier issue.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is that the research has all been secondary. Using
literature of experts and data from studies on child soldiers, I have
researched many documents on the topic of child soldiers but was unable to get
first hand interviews of former child soldiers. Even with this limitation I still
believe that this is important and extremely relevant work. The conviction that this
global problem must be eliminated should not be discounted by the limitations of
this research.

Significance of the Study

It is important for those working for the elimination of child soldiers, those
making policy, the President of the United States who issues the Presidential
Waiver, and for the people of the United States to understand that the legislation
Congress created was progressive and important, but that waivers such as the one
issued on October 25, 2010 reverses this progress. When Congress takes the
important first steps by creating the CSPA, implementation is the other half of its
relevance. This progress, which has been documented in the CRC and the
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and the CSPA have an
important place in politics and they need politicians and policy makers to know that. Voiding these documents purpose with waivers is doing children in these countries an injustice as well as American taxpayers who are funding these governments with military aid rather than that money being used for more positive issues domestically or abroad.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The US created legislation with the intention of contributing to the elimination of the global problem of child soldiers. The CSPA is the tool that encompasses this contribution and as discussed would prevent US military aid from being a resource to governments where the problem of child soldiers exists within the borders of that governments territory. The Child Soldier Prevention Act, which provides the US with a way to affect this problem, must be allowed to have the intended effect. The waiver of countries, which the act is meant to hold accountable, has nullified any this very effect which the US hoped to have when passing the legislation.

While governments have come to a consensus that child soldiers are a problem, not all of them are currently working to eliminate the problem. With the waiver of Sudan, DRC, Chad and Yemen, the only four countries found on the TIP report who receive US military aid, in practice there is no actual progress on the effect that the CSPA was meant to have. From my research I argue that this disconnect between policy and implementation can be outlined in regards to child soldiers not only in the US but in all legislation regarding child soldiers, and hopefully this can lead to better enforcement of such policy documents as the CSPA.
The purpose of this research project is to examine who a child soldier is, what are the conditions that lead to the use of child soldiers, and what are the current solutions to the problem of child soldiers. Using case studies, I will give insight into what the current solutions are actually doing to prevent and/or eliminate the use of children as a weapon. The first section of the literature review is dedicated to literature describing what a child soldier is. This section will include what international law instruments are available in regards to defining a child soldier. The second section is dedicated to understanding the context that creates a child soldier. This section will contain case studies of conflicts which have included/include the use of child soldiers and will examine what the current literature says about the rehabilitation of a child soldier and what solutions have been presented in the quest to eliminate this global problem.

**Child Soldier Definitions and Evidence**

There is an abundance of literature on the general phenomenon of child soldiers. Much of the literature notes that though child soldiers are not a new concept, since World War II child soldiers are involved in armed conflict on a larger, more violent scale than ever before (Brett and McCallin, 1998; Dallaire, 2010; Fox 2005; Singer, 2006). The term child soldier does not just refer to a child who carries a weapon and participates in direct combat. A child soldier comes with many different roles within an armed group. Children in combat carry out a range of functions from being the perpetrators of violence and atrocious acts to
less violent positions such as guard duty, patrolling, manning checkpoints, lookout, messenger and intelligence gathering. While children have carried out some of the tasks associated with war as far back as Medieval times, such as a lookout or messenger, the use of children as the perpetrators of violent war crimes and atrocities today is a disturbing trend in the modern era (Dallaire, 2010; Fox, 2005; Pugel, 2006; Singer, 2006; Wessells, 2009). Mary-Jane Fox eloquently points out: “It is important to stress that the contemporary child soldiers phenomenon is very new indeed, for in the post-cold war era it has reached proportions—both in terms of scope and extremes—that stretch far beyond any previous occurrences in human history. It is simply unprecedented (Fox, 2005).” The roles of young girls within these groups can include any of the above as well as the role of wife and child bearers (Brett and McCallin, 1998; Dallaire, 2010; Wessells, 2009). Child soldiers can be found on either side of a conflict. Additionally it is not uncommon that if they are indeed found on one side of a conflict that they are employed on the other. Child soldiers are found in government troops, rebel troops and paramilitary groups. Because children are small and naturally assumed innocent, they can be the best cover. Rarely does one expect the innocence associated with a child to in fact be the enemy (Brett and McCallin, 2008; Dallaire, 2010).

One of the difficulties that researchers of child soldiers have is in the study and monitoring of child soldiers. The phenomenon itself presents a dilemma: because the use of a child as a soldier is frowned upon by the international community, no government or opposition group seeking international validation
for their cause is eager to admit to using children to fight their wars. This dilemma means that child soldiers are undocumented, hidden and unknown fighters in conflicts around the globe. “Invisible soldiers” is a term that adequately describes the child combatant (Brett and McCallin, 1998; Dallaire, 2010). As Rachel Brett and Margaret McCallin say, “They are invisible because those who employ them deny their existence. No record is kept of their numbers and ages, or the ages are falsified. Many are not part of the formal strength of the armed forces or armed groups to which they are attached, but are unacknowledged servants or hangers-on. (Brett and McCallin, 1998)” This issue of invisibility is not only troublesome in identifying culpable parties using child soldiers but also is troublesome in terms of rehabilitation and demobilization. If you cannot see the child soldier, you cannot attempt to heal the child soldier.

The employment of child soldiers is an international issue that has many implications for the future of humanity. A UNICEF evaluation report estimated that 300,000 children around the world are participating in armed conflict (Achvarina and Reich, 2006; Emmons, 2001; Dallaire, 2010; Harmon, 2006). International law and human rights norms have tried to find its place in the issue of child soldiers. I would argue that the results have been effective in creating international law and statutes pertaining to the prevention of children being conscripted or employed as soldiers but that the enforcement of violators of such law has room for improvement. One of the major problems with child soldiers and international law is the age threshold in which a child is protected. Many of the
instruments designed to protect children from becoming combatants set the age of fifteen years old which is too low for many critics. Whereas the maturity age of eighteen years old, as it is in the United States, would better protect children from participation. The issue here is that many cultures consider a child to be an adult earlier than eighteen years old. When talking about what a child soldier is, the defining age of what is and what is not a child becomes one of the most frustrating and difficult aspects of child soldier examination. Even though the western construct of majority at 18 years old is found in international legal documents, the cultural construct of what age a child becomes an adult can be considerably lower in countries where children are actually found in armed groups (Dallaire, 2010; Wessells, 2009).

**Child Soldiers and International Law**

Extensive literature is available on child soldiers and international law. As previously mentioned, the major problem with child soldiers and international law is the age threshold in which a child is protected (Breen, 2007; Dallaire, 2010; Wessells, 2009). The first time that the issue of child soldiers was addressed formally in international law was 1977 with Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The Protocols set the protected age of a child at under 15 years old and makes mention of those who are 15 to 18 years of age. Protocol I addresses issues related to victims of international conflict. Protocol I Article 77(2) states that children who are under 15 years of age are not
to take “direct part” in combat. If the child falls within the range of 15 to 18 years old then the military should give priority to the older of the recruits. The Protocol specifically mentions the intentional recruitment of children under 15. “The Parties to the conflict shall take all feasible measures in order that children who have not attained the age of 15 years do not take a direct part in hostilities and, in particular, they shall refrain from recruiting them into their armed forces.” Article 77(4) addresses issues of detention or imprisonment of children related to conflict in that they should be kept separate from adults unless they are able to reside with their family. Article 77(5) states that the death penalty shall not apply to those who are under 18 years old. Protocol II addresses everything that Protocol I does in Article 4(3) and Article 6(4) as it relates to victims of non-international conflict, such as civil war.

These instruments are designed to protect children from becoming combatants and set the age of 15 years old which is too low for many critics. Claire Breen notes, “The protection afforded to children is problematic because the age a child may become a soldier and what constitutes child ‘soldiering’ fluctuates between States and cultures. Differing levels of children soldiers’ protection leave them vulnerable to particular abuses (Breen, 2007).” 15 years old seems to be a common number in which a child is defined in legal texts pertaining to armed conflict. In my opinion the maturity age of 18 years old, as it is in the United States, is a better threshold to protect young people from being involved in armed conflict early in life. The issue here is that many cultures consider a child to
be an adult earlier than 18 years old (Honwana, 2006; Wessells, 2009). In *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection*, Wessells explains:

In non-Western societies such as those of sub-Saharan Africa, however, particularly in rural areas where traditional ways remain strong, a person is regarded as an adult once he or she has completed the culturally scripted initiation ceremony or rite of passage into manhood or womanhood (Boyden 1997). Typically such rites occur around 14 years of age (Wessells, 2009).

In 1989, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. It is a treaty which is monitored by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Article 38: Children in Armed Conflict, is the pertinent article in relation to the issue of children soldiers. The CRC also uses 15 as the protected age a child is not to be conscripted or recruited into armed conflict. This UN Convention was ratified by 191 countries, not including the US (Harman, 2001). On February 12, 2002, the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict to the CRC came into force. Due to overwhelming international consensus that the age of 15 years old is too young for protecting children from participation in armed conflict, the Optional Protocol raises the age that a person should be participating in armed conflict to 18 years old. Governments who are party to the Optional Protocol are to take all “feasible” measures to prevent anyone under 18 years of age in their armed forces from participation in direct combat. The Optional Protocol additionally calls for governments to refrain from recruiting persons less than 18 years of age. Article 4(1) states: non-state groups will also not recruit children under 18 years old “under any circumstances”. This is important as the issue of
how to deal with non-state actors and their use child soldiers is a major one when
it comes to enforcement. This aspect of the child soldier phenomenon is difficult
to navigate and that is because governments are held accountable to international
treaties and conventions so non-state actors mentioned in the Optional Protocol is
an important step in the protection of child soldiers. “Addressing non-state cases is
more problematic, however, and not simply because non-state entities exist and
operate beyond legal reach (Fox).”

In addition to the Protocols and treaties mentioned above, the Rome Statute
of the International Criminal Court makes conscription of children under 15 years
old into the armed forces a war crime. The Rome Statute was put into force on
July 1, 2002. The Rome Statute is important in regards to the issue of child
soldiers as it was instrumental in the case study of Sierra Leone. In the aftermath
of the Civil War in Sierra Leone the Rome Statute was the basis for making it the
first case where recruitment of child soldiers resulted in a guilty verdict in
international law (Wessells, 2009). Michael Wessells, in his book *Child Soldiers,
From Violence to Protection*, notes:

It is an open question whether the prosecutions by the International Criminal
Court and the Special Courts will in fact deter child recruitment. To succeed, the
courts will need the moral support and resources of countries worldwide, but the
United States has revoked its signature on the treaty that established the Court.
Also, it is questionable whether the Courts can manage the number of cases
needed to deter child recruitment on a large scale (Wessells, 2009).

The importance of international collaboration by countries, especially those such
as the United States is outlined in the above quote. Much of the progress that has
been made through international law and domestic legislation in such countries is only as strong on the support provided for enforcement and legitimization of these mechanisms. The US has created domestic legislation aimed at solving this international problem, but has not ratified certain international law aimed at the same goal. This is a contradictory and confusing element of the US stance on child soldiers. By passing the CSPA and not ratifying the CRC or the Rome Statute, the message is unclear and does not progress the elimination of this important international debate.

**Contexts and Rehabilitation of Child Soldiers**

Literatures surrounding which context creates a child soldier, all seem to point out similar causal factors. Factors such as: poverty, famine, AIDS, wars, overpopulation and bad governance to name a few (Becker, 2006; Biel, 2004; Dallaire, 2010). In *They Fight Like Soldiers, They Die Like Children* Romeo Dallaire explains what leads to child soldiers in states where bad governance is at play: “when states fail, when leaders go mad, when the chaos of violence takes over souls, the time is ripe for such terrible ideas to enter the minds of human beings and be acted out (Dallaire, 2010).” Dallaire goes on to explain:

> Horribly, child soldiers continue to be used in conflicts throughout the world because there are leaders – political and military, governmental or non-governmental, soldiers or thugs and thieves – who have achieved “success” through using them and who are ruthless, apathetic and amoral enough to continue to recruit, employ, abuse and destroy children (Dallaire, 2010).

It is also agreed that a major motivation for recruiting child soldiers is that they are cheap and readily available in areas in which poverty and conflict over power in
poorer countries occurs (Biel, 2004, Dallaire, 2010; Singer, 2006). Michael Wessell says:

War zones embody the truth of mahatma Ghandi’s famous dictum that poverty is the worst form of violence. Poverty, which often contributes to war, intensifies during war. Follow war, poverty continues to damage well-being as societies slide into economic collapse (Collier et al. 2003). Furthermore, the destruction of infrastructure and reductions in family income take a devastating toll on children and families in war zones. Too often, these children grow up in inadequate shelters, living in families too poor to obtain adequate food or healthcare (Wessells, 2009).

When there is a combination of poverty, the prevalence of orphans, high numbers of street children, AIDS and political instability; conditions are ripe for children to be recruited both by force and by choice into an armed group who can provide for food, shelter and security as well as a sense of belonging (Brett and McCallin, 2005; Wessells, 2009). The term “choice” when it refers to two options: either to join an armed group or to die, it can be argued that choice is an unfair term to use. Children who have lost their family due to war, AIDS, famine or other causes, are left so vulnerable that the last resort of joining an armed group is the last hope they have. When you combine this desperation with the drugs and brainwash that the leaders of these groups employ as recruitment tools, it is unfortunate but true that children are left with no other option (Brett and McCallin, 1998, Dallaire, 2010).

During El Salvador’s 12 year civil war the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) asked poor rural parents to give their children to the cause as they were fighting to liberate the poor, disenfranchised of El Salvador. Courtney explains, “As Leonel González, an ex-guerilla, described it, ‘we would
arrive to a village and take all of the young, in many places they hid from us or ran 
- although many understood that our cause was just - in this sense, the recruitment 
methods we used put us against the villages we were trying to liberate’ (Courtney, 
2010).” Though the FMLN claimed to have the moral authority in the conflict, 
they employed some of the same means as the FAES, such as child soldier 
recruitment. The quote below emphasizes this point:

In 1987, Americas Watch (now Human Rights Watch/Americas), reported on the 
forced recruitment of children by the FAES and the FMLN. The FMLN at the 
time had given Americas Watch researchers several explanations for the presence 
of children as young as 11 in their camps, including that these were orphans being 
cared for by the FMLN, or were children of FMLN parents. They also claimed the 
children were not combatants and that in the countryside, where these children 
lived, they were used to performing adult tasks early in life (Ricca, 2006).

Whether or not the FMLN had children in their camp for other reasons than 
participation in the armed conflict is hard to prove. Often times the children had 
been orphaned from their parents being killed by the Salvadoran Army and so 
children finding refuge in the FMLN camps and even fighting for their cause were 
not uncommon (Brett and McCallin, 1998). Rachel Brett and Margaret McCallin 
explain why some Salvadoran children chose to join the FMLN, “Others join 
because they feel it is better to die fighting than defenseless (Brett and McCallin).”

Abduction is also an all too common way in which a child finds themself in 
the role of child soldier. This was the overwhelming case in many conflicts such 
as Mozambique and Angola (Honwana, 2006), Uganda ((Dunn, 2010; Pham et al, 
2008), El Salvador (Brett and McCallin, 2005) and Sierra Leone to name a few 
examples. These children are kidnapped straight from their homes, their schools,
or off of the street. In El Salvador’s Civil War the Salvadoran Army (FAES) systematically conscripted children into the military and often in such an abrupt manner that the child did not realize they had just been made a soldier until it was too late. Often times they were performing routine childlike activities when they were taken such as walking home from school, going to the movies, playing in a field or even attending school.

The movie *Innocent Voices* chronicles the real life story writer Óscar Torres, and many other young Salvadoran children, encountered during the 12 year conflict. The movie depicts the Salvadoran Army routinely entering a school in San Salvador while they roll called children who had come of age, 12 years old, into the armed forces. Once a young boy reached the age of 12 he was considered fit to enter the military and become a killer. Neither the children nor their families could stop the conscription. If they did try they would be shot. Many young Salvadoran children lost their lives fighting for a government cause that neither they nor their family believed in. In the rural areas of El Salvador the rounding up of children by the military “terrorized the local population (Courtney, 2010).” Throughout the war many children stopped attending school as it was deemed too dangerous since the Salvadoran Army used it as a recruiting ground. Mothers often died protecting their children as the Army came to take their sons away to fight. Much of the literature discusses the invisibility issue of child soldiers, and the difficulty in rehabilitating the forgotten children (Brett and McCallin, 1998; Watson 2004; MacDonald, 2008). A major cause of the invisibility is that neither
governments nor the opposition groups looking for international validation are eager to confess to employing child soldiers. Because of this they are largely unseen. “In most peace settlements and post-conflict recovery programs, child soldiers are either forgotten or lumped together under the general grouping of ‘ex-combatants’. The result is that children usually get shortchanged in the support they need, not only to their detriment but also to the detriment of broader peace prospects (Singer, 2005).” This “detriment” is addressed more in depth by Barbara Dridi in her article *Child-soldier rehabilitation and reintegration programmes: effective antidotes to war*. Dridi says:

> To ignore the special needs of the young fighter emerging from war is a sure technique to backslide rapidly into renewed warfare. Untreated and neglected, many war-traumatized youthful ex-combatants will readily take up arms when the conditions around them are ripe or their perceived needs are inadequately or too slowly met (Dridi, 2004).

If children who fight in war are unseen and unknown, then the hope for reintegration into society post conflict becomes all the more difficult. Those children who need rehabilitation will not receive it if no one knows they exist. Those children will return to civilian life and society scarred and untreated for the stress and trauma that war produces. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an extremely common result of participation in war and so children as well as adults must receive access to counseling and rehabilitation so that the psychological effects can be addressed and the violence experienced in war time is not repeated during peace. If there is to be healing and progress for those children whose
innocence is lost due to participation as army combatants, then governments and opposition groups need to make sure the children are not invisible.

The need for rehabilitation post-conflict is a major theme found in literature surrounding child soldiers (Dridi, 2004; Singer 2005; Honwana, 2006; Betancourt et al, 2010; Brett and McCallin, 1998). How a child soldier is demobilized and rehabilitated should be specific based on cultural and situational considerations (Betancourt, Borisova, et al., 2008; Boothby, Strang, & Wessells, 2006; Kohrt, Tol, Pettigrew, & Karki, 2010; Wessells, 2006; Wessells, 2009). Specifically, we must address “the reality of their experiences in conflict, and their situation upon return (Brett and McCallin, 1998).” This point is emphasized by the authors of Social Ecology of Child Soldiers: Child, Family, and Community Determinants of Mental Health, Psychosocial Well-being, and Reintegration in Nepal. The study conducted in the article found that “The mental health and psychosocial well-being of child soldiers varies not only because of their diverse experiences as soldiers and differential exposure to trauma but also because of different social relationships and socio ecological positioning both before and after conflicts (Upadhaya, 2010).”

Literature almost always has an aspect dedicated to the effects of participation in armed conflict by children on the children themselves and the need for special attention to these effects (Brett and McCallin, 1998; Dridi, 2004; McClure and Retamal, 2010; Singer, 2005). One of the most common effects of war on a soldier is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The presence of PTSD
is staggering in child soldiers. Peter Singer notes, “One study found that as many as 97 percent of child soldiers may suffer from PTSD, regardless of the time they spent in violence (Singer, 2005).” Dealing with PTSD is critical for the child soldier and should be part of the rehabilitation programs designed for the child soldier.

Much of the literature explains that in order to help those children who have participated in armed conflict, they have to undergo formal demobilization (Annan, 2009; Betancourt, et al, 2010; Dridi, 2004). DDR is the process of bringing a child soldier from fighter to a civilian in society. Unlearning the violence is also critical part of the rehabilitation process. McClure and Retamal explain, “Ex-combatants needed to relearn how to protect themselves and others from their own violent impulses” (McClure and Retamal, 2010). Education and structure are themes for what is needed during the process of DDR in studies done of child soldiers, specifically those in Uganda. In From "Rebel" to "Returnee": Daily Life and Reintegration for Young Soldiers in Northern Uganda the article summarizes the results of a study done in Northern Uganda for former child soldiers receiving DDR. The authors note that education can make a difference in successful rehabilitation, “The lack of economic and educational opportunities seemed to hinder youth’s reintegration for a number of reasons, including having little distraction from negative or intrusive memories and having difficulty finding a meaningful role or identity other than a returned rebel (Annan et al., 2009).”
The DDR process has three identifiable steps. The first is disarmament where combatants put down their weapons. The second phase is to break up the armed groups and have the former child soldier enter society. This stage is known as demobilization and has important steps within it. This is when children will be reunited with any family that survived the conflict. If none are found due to death or having fled then it is necessary to find alternative care arrangements for those who are still children. The final phase of DDR is reintegration and this is the “much longer and more complex process (Betancourt et al., 2010).” This is the phase where the psychological effects of participation in war by a child can surface. Because part of the manipulation of soldiers, especially child soldiers, in conflict is to erase any connection to family or the opposition force, this is where the DDR process is challenged the most. This phase is seen to be one of the most important since demobilized children will continue to grow and develop within society. Therefore, it is important that the indoctrination used by the armed group to connect the soldier to its cause (i.e. the creation of the other as the enemy) must be addressed. Ignoring the “special needs of the young fighter” is risking a “backslide into renewed warfare (Dridi).” Rehabilitation is a key factor in this process as it prepares the former child soldier for reintegration and provides them with coping mechanisms for the trauma they have endured as well as the trauma that they inflicted as a soldier.

Acceptance by the community and reintegration is another critical step in this part of the demobilization process.
From the perspective of the participants, community hostility stemmed predominantly from three causes. There was, first, their association with the looting, killing and other violence that occurred when the LRA attacked the civilian population in Teso, the local population now not being willing to accept those who had been involved in brutal violence against their own people. Second, there was a continuing fear that these children would continue to kill. This was, in part, evoked by the children’s own unmodulated or aggressive responses to those who insulted or abused them. For a large number such violence and aggression was a common way of handling the hurt they felt at their treatment by the community (CSUCH, 2008).

Putting down weapons and signing a peace treaty does not address the issues which created the violence in the first place. For there to be healing and transformation post-conflict, it is extremely important that there be resources devoted to reintegrating the child into the community and the community accept the child as part of it.
CHAPTER III
DATA/FINDINGS

In this section a closer look at three countries: Uganda, Sudan and Sierra Leone, which all have either had child soldiers fighting within their internal conflicts, or currently have them and are directly relevant to the CSPA waiver. I will discuss the historical background leading to the conflicts and the use of child soldiers. From this research, trends and solutions exist and they will be discussed in the next section.

CASE STUDY: Uganda

Uganda has been entrenched in a conflict between the Ugandan Government (GoU) and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) since the late 1980s. The country of Uganda has had political instability since it declared its independence from colonial rule under the British Crown in 1962. Much of the current violence is traced to colonial roots (Cheney, 2005). Political instability in Uganda has also played a role in the roots of the current violence. When General Idi Amin Dada overthrew Prime Minister Milton Obote in a coup d’etat in 1971, Amin began a reign of terror where he specifically targeted those of Acholi and Langi decent. Kristen Cheney explains, “Under the threat of ethnic extermination during the Obote and Amin eras, Acholi soldiers turned to self-punishment under a religious indoctrination that was a mixture of Acholi animist religion, Christianity, and militarism that gave rise to the LRA (Cheney, 2005).” Amin was known for
such a systematic use of violence during his dictatorship that he became known as “the butcher” (Quinn, 2009). In 1980, Obote returned to power in Uganda and proceeded to rule the country until 1985 when a military coup took power. Six months later Yoweri Museveni and the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took over the country and since 1986 President Yoweri Museveni’s government has been in control in Uganda.

Under Museveni’s administration there has still been instability. There have been numerous armed insurgencies against the Ugandan government. This fact has made Uganda a continuously violent country, especially in the Northern region where the LRA has been mounting their attack. Joanna Quinn explains in her article, “Getting to Peace? Negotiating with the LRA in Northern Uganda”:

One of the longest-lasting and most devastating is the conflict in northern Uganda. “The conflict in Acholiland began soon after Uganda’s last regime change in January 1986. It was triggered [in part] by the NRM’s methods for consolidating control over the northern parts of the country (Barnes and Lucima, 2002). (Quinn, 2005)

Over the past two decades Uganda has continued to experience violence and rebel insurrections via the LRA. The LRA uses spirituality as part of its mode of resistance. They are a “rebel group that wants to overthrow the government and install the Ten Commandments as law” (Wax, 2006). The LRA uses a combination of Mysticism and Christianity. World Vision, in their report “Pawns of politics children, conflict and peace in northern Uganda” writes: “The result is a cultic manipulation of religion by the LRA in lieu of a political platform. The
The religious dimension has become an excuse for lack of action by authorities with mandates for child protection and conflict resolution (WorldVision).

The LRA in Uganda has kidnapped and forced children into their rebellion. It is estimated that at least 20,000 children have encountered such a fate (Dunn, 2010; Pham et al., 2008). In the article *The Lord’s Resistance Army and Forced Conscription in Northern Uganda*, the authors use statistical data to create an actual number range of abducted person in Uganda by the LRA. Their conclusion is as follows, “…it is estimated that the LRA abducted approximately 54,000 to 75,000 people, including 25,000 to 38,000 children, between 1986 and 2006. These are conservative estimates (Pham et al., 2008).” The leader of the LRA, Joseph Kony, has terrorized the people of Northern Uganda for over 20 years. “Children are the primary targets of the LRA, shrewdly forced to perpetuate their own misery—whether they are abducted or live a life of ‘night commuting’ to avoid abduction (WorldVision).” Figure 1 shows the region of Uganda most affected by the LRA and the abduction of child soldiers.
The LRA abducts both boys and girls for use in their opposition forces. In a study reported in *The Lord’s Resistance Army and Forced Conscription in Northern Uganda*, the factors that contribute to the length of time that the girls are with the LRA is explained:

Three factors may explain why women...stayed with the LRA for long periods of time. First, the LRA abducts girls and women to serve as long-term sexual partners and domestic servants to commanders. Fourteen percent of females who passed through a reception center in the district of Apac self-reported that they had been “given” to commanders, and 10 percent reported giving birth while in captivity. Second, women forced to serve as “wives” are likely to be kept in encampments and villages located some distance from combat zones, offering less
opportunity to escape, surrender, or to be captured by army troops. Finally, women who have babies while in captivity may fear trying to escape or simply chose not to leave the rebel group (Pham et al, 2008).

It is estimated that 30 percent of the child soldiers around the world are girls and wile child soldiers in general are considered invisible, girls are even more so since they do not generally participate in direct combat (Dallaire, 2010; Singer, 2005; Wessells, 2009). The fact that the LRA women tend to keep their children versus female child soldiers in other countries such as Columbia, who are forced to abort or give their child away, means that the female child soldier in the LRA becomes “more wedded to the group, because their escape options are further limited (Singer, 2005).” This is another psychological tactic used to manipulate and decrease the likelihood of escaping.

*Early on when my brothers and I were captured, the LRA explained to us that all five brothers couldn’t serve in the LRA because we would not perform well. So they tied up my two younger brothers and invited us to watch. Then they beat them with sticks until the two of them died. They told us it would give us strength to fight. My youngest brother was nine years old.*

—Martin P., age thirteen (Human Rights Watch, 2003)

The prevalence of child soldiers in Uganda can be considered one of the most extreme cases of child soldiers. Children in Uganda are afraid to sleep in their own beds, in their own homes because they will be kidnapped and forced into the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). Nobody joins the LRA voluntarily and this is why the rebel group has become notorious for its single best recruitment tactic: abduction (*Invisible Children*, 2003). The result is a nightly ritual of mass numbers
of children in Northern Uganda, called “Night Commuters”, walking from their villages to the town of Gulu in order to seek refuge and safety from rebel soldiers who are seeking new recruits (Wessells, 2009). Children sleep on the floor, in any building, crowded together just so that they may wake another day without being forced into an armed group. On the invisibility factor of this large group of children Wessels notes: “Sadly, the plight of the night commuters and the masses of abducted and formerly abducted children has not adequately captured the attention of the international media or galvanized a concerted action by the international community. To a large extent, the child abductees remain invisible (2009).”

There are many reasons why armed groups target children. One reason is: “Children are big enough to carry a gun but small enough to into schools to get more recruits (Invisible Children, 2003).” Another reason is children are the most vulnerable and can be easily manipulated. Dallaire elaborates on this point: “Beyond their plentitude, children are also desirable because they are psychologically more vulnerable and can be easily manipulated, especially when they have been separated from their families. They will transfer loyalty to another adult, especially one who holds the power of reward and punishment (Dallaire, 2010).” The ages of these children range from 8-14 years old (Invisible Children, 2003). In the study, “Posttraumatic Resilience in Former Ugandan Child Soldiers”, a sample of 330 former child soldiers were on average 14 years old and had been abducted at the age of 11 years old (Klasen, et al., 2010). Human Rights
Watch’s Report, *Stolen Children: Abduction & Recruitment in Northern Uganda*, notes: “Since June of 2002, an estimated 5,000 children have been abducted from their homes and communities—a larger number than any previous year of the sixteen-year-old conflict and a dramatic increase from the less than 100 children abducted in 2001…The rate of abductions has escalated dramatically since early 2002, when a military offensive launched by the Uganda People’s Defense Force (UPDF) resulted in the LRA returning to Uganda from their camps in southern Sudan (2003).”

Once a child is abducted in the ranks of the LRA, they are hardened and made to fear for their lives should they not complete their duties: killing their neighbors, family members and people of their community. They watch as other children are murdered in front of their eyes and are told that if they do not do as they are told, they will endure the same fate. On Ugandan Child Soldiers, Romeo Dallaire notes:

> The most direct method of manipulating these children – more basic than drugs, occult rituals, charms and repetitive exposure to violence, both as victim and perpetrator – is simply fear. Drug-or-voodoo-induced states of utter fearlessness are temporary: these children survive in a constant state of fear and vulnerability, with often irreparable damage to their minds and souls. And, in their own right, they can become effective as weapons of terror and as weapons of hesitation, not to mention at honing skills in areas of logistics and reconnaissance (2010).

Another tactic employed by the LRA is to immediately condition newly abducted recruits by making them kill another child. This reinforces their connection to the rebel group and creates an immediate killer out of a just innocent child. “In LRA base camps, gruesome initiations take place in which new recruits are forced to
kill another child – often a sister or brother – or be killed themselves. Girls become ‘wives’ of soldiers; younger children run errands and carry loot (Honwana, 2006).” These ties to the group are intended to create a psychological connection that will make the children fear for their lives and/or consider their self a soldier or member of the rebel group from initiation on. This will then keep them from trying to escape. A Human Rights Watch Report explains that once children are abducted they are beaten as part of their initiation. The report goes on to state:

After the beatings, shea nut oil is placed on each child’s forehead, chest, back, hands and feet in the sign of the cross. Brenda O. explained that after being smeared with oil, ‘then you are no longer with your mother and father, but for the LRA. If you leave, they will kill you.’ Some children were told or believed that the shea nut oil would make it easier for the LRA to locate them should they try to run away. Samuel B. said that when he was anointed with shea nut oil, he was told ‘that it would make us not escape, for if we would try, this would help them track us down and find us’ (2003).

The use of violence and intimidation as a method of retention is also discussed by Jens Christopher Andgiv and Scott Gates in their article “Recruiting Children for Armed Conflict”:

In his exceptionally well-documented research from northern Uganda, Blattman (2007) examines how the benefits and costs of recruits varied systematically with age. He finds that although adult recruits were generally regarded by the leaders of the LRA to be better soldiers (“more skilled as guerilla fighters”), “adolescent (twelve- to fourteen-year-old) recruits yielded the largest expected net gain to the rebel leader.” One of the principal problems was that the adults were more likely to desert. Moreover, “adolescents and younger children were more easily indoctrinated and disoriented (and thus likely to stay) but were relatively ineffective as fighters” (Blattman 2007, 1). Blattman’s field research in northern Uganda demonstrates that children respond differently from adults to forced recruitment (Andvig and Gates, 2006).

Most of the children who are recruited or abducted into the LRA are from the Acholi district of Northern Uganda. In the documentary Invisible Children a
former child soldier states: “Kony says he wants to give peace to the Acholi, but he is killing the Acholi.” The report “Posttraumatic Resilience in Former Ugandan Child Soldiers” found that out of the sample of 330 child soldiers, 61.5% were Acholi and 38.2% were Langi (Klasen, et al., 2010). Another study included origins of former abductees as well:

A mapping of the place of origins of LRA returnees suggests that higher numbers of registered abducted people come from east of Gulu and south of Kitgum. Generally, they also came from urban centers and their environs. Fourteen sub-counties had at least 500 registered former abductees. They were all located in the Acholi districts of Amuru, Gulu (Atiak, Bungatira, Lamogi, Awach, Koro, Odek, Lalogi, Paicho), Kitgum (Kitgum Matidi, Labongo-Amida), and Pader (Atanga, Acholi-Bur, Pajule) (Phuong, et al. 2008).

The Acholi have definitely suffered the most from the ongoing conflict in Northern Uganda. Recommendations to the GoU call for protection of the Acholi region of Northern Uganda. “First, the high number of abductions suggests that the Ugandan government has largely failed to protect civilians from abductions and other assaults by the LRA in northern Uganda. It is imperative that the Ugandan government take greater measures to ensure the safety of civilians, particularly children and youth who are at a higher risk of being abducted by the LRA (Phuong, et al., 2008).”
Child Soldier Rehabilitation in Northern Uganda

*I will be a person who is responsible in the community; I will be an honest person; I will be a person who helps people*

—16-year-old boy, former child soldier (Klasen, et al. 2003)

Attempts to heal and reintegrate former child soldiers who do manage to escape the LRA has become the work of many who believe the children of Uganda, forced to commit gross atrocities against their fellow countrymen, require special attention once they are free. One example of a program designed to restore
the innocence of children stolen by the LRA is The Gulu Children of War Rehabilitation Center. The Center is located in Gulu, Uganda and it is a source of hope for former child soldiers to reintegrate into society. When the children return from committing gross atrocities and being victims of crimes themselves, the Center provides counseling and methods for healing from their past. On the other end of the spectrum of those who are healed and reintegrated into society, are the not so fortunate children. Terry Manca explains:

Nevertheless, many escapees find that their history with the LRA makes it difficult to suppress their violent tendencies after they enter a rehabilitation center or return home. Anthony Vinci (2005, 37) mentions that there are some instances of “sociopathic returnees killing siblings because they ‘would not be quiet’” (Vinci 2005, 37). Moreover, a girl who spoke to the Sunday Vision (2007) informed journalists that she attempted to murder her sister despite her guilt regarding her former involvement with the LRA. These returnees’ violent compulsions reflect the strict obedience and severe punishment that they experienced within the LRA (Manca, 2008).

The Center was created after a young girl, returning from fighting for the LRA, killed her mother in her sleep thinking that she was being attacked (Wax, 2006). The young girl had escaped from the horror in the physical sense, but the images, memories and fear associated with being a child soldier were still present. The Center is run by Ugandan World Vision employees. It is designed to help children scarred by war to resolve some of their fears and mental effects of their participation.

The Gulu Children of War Rehabilitation Centre is a temporary home for former child soldiers. Staff members help children to recover from their experiences and reintegrate into their communities. The children receive counseling, food, shelter, and clothing. Since the Center opened in 1995, nearly 11,000 former abductees and their children have been helped through its services (WorldVision).
The Children of War Rehabilitation Center introduces structure into the children’s lives, which they have lacked their entire life due to the 20 year long conflicts effect on childhood for those children living in the northern region of the country (Cheney, 2005). The time that the children spent with the LRA were “based on horrendous reversals of their concepts of childhood normality” (Cheney, 2005). This center, and others like it, have shown that there is hope in healing these traumatized children. 27.6% of the 330 children in the Klasen, et al. study “showed posttraumatic resilience as indicated by the absence of posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and clinically significant behavioral and emotional problems (2010).” In the study’s conclusion, the author’s state: “Our findings indicate that despite severe trauma exposure, a critical proportion of former child soldiers showed a posttraumatic resilient outcome (Klase, 2010).”

**The Sudan/LRA Connection**

The discussion on the prevalence of child soldiers in Uganda would not be complete without making the connection between the Civil War in its northern neighbor Sudan and the spillover into northern Uganda and vice versa with the conflicts in Sudan. The country of Sudan has been consumed with internal conflict for decades. This has translated to substantial instability for the country and its neighbors. In terms of geopolitical location Sudan is strategic as it is located within Arab North Africa; it shares borders with many African countries including: Egypt, Kenya, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Uganda, Chad, the
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Libya; as well as it is situated along the Nile River. The US also has close ties to the Government of Sudan (GoS) and provides military assistance to the country because of Sudan’s cooperation with the War on Terrorism. This connection will be examined more in depth in the next case study.
CASE STUDY: Sudan

Prior to Sudan’s independence in 1956, the country was subject to foreign influence whether through colonialism via the British or Arab influence as it made its way down from Egypt. These two elements of interaction forever changed “traditional” identity in the Sudan. This was accomplished mainly through religious/cultural conversion toward an Arab identity centered on Islam. This conversion occurred because of the affluence associated with Arab identity. It was also due to the colonial power, the British, exhibiting preference of certain groups over another i.e. Arab over African identifying Sudanese. In Sudan today adversarial relation between otherwise similar peoples has escalated to the point that many Sudanese see their fellow countrymen as the “other” on the basis of exaggerated or even manufactured differences. These differences have succeeded in dividing the people of Sudan in what outsiders describe simplistically as Arab versus African, Muslim versus Christian, North versus South, or modern versus traditional (Iyob and Khadiagala, 2006).

The civil war in Sudan has been simplified as an ethnic-religious conflict, thereby missing the point that even as these two identifiers are part of the conflict there is much more occurring than simply one group versus another. Rather, there are critical dynamics taking place such as: government support of militia groups, which have sustained Muslim on Muslim violence in the West of Sudan in the area known as Darfur, and not least of all a major humanitarian crisis is taking place. The conflicts are commonly described as being one between Africans and Arabs.
or Arab versus Arab, but this is not the case. When the explanation for civil war in Sudan is simply put as an ethnic or religious clash between Arabs and Africans or Muslims and Christians, the aforementioned complexity is taken out of the equation.

Another important aspect in terms of identity and its role in the Sudan civil war is that much of the difference between the Arab and African Sudanese has been manufactured in order to exploit the divisions between groups which were not previously adversarial. This was done in part by the British during colonial rule and has since been used by the GoS. This creates an internal enemy for the people rather than the ruling authority (Deng, 1995). The Northern Sudanese are described as modern and Arab-Muslim while the Southern are described as traditional, African-Christian. The conflict is then modern Arab-Muslim North, backed by the government in Khartoum, versus the traditional African-Christian South, backed by the rebel group Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). With the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, intended to end the conflict between the GoS in Khartoum and the Southern secessionist insurgency headed by the SPLM/A, the main fighting in Sudan is thought to have been negotiated to a close. Rather the conflict between the North and South still continues even though the South voted in February of 2011 to secede from the North. The GoS has been less than eager to celebrate South Sudan’s independence of July 2011.
Power in Sudan is concentrated in Khartoum, in the North which is Arab dominated. This translates in the GoS being made up of and running in the interest of the Northern Arabs in Sudan. The Southern African Sudanese are not represented in the Northern Arab dominated government institutions and it is not surprising that those living the South have voted for secession with 98% of people in favor. Sudan is considered an Arab-Muslim state which means that all of the institutions and policies stemming from the Khartoum regime reflect Arab interest while the majority of the population in Sudan is African (non-Arab). “Self-perceptions in the North and in the South have consolidated racial, cultural, and religious identities and attitudes that are basically sustained by confrontation and conflict. (Deng, 1995)” The introduction of Shari’a law to Sudan as the official law applicable to all Sudanese, including non-Muslims, in September 1983 solidified the power and influence of Arab-Muslims in Sudan. Religion is tied into politics in Sudan and this has considered problematic by many scholars. Vern Redekop, who has written many pieces on reconciliation, confirms that the political realm in Sudan must be able to see that there are multiple stake holders with various needs in Sudan and so the GoS must take religion out of the political solution in a heterogeneous State such as Sudan. “Where religion functions as a significant aspect of identity, some elements of reconciliation can only come from the realm of politics. Any attempt at reconciliation that does not take into account the demands of both realms may be at best incomplete and at worst doomed. (Redekop, 2007)”
Darfur

Resource and land scarcity has exacerbated the fighting between groups in Sudan. Arab tribes fight within group, against other Arabs, as do African tribes due to competition over land and water. This creates a gray area in the dynamics of the conflict where before it appeared black and white: Arab versus Muslim. This gray area is the inter-group conflict occurring in Sudan. Allegiances within groups have changed over the course of conflict in Sudan with support from the GoS supplying different warring sides with weapons. Even those who are Muslim have fought others who identify as Muslim. Some of the most brutal atrocities in Darfur have been committed by Arab-Muslim identifying “Janjaweed” tribes against African-Muslim populations in Darfur.

Sudan is a story of multiple groups of people who are vying for same resources such as land, water, economic means and physical security in addition to power. Land is critical to all in Sudan and this is one of the critical resources which the people are divided over. Jerome Tubiana touches on the issue of land when he says, “To date, analyses of the Darfur crisis have failed to focus on the issue of land. It is, however, a central driver of the conflict: the Janjawiid recruit mostly from the Arab camel herders of Northern Darfur who have never enjoyed traditional land rights, and who aim to gain access to the land they increasingly feel they need because of environmental pressure. (Tubiana, 2007)” Recalling Sudan’s global location, it has a desert landscape and arid climate which both make it prone to drought. This coupled with changing rainfall patterns, the people
of Sudan have to move as the water does. Environmental degradation is changing the landscape in Sudan and this natural element is exacerbating tensions between groups. Iyob and Khadiagala note, “The competition for resources, water, pasturage, cattle, and people plays a critical role in the conflicts at different historical times. It is only logical that these factors should be taken into account, not only in the examination of the conflict, but also in the quest for solutions that could lead to a sustainable and equitable peace (Iyob and Khadiagala, 2006).” Cooperation between groups, facilitated by the GoS is the only way that the people in Sudan can coexist with limited access to water and usable land. Human needs theory suggests that deep rooted conflict is caused by unmet human needs such as belonging, connectedness, security, recognition and autonomy. These needs are the most relevant to the conflict in Sudan and if they are addressed, then at least the process of reconciliation can begin. If the people of Darfur continue to fear for their lives, are living in refugee camps where the process of getting firewood to cook a meal for your children is life threatening, then the conflict is not resolved and cannot be until the needs of the people of Darfur and the rest of Sudan are met. This combined with a transformation of identity as it relates to inclusion in the political spectrum could actually form the basis for conflict transformation.

The Enough Project, dedicated to education about the ongoing conflicts in Sudan and the cessation of fighting, explains the role of the GoS has had in sustaining the conflict based on divisions over resources:
The Sudanese government responded by enlisting the help of some of the nomadic tribes in Darfur, such as the (Abbala or northern) Rizeigat and the Misseriya, in putting down the rebellion. By promising these tribes land for cooperation, the government not only played on the livelihood concerns of these tribes which had been brought on by years of environmental degradation, but also created clear dividing lines that essentially “Arabized” the conflict. With support from the National Congress Party, or NCP, these groups thus formed militias known as the Janjaweed, and began wreaking havoc throughout Darfur, ultimately leading to the deaths of around 300,000 people and the displacement of almost 4 million (Enough Project).

The involvement of the GoS in intensifying tensions and arming warring parties in the conflict means that it can play a major part in bringing peace to Sudan just by ceasing to be a source of weapons and division in Sudan. Instead of choosing one side over the other and then supplying that chosen side with arms the government can remove the supply and begin to forge the path of reconciliation toward a national identity. Another key element is the GoS adherence to the provision of the CPA which calls for wealth sharing with the South. The country’s revenue all goes to Khartoum, even if the oil is from Southern based fields.

**Child Soldiers in Sudan**

Randall Fegley in his article *Comparative Perspectives on the Rehabilitation of Ex-Slaves and Former Child Soldiers with Special Reference to Sudan* looks at slavery in Sudan’s historical roots and ties it into modern day forms such as child soldiering. Fegley states:

In the Sudanese context, distinctions between slaves, child soldiers and street children are fluid rather than mutually exclusive. The government, SPLA and SSIA forcibly or deceptively recruited underage boys into their ranks. Many street children and others who were displaced found themselves exploited. Some demobilized child soldiers became street children as a result of poverty. Many became adults by the time of their demobilization. All totaled, tens of thousands
were coerced into servitude and denied basic rights. Even more found soldiering, begging, prostitution and menial labor the only means to survive the oppressive poverty characterizing most of Sudan (Fegley, 2008).

Child soldiers have been widely used in the civil war in Sudan that has lasted over two decades. A release of 53 child soldiers by the SPLA, who had been forced into fighting by the SPLA in March 2011, occurred in November 2011 (Taban Kuich, 2011). Those children had been mostly from the Payinjiar region of Sudan and had been recruited as a mobilization effort against the rebellion against the government.

The use of children within Sudan is not a new concept and the CSPA is not the first document to cite Sudan as a contributor to this global problem. In 2006, a United Nations (UN) report cited Sudan as having children fighting within its borders. An article summarizing the report, *UN Report Cites Burma, Sudan for Using Child Soldiers*, stated:

In Sudan, both the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) have recruited children. In Darfur, government and paramilitary forces, Jingaweit militias, the faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) led by Minni Minawi, and the Chadian opposition forces have been recruiting and using children. ‘It is estimated that thousands of children are still associated with armed forces and groups in Darfur and were actively involved in the conflict between May and July 2006,’ Annan reported. In Darfur, the practice of ethnically targeted sexual violence against girls and women continues, particularly in areas of displaced populations. Some 40 percent of the victims have been under 18 years old, and many of the attacks are carried out by uniformed men, the United Nations reported (Aita, 2006).

In addition to the forced recruitment of child soldiers by Sudanese groups/governments, the LRA also abduct children in Southern Sudan into its own ranks. “The LRA is a Ugandan rebel group operating from bases in the
Democratic Republic of Congo, which continues to abduct children, rape, loot and burn villages mainly in bordering Southern Sudan’s Western Equatoria (UNICEF, 2011).”
CASE STUDY: Sierra Leone

The Civil War in Sierra Leone lasted from 1991-2002. The conflict mainly involved the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the Sierra Leonean Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and the Sierra Leone Army along with local groups of which the Civil Defense Force (CDF) fell under. The RUF was the major rebel group of the conflict. Among the leaders of the RUF were former Sierra Leone Army corporal Foday Sankoh, Abu Ahmed Kanu, and Rashid Mansaray. Sankoh, Kanu and Mansaray formed the RUF and in 1991 they began an attack on Sierra Leone from Liberia. The rebel group claimed that the war was about overthrowing Momoh’s corrupt government and thereby bringing prosperity to all Sierra Leoneans. As in most cases war has many causes and so was the case with the civil war in Sierra Leone. Tunde B. Zack Williams addresses what some of those causal factors were, “factors including: economic mismanagement; the impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes; the absence of political and economic transparency; corruption; the social exclusion of young people and the crisis of Sierra Leonean youth (Zack-Williams, 2006).” Another factor to keep in mind when trying to understand the conflict was that there was what Susan Sheplar referred to “as a crisis of youth” because the chances for education or any sustainable future were so few and far between that “legions of disaffected youth were ripe for recruitment (Shepler, 2005).”

While the basis for the war was proclaimed to be about bringing opportunity to the people of Sierra Leone, the methods of violence and savagery
the RUF perpetrated against the very villages and population they were claiming
to fight for caused many to question the validity of the RUF’s reasons for fighting.

Lisa Denney makes the point:

Over the next eleven years the rebels raided village after village, working their
way towards the capital, Freetown. The RUF became synonymous with the
capture of child soldiers, the 'chopping' off of limbs and Rambo-style fighters.
Promoting a loose political ideology of socialism and pan-Africanism, the rebels
appeared more interested in personal gain through looting and diamond mining,
than in realizing political change (Denney, 2009).

The ideology the RUF preached and the methods of violence and terror it used
against innocent people were contradictory leading many critics of the RUF to
agree with Denney that the war was in truth about control of Sierra Leone’s
diamond mines. Romeo Dallaire points to one of the causes of the Civil War and
its brutality as the failure of the government and the breakdown of institutions in
Sierra Leone.

The West also imposed demanding and unachievable milestones on such
countries (post-colonial, independent African states): they had to get on with
democratization if they wanted aid support from governments and from
international financial bodies…In such states, the core of government soon
collapsed; the police, judiciary and other bodies serving to maintain law and order
have either ceased to exist or are no longer able to operate…Eyewitness reports
from Liberia and Sierra Leone speak of the whole society- adults and children
alike – falling into the grip of collective insanity after government institutions
broke down (Dallaire, 2010).

The SLA was meant to counter the RUF but it was incapable of preventing
the violence and containing the RUF threat. In fact many of the soldiers of the
SLA terrorized the population as the RUF did. Denney notes, “Soldiers were under
paid (when they were paid at all), poorly equipped and lived in appalling
conditions. In an attempt to make up for their situation, SLA soldiers took to
posing as rebels to loot villages. This resulted in the 'sobel' phenomenon – soldiers by day, rebels by night (Denney, 2009).” In response to the threat not only from the RUF but now from the army meant to protect them, the general population formed protection groups such as the Civilian Defense Force (CDF). Ultimately there is estimated to have been 75,000-200,000 deaths as a result of the fighting (Denney, 2009).

The civil war in Sierra Leone was characterized by some of the most inhumane and gross violations of human rights. The use of children in the war has become well documented and the conflict itself can be identified with the use of children to perpetuate the violence that the RUF came to be known for. One estimate puts the number of children forced to take part in the military aspect of the war at 15,000-22,000 (Betancourt et al, 2008). Children were often physically forced to fight or forced into fighting because there was no other option. Much of the time their entire family had been killed so they were street orphans with no one to turn to. Theresa S. Betancourt states:

Many young boys and girls were brutalized into submission, drugged, and then forced to fight on the frontlines of combat…Although most point to abduction as their point of entry into their role as child soldiers (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004)…The breakdown of family and community systems, coupled with insufficient educational opportunities, left many children with limited viable options for the future (Ashby, 2002). (Betancourt et al, 2010)

The movie *Blood Diamond* is a mainstream Hollywood movie that looks at the conflict in Sierra Leone and captures the use of children as soldiers in the RUF. It is estimated that half of the RUF’s combatants were between the ages of eight and
fourteen (Zack-Williams, 2006). In terms of barriers to desertion by child soldiers within the RUF, Andvig and Gates point out a tactic designed to prevent such occurrence which follows from the point they make about Uganda and the psychological attachment that children share with armed groups they join:

Mutual monitoring induced by the shared negative consequences of desertion is a further barrier. Organizations such as the RUF in Sierra Leone established a buddy system, in which children are paired. If a child’s buddy deserts, the remaining child is punished, with the penalty often being death (Andvig and Gates, 2006)

The systematic abduction, rape and general violence that characterized the RUF camps made it a dangerous place for children. The mental and physical abuse suffered by children in the Sierra Leone conflict, as well as the violence committed by children perpetrators are addressed by Miriam Drenov:

It is important to note, however, that the transition from victim to perpetrator was not a linear one and none of the children experienced the entire transition from victim to hardened perpetrator. Instead, it would appear that children continually drifted between committing acts of violence, and simultaneously being victims of violence by others (Denov, 2010; Denov and Maclure, 2009). The complexity of this situation often brought about much shame and confusion (Denov, 2010).

The child as a victim and as a perpetrator of violence makes the child soldier a complex global problem. It is one thing to acknowledge that a child forced into the armed forces has no other choice but comply with the orders or else be killed themselves. The hard part is that not only are they perpetrating violence but they are experiencing violence as well. In the case of Sierra Leone, violence against RUF child soldiers by other RUF soldiers was commonplace.
In the case of Sierra Leone, child soldiers who were part of the rebel groups were committing atrocities against their own countrymen. The Civil War that occurred in that country, between the years 1991-2002, was one that not only was devastating on a national level, but even more deeply because of the rampant use of children as weapons by the rebels. The RUF specifically has been considered extraordinarily rampant and cruel in its use of young children in their fight against the SLA. This contributes to why this specific conflict has been named one of the bloodiest in African history (*Children of War*). Some of the characteristics of the civil war were related to child soldiers. For example, children as young as seven, who were soldiers in the RUF, were drugged and forced to cut off the limbs of other Sierra Leonean’s, often times they had to cut off the limbs of people who were their former neighbors. In the documentary *Children of War* one former child soldier, Sherieff Koroma, speaks about his experience as a child soldier in the RUF. He explains that he was given the option to be killed or join the rebel group. After he chose life he was then drugged with cocaine daily and forced to carry out some of the most grave human rights abuses in history, according to Human Rights Watch (Dufka in *Children of War*). Koroma near the end of the documentary reflects on the actions he was forced to carry out and says: “It was not my wish. I was abducted and forced to do these things (Koroma, 2000).”
Demobilization of Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone

The process of demobilization of the child soldier in Sierra Leone war was an important legacy of the conflict. Sierra Leone was the first time that a court prosecuted the use of child soldiers as a crime as demobilization of a portion of child soldiers was actually attained. This is drastically different from El Salvador, where only a decade prior the accountability for child soldiers was largely ignored and their existence denied. The demobilization process was conducted with the international community’s involvement. The National Center for DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) and UNAMSIL headed a program for former RUF, CDF and AFRC fighters which ended up demobilizing 72,000 soldiers. Of the 72,000, children comprised 6,700 (Betancourt et al., 2010).

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) has three identifiable steps. The first is having combatants put down their weapons; this is the disarmament stage. The second phase is to break up the armed groups and have the former child soldier enter society. This stage is known as demobilization has important steps within it. This is when children will be reunited with any family that survived the conflict. If none are found due to death or fleeing then it is necessary to find alternative care arrangements for those who are still children. The final phase of DDR is reintegration and this is the “much longer and more complex process (Betancourt et al., 2010).” This is the phase where the psychological effects of participation in war by a child can surface. Because part of the manipulation of
soldiers, especially child soldiers, in conflict is to erase any connection to family or the opposition force, this is where the DDR process finds the most challenges. Because of this fact, this phase is seen to be one of the most important since demobilized children will continue to grow and develop within society. Therefore, it is important that the indoctrination used by the armed group to connect the soldier to its cause (i.e. the creation of the other as the enemy) must be addressed. Ignoring the “special needs of the young fighter” is risking a “backslide into renewed warfare (Dridi, 2004).”

Connecting the CSPA to the Research

The Trafficking in Persons Report of 2010, released by the US State Department, was based on information gathered for the time period of March 1, 2009-February 28, 2010. The determinations were based off of: first hand observations by US Government Personnel, research and reporting from United Nations (UN) entities, international organizations, local and international non-Governmental organizations (NGO’s) and international media outfits. The six guilty countries found to have child soldiers (as defined by the Optional Protocol to the CRC) were: Burma, Chad, DRC, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. Within the report itself, under the heading: Child Soldier Topic of special interest it is stated:

Governments identified on the list are subject to restrictions, in the following fiscal year, on certain security assistance and commercial licensing of military equipment. The CSPA prohibits the following forms of assistance to governments identified on the list: international military education and training, foreign military financing, excess defense articles, section 1206 assistance, and the issuance of licenses for direct commercial sales of military equipment. Beginning
October 1, 2010 and effective throughout FY 2011, these types of assistance will be prohibited to the countries listed, absent a presidential national interest waiver, applicable exception, or reinstatement of assistance pursuant to the terms of the CSPA.

In the instance of Sudan, the TIP report found the country guilty based on a multitude of evidence. Evidence such as the forced recruitment, on all sides of the conflict, of adults and children; 10,000 Children were associated with militia groups in the South and were still awaiting demobilization and reintegration into society. Even as recently as March 2011, the SPLA admitted to abducting children into their forces in order to gain an advantage in numbers against the government rebellion. Only in November were 53 of those abducted children released to the South Sudan Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (SSDDR) as noted in the Sudan Tribune article.

Children have been abducted by the JEM, SLA, Janjaweed and Chadian opposition forces, as found in the TIP Report. There was also evidence of re-recruitment of demobilized children in the Blue Nile State. In relation to the LRA, the rebel group was found within the borders of Sudan to be harboring Sudanese, Congolese, and Ugandan children in southern Sudan. These children are then taken across the border into countries such as the Central African Republic (CAR) and DRC. The GoS was found non-compliant with minimum standards of enforcement, highlighting the fact that this is not a priority of the regime. During the period that the TIP report covers, many former child soldiers were punished by the GoS. Six were sentenced to death in 2009 for their involvement in the JEM.
Also, an interim care center which is in Malualkon is behind schedule in its timeline. Based on the information contained in the TIP report the conflict in Uganda spills over to its neighbors: Sudan, Chad and DRC which accounts for Uganda’s connection to the Presidential Waiver. The conflict in Sudan spills over to Chad and DRC in the same manner. The interconnectedness of the use of child soldiers by these countries is not a coincidence and thus it is no surprise that these four countries found guilty through the TIP report, are closely related and all waived together.
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The conflicts in Sudan, Uganda and Sierra Leone are prime, modern day examples of the treatment of children in war in a most inhumane and abusive manner. The SPLA, RUF and the LRA have each utilized child soldiers in their rebellion against their governments and in the process stolen thousands of innocent lives. The children who did survive were maimed physically, emotionally or both. The repercussions for post-conflict society are that the children who do survive have to deal with the experience they have had as does the community.

It is extremely important to examine the cases of countries which have suffered from the use of child soldiers. Only then can you determine the context that creates child soldiers which is imperative to their prevention. Of the three countries examined closely in this paper: Sudan, Uganda and Sierra Leone, all three have some elements in common. They are all developing countries in Africa with unstable governments which after independence from colonial rule, have not managed to escape political and economic instability and underdevelopment. This is due in part to poor leadership, insufficient representation of the people, and degradation of natural resources of which the wealth is concentrated into the hands of a small elite group. This instability and the prevalence of corruption is alluring to rebel groups interested in seizing as much power as they can. This power is
used to enslave the youth of a country into their rebellion, and then make children commit some of the most atrocious acts of violence against their own countrymen.

There is a responsibility of countries with leverage, such as the United States, to make the elimination of this global problem a priority. What I advocate for is not a unilateral approach by the US where it goes in guns blazing and forces a country to yield to its wishes. Instead, I recommend a cosmopolitan approach, in tandem with other countries who have agreed through international law that child soldiers are a problem that need to be eliminated. This approach means not supporting countries who are not complying with international agreements/law that say child soldiers under the age of eighteen years old should be actively recruited, let alone abducted, into armed forces of a state or a rebel group. This means not providing economic or military assistance to guilty countries. The CSPA is an excellent first step and should be taken further with the elimination of a presidential waiver, the addition of a clause which would prevent economic support of guilty countries as well and most importantly, the actual enforcement of the document. The TIP report is the US’s own metric for whether countries are trafficking humans within their borders. If the purpose of this report is to aid in the elimination of human trafficking, then its findings need to be examined and action taken to affect change. The fact that the TIP report lays out a detailed explanation of the cases of child soldiering in countries in which the US provides aid, shows that the CSPA is the precise tool for affecting change through the leverage the US has in its relations with those countries. If military aid is part of that relationship, it
should be revoked until the military affairs within the borders of said country do not include the recruitment or abduction of children into the ranks of the State Armed Force, or the rebel groups vying for power. If the TIP report has found that children are being recruited or abducted to fight in the borders of a country, clearly that country has not done its job in preventing this modern day form of child abuse from occurring.

I also recommend that legislation like the CSPA be adopted in other countries that have economic or military relations with countries who have children fighting in their conflicts. As mentioned before this is not a unilateral US interest, it is a global one that must be enforced through international law, domestic law, political relations, military relations and understood by the global citizenry as a whole. With multiple ways of attacking this problem, including the prevention of an environment in a country which would provide the climate for rebel groups to gain so much power as to be able to destroy a generation as was done in El Salvador in its civil war in the 1980’s, Sierra Leone in the 1990’s and Uganda and Sudan up to present day.

This problem does not belong to one culture, to one continent, or to one point in time. Neither will the elimination of the problem. It will take the entire international community and time to make a world without child soldiers a reality.
Conclusion

This thesis project has examined the problem of child soldiers by examining existing research, describing specific case studies of three conflicts in which child soldiers were present, and by looking at international and domestic law aimed at the elimination of the problem. From the data presented here the important takeaways are: that the current mechanisms for preventing the use of child soldiers around the globe are only as strong as the enforcement behind them. It is not enough to put laws and conventions to a vote at the UN or to discuss these problems in a white paper. The real key to eliminating this problem is for countries with bargaining power, such as the US to use that power to keep military aid from continuing the violence in countries where the conflict employs children. Tools such as the CSPA can be made relevant but the waiver of countries which are meant to be affected is something that has to be avoided and the country in question must address the issue of child soldiers in their borders. It is not enough to say it on paper; it has to be enforced in practice.

The prevalence of child soldiers around the globe is a disturbing fact that is the entire international community’s responsibility to correct. This problem is not one that can be traced to one group, one conflict, one government, one country, nor one continent. The very fact that this is problem which spills over borders, affects entire communities and destroys the lives of as many as the 300,000 children estimated to be fighting around the globe at any given time, shows how important this problem is for the global citizenry. All countries must do their part
to ensure the end of this problem. Legislation such as the CSPA are necessary first steps but the next one has to be legitimization of such legislation and most importantly: enforcement. Without these additional facets of any international or domestic law, there is no substance to them and thus the intended effect is lost.

Lastly, it is imperative that this issue be given more attention. In the course of writing this paper I found one too many people I spoke with about my research clueless to the problem of child soldiers. This is not a temporary or fleeting problem. The issue of stolen innocence in the form of child soldiers needs attention. As global citizens, no matter what country you pledge allegiance, elimination of this problem should be a goal.
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