

INTRODUCTION

The issue of child soldiers is not a new problem/continues/remains a threat to/is an example of. Lewis D. Eigen (year) discusses how child soldiers are unfortunately nothing new. This suggests that child recruitment into war situations is something that has been a problem for years and needs to be addressed. This applies to the issue of economics through/by (in what way) where children are recruited in poorer countries. For example, (provide an example from one of the journal articles or books, something that someone says or happens that illustrates your point) "Children are considered an economically efficient alternative to adult combatants. They are easily indoctrinated and are efficient fighters because they have not yet developed a concept of death (childandarmedconflict.un.org). The illustration shows how economics and age affect the recruitment of child soldiers. The child soldier did not make it's way into international humanization discourse until 1977(Child Soldiers in Africa: A singular phenomenon? On the necessity of a historical perspective. By: Jean-Herve Jezequel). Child soldiers wasn't such an important issue internationally until the 1980s. "The rebels told me to join them, but I said no. Then they killed my smaller brother. I changed my mind," -L, age 7 (The new faces of war PDF. By: P.W. Singer). The quote clearly shows how these children were forced to join and if they didn't, then their family members would pay the price by either killing or torturing them. "197 country entries document military recruitment legislation and practice, and child soldier use in hostilities by governments and armed groups across the globe," (Child-soldiers.org).

Most people think these child soldier issues only happen within a few countries, but

there are over 100 countries that practice this and are greatly affecting these children across the globe. “ It is estimated that some 300,000 children- boys and girls under the age of 18- are today involved in more than 30 conflicts worldwide,” as said by, Fact sheet:Child soldiers UNICEF, an organization that is against the use of child soldiers and protection of children/adolescents to these unfair conditions to war or childhood of a child. According to the article of America’s Child Soldiers, By: Ann Jones and Tompis Patch,“JROTC (Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps) captures youthful idealism and ambition, twists it, trains it, arms it and sets it on the path to war and is a rainbow coalition,” meaning that this program is a scheme for the adolescents to join and get recruited to the army, also this program is filled mostly with African-Americans and Hispanics, which is why the quote stated, “rainbow coalition” (Truthdig.com) meaning that JROTC is mainly located in lower conditioned neighborhoods where adolescents are mostly to join and fall into this manipulation mindset of training for war/army. These issues are also happening locally in Chicago, according to the Chicago Tribune reporter, Geoff Ziezulewicz, in his article (2nd Person Charged in attack a teen who refused to join a gang) said in his article,“Hussien was beaten and stabbed multiple times in the neck and kidnapped with blindfolds only to be forced to join Ramirez’s gang, but Hussein refused even after the torture, after the horrific experience he was then tossed near a dumpster, however he was still alive and recovered in SINAI hospital.”

There are children younger than 16 or 15 being forced to join gangs and go to war in their own neighborhoods depending the different side or street these children live in. Another article by, Valeria Stratten Guerra(Child Soldiers, Gang Members) said, “While

America's goodwill efforts have significantly impacted the health and safety of children across international borders, America's own children have been suffering." Meaning that even though America has been putting laws and rights for protecting it's children, America is still having drastic tragedies with the violence the youth is being put into in specific places they live in. Who.INT (Healing Child Soldiers) said, Over 200,00 women and children have been raped since the onset of the conflicts," not only are these children facing war, but also sexual abuse at such a young age, which no child should face ever. Elisabeth Schauer and Thomas Elbert are also part of an organization against child soldiers and in the website (Usip.org) they say,"Child soldiers are more often killed or injured than adult soldiers on the front line, are less costly and require few resources to equip with because of their small size." Young children are viewed as less costly to their armies because of their cheap or innocence and are treated anyway they can be treated, because, "child soldiers are one of the most complex traumatized populations of children and adolescents,(Psych.nyu.edu: Ugandan child soldiers)" meaning the youth is the most affected in war or when in extreme conditions of violence within their country that is in conflict. These aren't just the only issues a child soldier faces, according to Elisabeth Schauer, PhD director, said "More than 2.5 million children have been orphaned or separated from their families because of war in the past decade." Children being torn apart from their families and obligated to go to war and kill, fight and destroy. There are so many organizations fighting these harsh practices of child soldiers and recruitments at such a young age, but there is already one resolution that caught my attention and is the Child Soldiers: Preventing, Demobilizing and Reintegrating. This organization has helped Angola's demobilizing exercise , which lasted from 1955 to

1977, was one of the most extensive in the history of the United Nations. It was perhaps the 1st time that children were specifically included in a peace process, meaning there was a change, but wasn't as strong as before and it's only up to us as the people of this world to actually take action to make a difference to save our children and make the world better for the upcoming generations, because if we don't, then next day we are going to have wars, but instead of 14 through 17 year olds; we are going to have babies grabbing machine guns going to war!

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Since the beginning of war, children have played a huge role in battle, but instead, they these child soldiers were never given choices to whether to become a lethal killer, but were forced to become a soldier at such a young age. Civilians have always suffered in war, but the difference today is that, in many present-day conflicts, children are the primary target. In the Americas since 1990, child soldiers have fought in Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico (in the Chiapas conflict), Nicaragua, Paraguay, Perú, also Europe, Africa, the middle East and central Asia. The world that we know today, from the states that we live in to the technology that we use daily, has been greatly shaped by violent struggle. In particular, the once unimaginable targeting of children has become a widespread tactic for war and further newly strategies.

In the last decade of warfare, more than two million children have been killed, a rate of more than 500 a day, or one every three minutes, for a full 10 years. To be alive in these times of tragedy was just guns, gore, and war for a child. In particular being a child soldier was giving up your childhood, family, and innocence, but also becoming a killer, warrior,

fighter, soldier. Many child soldiers are recruited so young that they do not even know how old they are. Influences that have caused for the recruitment of child soldiers begun since the very beginning of history: conflicts over food, territory, riches, and power, according to the article (The New Faces of War) by: P.W. Singer . A child soldier doesn't choose his/her path. According to the article (The New Faces of War) by: P.W. Singer, a young soldier was asked why he became a soldier and his response was, "The rebels told me to join them, but I said no. Then they killed my smaller brother. I changed my mind." So basically as a child soldier, your family would die or survive depending on your decision and also depend if you live or die as well.

GLOBAL CONTEXT

According to the global report of 2008(Child-soldiers.org),"197 countries document military recruitment legislation and practice, and child soldier use in hostilities by governments and armed groups across the globe." There is one continent in particular that has greatly contributed to the tragedies of child soldiers; Africa is often considered to be at the epicenter of the child soldier phenomenon. Armed groups using child soldiers cover the continent of Africa and are present in nearly every one of its myriad of wars. For example, a survey in Angola revealed that 36 percent of all Angolan children had either served as soldiers or accompanied troops into combat. Also the United Nations estimates that some 20,000 children served as combatants in Liberia's war, up to 70 percent of the various factions' fighting forces, according to the United Nations.

In Africa the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda, renowned, or rather infamous, is known for being made up of almost exclusively of child soldiers. The LRA has abducted more than 14,000 children just to turn them into soldiers. The LRA also holds the global record for having the world's youngest reported armed combatant, age 5. The Middle East is another area where child soldiers have become an integral part of the fighting. Children today are engaged in fighting in Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iran (as part of rebel groups now fighting against the regime), Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Tajikistan, and Yemen.

These statistics are shocking enough, but more chilling is the conclusion to be drawn from them: More and more of the world is being sucked into a desolate moral vacuum. This is a space that doesn't even have a particular quality of the most basic human values; a space in which children are slaughtered, raped, injured, and scarred for life; a space in which children are exploited as soldiers; a space in which children are starved and exposed to extreme brutality. Such unregulated terror and violence speak of deliberate victimization. It is estimated that some 300,000 children – boys and girls under the age of 18 – are today involved in more than 30 conflicts worldwide, according to (Unicef.org, Fact sheet: Child Soldiers). Ending the use of child soldiers can be extremely challenging, especially when children are enlisted for combat by armed, non-governmental groups. Also, modern conflicts are characterized by governmental breakdown, making it difficult to identify and influence those recruiting and using children as soldiers. Basically, it's hard who to blame or judge because the government, the rebels/soldiers, family, and the child him/herself take part in the influence or manipulation of becoming a child soldier. For the purposes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, UNICEF defines

a 'child soldier' as any child – boy or girl – under 18 years of age, who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including, but not limited to: cooks, porters, messengers, and anyone accompanying such groups other than family members. The definition, therefore, does not only refer to a child who is carrying, or has carried weapons (Based on the 'Cape Town Principles', 1997).

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Congress surely meant to do the right thing when, in the fall of 2008, it passed the [Child Soldiers Prevention Act](#) (CSPA). The law was designed to protect kids worldwide from being forced to fight the wars of Big Men (adult's wars). From then on, any country that forced children into becoming soldiers was supposed to lose all U.S. military aid (America's Child soldiers, by: Ann Jones and Tomdispatch, 2003). There is a youth programs in the U.S that is called JROTC (Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps) and in the United States it might be considered the biggest, most efficiently organized, most effective system for recruiting child soldiers in the world. With uncharacteristic modesty, however, the Pentagon doesn't call it that; the term the government uses is "youth development program." What makes this child-soldier recruiting program so striking is that the Pentagon carries the program out in plain sight in hundreds and hundreds of private, military, and public high schools across the U.S. For example, I have seen the program in action, because one of the high schools that is close to my home is Farragut High school and this particular school has that program. In this program, however, the majority students are African Americans and Hispanics, the children of immigrants from Vietnam, Mexico,

and North Africa. The program is more focused on the less “fortunate” kids that are most likely not succeed, advance in the future academically, financially, and even socially. The program manipulates the children/adolescents into becoming more disciplined, corrects them by becoming a better use for society, become stronger not just physically, but also emotionally to overcome obstacles that can affect their decision or mindset of joining the army. The U.S. Army JROTC program was conceived as part of the National Defense Act of 1916 in the midst of World War I, meaning that this program was not only a current system of the U.S but, a particular recruitment needed for the next generation of soldiers, child soldiers. In JROTC’S own defense, the program publicizes a selling point widely accepted across the United States: that it provides “structure,” keeps kids from dropping out of school, and turns boys (and now girls) of “troubled” backgrounds into “men” who, without JROTC to save them (and the rest of us from them), would become junkies or criminals or worse.

However, in reality, this a scheme and manipulates children or teenagers with fantasies of becoming mature, stronger, leaders, disciplined, and basically becoming soldiers. The great majority of students find better, more life-affirming “structure” in school. For example, academic courses such as: sports, choirs, bands, science or language clubs, internships in schools where such opportunities exist, not some JROTC program that tries to copy what most school programs already have. JROTC only prepares you for the army, then leads you off to the march of war at such a young age. What kind of school system gives boys and girls such “choices”? What kind of country? What goes on in schools in your town? Isn’t it time you found out? (Child soldiers Prevention Act CSP). The program only exists in the

U.S and not in any other place in the world, because this program was made in the U.S to target children/adolescents in the U.S, and use them for war later in the future. Activists are countering the JROTC program, for example, Social Justice high school does not allow army recruiters or a JROTC to establish in their school because of those many reasons/purposes that JROTC contains for adolescents/children in the U.S.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Today, an anarchistic gang structure is described in many ways, wherein gangs crop up for each block of the neighborhood, with impulsive retaliations spawning further gang activity (Glass, 2013). In Chicago, I'm a victim of Child soldiering, but not as any type of rebel soldier or army-trained young assassin, but a simple civilian that was almost forced to become a soldier to protect the other side of the neighborhood. Harper students from the neighborhood of Englewood, listed fifteen different gangs within a few square miles in Englewood, with each gang having access to guns (Glass, 2013). According to the testimony of these students, every student is affiliated with a gang – whether they want to be or not. There are no “neutral” students. Also, according to UNICEF’s definition, adolescent urban gang members qualify as formal “child soldiers” due to their participation in irregular armed forces or armed groups. However, this idea of gang members being child soldiers does not exist in America.

Cure Violence, a non-profit organization, is ranked #9 on global journalist’s of top 100 NGOs 2013. Basically, this program is well known in Chicago, because the Cure Violence model reduced violence in every neighborhood it operates in by up to 34 percent. The

program also successfully cut retaliatory homicides by 100 percent. The impact of the Cure Violence has also shown the impact of model in reducing shootings, violent confrontations, and killings in multiple cities across the United States. The program Cure has been a very huge impact on the casualty ratings of the violence distributed or committed in Chicago, specifically in the south.

There are serious similarities and important differences among child soldiers and urban gang members. They both live in poor and violent contexts and join a military organization or a gang for protection. In urban areas and countries torn by civil war, the state does little to protect people from violence. Children are recruited into both armed forces and gangs by other people who are able to manipulate them from within their social environment. Both groups commit acts of violence and are encouraged to do so by older soldiers and gang members. Of course, the amount of violence is less among urban gang members in the U.S than the amount of extreme violence committed in other parts of the globe. There are pressures that remain in gangs, but more importantly, once a gang banger has entered the penal system he (or she) may be drawn into prison gangs and, the likelihood of rearrest and a continued life of crime increases.

Neither child soldiers nor gang members have the tools and skills necessary to live in a peaceful civil society. Also, neither receives enough resources for rehabilitation, but there is also a difference in attitudes held by those with the ability to rehabilitate among adolescent gang members and child soldiers. In one African survey, for example, 80% of adults did not want their children to play with former child soldiers (Singer, 2005); meaning that parents didn't want their children to also get manipulated or involved with the same

horrific violence or tragic crimes child soldiers commit, and while there are many programs in the US designed to prevent children from joining gangs, once children do actually join a gang and are convicted of crimes, there is little enthusiasm for programs to rehabilitate them back to society and become something better, rather than a soldier for others to use (Glass, 2013).

ROOT CAUSES

Three major causes of child soldiering is poverty, lack of opportunity, and high orphan rates. Most civil wars occur in relatively poor countries, and places where its status has for long been associated with involvement in violent conflict. The recruitment costs are also lower when the alternative means of income are low, in situations of under-unemployment and poverty. If people have no other primary means to ensure a lie sustaining income, the threshold for joining an army (be it government or rebel) is presumed to be low. Child soldiering can reduce the amount of opportunities as well as: jobs because child soldiering is the only way to gain money, education because it is not available or the culture itself does not accept it, shelter, food, and clothing are the main objectives why so many adolescents are “volunteering” to gain these lack of resources. They are by no means the safe havens they are believed and supposed to be. Children in refugee camps can also turn into voluntary recruits for armed groups due to shortage of food and lack of meaningful activities for children in the camps. To some of these children, joining an armed group seems like the most attractive option to make. Orphaned children may be particularly susceptible to the greed motivation as the groups of armed adults might become the only

substitute for parental care in terms of food provision, perceived security guarantee, and a mere establishment of a missing category of an adult-child relationship in an orphan's life (Brett/McCallin 1996; Singer 2005; UNICEF 2002).

DEBATE CONTROVERSY

The main debate between a child soldier is should countries prosecute these adolescents/children for the crimes they committed during wartime? Should there be a minimum age internationally of criminal responsibility for war crimes against humanity and other war crimes? Yes because If a child can be convicted for murder under national law they should also be held responsible for international crimes and should be no exception simply because the crimes occurred in wartime, but some can say no because children are often forced into fighting in wars and have little choice over whether or not they enlist. After that, they are basically just following orders from adults rather than acting from their own free will. The recruiters of child soldiers also use drugs/alcohol to make children more compliant, which will enable them to commit acts they wouldn't ordinarily commit.

Child soldiers shoulder should be prosecuted because it is wrong to say that all child soldiers are forced into fighting or that they had no control over their actions and many children volunteer to become soldiers in wartime out of patriotism or a desire to avenge the death of their families, but It may be that the child thought it would be safer to enlist for protection for him/herself or factors such as poverty and hunger influenced their decision rather than a desire to fight. Once children are recruited into the military it is also difficult for

them to leave because they become dependent on their commanders for drugs, alcohol, money and food.

The aim should not be punishing child soldiers but rehabilitation back to better and in society. Even if it looks like a child has volunteered this may not be the case, because child soldiers rarely have the same understanding of their decisions, and actions as adults and therefore should not be held responsible for their actions. If prosecution isn't done then this will be allowing child soldiers immunity from prosecution that will deny victims justice. It is unfair to victims that will have to live side-by-side with their attacker and see them walk free without any punishment, but child soldiers are often victims as well of war themselves. Prosecutions do not allow the opportunity to these children/adolescents to rehabilitate and instead prioritise the rights of victims over the rights of the child (soldier), even though the child himself will probably have suffered abuse as well from the experiences of war.

There can also be a reason to prosecute child soldiers because by not prosecuting child soldiers, that may encourage commanders to use child soldiers to commit war crimes because they know there will be no consequences toward the children/adolescents themselves and be a clever/sneaky strategy to use in combat. Prosecutions only happen after the war has ended so those commanders or whoever that recruit child soldiers will not take this into consideration. Moreover, they are already breaking the law by using child soldiers so they most are unlikely to stop using child soldiers just because the child faces a risk of prosecution if s/he is used for purposes for war. Child soldiers should therefore not be held responsible for the many like actions they were forced to commit during war and had little so understanding of.

ACTION

The action me and my partner will be demonstrating for creativity and leadership in solving social problems through entrepreneurship, education, and advocacy is a pamphlet. This pamphlet will require for both of us to interact with random strangers and distribute these pamphlets, each containing powerful facts about child soldiers. This pamphlet is to not just inform people about what is a child soldier, but what a child soldier goes through or went through. To get peoples attention and have them think critically about what to do or prevent if such events were to occur within their neighbourhood. This pamphlet is not just going to be distributed among a certain age, race, and gender, but to anyone because we both believe everyone should read/listen to what child soldiers is about, but is one of the few problems the world faces.

ACTION REFLECTION JOURNAL

Some challenges will probably be the amount of pamphlets be distributed. Next step for further action will be to inform people that are most likely related to child soldiers or such related programs/organizations. What I have learned about research and action is that to have people understand your issue, you need to inform them with powerful information that will impact on their perspective, on how they view the issue and what they can do to make a difference/action themselves towards the issue. After high school I will take my education of social justice and go further, by majoring into criminal justice. I would love to make justice my career and enforce the law that everyone must follow: correctly, truthfully, informatively, and righteously in the future.

RESOLUTION

Committee: Peace & Security Rights

Topic: Child Soldiers

Dear everyone,

I'm **deeply concerned** of the issue occurring with child soldiers around the world, that child soldiering has been occurring since the beginning of war.

Realizing the recruitment of early age for a child is the worst option to determine a child's life and abusing, forcing, and exploiting a child to take another life is inhuman.

Encouraging to stop the recruitment of a child/adolescent and preventing the abusing of children being used for war tactics and to instead educate or inform at least of what negative effects of being a child soldier is and to protect children from falling into forceful/voluntary recruitment.

Affirming the enforcement of laws a child faces on the minimum age consent and recruitment for children/adolescents.

Stressing that children/adolescents of recruitment are manipulated with: money, drugs, alcohol, power, sex, protection, and other direse a certain child wants, but they are either taken from their families, kill their family members to join, or recruited for protection, because of revenge or other strong emotions.

Taken into account the demobilization of soldiers is a form of stopping violent behaviour.

1. The safe demobilization of child soldiers requires national and international intervention that puts pressure on both governments and rebel groups to release their young

combatants/child soldiers. Failing to do so should result consequences, including restraintment from military leaders and the imposition of economic threat penalties for disobeying laws.

2.Successful demobilization can only take place if children are guaranteed security in the repatriation process, that is basically the process of converting a foreign currency into the currency of one's own country, such as for the child soldier(s).

3.New processes of returning the mind to an integrated state after it has been deranged; programs must be set up and existing ones must be strengthened to promote health and nutrition, as well as psychosocial growth wellness and education for the ex-child soldier or current child soldier.

4.Special attention must be given to those who are most at risk in a conflict, yet often forgotten and therefore, demobilization and reintegration programs must be sensitively designed, to appropriately respond to the needs of vulnerable populations where the recruitment of child soldier exists.

5.Within education programs, ex-soldiers should be encouraged to use their energies, ideas and experiences in positive ways when contributing to the renewal of post-violence societies and hope to end the use of child soldiers locally, nationally, and globally.

REFLECTION

I chose the issue child soldiers, because I'm very passionate about justice and how every child should have a healthy childhood. I spent 15 hours just to get everything researched, organized, and typed. When I worked on the project, I worked at home or in

school with my partner. The research was the hardest part, because I had to cite it and then write a whole page about the different subjects (global, national, and local).

I also, had to manage time for: sports, family/friends, job, and other homework assignments. The way I managed time for all these subjects, was do a portion of my fire project, then I would do everything else on what ever time I had left. Even if you work with a partner, you still have to do work and present, but with a partner you both help each other out and share same research/resources that help in the fire project. My goals for this project was to get the fire project done.

Many obstacles I faced was the lack of sufficient time that I needed to finish my fire project. I would like other audiences to know that this project requires depth to the issue you are passionate about, because if you choose something you don't like, then you're going to have harsh time doing this project. I would give myself an A, because I worked hard and still managed to do other after school activities. I have no excuses to not finish in time, because even after the hard pressure I experienced, I still managed to accomplish my fire project in time. Also, some skills I think that I have mastered is writing faster and not being shy in public. I still have some weaknesses, like not being explaining my answers clearly and projecting my voice louder.

I'm proud of what me and my partner have accomplished together, and the work we both put in to finish this fire project. One difficulty I faced, was sharing my information with my partner, but we solved this issue, by meeting in person and looking over the research to understand each other better. One approach I could've changed was the amount of time and effort I should've put in my fire project, because I would've made my fire project better. I

answered my central question well, because throughout my whole project I didn't get off topic about the issue that was presented. The source that benefitted was the program, called CURE, which is a program that prevents/disapproves acts of violence in Chicago. This program helped to explain my local essay/paper more thoroughly. I live in Chicago and have witnessed the program in action and has had a huge contribution to gang violence preventions in Chicago. I would advise a student that will do a capstone/fire project next year, is to make sure to pick a topic you are really passionate about and would like to talk about in the future.