War's Children

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ABSTRACT

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When one thinks of war, one does not often think of children. Images of Navy SEALS in camouflage, tanks, and the desert, may come to mind when thinking of modern war. Those of Pearl Harbor, the Allied Forces, and Hitler may arise when thinking of war in a more historical sense. In the mind of the civilian, children and the key role that they play in armed conflict rarely surfaces. In this thesis, I will address the function of children in war by arguing that their assumed innocence, as well as their assumed status as a "child" makes them easily utilized by both the "bad" forces who recruit them, as well as the "good" populations that attempt to defend them. First, I will address the idea that children are innocent, as well as how advocacy groups and governments harness this innocence in order to further their own agendas. In the second chapter, I examine the multiple ways in which children can explicitly be involved in a war effort, such as by filling the role of child soldier, child bomber, child bride, and child refugee. I then delve further into the use of children by terrorist groups, and ask why they invest so much in younger generations. In the final chapter, I analyze what the term "child" which has been so heavily used in this thesis, means, as well as how that label is affected by exposure to fighting and violence.

INTRODUCTION

I have seen the children of my people fall one by one like unripe peaches from a tree.

- Samar Yazbek, *A Woman in the Crossfire: Diaries of the Syrian Revolution*

In November of 1989, the United Nations adopted a human rights treaty entitled "Convention on the Rights of the Child." The Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines human rights protections specific to children incorporating "the full range of human rights- including civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights," ("Protecting Children's Rights" 2014). The intention was to attempt to ensure that children across the globe were protected from issues that would hinder their development and right to life. Almost every United Nations member country ratified the CRC across the globe, save for the United States, which has signed the agreement, indicating their intentions of eventually reaching ratification (Stern 2016). Among the many issues that the CRC addresses, Article 38 deals with the issue of armed conflict. Additional sections, such as Articles 34 through 36, address issues of exploitation, abduction, sexual exploitation, and trafficking, all which could occur during times of war or conflict ("Convention on the Rights of the Child" 1989). Despite these measures, and all of the measures taken in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children are still not safe from factors that may negatively effect their overall right to non-discrimination, provision of their best interest, right to "life survival and development," and right to have their voices heard ("UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)" 2016).

In an additional Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed

Conflict, the United Nations raised the age that children can be involved in armed

conflict from fifteen to eighteen, the defined threshold between childhood and adult used

in the CRC. Adopted in May of 2000, the Optional Protocol prohibits the recruitment and

utilization of those under the age of eighteen. 166 countries have ratified. Currently there

are 18 UN member states that have not signed or ratified the Optional Protocol including

Antigua and Barbuda, the United Arab Emirates, Papua New Guinea, South Sudan,

Barbados, and others. Those that have signed, but not yet ratified include Fiji, Iran,

Lebanon, Somalia, the Central African Republic, and eight others ("Ratification Status of

the Optional Protocol" 2016). Otherwise, the Optional Protocol has been signed and

ratified by the majority of UN member countries.

Despite these very clear-cut provisions against the involvement of children in war

or armed conflict, it still occurs at alarming rates. During my analysis, I will often refer to

groups that commonly and publicly utilize children as actors during a war effort as a

number of things: terrorist, revolutionary, and rebel groups and organizations. These

terms do not mean the same thing, and, for clarity, I will include their separate definitions

here. As a disclaimer, I will, at times, use these terms interchangeably. Although this may

be unfair, I use them all synonymously to refer to the overarching theme of armed

conflict and insurgency.

While it is incredibly difficult to define terrorism, I can attempt to synthesize

different definitions to sum up "terrorist group." The most obvious definition is that a

terrorist group is a group that employs methods of terrorism in order to instill terror in the

hearts of an intended population. However, what is a method of terrorism? In the article

"The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism," a team of three political scientists

attempts to pin down a general definition. One they site as a well rounded and rather

accurate definition can be attributed to that of Alex Schmid. Schmid writes:

> Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by
> (semi-) clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal,
> or political reasons, whereby—in contrast to assassination—the direct targets of
> violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are
> generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative
> or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators.
> Threat—and violence—based communication processes between terrorist
> (organization), (imperiled) victims, and main target (audiences(s)), turning it into
> a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on
> whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought (Weinberg,
> Pedahzur, and Hirsch-Hoefler 2010, 780).

Although this definition may be well rounded and inclusive, it is convoluted and

confusing. Based on the United States government's definition, included in section

212(a)(3)(B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act of, an act of terrorism is:

> Any activity which is unlawful under the law of the place where it is committed
> and which involves any of the following: the hijacking or sabotage of any
> conveyance (including aircraft, vessel, or vehicle), the seizing or detaining, and
> threatening to kill, injure, or continue to detain, another individual in order to
> compel a third person (including a governmental organization) to do or abstain
> from doing any act as an explicit or implicit condition for the release of the
> individual seized or detained, a violent attack on an internationally protected
> person or upon the liberty of such a person, an assassination, the use of any
> biological agent, chemical agent, or nuclear weapon or device, or an explosive,
> firearm, or other weapon or dangerous device (other than for mere personal
> monetary gain), with intent to endanger, directly or indirectly, the safety of one or
> more individuals or to cause substantial damage to property, or a threat, attempt,
> or conspiracy to do any of the foregoing (Immigration and Nationality Act, 1965).

On an international scale, the United Nations General Assembly uses the

definition of "criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the

general public, a group of persons, or particular persons," ("Measures to eliminate

international terrorism" 1994). Hence, the definition of a terrorist group is complex. For the purpose of this document, we will consider terrorist organizations to be those listed by the United States. For example, ISIS/ISIL, Boko Haram, Hezbollah, and Hamas, all groups I will mention, are on the U.S. Department of State's list of foreign terrorist organizations, the criteria of which is the previously reference definition from the INA ("Foreign Terrorist Organizations" 2016).

A rebel group can be defined as a group that is posed against the government in place. They often "oppose existing national governments militarily and have political goals," (Jo, Dvir, and Isidori 2015, 76). Their goals can range from the overthrowing of the current government, secession of territory, or political autonomy. Regardless of their end goal, each armed action is a strategic means towards that end (Jo, Dvir, and Isidori 2015, 76). A revolutionary group, similarly, is rooted in a political revolution. The current difficulty in separating these terms, although they are mutually exclusive, is that current groups that are considered terrorist organizations, such as ISIS, are working towards the accumulation of territory and political autonomy. Hence, the motives and *modus operandi* overlap.

Despite their differences, I will use these terms rather interchangeably within this text as a synonym for the more general violent non-state actor. Additionally, in this instance they all serve the same purpose: they are all groups that are known to use children for different roles in times of conflict. In recent history, there is a multitude of groups that fit any of those definitions and have been known to recruit children. The utilization is not limited to just terrorist organizations or just rebel groups. A few of

those, including some that I will reference later, are: ISIS/ISIL, the LRA of Uganda, Boko Haram, and the FLA.

Within this thesis, I will argue that children are not only utilized by these groups against international law, but that they, are in fact, instrumental in armed conflict, not only on the side of the rebels, or those who use children in the capacity of soldiers or messengers, but also on the "western side", that which you as the reader may relate to most. I will also attempt to pinpoint how and why children are so heavily utilized, since often their involvement is something that we cannot articulate well or fully explain, as well as what happens to them when the weapons are laid down. Within this argument, I will attempt to explain that the way in which people utilize children, though it may be beneficial, key, even, to their strategies, is degrading and assumptive of children as a community.

In my first chapter, I will discuss "Innocence". Particularly, how groups around the world shed light upon the humanitarian issues occurring in developing countries by harnessing the commonly used trope of innocence. By capitalizing on the perception that children are inherently innocent, humanitarian organizations, government agencies, and the media play upon human sensibilities to increase donations or motivate political action and social change. This innocence, I will argue, is not what is portrayed. To assume unconditional innocence is to assume that children have no responsibility over their bodies or actions and that they are involved in armed conflicts only because of the ill will of "evil" adults. However, as I will discuss, this is often not the case.

After discussing the ways in which foreign, suffering children are portrayed in Western culture and how that benefits that world's political and humanitarian agenda, I

will switch to the role a child takes on within combat. Within this section, I will outline four different functions a child can fill: child refugees, child soldier, child bombers, and child brides. The first subsection on child refugees attempts to illustrate how children, even though they may not be recruited or explicitly involved in an armed group, they are still negatively effected by the conflict. The next three outline three different explicit ways a child may be incorporated within the group. The child soldier is the classic image: young boys and girls with weapons that are as big as them. The child bomber is an extension of this, though it is most commonly seen among contemporary terrorist organizations. Child brides, though they do not fight, are often abducted and forced to live with the group in sexual slavery and forced marriages. After I detail these, I also discuss how different organizations that double as political parties, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, cater to their constituents by providing social services that often aid children.

The next chapter, entitled "Future" hones in specifically on one reason that groups choose to utilize children: to ensure that a new generation will be able to keep their beliefs and ideals alive. I utilize different examples to show how groups in both the past and present have done this, and why they feel it is so important to indoctrinate younger and younger members. My final chapter attempts to answer the question "What is a Child." The term will be heavily used throughout this thesis, and it is not as simple a term as one may assume. I argue that "child" and "childhood " are social constructs and that one definition, whether it is theoretical or concrete with age thresholds, cannot be applied on an international basis. Although different cultures may have different definitions of "child," I provide discussion and analysis of programs put in place to help demilitarize ex combatants and help them reclaim their "childhood," whatever that may be.

I. INNOCENCE

It is a well known image: an African child swaddled in a blanket or sitting in her

mother's lap, her stomach distended and her eyes, seemingly too big for her sunken face,

staring back at you. A variation of this picture has been used in print, in video, on the

Internet, with accompanying messages about famine, war, or HIV/AIDS. Multiple

organizations, from Oxfam to Save the Children to Amnesty International, have utilized

this advertising. They claim that somewhere from 250,000 to 300,000 minors are

involved in armed conflict, however it is believed that "the figure...was put forth by

advocacy groups promoting a ban on child recruitment as a way of dramatizing the issue,

and it is very likely that the actual numbers are significantly lower," (Rosen 2015, 134).

This method of advertising is effective, because who wouldn't respond to a child in need?

As Westerners, these pictures play at our humanity, our heartstrings. "The White

Savior Industrial Complex," by Teju Cole, (2012) criticizes the western need to intervene

and interfere in the affairs of other countries that are different from our own is analyzed

and explained. He calls white activists out on their actions, insisting, "There is much

more to doing good work than "making a difference." There is the principle of first do no

harm. There is the idea that those who are being helped ought to be consulted over the

matters that concern them." While Westerners may mean well, often they involve

themselves in international problems and human rights atrocities as a way to validate

themselves, to prove that they are a "good person." When this occurs, it often ends in

more harm being done. Cole (2012) writes: "I deeply respect American sentimentality,

the way one respects a wounded hippo. You must keep an eye on it, for you know it is

deadly." Those who are used to appeal to appeal to our sentimentality, who we must "help," most frequently are children.

What one can infer from Teju Cole's series of tweets, is that Westerners, often Americans, focus their efforts entirely on one aspect of a situation that they deem unacceptable, without paying attention to the greater whole. In this case, the magnified aspect is the crime against humanity that is recruiting and utilizing child soldiers. However, those that so actively advocate against it do not realize that there may be extenuating circumstances leading children to armed conflict. In David Rosen's book, *Child Soldiers in the Western Imagination: From Patriots to Victims* (2015), he provides the example of a young soldier from Sierra Leone who sent a message to those so intensely trying to fight against child soldiers like him by writing "War is my food," on the butt of his rifle (174). This, Rosen (2015) says, was meant to broadcast "to the world the harsh context of economic inequality and exploitation that characterizes the modern world of the child soldier," (174). In order to survive, in order to eat, he must fight. This is the other side of the story that intervening parties often do not realize.

Tony Kushner, a rather outspoken playwright, authored a play entitled "Only We Who Guard the Mystery Shall be Unhappy." The play, written in 2003, stars then First Lady Laura Bush, alongside an angel, and a group of dead Iraqi children. The play utilizes this cast to satirize the motivations behind invading Iraq, mainly the fact that the United States needed to liberate the oppressed women and children there. Laura is portrayed as a woman who preaches for, whose only cause in life is, the well-being and education of children, especially of those in Iraq. A number of her lines show the blindness that many Westerners have regarding the needs and wants of those we try to

aid. Laura Bush claims at one point that "All children can learn to love books if you read to them," (Kushner 2003). It seems that this line has a more nuanced reading, substituting books and reading with "our way of live" and "make" them. It seems that some, especially the United States government, feel that anyone would be happy living the way we live and jump at the opportunity to force it upon other cultures. Yes, books are important, but so is these children's right to a happy and normal life, which does not necessarily go hand in hand with the administration enforced on them by America.

We, as Westerners, see the foreign world- be it the Middle East, Africa, or anywhere else "uncivilized"- as different from the United States in all of the "bad" ways, as the "other." In the book *W Stands for Women*, Lori J. Marso and her colleagues (2007), regarding the United States' perception of the Middle East during the War on Terror, writes that we are overcome with "evocative symbols of fully veiled women, uneducated children, Taliban 'evil,' Islamic fundamentalism," et cetera (224). Our association of these negative images with these far off countries leads us to believe that our intervention is necessary. Not only is it necessary (for our moral conscience as well as the safety and well being of the citizens of these countries) but also it is wanted and appreciated by those receiving our "good deeds." Marso (2007) also touches on Kushner's play and discusses "the inability of the Laura Bush character to acknowledge the United State's role in creating the conditions of these children's suffering and death," (223). This statement is reminiscent of the recklessness with which nongovernmental organizations, advocacy groups, missions, and other bleeding heart volunteers act in regards to many foreign conflicts. While many believe they are making a change for the better, long-term results may be more negative than positive.

Unsurprisingly, children are often viewed as the most innocent subcategory of these foreign communities. Their youth and fragility, both in mind and body, and hence their need for protection translates to innocence. This innocence is often capitalized upon by Western governments and non-governmental organizations and molded into a certain type of propaganda. It is also, as can be seen in Laura Bush's character in Tony Kushner's play, a motivating force for people to act and protect. This utilization of an individual's status as a "child" relates to a concept called the politics of age. David Rosen (2007), in "Child Soldiers, International Humanitarian Law, and the Globalization of Childhood," discusses this phenomenon and how it affects the world around us. He defines this politics of age as the "use of age categories by different international, regional, and local actors to advance particular political and ideological positions," (Rosen 2007, 296). The United Nation's universal definition of childhood is "beginning at birth and ending at age eighteen," (Rosen 2007, 296). This standard is now utilized by almost every human rights organization and NGO, especially those involved in the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. This coalition, involving groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, came up with the "Straight 18" rule, basically reinforcing the UN's standard conception of childhood, as well as work to "prevent the recruitment and use of children (any person under eighteen years of age) in armed forces or groups and to bar the criminal prosecution of children for war crimes," (Rosen 2007, 296).

The issue is that, much like that of those criticized by Teju Cole or the character of Laura Bush in Tony Kushner's play, groups that push for international standards such as the "Straight Eighteen" do so without thinking about differences among cultures. Not

only does it assume "childhood," which will be discussed in the chapter "What is a Child?" but it also assumes that all people under the age of eighteen are innocent simply because of their age. International laws against child soldiers and calling it a war crime, assumes that children are vulnerable, perpetually innocent, powerless, and incapable of making their own decisions. While yes, forcing children to fight and commit and witness acts of violence is indeed a war crime. However, it does not account for the many children who choose to fight, not because they are pressured or manipulated, but because it is the right choice for them. The labels of "child" soldiers, "child" brides, and "child" bombers take the agency off of the child and place it on the evil adults. But does this mean children are not responsible for the crimes that they commit? What about their victims? Obviously, innocence goes hand in hand with the concept and age range of childhood, which is set by political and activist groups to help their own agendas.

With these three examples, Cole's article, Kushner's play, and Rosen's article, it is clear that innocence is something that we can easily convince ourselves is true. Just by comparing a fifteen year old in a far off country, where he might be the primary bread winner for his family and choose to enter into a conflict to further protect them, to a fifteen year old in New Jersey who cannot drive yet, let alone support his family, Americans assume that each are equally as vulnerable, equally as innocent because of their common age. We convince ourselves so much of this, in fact, that we are willing to place our influence, and occasionally our troops, in the middle of other, "less fortunate" countries in the name of innocence. We assume that every child should have the right to the same carefree, innocence, and existence as our own Western children without taking into consideration the many differences between them and us.

Within this chapter, the assumed innocence of children as a catalyst for change, whether that change is good or bad, will be looked at through a critical lens. In an attempt to explore how children are instrumental in western involvement across the globe, three wars will be examined: The Biafran War in the 1960s, the Gulf War in the 1990s, and the current Syrian Civil War. In each of these three examples, children were a key part in the public's perception of the tragedies going on in the respective countries, and played a role in rallying support throughout the western world.

The Hungry Child

In 1967, a group of Ibo Nigerians, an ethnic group found in the southern region of the country, seceded from Nigeria and formed a country called Biafra. The Ibo people felt disenfranchised: they had had control over the Nigerian government, which was overthrown and their leader killed. The secession led to a civil war, often referred to as the Biafran War, over the oil rich parts of the country. Throughout the course of the war, Nigeria prevented resources from reaching Biafra, causing mass starvation ("Biafran War 1967-70" 2016). This starvation was documented in what were the first mass produced media images of starving children. In this utilization of the media, the "Biafran crisis was only a step towards the formalization and modernization of the concept of the responsibility to protect," (de Montclos 2009, 71). In today's society, crisis throughout the world is well documented in print, television, and Internet. In 1968, the Biafran War was the first African conflict seen on TV (Gourevitch 2010).

Through the intense distribution via the media, the Western world was alerted and outraged. The spread of the images of starving children led to the development of

ingérence: a term often associated with the Biafran War that means "the international responsibility to protect," (de Montclos 2009, 69). It was during this war that Medecines sans Frontieres (the French "Doctors Without Borders") was founded (de Montclos 2009, 70). The Red Cross, which, in 1967, had an annual budget of a half a million dollars, increased their annual budget in 1968 to include 1.5 million devoted to Biafra alone. In the United States, Americans were ready to invade. Protestors of the Vietnam War advocated for taking troops out of Vietnam and transferring them to Biafra. The "genocide" occurring in Biafra was often compared to the atrocities of the Holocaust. People were mobilized, due to "the graphic suffering of innocents [that] made an inescapable appeal to conscience," (Gourevitch 2010). The general consensus was that the West should intervene, and it did.

The intervention of Western NGOs in Biafra, however, was not a positive one. Although portrayed by the media as a huge success, humanitarian aid was very much not. It was an "operational disaster, logistical nightmare and a political failure," according to Phillip Gourevitch (2010) in his article "Alms Dealers: Can you provide humanitarian aid without facilitating conflicts?" With their airdrops bringing in food and supplies, many NGOs were unknowingly helping to supply and aid rebels (Gourevitch 2010). Similarly, by continuing their "support," NGOs were drawing out the war and creating more death and suffering. They justified their aid because they imagined that a mass genocide of Biafrans by Nigerians as punishment for secession. However, after the Biafrain surrender in January of 1970 ("Biafran War 1967-70" 2016), such genocide never occurred (Gourevitch 2010). Hence, without the help of NGOs, the war would have ended earlier and so would the consequential deaths.

The Biafran War is one of the first major contemporary examples of how the innocence of children was used to motivate action. Pictures of starving children appealed to the morality and intrinsic need to help of many people throughout the Western world. This relates back to the "White Savior" complex discussed earlier. Westerners saw a situation in which the "other," the African children, was starving. In our privileged society, people were up in arms, and felt the need to assist and become more like "us," more modern. Without the plight of these sickly African babies, the tremendous push for involvement in Biafra would not have occurred.

Babies

About twenty years later, another war across the Atlantic caught the attention of Americans with stories of dead babies. In early August of 1990, Saddam Hussein made the decision to send Iraqi troops into their small, oil rich neighbor Kuwait (Allison 2001, vii). The United States denounced the invasion and ultimately led the coalition to liberate Kuwait and stop Hussein. The American people, however, were not easily sold on the thought of invading a country and essentially getting involved in a war that did not involve us. In order to gain the approval necessary, the White House had to convince the public. One of the key ways this was achieved was through a testimony by a young girl named Nayirah, an alleged refugee, on October 10, 1990 (Rowse 1992, 16). Her tearful monologue included details of Iraqi troops entering hospitals in Kuwait and taking premature babies out of incubators and leaving them to die on the floor (Gregory 1992). This horrifying vision of ransacked hospitals and dead babies "added a crucial emotional rationale to the economic argument for U.S. involvement in the Gulf," and was successful

in rallying support among the public (Rowse 1992, 16). The babies were defenseless,

innocent children, a demographic that needed the United States to step in and defend

them. The testimony not only influenced the feelings of the public, but also swayed

politicians. In his article, "Kuwaitgate," Ted Rowse (1992) wrote, "several members of

Congress said the testimony influenced their votes to approve military action," (16).

President George Bush capitalized on this public relations gold mine. Throughout

his push for invasion, he cited the incubator story in speeches six different times

(Gregory 1992). When detailing the atrocities of the Iraqis in one speech, he is quoted in

saying that there are "babies in incubators heaved out of the incubators and the incubators

themselves sent to Baghdad," (Bennis and Moushabeck 1991, 313). From there, the story

exploded. News reports showed videos of huge mass graves being dug. The UN held a

public forum where the incubator story was again referenced. Two days after the forum,

the UN voted to intervene in Kuwait (Gregory 1992). Amnesty International published a

report, where they published a "concrete" number: 312 babies killed by the monstrous

Iraqis. When debated at the Senate, the story was used seven times (Gregory 1992). The

motion to invade Kuwait passed in both the House of Representatives 250 to 183, and the

Senate 52 to 47, with overwhelming support from civilians. Thus, "House Joint

Resolution 77 authorizing military force against Iraq," was authorized (Smith 2010, 118).

This groundbreaking story, which was utilized so often in the campaign for

invading Kuwait, was false. John R. MacArthur, in an op-ed piece for the New York

Times in January of 1992, exposed that Nayirah was actually the daughter of the Kuwaiti

Ambassador (Rowse 1992, 16). Not only was Nayirah's identity obscured from the public, but also it seems that the atrocities detailed in her testimony never happened. In Canadian documentary *To Sell a War- Gulf War Propaganda* (1992), the belief that Iraqi soldiers dumped babies out of incubators seemed to be dispelled. Dr. David Chu with the World Health Organization traveled to Kuwait to assess damages made to medical facilities and materials. He visited hospitals and found that there were many incubators: none had been stolen. Hospital personnel said that the incubator stealing had never occurred. Dr. Ian Pollock and Andrew Whitley with Physicians for Human Rights discovered a similar story. Both believe that 312 deaths is much too high of a number, with Whitley even going so far as to call it "a complete hoax." Pediatrician sources in Kuwait said the story was false, and, upon visiting Kuwait and physically counting incubators, it was found that only a few were unaccounted for (Gregory 1992). Even Amnesty International, in light of these discoveries, retracted their previous report, saying:

> On the highly publicized issue in the December report of the baby deaths, Amnesty International said that although its team was shown alleged mass graves of babies, it was not established how they had died and the team found no reliable evidence that Iraqi forces had caused the death of babies by removing them or ordering their removal from incubators (Bennis and Moushabeck 1991, 317).

Due to a lack of corroboration, the overwhelming medical opinion is that the incubator story never occurred.

The story of the dead babies and stolen incubators likely came from the public relations firm Hill and Knowlton (Gregory 1992). Hill and Knowlton began conversing with the Kuwaiti government just after Iraq initially invaded in August of 1990. The two

groups began brainstorming ways to gain support in the United States. Through these meetings, the Citizens for a Free Kuwait was born, a group that received almost all funding from the Kuwaiti government and paid Hill and Knowlton for their services. In MacArthur's article, it was found that Representative Tom Lantos and Representative John Edward Porter, two politicians who sponsored the Congressional Hearings, were linked to Hill and Knowlton. The two formed the Congressional Human Rights Foundation, a group that received $50,000 from Citizens for a Free Kuwait and free office space in Hill and Knowlton's D.C. building (Rowse 1992, 16).

Regardless of where or how the incubator story originated, it made a lasting impact on the minds of Americans. The outrage and disgust that ripped through the country was enough to validate Bush's economic interests in entering the Gulf War. After it was discovered that Iraqis were dumping and killing defenseless, innocent babies, most anti-war rhetoric lost traction. In his book *Why War: The Cultural Logic of Iraq, the Gulf War, and Suez,* Phillip Smith (2010) writes, "Hussein really was understood by the majority of Americas as a figure analogous to Hitler." (106). These poor, premature babies needed protection against this monster, a terrorizing force with apparently no human decency. We, as Americans, were the ones to fight on their behalf. The incubator babies of the Gulf War are another example of how images of children in need are used to mobilize an entire nation.

A slightly similar and more contemporary example of this kind of situation is the current Syrian Civil War and subsequent refugee crisis. According to the United Nations Commissioner on Human Rights, there are currently 4,904,021 registered Syrian refugees ("Syria Emergency" 2017). Since the Syrian Civil War began in 2011, over four million Syrians have left the country seeking refuge in other nations. Within the country, there are an estimated 13.5 million people in dire need ("Syria Emergency" 2017). Like other western countries, the United States has received backlash both from its citizens and from other countries about not doing enough for Syrian refugees. Criticism ranges from not doing enough militarily to intervene, to not accepting enough refugees across our borders. Now, with Donald Trump as our newly elected president, how much action the country expects to take has dropped even further and, hence, criticism has increased. On January 27, 2017, President Trump signed an executive order banning citizens from Syria, as well as six other Middle Eastern countries, from entering the country for at least ninety days, as well as banning "entry of those fleeing from war-torn Syria indefinitely," ("Full text of Trump's executive order on 7-nation ban, refugee suspension" 2017). In the aftermath of this executive order, "students, visitors and green-card-holding legal permanent United States residents from the seven countries — and refugees from around the world — were stopped at airports in the United States and abroad, including Cairo, Dubai and Istanbul. Some were blocked from entering the United States and were sent back overseas," (Stack 2017). As this is one of President Trump's first orders in the White House, the future involvement of the United States in the Syrian refugee crisis does not look positive.

While I cannot predict what kind of humanitarian aid or governmental intervention will occur in the future regarding the United States and Syria, I can speak to the pattern between the previous examples of the Biafran War and the Gulf War and the Syrian refugee crisis.

As in previous times of civil war, genocide, and conflict, the Syrian refugee crisis is well documented. Pictures are heavily utilized to portray the strife felt by those affected. New sites promote photo galleries such as The Guardian's "Portraits of Syrian Child Refugees- in pictures," full of professional photos of wind chaffed, sun burnt, dirty children, whose eyes beg the reader for their attention and help (Muheisen 2016). Platforms from Buzzfeed to the New York Times, from CNN to Business Insider, report on the horrifying realities of the Syrian Civil War and its ever-growing refugee problem.

There are articles upon articles, displays upon displays, of pictures of refugee children. Of the thousands documented, there is a handful that has gone viral. One of those famous pictures is a depiction of a young girl named Hudea with her hands raised as a sort of surrender. Photojournalist Osman Sagirli tried to take a photo of her and, instead of smiling or posing, Hudea slowly raised her hands above her head. When talking to BBC, the photographer said that he "realized she was terrified," when she did not react like a normal child in front of his lens. The image permeated social media in both the Middle East as well as the Western world. Her petrified face and raised hands served as "a symbol of the human toll that endless war and strife have taken on Syria's

displaced millions," ("The photographer who broke the internet's heart," 2015), as it represents how helpless and frightened the displaced population truly is.

("The photographer who broke the internet's heart," 2015)

Another shocking photograph that emerged from the Syrian refugee crisis is that of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi, a young Syrian boy fleeing for Canada with his family, washed up upon a beach in Turkey. As the New York Times describe the picture, Aylan seems posed with "his round cheek pressed to the sand as if he were sleeping, except for the waves lapping his face," (Barnard and Shoumali 2015). His dead body symbolized the seriousness of the situation: it told the story of the dangerous journeys refugees take to escape their country, and how much more dangerous it is when they have to go through smugglers. Because they are not able to legally travel to a country of refuge, Aylan and his family boarded a rubber raft to travel across open water from Turkey to Greece (Barnard and Shoumali 2015).

(Barnard and Shoumali 2015)

The response to this photo was global. The image and story was picked up by news outlets around the world, and was shared obsessively on social media. In an article for the New York Times, Anne Barnard and Karam Shoumali (2015) state that the photo "appears to have galvanized public attention to a crisis that has been building for years," and that it "forced Western nations to confront the consequence of a collective failure to help migrants fleeing the Middle East and Africa to Europe in search of hope, opportunity and safety." Aylan, with his grieving father and haunting pictures, provided a "human" face to the horrible reality of the Syrian refugee crisis. Although thousands upon thousands have died, either in Syria or while trying to get out of Syria, the reports of anonymous deaths have not had the same affect that one child, one son, has had on the public. Business Insider reports that a study, done by Paul Slovic, a professor at the University of Oregon, shows that Aylan's picture had a tremendous effect on charitable giving and concern regarding the Syrian refugee crisis. The study utilizes data from the Swedish Red Cross in addition to search frequency from Google. It found that "the average number of daily donations to a Syrian refugee fund run by the Swedish Red

Cross rose 100-fold. Before the photo circulated, the charity received fewer than 1,000 donations in a day; afterwards, it rose to almost 14,000," (Mintz 2017). As for data from Google Trends, the study showed "a major spike in searches for the terms "Syria" and "refugees"," (Mintz 2017). Aylan's photograph had a major impact on the view people held about the Syrian refugee crisis, and convinced many that it was a major problem.

As the Syrian refugee crisis is so recent, it is hard to predict what will happen as far as what kind of humanitarian action will be taken and when. It is obvious, given the example of Aylan Kurdi's picture and its effect on charitable giving and public interest, that the pictures of Syrian child refugees have an immense impact on civilian thought process. The painful images of these innocent children moves the public emotionally, unfortunately more so than reports of thousands dead. One can only hope that pictures such as the ones discussed will lead the public to influence the government to accept more Syrian refugees and intervene in the Syrian Civil War. Supporting Syrians at this time is already supported by what seems to be the vast majority of the population. After Donald Trump's signed his executive order, thousands of people protested in airports throughout the United States, where people were being detained (Rosenberg 2017). In December of 2016, a giant push for government intervention in Aleppo swept the media after Assad's government recaptured the city via airstrikes ("Syrian War: Assad says Aleppo Bombing was Justified" 2017). However, one must also hope that when reacting to the climate of not only the American public, but also to the political climate in the Middle East, the government and additional NGOs will not cause more harm than good.

<u>Conclusion</u>

These three examples, the Biafran War, the Gulf War, and the Syrian refugee crisis, span a time difference of almost 70 years. However, they share a common thread: something awful happens somewhere, pictures are taken of the victims (often children), and it becomes a worldwide humanitarian crisis. These children are the innocent victims of something terrible, whether it is war, genocide, famine, etc. Their stories are horrible, yes, but often their stories are exploited by the media to provoke change and action. Their big, sad eyes are a ploy to touch you, as the consumer, and pull at your heartstrings, so you will donate to the cause or write to your senator or protest at your state capital. It is hard for us, as westerners, to believe that life could be so horrible for these poor children living in other countries and we feel the need to act. However, it seems that often when we act it is not for the right reasons, or for the "right" reasons without looking at all of the facts. Hence, these innocent children are exploited for our narrow-minded cause.

While researching, I was lucky enough to find the Honors Political Science Thesis of Karlee Bergendorff, Union College '15. Her thesis, entitled "The smiling, the sick, and the suffering: snapshots of Syrian displacement," discussed the issue of taking pictures of Syrian refugees. One of the problems she discusses is that, often, when human rights organizations are attempting to help a population, they often forget who they are advocating on behalf of. Although they may be working with them, getting them medical attention, or, of course, taking pictures of them, they forget to ask what they actually want or need. This can be an accidental oversight; it is easy to get caught up in a whirlwind of fundraising and health clinics. It may also be on purpose.

Especially when it comes to photographs, it is easy for organizations to choose the ones that will help their business the most. Bergendorff (2015) writes, "photographs are selected by a specific organization in order to send a conclusive message about refugees and their organization," (103). One of the examples used in this chapter, the United States using the image of dead babies to spur support for the invasion of Iraq, shows how a government and the media can use images to entice action. Humanitarian organizations, however, are different. First and foremost, they are a business. Even if they are a nonprofit organization, their success is measured by money and donations. The images they choose and the message they send, then, is all geared toward the story that will increase public donations. The more money they have to spend, say, on the Syrian refugees, the more successful and reputable they look, inspiring even more donations. This sense of competition, however, "leads to the dissemination of manipulated, simplified, decontextualized, and dramatized photographs," (Bergendorff 2015 103).

What Bergendorff (2015) suggests as a way to rehabilitate the use of photographs in the humanitarian aid industry is to normalize the use of pictures that do not portray refugees, especially children, as victims. By portraying them as such, organizations undermine their agency, making them seem less like humans and more like defenseless, sweet creatures. Instead, Bergendorff (2015) calls for the use of "more photographs depicting refugees as figures of resilience and strength," (125). Refugees are not just passive victims. They have survived more hardships and adversity than many of us will ever know. Instead of focusing on their vulnerability, organizations should be giving them more credit for their strength and resilience. In doing this, Bergendorff (2015) believes that we will be able to work towards moving "away from the interventionist

rhetoric of saving," (125). This is reminiscent of Teju Cole's argument, referenced in the beginning of this chapter. The White Industrial Savior Complex, like the "interventionist rhetoric of saving," is something that Westerners should attempt to separate themselves from, especially in the area of humanitarian aid.

Overall, humanitarian organizations need to reevaluate in order to stay true to their organizations and primary goals. In her book, *The Crisis Caravan: What's Wrong with Humanitarian Aid,* Linda Polman (2010) outlines the original intentions behind many current organizations. She writes, "humanitarianism is based on a personal duty to ease human suffering unconditionally," (7). She also claims the driving traits behind the mission of the Red Cross and other organizations are neutrality, impartiality, and independence. These three traits mean that they will not choose to aid one side of a conflict over the other, that they will give aid solely because it is needed, and that they will not be effected in their aid giving process by any outside factors (Polman 2010, 7).

It seems, however, that humanitarian aid organizations have strayed from these original guidelines. First, while they claim to give aid unconditionally, should there be conditions? While it may go unspoken that they are not supposed to cause more harm than what they are originally treating, it may be helpful for their to be guidelines in place, conditions, about where, when, how, and to whom they provide help. Not in attempts to limit unfairly, but to keep them honest and focused on what really will help their "clients." Organizations should be treated more like suppliers of aid than businesses. In order to do so, they also must go back to their roots and assess if they are honorably withholding the standards that Polman outlines. In particular, they must reevaluate their "neutrality." If they are using photographs of refugees to further their own business

ventures and grow the organization, are they really being neutral? If the photographs are in the organization's best interest, then they are not neutral portrayals of their subjects. Refugees, specifically child refugees in this case, should not be utilized for the organization's gain.

While Bergendorff and Polman's examples speak specifically towards the actions of humanitarian organizations, it is clear that they are not the only perpetrators. Government, government agencies and the media also take advantage of the vulnerable image of children. The "innocence" of a child is easily marketable, and is a seemingly foolproof way to encourage a public reaction. The outrage of the public at the heartless acts of armed groups involving children can be harnessed for one's own purpose when engaged correctly. In the following chapters, other ways in which children are utilized for their innocence during times of war will be examined.

II. REVOLUTION/TERROR

As discussed in the previous chapter, children are often used as the face of innocence. Westerners are exposed to image after image of starving children with distended stomachs, and those privileged viewers develop the belief that every child in war stricken areas is worthy of our help, needs our help. The West, the United States, after all, is far superior: we are free and they are not. While this may be an extreme way that the West utilizes children in need, these children in war torn countries are incredibly vulnerable. Terrorist organizations and revolutionary groups both worsen the vulnerability of youths in their respective areas, as well as take advantage of their innocence and vulnerability.

Although they may not need our usual method of intervention that is not to say that they are not hugely taken advantage of by armed forces in their area. Armed conflict in general often tears communities apart, leaving them struggling with poverty, orphaned children, and starvation. Just as the Western population utilizes the "innocence" of children for their own gain, so do armed groups. They capitalize off of their vulnerability, amplified by the terrible circumstances left in the wake of war and violence, and incorporate them into their own agendas.

Within this chapter, I will discuss the many different ways that revolution and terror both indirectly and directly affect the children in their path. I will begin with the concept of child refugees, a group whose vulnerability is amplified by the terrible circumstances under which they live. I will then discuss different roles that children can take within a war: child soldiers, child bombers, and child brides. The final section will

discuss how certain terrorist groups use children and their vulnerability to gain support within their region.

<div align="center">Child Refugee</div>

Recently, a new role for children in conflict has emerged: the child refugee. In recent years, the number of refugees around the world has spiked. In the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the United Nations defines a refugee as:

> Any person who, owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it ("1951 Convention Relating to the State of Refugees", 14).

With the progression of the Syrian Civil War, the number of refugees circulating the globe has increased exponentially. In the spring of 2016, 4.8 million refugees had left the country. An additional 6.6 million are considered "internally displaced," meaning they reside in refugee camps scattered around Syria (Akbarzadeh and Conduit 2016, 8). 50% are child refugees (Taub 2015). Within the Middle East, one million Syrian refugees have fled to Lebanon, 2.7 million to Turkey, and 600,000 Jordan. An additional 900,000 have attempted to enter European countries (Akbarzadeh and Conduit 2016, 9). Although the role of the child refugee is not as explicitly connected to the plan of revolutionary or terrorist groups as is the child soldier, bomber, or bride, they are still a direct result of the pain and suffering caused by many of the groups and their agendas.

Although the Syrian refugee crisis is sweeping the media, there are additional

refugees from many other countries. In total, there are about 43 million people considered to be refugees. Of this number, 46% of them are children under the age of 18 (Murray 2016, 29). Child refugees leave their countries for a variety of reasons, including "flight from war, political conflict, and persecution on the basis of religion, ethnicity, and faith," (Finch et. al 2011, 38). While their reasons for leaving their home country are similar to that of adult refugees, child refugees are at a considerably higher risk for many negative factors, especially if they are traveling alone. These unaccompanied minors (children that "have been separated from parents and relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so,") are susceptible to a plethora of physical dangers and psychological and health problems (Huemer, Karnik, and Steiner 2009, 612).

During their journey, children face a number of risks, such as crossing deserts and seas. During the journey, they could easily fall victim to adverse weather, starvation, or dehydration (Murray 2016, 30). When they arrive at their destination, their situation does not improve much. Even at camps serviced by the government or non-governmental organizations, they can lack basic resources such as food and water (Murray 2016, 30). A number of diseases run rampant among child refugees, including tuberculosis, malaria, malnutrition, and parasites (Murray 2016, 32). While physical dangers exist, there are also more aspects refugees have to be aware of. Children, "especially those separated from family and adult caretakers, are at the greatest risk for neglect, abuse, violence, exploitation, and human trafficking." They are at a higher risk for abduction, which can then lead to being forced into combat as a child soldier, or being sold into sex slavery or a forced marriage (Murray 2016, 31).

Psychologically, child refugees suffer immensely, especially unaccompanied

minors. In Julia Huemer, Niranjan Karnik, and Hans Steiner's (2009) article,

"Unaccompanied Refugee Children," the authors discuss the many ways that child

refugees can suffer, mainly because of a lack of a support system. Without parents,

guardians, or family, unaccompanied minors suffer because "they lack social

relationships and a familial system at a crucial development period, they have struggled

through numerous challenges to arrive in a country of asylum, and they have had to

overcome the obstacles of cultural differences," (613). The traumas that unaccompanied

minors see are more severe than children should have to deal with. Their mental state is

not helped by the host countries' governments, which often block them from receiving

support and resources they need, such as access to proper health care and education

(Huemer, Karnik, and Steiner 2009, 613). Those who are "internally displaced" do not

escape the downfalls and dangers of refugee status because they do not travel. The

negative effects of the Syrian Civil War and other conflicts cannot be escaped, especially

when "escape" is to refugee camps where resources such as shelter, food, and water are

scarce.

The population of many western countries are concerned about accepting large

numbers of refugees and, hence, governments have been reluctant to receive their

respective quota. For example, in 2015, Australia vowed to accept 12,000 Syrians

seeking asylum. However, by February 2016 only 26 had entered the country

(Akbarzadeh and Conduit 2016, 10). Similarly, in October of 2016, the French

government decided to shut down and demolish the Calais "Jungle," a huge retaining

camp for refugees trying to enter Britain. In an article published by Human Rights Watch,

Helen Griffiths writes that, according to French officials, about 900 unaccompanied

minors live in the camps, while other groups claim there could be as many as 1,600. Not

all of these children will be accounted for. While around 300 of them could be accepted

into Britain because they have family already living there, only 80 have entered the

country. The rest will be dispersed (eventually) to different camps, although a percentage

will simply disappear. While plans are being made for dispersal, however, these children

will be left in even worse conditions than the tents and mattresses they lived on (Griffiths

2016). In an attempt to hold western nations accountable for aiding in the refugee crisis,

the United Nations published a General Comment on the "Treatment of unaccompanied

and separated children outside their country of origin" in 2005. This general comment

attempted to:

> Draw attention to the particularly vulnerable situation of unaccompanied and
> separated children; to outline the multifaceted challenges faced by States and
> other actors in ensuring that such children are able to access and enjoy their
> rights; and, to provide guidance on the protection, care and proper treatment of
> unaccompanied and separated children based on the entire legal framework
> provided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child ("General Comment No. 6:
> TREATMENT OF UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED CHILDREN
> OUTSIDE THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN" 2005).

It is the intention of the United Nations, as well as many humanitarian groups, to help

child refugees as much as possible.

Child Soldiers

Unlike child refugees, the following categories will deal with more explicit ways

in which children are utilized by terrorist organizations and revolutionary groups. The

most prevalent and established way children are involved in rebel campaigns is through

the utilization of child soldiers. According to the Encyclopedia of Social Justice, "10% of all combatants are children," (Mizel 2011, 121). In 2012, a documentary entitled "Kony 2012," reached the eyes of almost every young person in the United States. The thirty minute long video, filmed and narrated in a way that made it understandable and engaging for students, discussed child soldiers in Uganda under Joseph Kony, leader of the Lord's Resistance Army (Russell 2012). Although the short documentary was, in many ways, the first of its kind, it discussed an issue that was by no means novel. By simplifying the information, as well as portraying it in a "hip" way, the producer missed key facts about the conflict and the issue at hand.

Historically, the concept of child soldiers has evolved over recent years. With the exception of groups such as the Nazi Youth, children only served non-violent roles in the eighteenth through mid twentieth centuries. The role of the child in armed combat was limited to fife players and drummers (Mizel 2011, 121). In recent decades, however, child soldiers are commonplace in many countries. Israeli soldiers use Palestinian children as human shields, and often capture and interrogate Palestinian children for throwing rocks. In Nepal, children were utilized on both sides during the Maoist's People's War. In Columbia, children are utilized as military combatants, assassins, and minelayers for opposition groups, as well as employed by drug lords. In Chad, children are recruited by the government from refugee camps and stationed as border guards ("Child Soldiers" 2010).

Although the definition of a child soldier may be subject to interpretation through the specific cultural lens of the country in question, there are internationally recognized concrete classifications. Through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the

Child, the minimum age of recruitment is 15 (Mizel 2011, 121). However, the Optional Protocol added to the CRC in May of 2000, which over one hundred countries from around the world signed, increased the age from 15 to 18 years old. Hence, the general definition of a child soldier is "any person under the age of 18 who is a member of, or attached to, any armed force, whether governmental, opposition, guerilla, or political, and whether or not an armed conflict exists," (Mizel 2011, 121). Although this is the generally accepted definition, the term child soldier cannot easily be pinned down. What, other than age, determines someone a "child"? This topic will be addressed more in depth in my final chapter; however, Alicinda Honwana (2011) discusses this issue in her book *Child Soldiers in Africa*. She understands the many nuances included in the term "child," which depends on the specific culture. Being classified as a child has more prerequisites than just a number. It also depends on their role in society (Honwana 2011 52). Regardless of how a child is classified, "80% of children involved in armed forces are under the age of 15," which is the absolute youngest a recruited member can be according to international law (Mizel 2011, 121). For example, in Uganda, children in the Lord's Resistance Army are, on average, 13 years of age (Mizel 2011, 121).

Children become involved in armed combat in a variety of ways, including recruitment, abduction, and volunteering. Because of their youth, children are extremely malleable and vulnerable, making recruitment relatively easy. In some cases, children are forced into violence by their parents. Mothers and fathers trade their children in order to preserve their villages and homes, or hand them over for their own safety: In the eyes of some parents the choice is either for their children to "become killers or be killed," (Honwana 2011, 57). In instances such as these, it is difficult to determine which is the

right choice, give you child to a rebel group, or watch them be killed. Sometimes, however, parents are not given the chance to make that decision. Often, rebel groups simply abduct all of the children when they take over a village.

Children themselves sometimes make the choice to join, whether out of actual interest or coercion. Since many war torn areas struggle economically, some turn to fighting to remedy their intense poverty. The rebel groups provide the food, shelter, and other resources that they lack in their community (Honwana 2011, 57). Some groups, such as the Islamic State, offer high salaries in return for service, a large attraction for children with no means of supporting themselves (Benotman and Malik 2016, 35). Armed groups also provide support psychologically for young children that lack self-confidence or want to be a part of a community. They may be newly orphaned, or abandoned by or separated from their villages. By becoming a child soldier, they are gaining socialization because they get to be around children their own age with their own interests and comparable experiences (Benotman and Malik 2016, 35). Similarly, some may volunteer in order to protect their village from the same group that they join. There are those who actually agree with the stance of the rebel group and feel that it is their duty to join them in the fight (Honwana 2011, 1). Others are "seduced by promises of glory or excitement," (Honwana 2011, 1).

After being recruited, the child soldiers must be trained. For groups such as the Islamic State, "training starts with religious indoctrination followed by physical training, at which point children are typically isolated from their families," (Behn 2016). They are forced to follow orders with torture and beatings. In a report by the Quilliam Foundation, Noman Benotman and Nikita Malik (2016) write that "children who refused to conform

with IS orders were flogged, tortured, or raped," (34). As a method of training, children are required to torture and kill adult militants that either abandoned their group in the field or commited some other act of treason or cowardice, both to desensitize them to violence as well as provide an example of what occurs when you do not obey (Behn 2016).

The concept of child soldiers is normally associated with males. Alcinda Honwana (2011) brings up the point that "public awareness of the impact of armed conflict on children focuses almost entirely on boys and young men, as do governmental, non governmental, and international programs," (75). However, girls are affected and recruited as well. In Mozambique, for example, girls were utilized in a number of ways, including as "guards, carriers of ammunition and supplies, messengers, spies...and sometimes as fighters on the front line," (Honwana 2011, 79). Similarly, in Sierra Leone, there are all female child soldier groups, referred to as a "Small Girls Unit." Young girls involved in this group are "often sent out on dangerous missions and are known to have performed some of the most violent killings and mutilations," (Coulter 2015, 109). Just because they are female does not mean they escape the gruesome and violent tragedies of war. All child soldiers, boys and girls alike, witness and aid in unimaginable brutalities.

<u>Child Bombers</u>

Within the contemporary issue of the War on Terror, a more specific classification of child soldier has emerged: the child bomber. In Robert Pape's book *Dying to Win* (2005), he writes:

Suicide terrorism attempts to inflict enough pain on the opposing society to overwhelm its interest in resisting the terrorists' demands, and so to induce the government to concede, or the population to revolt against the government (28).

What better way to inflict pain on a community than by recruiting, training, and utilizing, children?

The draw to use human bombs is immense among revolutionary groups. Other than the bomb part, human bombs are low technology. The supply is almost endless, as there will always be another person to volunteer after the last one is utilized (Sawicki 2016, 40). In war torn areas, there are many children, who may be orphaned or otherwise left vulnerable. There are even more benefits to using children. A child can more easily approach a target without raising suspicions. Sawicki (2016) writes that they can "approach a target more easily, evade scrutiny, and in general catch the target with its guard lowered," (40). Not many would suspect a child to be a killer, adding stealth to the list of advantages. Utilizing a child bomber also adds a layer of shock and depth to the attack. The death of a child is exponentially more appalling to the public than that of an adult, and increases the terror and upset felt in the wake of the attack (Sawicki 2016, 40). The public will ask themselves how did a child become involved with this horrible, violent group? Did they believe their radical ideas? What kind of people could cause harm to a child? Additionally, if a soldier or policeman were to begin profiling and attacking children suspected to be carrying a bomb, it works in the favor of the rebel group's image. As soon as a guard kills or injures a child preemptively and nothing is found, the establishment is then seen as attacking unarmed children, the very population they're claiming to "protect," (Sawicki 2016, 40). Hence, public support will increase on the group's behalf.

Another benefit of using children and adolescents is how easily recruited they are. Like recruiting child soldiers, the key to recruiting child bombers is their vulnerability (Sawicki 2016, 40). Children are more apt to peer pressure and, in his book *The Smarter Bomb*, Anat Berko (2012) discusses how organizations "use children to recruit their peers for attacks," (61). He tells the story of a young man named Hassan, a Palestinian boy who was used to recruit other fifteen year olds, including his cousin and a friend (61). In the case of young men, they want to prove their masculinity, find role models, not excluding terrorists, and be accepted by a group or community (Sawicki 2016, 42). For many, the acceptance of revolutionary groups builds their self-esteem. They are also innocently attracted to the power of violence in the beginning. This vulnerability makes them more easily manipulated than adult men and women, hence making them more easily recruited. Unlike adults, children do not have a fully formed understanding of life and death (Mizel 2011, 121).

For child bombers, religion plays a larger factor in recruitment than child soldiers. After September 11th, a new wave of terrorism focusing on religious extremism emerged (Emilsen 2008, 7). In many cases, "religion plays a critical role in radicalizing and mobilizing young suicide bombers," (Emilsen 2008, 7). In the past, religion has been linked to child suicide bombers, one example being the Japanese Kamikaze pilots of World War II. Many of these pilots were in their mid teens. In the last five months of World War II, a calculated 32% were junior high and high school students. Part of the draw to become a Kamikaze fighter lay in the Shinto religion, particularly the Bushido ideology, which stressed that there is a high honor in death (Emilsen 2008, 9). Within the same vein, Islamic Jihad has now taken off, one major example being ISIS.

As the Islamic State explodes across the Middle East, they continuously use more and more children in suicide bombing missions. According to an article by Sharon Behn (2016), they have recruited anywhere from 800 to 900 children between the ages of eight and eighteen within the last year, and have trained them in their reported two training centers in Mosul. All children are trained in the art of suicide bombing, whether they are spies, suicide bombers, or soldiers, and all are instructed to wear bomb vests at all times in case of attack (Benotman and Malik 2016, 44). They are recruited in a number of ways, mainly through education. In areas controlled by ISIS, public schooling is mandatory, and education is greatly restricted and controlled by the group. Teachers are constantly watched, curriculum must be centered on radical Islam and the idea of jihad, and the dress code, especially for young girls, must adhere to the strictest of Islamic values (Benotman and Malik 2016, 30). For the Islamic State, education is an especially important way of infiltrating the minds of young people. For the sake of their Caliphate, it is crucial to breed generations of children that believe their ideologies. Benotman and Malik (2016) write:

> The current generation of fighters sees these children as better and more lethal fighters than themselves, because rather than being converted into radical ideologies, they have been indoctrinated into these extreme values from birth, or a very early age (Benotman and Malik 2016, 28).

If these children truly believe ISIS values, there is no stopping them. In the eyes of the Islamic State, there is no higher honor than becoming a martyr. If one kills themself in the name of jihad, there will be glory and fame (Benotman and Malik 2016, 28).

Another example of a group that frequently utilizes child bombers is Boko Haram. According to a UNICEF report from 2016, "One of every five suicide bombers deployed by Boko Haram in the past two years has been a child," (Searcey 2016). This

number has skyrocketed. In 2014 four out of 32 suicide bombings were done by children, while from April 2015 to April 2016 44 out of 151 were children. Most of the child bombers recruited by Boko Haram are girls (Searcey 2016). As discussed with child soldiers, the role of the child bomber is mostly associated with teenage boys, but there is a large demographic of females as well. Regardless of sex, Boko Haram's child bombers are often as young as eight years old. In a report by Human Rights Watch, "between 2009 and 2015, attacks by the group destroyed more than 910 schools and forced at least 1,500 to close," (Searcey 2016). By destroying and closing schools, even more children are left vulnerable to the fate of becoming a suicide bomber.

The unfortunate reality of child soldiers and bombers is that, after a certain point, the line between victim and antagonist becomes blurred. At what moment do they become accountable for their actions, for the people they have killed and havoc they have wreaked? For child suicide bombers, the distinction is even more difficult to make. On one hand, outsiders viewing attacks would never expect a child to have such ill will towards a group of people to sacrifice their own life to kill others. On the other hand, they are, in the case of religious extremism, following their own beliefs. In an interview with 60 Minutes, Asim Bajwa, a commander in the Pakistani Army, said, "as long as the child is in their custody and he's been indoctrinated, there is hardly anything you can do," ("CHILD SUICIDE BOMBERS" 2016). However, are these children really so radical? In many instances, this religious brainwashing may be another way that terrorist organizations steal the innocence of children.

As discussed, sex is not a deciding factor when recruiting child soldiers and child bombers. Young women are often utilized in both regards. A role in rebel groups that is exclusively for girls, however, is the child bride. Within this section, the term "child bride" will be split into two categories: those that are abducted and forced into marriage, and those who are recruited and join of their own free will.

Like those forced into a life as a fighter, girls are abducted from their villages by rebel groups to serve as sex slaves. Not much has been written about young girls' roles as sex slaves, rape victims, and victims of forced marriage because of a lack of information and statistics. Even after they have separated from their war husbands, young women do not often like to talk about their experiences because of a cultural sense of shame (Honwana 2011, 79). In many African countries, families refuse to talk about sexual abuse that female members have endured and see the topic as "taboo." To these families, their daughters are victims, but they are also a source of dishonor to the family (Honwana 2011, 80).

According to the 1956 Supplementary Convention to the Slavery Convention of 1926, forced marriage is a type of slavery (Honwana 2011, 79). Cécile Aptel (2016), in her article "Child Slaves and Child Brides," defines forced marriage as occurring "when at least one of the parties does not or cannot express his or her full and free consent or is unable to end or leave the conjugal relation for various reasons." In the case of child brides throughout Africa, as well as elsewhere in the world, this definition applies. They cannot reject their marriages because, in many places, the alternative to forced marriages

and sexual slavery was death (Honwana 2011, 79). If a girl is not obedient, she is killed. If another officer rapes her, she is killed for her infidelity (Honwana 2011, 84).

With forced marriage comes a host of other inevitabilities. For example, in the eyes of groups such as the Islamic State, girls as young as thirteen years of age are eligible for marriage and sexual relations (Honwana 2011, 79). With marriage comes rape and, consequently, unwanted pregnancies (Aptel 2016). They are then forced into raising the children, normally more than one over the course of their marriage (Aptel 2016). Giving birth while in captivity is its own negative experience. Camps were unsanitary and lacked proper tools for childbirth. Additionally, many babies were killed while in hiding because crying could give the whole group's position away (Honwana 2011, 85). Essentially, they are trapped in a life that they did not ask for, and have no other choice but to take care of the husband, household, and children that they did not want and are too young to have.

In Sierra Leone, girls that have been forced into marriage by a revolutionary group are called "Bush Wives." In Chris Coulter's book, *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers: Women's Lives Through War and Peace in Sierra Leone* (2015), he outlines the daily life of these Bush Wives through interviews and anecdotes. During Sierra Leonean War, thousands of girls were abducted from their villages and taken into the Bush, the dense forest that permeates the entirety of Sierra Leone and housed the rebels. There a "Mamy Queen" looked them after until they were old enough to be married and an officer expressed interest in them (Coulter 2015, 106). Once they were married, girls spent anywhere between days and years with their captors, depending on how quickly they escaped, or if they even tried to leave (Coulter 2015, 95). During this time, they traveled

the Bush by foot with the community of rebels, making camp wherever necessary

(Coulter 2015, 98). Their lives as "Bush Wives" were grim. Normally there were multiple

wives for commanders, and relationships were fraught with drug use and physical and

sexual abuse. One woman interviewed said "most men use their wives several times for a

day, especially when they take cocaine. Cocaine makes them to like to sex women

frequently, and also to kill. The woman won't say 'I am too tired to sex.' If you refuse,

you will be killed," (Coulter 2015, 107). Bush wives had no choice but to be raped

repeatedly by their husband, in a way for their own protection.

Although these examples stem from Africa, rape as a tool of war is universal.

Alcinda Honwana (2011) discusses rape as overall an aggressive act, that "the

humiliation, abasement, and domination of the victim and her group provide satisfaction

to the perpetrator," (88). In the realm of war, rape, like the burning of villages or

executing family members, is just another way act violently towards a group of people.

From a cynical viewpoint, it could be argued that, indeed, rape is just another negative

byproduct of war, and that being the victim of sexual assault is it's own role that women

play during wartime. The rape of women is also a "violent instrument of subordination,"

(Honwana 2011, 89). By abducting and raping all of the women in a village, a group can

instill fear throughout the entire population, leaving them vulnerable and easy to

manipulate. For example, in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, rape was used as a method

of ethnic cleansing. Serbian soldiers would rape Croatian females with the goal of

creating mixed heritage babies and break up pure Croatian bloodlines and, hence, unity

among the Croatian community. With this practice, the Serbians succeeded in humiliating

women and emasculating men, while terrorizing an entire ethnic group (Honwana 2011, 90).

Recently, a trend has emerged among young western women, specifically in the United Kingdom. For some reason, they are motivated to leave their homes for the Middle East with intentions to join ISIS. The term "ISIS Bride" developed in the media and has permeated everyday language. While many of them are under the age of eighteen, making them child brides, their situation differs because they go based on their own accord. The reasons that girls leave their western homes to join terrorist forces differs, but some examples include "romance; adventure; purity; seeking what they believe is the "true Islam"; reacting out of anger over geopolitics; disillusionment with the societies they live in; lured by promises of family, home, even riches," (Speckhard 2015). Of the 20,000 people who have emigrated with the intention of joining ISIS, about one fifth are girls seeking marriage, some as young as eleven years old. In the United Kingdom, 56 or more girls immigrated to Syria to join the Islamic State (Dearden 2016). The group utilizes social media sites such as Twitter to meet, seduce, and recruit young women. This approach, and the fervor with which ISIS operates, is new among terrorist groups. The Head of the FBI's counterterrorism Division, Michael Steinbach, says, "ISIS is more aggressively recruiting women than any other terror group has," (Dearden 2016).

Child Services

Regardless of the role that they play in a time of conflict: child refugee, child soldier, child bomber, child bride, or just child citizen, simply being a child, someone

who is dependent on others, indicates a certain level of vulnerability. In the Middle East, two groups, Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon, incorporate a massive net of social services, many of which are directed towards children, into their political scheme. Both use these organizations and groups to further enable their violent retaliation against Israel.

Hamas, added to the list of groups regarded as "terrorist" by the United States in November of 2001, has a strong political presence in Palestine. In order to maintain their political power, Hamas must gain supporters. One way to do this is through offering social services in conjunction with specifically Hamas-oriented groups. For children specifically, they provide "mosques, schools, orphanages, summer camps, sports leagues," as well as many more (Levitt 2006, 5). These seemingly benign groups, however, are linked to terrorist acts. They can be used to inspire and integrate young children to support their mission and even maybe become a beloved martyr. These organizations can also be used for a range of things: from weapons smuggling to providing cover identities and employment to various operatives. Although many Palestinians may not align with or approve of Hamas' mission, many of them need the social services they provide. Because of this, Hamas continues to win political power; in 2006 they "won 44.5% of the vote and became the majority party," (Levitt 2006, 5).

Hezbollah is, in many ways, similar to Hamas. As of 2009, they, too, have a very powerful political presence, both on the national stage as well as within smaller municipalities. Hezbollah also provides a wealth of social welfare programs. Their services can be divided into three parts: the Social Unit, which includes organizations such as the Jihad Construction Foundation, which is responsible for major infrastructure

moves, the Islamic Health Unit, which is responsible for public health and, in 2009, was responsible for "three hospitals, 12 health centers, 20 infirmaries, 20 dental clinics, and 10 defense departments" and offered free or low-cost health care, and the Education Unit, which provides quality education to Lebanese children for less than the average private school cost (Flanigan andAbdel-Samad 2009). These different groups are often registered as NGOs. In doing so, it makes the organizations seem more legitimate, especially in the eyes of people who may not support Hezbollah politically and are wary of their involvement. It also protects the organization and it's actions under certain laws (Flanigan and Abdel-Samad 2009).

Conclusion

In March 2014, Save the Children released a video entitled "Most Shocking Second a Day Video" in an attempt to spread awareness about the Syrian refugee crisis. The video begins with a clip of a young British girl on her birthday, and progresses two years, during which time London is turned into a warzone wasteland. The young girl gets progressively less happy, less well fed, and less clean. The beginning of the video is her birthday, at which friends, family, cake, and gifts surround her. A year later, it is only herself and her mother at a clinic with a smaller cake. Yet another year later, she is reminded of her birthday by a social worker interviewing her (Stirling 2014). Her birthday, a day that normally is associated with positive feelings, is completely overshadowed by the hardships and traumas she has encountered and holds nothing for her any longer. In this progression, the viewer sees that she has lost her innocence and her

childhood. In the span of a three minute video, she has witnessed more hardship than any child should, and had to bear parts of it alone.

While this is speaks to the issue of the previous chapter, the portrayal children as inherently "innocent" in Western media, it does simulate the conditions under which some children around the world live. As stated earlier, violence can affect not only those directly involved, but also those living in surrounding areas. Children who are recruited as child soldiers and bombers, forced into sexual slavery as child brides, and whose lives are uprooted as child refugees may have gone through a similar transition: all was normal, and then, following only a few events, the world would never be the same.

In his article "Why Terrorists use Female and Child Suicide Bombers," John Sawicki (2016) writes that it "proves the inability of their families or government to keep them safe," (42). As discussed, children are among the most "innocent" subgroup of the human population. They are seen as young, vulnerable, and in need of protection. Rebel groups and terrorist organizations are not blind to this trope, and capitalize off of it. The innocence of children makes them a target, the perfect pawn to play in the game of war.

While this chapter consisted mostly of definitions, and attempted to illustrate some of the ways in which children are utilized by armed forces during a time of conflict, it focused on the more tactical, strategic, or explicit reasons behind the exploitation of children. In the next chapter, a more specific and theoretical approach will be used to pinpoint why terrorist organizations in particular choose to incorporate children into their overall plan.

III. FUTURE

As discussed in the previous chapter, children are utilized in a multitude of ways during a war effort. In this chapter, entitled "Future," one specific use of children by rebel and terrorist groups will be zeroed in on: children as a way to guarantee the future of the organization. Children are indoctrinated as a way to grow the organization in years to come by passing down the beliefs and ideologies specific to the group. In part because of their young age, children are impressionable. This is one of the reasons why groups are so interested in recruiting them. This is briefly mentioned in the second chapter, that because they are children, they do not have the morals and identity engrained in them that adults do. It is easier to change their values and beliefs to match that of the organization. This chapter will outline this phenomenon, citing three examples: Hitler Youth in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, the FLN in Algeria in the 1950s and 1960s, and the more current example of ISIS's workings in the Middle East.

Although this is not a psychology or sociology thesis, it is important to discuss the reasons why children are so vulnerable to indoctrination into terrorist and rebel groups and why they are so easily molded to support each organization's ideals. Aspects such as the formation of identity, socialization, and consciousness come into play during childhood, regardless of the environment a child grows up in. In his book, *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection*, Michael Wessells (2006) writes, "To grow up in a society is to learn a distinctive set of values and norms and to acquire a sense of identity defined along lines carved by language, culture, ethnicity, religion, and politics," (52). When a child is involved in a terror or revolutionary group, and develops in this environment, the

lines carved are much different, and may "reshape behavior, roles, values, and identities,"(Wessels 2006, 57). They are altered to reflect the values of the group, priming these children to really embody the ideals the organization promotes. Wessells (2006) continues, saying, "In this process of socialization, societies teach children to sacrifice for their group, fighting when necessary, and to honor their history and way of life," (57). When this society is the Islamic State, for instance, children are taught to sacrifice and fight for ISIS. Socialization plays a large role in the formation of a child's identity, and children can easily be socialized to the terrorist or rebel group's norms.

Similarly, Opiyo Oloya (2013), in his work *Child to Soldier: Stories from Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army*, argues that children's identities are manipulated and changed through a "repurposing of culture." This repurposing suggests a "deliberate manipulation of culture from its intended use in order to achieve another end," (74). This alternate end is convincing children of a group's ideals and turning them into the perfect soldier. The idea of culture is so important because it is a large factor in how children develop as they grow up. Oloya (2013) writes, "children's initial world view is formed within the family, community, and shared culture in which they live," (74). As argued above, when the "community" is ISIS, or a different terrorist or rebel group, and the "culture" a child is exposed to is the group's ideals and beliefs, the end result is a very different kind of socialization than that of a child growing up in a peaceful environment. This socialization based on the prevalent culture provides a suitable environment for the legacies of terror to be passed down to the next generation.

Children are so easy to socialize into the ways of the organization because their young minds are easily malleable. They are not yet fully psychologically developed.

They do not yet have a fully formed sense of danger and their own mortality, making them prime candidates for doing dangerous missions, such as suicide bombings, that adults will not do. Their moral development is not complete, either, making them more willing to buy into any half-baked or obviously flawed rules of the organization (Wessells 2006, 36). They may be gullible, and believe any promises of escaping poverty or, for example, that "as long as they were wearing a key around their neck when they died in battle, it would unlock their way into heaven," a line used in Iran (Singer 2005, 66). Groups can easily take advantage of the soft minds of young people via education, propaganda, the use of media, and religious extremism. In the 80s and 90s, for example, the Education Center for Afghanistan, run by the mujahedeen, published a series of children's books that were utilized throughout the region and served as "the basis of primary education," which taught children basic skills, such as math and the alphabet, via war scenarios (Singer, 2005, 67).

In his work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon (2011) paints a picture of a divided Africa, where there is a northern "white" region, and a southern "black" one. He writes that "it is all too likely that students from Black Africa enrolled in schools north of the Sahara will be asked by their schoolmates whether people live in houses in their home countries, whether they have electricity, and if their family practices cannibalism," (109). This example shows how easily children can pick up even the most far-fetched and negative beliefs of their community. Of course their classmates have not come from cannibalistic, depraved villages. This is simply the image that children of northern Africa (who are often white) inherited from the adults in their life. It also provides evidence to the fact that innocence, as discussed in previous chapters, is conditional. These white

children are "innocent" until they are taught that to be "black" is to negative and to be "white" is positive. Similarly, black children are innocent until they are perceived to be bad, dangerous, or less than. In this way, the perceptions that children have, as well as the perception outsiders have of children, are changeable. This impressionability can be seen in further examples, one being a study done among Nigerian children done by Wakil A. Askeun (2015) from the Department of Psychology at the University of Nicosia. He found that, despite efforts to unify the once divided country, negative news reports and social media representation prevent Southern children from forming positive ideas regarding their peers in North Nigeria. Those living in the north are still very much the "other," regardless of efforts to minimize ethnic prejudices. This same concept, the malleability of the mind of a child, can be applied to the indoctrination of youth into a terrorist or rebel organization.

Based on these examples, as well as the more developed instances to come, it is clear that children are easily influenced by the opinions and views of those around them. Each of the following groups has formed a community and environment that affects the way children living in these areas are socialized. Wessells (2006) believes that, depending on how they are socialized, children are more apt to serve in terrorist and rebel groups, saying, "through socialization, many children acquire a strong desire to serve and a willingness to sacrifice that leads them to join armed groups," (53). This desire and willingness primes them to accept the groups' ideals and values as their own. Hence, it is true that by recruiting young children, rebel and terrorist organizations are more likely to see their beliefs passed on through generations and survive well into the future.

<u>Hitler Youth</u>

An historic example of a group putting this concept to work is Nazi Germany and the Hitler Youth movement. To replace organizations such as the Boy Scouts, which was outlawed in Nazi Germany, Hitler's regime put into place Hitler-Jugend, a youth organization founded in the 1920s that trained boys from the ages of ten to eighteen ("Hitler Youth" 2014). There was a parallel organization for young women, Bund Deutsche Mädel, which was formed in 1930 and taught girls domestic skills along with Nazi beliefs (Kater 2004, 16). It is estimated that 82% of German youth was involved in the Hitler Youth movement at some point throughout Hitler's rule (Rempel 1989, 11). At the end of 1933, there were approximately 2.3 million members, which increased to 7.7 million in 1939. The point of these organizations was to "indoctrinate especially the young as the future bearers of responsibility," ("Hitler Youth" 2016). By 1936, Hitler deemed all other youth groups, such as the German Boy Scouts and Protestant youth organizations, illegal ("Hitler Youth" 2015). Additionally, through the Youth Ordinance of 1939, enrollment in either Hitler Youth or BDM was legally mandated (Kater 2004, 23).

The point of these youth organizations was to prime young people to continue the Nazi legacy. Hitler himself was quoted as saying:

> I am beginning with the young. We older ones are used up...We are rotten to the marrow. We have no unrestrained instincts left. We are cowardly and sentimental. We are bearing the burden of a humiliating past, and have in our blood the dull recollection of serfdom and servility. But my magnificent youngsters! Are there finer ones anywhere in the world? Look at these young men and boys! What material! With them I can make a new world (Rempel 1989, 2).

A new world is exactly what Hitler did, by mass-producing young followers who were all

the "future of pure Arians," whom he "indoctrinated with racist ideas, meant to motivate

them to fight on all fronts of the Third Reich and to execute its missions of cleansing the

country," (Dumanescu 2014, 142. In his book, *Hitler's Children: The Hitler Youth and*

the SS, Gerhard Rempel (1989) describes Hitler Youth as an "incubator that maintained

the political system by replenishing the ranks of the dominant party and preventing the

growth of mass opposition," (2).

This incubator depended on a variety of techniques to cultivate its following.

They reached the young population via education. Teachers were watched over to make

sure they were following the Nazi approved curriculum, and certain stories promoting the

Hitler Youth path were taught in class (Kater 2004, 38). Hitler Youth activities prepared

young people for combat, as well as instilled Nazi values such as incredible self-

discipline. Groups went camping and hiking to prepare for the life of a soldier. Athletics

were stressed, as the physical activity and competitive nature helped relay the idea of

"survival of the fittest," which was an underlying mantra among Nazis. Boxing was a

popular pastime among youths, an activity that Nazi Germany supported mainly because

it provided youths with combat training. Music and the arts were also supported because

they provided an outlet for propaganda. For example, one Nazi hymn, popular among

music classes, included the lines "We are marching for Hitler through night and dread/

With the banner of youth for freedom and bread," (Kater 2004, 33). During the school

vacations, members of Hitler Youth were dispatched to the countryside, where they

helped with agricultural work on German farms. This was to teach them about the honor

of "Blood and Soil," a Nazi idea that promoted rural living and attempted to prevent people from moving out of the country and into the cities (Kater 2004, 33).

When it came time to involve them in active duty during World War II, the members of Hitler-Jugend were ready. Throughout their time in the organization, they were told that they were to preparing for an "inevitable war," and, as they were promised, the war came. During the war effort, Hitler Youth members travelled to Poland to help German people who lived on farms in the area. These Germans lived to "Polish" standards, which the Nazi's found inferior. It was the job of these young people to reeducate them on how to live and change their less than acceptable "standard of nutrition and hygiene," (Kater 2004, 34). Children were also dispatched to camps filled with children, most often their Polish peers, to act as guards (Kater 2004, 35). At home in Germany, they went door-to-door collecting dry goods in support of other Nazi soldiers (Kater 2004, 36).

The doctrine of Hitler Youth was appealing to young people, as post World War I conditions in Germany were not ideal. The youth of the nation desperately needed something to believe in. There was a significant lack of "confidence in the government to provide jobs" among those still in school (Kater 2004, 5). Suicide rates among young people were the highest seen in modern Germany, about three times that of the entire population (Kater 2004, 5). The Nazi party seemed to be a party that was built for youth, with young people heading important quadrants of Hitler's regime, such as the SS and SA (Kater 2004, 6). Michael Kater (2004), in his book Hitler Youth, writes, "They were able to offer a political and ideological world view that granted status, certainty, and power to young people, so much so that teenagers of both genders could accept and abide

by the prescribed behaviors with hardly any qualms," (4). For disillusioned young

Germans, Hitler truly was the father figure, or Führer, that they needed to provide them

with support (Kater 2004, 4).

A mixture of these factors- education, extra curricular activities, a low morale, et

cetera- provided the Nazis with a perfectly willing and able population of young people.

The Nazi party provided young people with the feeling of support and protection they

needed. This was seen as positive and made the more severe, anti Semitic, fascist,

policies seem understandable. For those that were still on the fence about supporting the

Nazis, socialization factors convinced them otherwise. Hitler Youth was as big an

influence as school and family life. It took up just as much time and was just as prevalent

in the lives of young people. In fact, Hitler Youth had to make allowances in their

schedule to reflect fairness to education and family time. For example, administrators

promised that Sundays and Christmas would always be time allotted for family. They

also tried to keep Hitler Youth activities from running during normal school hours,

scheduling meetings and outings on Saturdays and in the evening (Kater 2004, 38).

With these heavy schedules, intense and all encompassing training, and the

eventual legally mandatory affiliation, it is clear that Hitler wanted to ensure that the Nazi

legacy would live on. He seemed to have high hopes for the future of the Nazi party, as

well as the new generation that he fostered. He is quoted in saying, "After these youths

have entered our organizations at ten and there experienced, for the first time, some fresh

air...and thus they will never be free again, for the rest of their lives," (Kater 2004, 37). It

is now clear, however, that Nazi Germany did not survive, and that, generally, the

ideology of the group has died.

Similarly to Hitler-Jugend in Nazi Germany, the National Liberation Front, or FLN, in Algeria incorporated children into their cause. In June of 1830, the French army invaded Algeria. The invasion and subsequent colonization was provoked by the Dey of the Ottoman Empire, who currently held control over Algeria. Allegedly, he demanded that France repay loans due to the Empire, and went after the French consul with a fly swatter when they refused to pay. The entire French nation was outraged, and decided to go after Algeria as a way "to punish the 'grave insult' of the flywhisk, end piracy, and reclaim Algeria for Christianity," (Evans 2012, 9). Louis Auguste Victor de Ghaisne de Bourmont, the French general at the head of the invasion, claimed that the culture, religion, and way of life of the Algerian people would not be affected by French presence (Evans 2012, 9). However, with the increased migration of many Europeans after the official annexation in 1842, this proved to be an empty promise ("Algeria" 2015). The country was heavily divided between the Algerians and French. The "refusal of the European settlers to grant equal rights to the native population led to increasing instability" in the country, culminating in the outbreak of a war for independence in 1842 ("Algeria" 2015). From this war, the FLN was born as a resistance group and later transformed into a political party. Two works deeply rooted in the FLN will be examined within this section to show how important the utilization of children was the organization.

A striking illustration of this can be seen in the character of Omar in the film *The Battle of Algiers* (1966). Omar represents the utilization and integration of children into

the FLN. Their purpose was population wide, and those under the age of eighteen were not excluded from the effort to rebel against French occupation. The first time the audience meets Omar, he is delivering a message to Ali La Pointe, who originally does not believe that this young boy could know about the inner workings of the rebel group. Omar consistently reappears throughout the film. He later is seen rounding up a huge group of children to knock over and trample a stumbling alcoholic at the request of an FLN member after the group outlaws vices such as prostitution and alcohol in the Casbah. There is no dialogue in the scene, just the children's continuous, shaming chant of "Wino" and the old man's screams. This, contrasted with La Pointe's equally violent moment when he shoots the head "pimp" of the Casbah, shows how assimilated the children of the community are to the ideals of the FLN and how willing they are to do their dirty work (Pontecorvo 1966).

Later, when the French army rounds up the Algerian people from their strike and forces them to go to work, Omar steals the microphone used to shepherd the masses and provides the group with an inspirational speech. He begins with the words "Algerians! Brothers! Take heart! The FLN tells you not to be afraid. Don't worry, we're winning. The FLN is on your side," before the French turn the microphone off. His speech is inspirational and speaks to all of the Algerians, men, women, and children, as their equal. He includes himself in his vision of the FLN and the resistance, calling them "brother" and referring to "we." In my opinion, Omar has every right to associate himself with the ranks of the FLN. Just a few minutes after his speech scene, he accompanies a group of high-ranking FLN members, including La Pointe, while they move from one hiding spot to the next dressed as completely covered Muslim women. His presence as a child makes

the group of women seem more believable, as he could easily be a son. However, their

men's pants and shoes, visible from the bottom of their robes, gives the group away and

subject them all to machine gun fire. Omar puts himself at risk for the good of the

organization in this instance, and is willing again at the close of the film, when La Pointe

includes him in the workings of the final plan that ultimately are foiled. At the end of the

movie, Omar refuses to leave La Pointe's side in their hiding place, despite their

impending death by explosives. Just a young boy, Omar makes it farther into the fight for

resistance than many grown men by utilizing his age to avoid death or imprisonment. His

age, however, does not affect his feeling of belonging and brotherhood among the FLN,

and fights until his final moments for the cause of the group (Pontecorvo 1966).

Based off these examples from *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), it is obvious that the

FLN had the support of the Algerian youth. Omar, a child, played a key role in the

movie's depiction of the resistance. He was not, however, an outlier. One of the most

poignant examples of youth support for the FLN occurs as the organization calls for a

weeklong strike in attempts to show the UN how serious the issue of French occupation

in Algeria is. A boy, younger than Omar, is selling newspapers on the street. He interacts

with two men. The first is dressed in business clothes, which the young boy simply sells a

copy to. The next wears a turban, a sign to the audience about where his alliance lies in

the conflict. The boy does not sell a copy of the paper to this man, but exclaims, "We did

it," with a huge smile as he runs away (Pontecorvo 1966). This sense of camaraderie and

pride that the young boy feels with this man, whom he may not have known at all, shows

the bonding power of the struggle for independence among the entire population of the

Casbah. Young people were very much included in the effort, and they obviously

supported the beliefs and ideals of the FLN (Pontecorvo 1966). The aspect of age did not

change the loyalty they felt, and, as can be seen by these examples, the inclusion of

children only helped the FLN.

While the Battle of Algiers may be a slightly fictionalized account of the Algerian

struggle for independence, the role of children in the conflict, as well as their sense of

brotherhood and belonging, can be backed up by accounts from Frantz Fanon's (2004)

book, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon, who lived in Algeria for a part of his life and

visited multiple times when he did not, was a member of the FLN and supported the push

for Algerian independence (Peterson 2016). In his book he talks about the importance of

youth multiple times. He describes a village setting, away from the urban center, where

the roots of unrest and rebellion are strong and continue to grow. Here, he says, live

children where "at the age of twelve or thirteen [they] know by heart the names of the

elders who took part in the last revolt, and the dreams in the douars and villages are not

those of the children in the cities dreaming of luxury goods or passing their exams but the

dreams of identification with such and such a hero whose heroic death still brings tears to

their eyes," (69). These young people, who live in awe of past revolts and live for their

village and values, combined with the youth of the city, whom Fanon (2004) deems as

"idle and often illiterate," (68) provide the groundwork for a revolt. This idle youth must

be occupied, and what better to occupy it with than the push for independence and the

end of colonization.

This readiness for young people to revolt against an occupying government such

as the French in Algeria is not uncommon. According to Wessells (2006), "children often

learn to define themselves in part by opposition to the enemy," (52). In the case of

Algeria and the FLN the enemy is the French. The youth population of an occupied

country also "see their choice to join armed groups and to fight as rational and

purposeful, and in their struggle they may be willing to use tools such as terrorism that

others regard as irrational," (Wessells 2006, 53). It makes sense, then, for Algerian youth

to join forces that rebel against the government in place, especially if their actions are on

"behalf of a higher cause," (Wessells 2006, 58). As for the previously mentioned

inclusion of youth by the leaders of the FLN, as seen in Omar's character in The Battle of

Algiers, Wessells (2006) also confirms this phenomenon. He writes, "The armed struggle

provides unwavering direction and creates solidarity with others who also engage in the

struggle," (58). The little boy selling newspapers includes himself and the man in the

turban in his phrase "We did it" feels this sense of solidarity. It is that unity that helps

children feel equal to their elders in the group and further share their ideology.

Later in his work, Fanon (2004) further solidifies the importance of the youth

population. He delves into what makes a successful national government after colonizing

factors have been eradicated and says that "A government that proclaims itself national

must take responsibility for the entire nation, and in underdeveloped countries the youth

represents one of the most important sectors," (141). He then slightly echoes Hitler's

mentality regarding the youth of the nation, claiming, "The consciousness of the younger

generation must be elevated and enlightened. It is this younger generation that will

compose the national army," (141). Fanon obviously supports the incorporation of

children into revolutionary struggles. When he says that youth consciousness "must be

elevated and enlightened," he calls for the education of children about the struggle for

national identity and autonomy that the FLN in Algeria supported. He calls these

educated children "conscious individuals" and argues that nations should "elevate the people, expand their minds, equip them, differentiate them, and humanize them," (137). Not only will this help with the revolution at hand, but also it will, as this chapter argues, engrain the beliefs of the group in the next generation of adults and make sure the ideology of the organization lives on.

ISIS

Both of the previously mentioned examples occurred over 50 years ago. However, it is obvious with the current on goings of ISIS in the Middle East that modern day terrorist groups are utilizing children for a similar, future looking purpose. The Islamic State is busy indoctrinating children in their territories of Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. For groups such as ISIS, children are easy targets. Their young minds are less entrenched in "the enemy's values," and are "easier to mold into ISIS"s vision," (Stern and Berger 2015, 212). This vision consists of many aspects, including expansion of the Caliphate, the quest for jihad, and a need for "pure" Islam. In September of 2016, a video was released entitled "Cubs of the Caliphate" depicting children being trained by ISIS. This video was one of the first depictions civilians outside of the Middle East received in depth information about the recruiting and training of children done by the group. It is obvious that one of the main reasons ISIS incorporates children is to spread their belief system.

The main goal of ISIS is to build their caliphate. Their ultimate goal is, in fact, to control a "global caliphate secured through a global war," (Lister 2015). In the glossary

of their book, ISIS: The State of Terror, Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger (2015) define the

caliphate as "a political-religious state led by a caliph," who is the "ruler of the Muslim

community; a political successor of Muhammad," presently Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (XI).

Currently, the Caliphate consists of areas controlled by ISIS in Syria and Iraq, as well as

some areas of Libya, with a strong presence in Yemen and other Middle Eastern

countries. In the future, the Islamic State hopes to maintain these areas, as well as expand

through the Middle East and eventually conquer their Western enemies in Europe and the

United States. ISIS does not care about pre-existing borders between countries, as all

territories will all be included in the Caliphate. According to ISIS's magazine, Dabiq,

"the shade of the blessed flag will expand until it covers all eastern and western extents of

the Earth," (Lister 2015). This Caliphate cannot exist without territory, which is why the

physical state is so important to ISIS.

In order to set up such a state, an education system needs to be put into place.

This use of the classroom was briefly discussed in "CH2," when mentioning ISIS and

child suicide bombers. In this education system, there is room to tailor mandated areas of

study, classroom settings, and other aspects to reflect the core values of ISIS. Along with

basic military training, such as how to assemble an automatic weapon, children are forced

to watch videos of executions, live executions, and eventually execute someone

themselves (Williams 2015). In a documentary from Frontline, *Children of ISIS*, a young

boy says that they are also taught "listening and obeying." They must repeat to their

teachers "I must listen and obey, even if I have to die," (Williams 2015). In a way, this is

more dangerous. It shows that they are not only learning fighting tactics and skills, but

also learning to be subordinate. They are learning how to be good followers of ISIS.

Wessells (2006) writes that one of the reasons why children are so easily controlled is because of their willingness to obey, especially when it serves as a survival tactic. When threatened with violence or harm, they obey the commands of their superiors (3). With the spread of their beliefs via this education system, their caliphate is able to grow and expand (Vinograd, Balkiz, and Omar 2014). According to a document written by the United Nations Human Rights Council, "education is employed as a tool of indoctrination designed to foster a new generation of supporters," (Human Rights Council 2014, 10). This generation of supporters is crucial to the future success of ISIS.

Essentially, ISIS is brainwashing children into supporting their ideals. They use the religion of Islam to convince young Muslim boys that what ISIS wants is justified. They claim that it is in the Qur'an that all Muslims need to work to kill infidels. It is easy to convince young children, who already believe in the basis of the religion, of certain readings of the Qur'an. In an article for NBC News entitled "ISIS Trains Child Soldiers at Camps for "Cubs of the Islamic State"," the brainwashing technique is described as a "strategic move aimed at ensuring the militant group's longevity by providing a ready-and-willing next generation of jihadis," (Vinograd, Balkiz, and Omar 2014). The use of religious extremism is another factor of socialization, which Wessells (2006) discusses in his book. He compares the call of jihad among Muslims to the draw of the Crusades to many Christians in medieval times. He also states that extreme interpretations of religion provide a moral justification for many of the violent actions done by jihadi groups (54). Regardless of age, ISIS motivates support via religion by saying, "the end of times is at hand, and if you want to be a true Muslim, on the right side of history, you had better join us," (Lister 2015).

It is the hopes of the Islamic State's leaders that their brainwashing version of indoctrination will be successful. In order for their caliphate to grow they need to mass-produce young followers to replace the ranks of those that are dying in battle and suicide missions. Not only are they attempting to build up their numbers and increase support, but also they are trying to create the "perfect" soldier, one who will not rise up and revolt. Stern and Berger (2015) write, "leadership decapitation is significantly less likely to be effective against organizations that prepare children to step into their father's shoes," (211). The Islamic State is doing just this.

This brainwashing is working, as can be seen in "Children of ISIS." At one point in the documentary, two different grainy videos of groups of young boys in black masks are shown. In the first, viewers can hear their pre-pubescent voices chanting, with subtitles translating, "Here, here, here comes the State of Islam. It will vanquish Bashar and (his daughter) Bushra, the lowlifes and the infidels," (Williams 2015). The next video, which features a different group, shows the eerily singing, "The World Trade Center was turned into rubble. If they call me a terrorist, I will consider it an honor, (Williams 2015)." Earlier in the film, an anonymous boy living in Turkey after escaping ISIS recalls that the youngest boy he has seen involved in a suicide mission was eight years old. He then says, "You will never be able to persuade him to give up his ideals," (Williams 2015). Given these examples, it is obvious that ISIS's tactics are successful and have produced a population of young people that have fully absorbed their beliefs and eerie mantras.

<center>Conclusion</center>

Although there are major differences between the three groups examined in this chapter: Hitler Youth in Nazi Germany, the FLN in Algeria, and the Islamic State, they do all share one thing: a need for their missions and beliefs to be survived through children that they indoctrinate. A child as the future is not a new concept, nor is it a complex one. As adults age, become inactive, or die, they must insure that their legacy will continue with the children that they teach. Not only must children replace their elders in the line of fire as a new generation of soldiers, but they also must continue to maintain and stay true to the beliefs and ideals of the group.

A large factor in successfully indoctrinating children is socialization. By beginning to "educate" or "brainwash" children at a young age, terrorist organizations and rebel groups are able to take advantage of their still developing psyche. Socializing them to believe that what the group is doing is right and just, whether it is by using extreme Islam or some other tactic to convince them, alters their identity. This identity can be hard to strip, as can be seen in the rehabbing of former child soldiers. Wessells (2006) claims that "children who grow up having learned fighting as their only means of livelihood and survival are likely to continue fighting for more years than adults," (3). Sometimes, children do not want to leave their organization. Some, especially those who decide themselves to join and fight, think of the group as their family, and many "find meaning in the group's activities," (58). He also writes, "many war torn societies have implemented national programs of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR)," in order to help these children. These programs will be examined in more detail

in the following chapter, "What is a Child." During the reintegration process, however, steps must be taken to attempt to shed the identity of "child soldier" and replace it with one of a civilian. In order for these identities to be successfully cultivated, certain steps must be taken, including the incorporation of Western, as well as native "psychosocial supports," (Wessells 2006, 160).

This proves that yes, revolutionary groups are successfully using children to make sure their beliefs survive and are passed down through generations. Though their methods may be cruel, they obviously alter the identity of children to the point that they fully embody the morals and mission of the organization. It is this identity, that of a child soldier, that is seen as necessary for the group's future existence. It is also the identity that must be rehabbed into that of a "normal child" after their involvement.

IV. WHAT IS A CHILD?

Throughout this thesis, the social categorization of "child" is a staple. The label of "child" has been used throughout, while defining child soldiers, child bombers, child brides, and child refugees, when discussing how children can motivate political action and public approval, and when exploring how children are depended on to further the agenda of an organization. However, the normal, across the board definition of "child"- under eighteen years of age- is used. The concept of childhood is much more complex than this. Depending on the culture, a child may be defined on things other than age. There are different terms that can be used, such as "adolescence," "youth," or "minor," all which add no more meaning to the immense gray area than the questionable term "childhood" itself. This chapter will attempt to pinpoint what exactly a "child" is, as well as how those involved in war can attempt to get back to that definition.

A child is normally seen as someone who is still developing (Schapiro 1999, 716). They may not be fully developed physical, morally, intellectually, or morally. For these reasons, we treat a child "as if her life is not quite her own to lead and as if her choices are not quite her own to make," (Schapiro 1999, 715). The ages at which someone is considered a child, however, varies among different cultures and societies. Dr. Jo Boyden, in "The Moral Development of Child Soldiers: What Do Adults Have to Fear?" (2003), claims "childhood is a social construct that varies in form and content across cultures and social groups. What is deemed fitting, good, or bad for children is largely defined by localized understandings and values," (348).

Michael Wessells (2006) claims that child soldiers "want above all to be normal and like other children," (181). What, though, does that mean? In the first chapter, "Innocence," I discuss the idea that innocence is a common assumed trait among children, even though the term is not always black and white. Similarly, the term "childhood" and what a normal experience is, is superfluous. David Rosen, in his book *Armies of the Young* (2005), tries to attack this paradigm. He states that the western idea of "child" came about with the industrial revolution, when the education system became more formalized and more and more children were completing higher levels of education. This clear-cut separation between child, those who were still in school, with adults, those who instead held a job, helped classify "child" as under the age of eighteen (7). He continues to give examples of foreign communities where there are different landmarks for adulthood.

In some cultures, however, this definition of "child" is not always accepted. Wessells (2006) gives examples of some sub-Saharan communities, where traditional values of the village are still very much alive. In these communities, "a person is regarded an adult once he or she has completed the culturally scripted initiation ceremony or rite of passage into manhood or womanhood," (5). He states that the average age at which a child goes through this is fourteen (5). Other than these traditionally cultural societies, there are many other communities around the world where the maturity and "adulthood" of a person is measured by their contribution to the community. Depending on the "terms of labor or social roles," some teenagers may be considered adults because they have taken on an adult role. Some instances of this can be seen in families when a parent dies and the oldest sibling has to fulfill the role of mother or father. Another

example, provided by Jo Boyden (2003), is that of girls in certain traditional societies. He writes, "by age twelve to fourteen, girls in particular may bear a burden of work very similar to that borne by adult women," (348). Often, upon puberty and menstruation a girl is considered to have transformed into a woman. At this point, she is married off rather quickly and assumes the role of wife, mother, and matriarch.

Rosen (2005) provides more specific examples, citing young men of the Dinka culture in Sudan. These boys are considered man enough to fight at ages between sixteen and eighteen. Similarly, in Venezuela and Brazil, boys and girls who grow up in the Yanomamo culture are given free reign to decide when they want to reach "warrior" status. They are encouraged to "set their own pace in determining when they wanted to take up the adult role," (4). This speaks to the agency of children, that they can make their own decisions- a trait that, according to Schapiro (1999), would classify them as "adult," (716). For the role of "soldier" or "warrior," it is not hard to justify why teenagers, sixteen or seventeen year old boys, are well suited. They are young, spry, and physically fit. In some cultures, it does not make sense to withhold the most able of the population if they are willing.

Even in the United States, arguably the most "western" nation, and a driving force in the United Nations, does not always uphold the Straight Eighteen concept. Although the official age requirement to enlist in the armed services is eighteen, seventeen year olds are allowed to sign up with parental permission (Rosen 2005, 135). Although it is "fully compliant with W.S. law and all of its treaty obligations," and oftentimes 17-year-old soldiers are not allowed to actively fight in war zones, it is not always a perfect practice. During the Iraq, for example, underage enlistees served in active duty in war

zones. Though this may technically be inoffensive, particular human rights organizations can easily chastise the United States for partaking in the recruitment of children (Rosen 2005, 135).

<center>From Soldier to Child</center>

One way to get children out of conflict and back into their communities is through a DDR program. There are three parts to DDR, Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration. Occasionally, countries add an additional R, which stands for Rehabilitation (Wessells 2006, 154). The United Nations, which organizes the majority of official DDR programs, stresses that a program should be multidimensional, including "political, military, security, humanitarian, and socio-economic dimensions," ("What is DDR?" 2017). It is crucial for a program to be designed to work with other national and international groups, as well as the authorities of the country, to work towards a common goal: peace ("Key Considerations in Planning and Implementation" 2017). These programs are used for all combatants, men, women, and children alike. Under the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child, children, specifically, are "entitled to DDR benefits such as psychosocial assistance," (Wessells 2006, 157).

The first step of the process, disarmament, can be defined as "the process of soldiers turning in their weapons, which may be collected and stored safely and subsequently destroyed," (Wessells 2006, 154). In formal programs, authorities set up reception areas where group members can enter to surrender their weapons. The weapon then is registered and the member receives a written receipt. Not everyone, however, can

participate in DDR. Before you can enter the reception area there are a series of tests to prove that you are eligible for the program. One must prove affiliation with or membership to the armed groups named specifically in the treaty or DDR plan ("What is DDR?" 2017). For most, however, the disarmament period "symbolizes the end of hostilities and marks the beginning of the transition out of military life (Wessells 2006, 158). One of the most famous examples of this symbolic laying down of weapons is the Flame of Peace ceremony that occurred in Mali in 1996. At this ceremony, members of the Malian government as well as many heads of the Tuareg rebel groups joined civilians for a burning of thousands of weapons. This emblematic bonfire followed years of tension and multiple attempts at treaties, finally showing a cohesive movement towards peace via disarmament ("A Timeline of Northern Conflict" 2012).

Demobilization, the second phase of a DDR program, "involves both the formal disbanding of military groups and the release of combatants from a state of military mobilization," (Wessells 2006, 155). Militants are no longer soldiers, and need to prepare to reenter into society as a civilian. Upon officially exiting an armed group, they "officially exit the armed group and receive an identification card validating their discharge," which is necessary to be allowed access to different offerings of the DDR program (Wessells 2006, 159). Occasionally, children enter into ICCs, or interim care centers, for as long a period as needed. ICC's provide:

- "A safe space in which children live while their families are located and preparations made for family reunification," (Wessells 2006, 159)
- Health care and psychosocial support, and

- Care packages of things such as clothes, or an allowance to buy necessary items (Wessells 2006, 160).

Children may stay in ICC's for however long is necessary, from days to months. Occasionally, a step called "reinsertion" is included in demobilization. Reinsertion is the "transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families," ("What is DDR?" 2017). It focuses on psychosocial aid to prepare them to rejoin their communities.

The final step of DDR programs, reintegration, is much more long term than disarmament and demobilization. During reintegration, "former soldiers transition to civilian life, achieving a viable civilian role that offers an alternative to soldiering" This obviously may take years (Wessells 2006, 155). Reintegration focuses mainly on reunifying and rebuilding families, as this is one of the most important types of support a child ex-combatant can receive. Along with family reunification, there are four other types of "support" that a successful reintegration program will achieve: educational support, psychosocial support, job training, and community mobilization (Wessells 2006, 160). Not only should there be both formal and informal support structures in place to target these five different areas, but there should also be organized "peace building activities to promote reconciliation, community caring, awareness, and coping mechanisms that protect children," ("Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups: Key Non-Negotiables" 2017). In addition to creating new programs, there should also be a push for reinforcement of preexisting, local ones ("Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups: Key Non-Negotiables" 2017). It is crucial for children to have the support of their community, as the population of a whole needs to accept

them positively in order for them to feel comfortable taking on a new role, one that is not "soldier."

Often, however, DDR programs fall short. There is much that is still unknown about what will truly help ex-combatants, and conditions vary from culture to culture and scenario to scenario. Regardless, DDR programs are not custom built to suit the needs of children and, as a result, many fall through the cracks and do not receive the help they require (Wessells, 2006 156). One reason is that "DDR processes for children typically reflect universalized views of children that fail to recognize how children's social class, ethnicity, gender, and particular vulnerabilities and assets shape their needs and experience of the post-ceasefire context" (Wessells 2006, 156). As discussed earlier in this chapter, not every child is the same, nor is every experience of "childhood." This common misconception about what a child "should" be hinders success of child targeted DDR programs. There can be no one size fits all approach. Depending on age, gender, social class, and if they are mentally or physically disabled, children have different needs.

Additionally, DDR programs cannot work successfully unless there is peace. DDR programs can only officially be instated in a peace treaty or other agreement. Graça Machel, however, found that as of 1996 "no peace treaty to date has formally recognized the existence of child combatants," (19). She recommends, "peace agreements and related documents should incorporate provisions for the demobilization of children," (19). Not only is it crucial that a peace treaty discussing a DDR program take into account the needs of children, but it should also aim to be successful in itself. An unsuccessful peace treaty would result in attempts at peace building, DDR programs, and other moves towards reunifying without the full compliance of all parties. If fighting is still occurring,

then any child entering into the program has either escaped or deserted, which can lead to dangerous consequences if the group discovers them (Wessells 2006, 173).

Girls especially struggle in these programs, as their needs are very much specific to their gender. Often, girls are not as likely to participate in DDR programs, whether they are not able to or choose not to. While some armed groups will surrender their fighters, some do not want to give up the girls they have procured as wives or sexual or domestic servants. Thus, they do not allow them to join the DDR process. Some also do not think they are eligible, as they did not fight and do not have weapons to give up. Others choose not to enter into the process due to a sense of shame. As discussed in the section on child brides, there is a stigma against girls who are involved sexually with rebels. They may not want to come forward about their experiences in an armed group because of the overwhelming fear of impending shame, fear of being rejected by their communities, and the guilt of sullying their family's honor. Unfortunately, these worries about rejoining society are not uncalled for. Young girls who have become new mothers during their time in the armed groups and their children often struggle the most during reintegration. Their families often reject them and their communities neglect and abuse them. The stigma against forced wives is very much intact in many villages and cultures and negatively effects girls abilities to reenter their societies ("Girls" 2017).

The motivation to change DDR programs to better suit children, however, is hindered by the existence of what the United Nations terms "release and reintegration" programs. In their eyes, DDR programs are not suitable for children, both for the reasons stated above, as well as some other fundamental differences. A child cannot go through a disarmament period because many child soldiers do not have weapons of their own to

give up. Militant groups arm many. Because of this, handing in and registering a weapon

is not mandatory for release and reintegration, like it is for DDR. Additionally,

demobilization is not needed because in order to demobilize a child, one is admitting that

they have been mobilized. According to the United Nations, the majority of child soldiers

were forced into service, not mobilized by the group. Since the recruitment and use of

child soldiers is illegal under international law, release and reintegration can occur at any

time. DDR, however, can only be spurred by a peace treaty or agreement between actors.

Regardless of which program, DDR or release and reintegration, a child goes through, it

is a sensitive issue. Any program regarding children "should be heavily overseen by child

protection agencies in coordination with the United Nations and governmental actors

involved in broader DDR programmes," ("Key Topics- Children" 2017).

For some children, reintegrating into their old community does not provide them

with the experience of childhood that they want to find. An example of this is the

situation of children in Nepal that joined the Maoist movement. Throughout the late

1990s and early 2000s, the Maoist People's Liberation Army, or PLA, became the

popular communist armed group in the Nepal Civil War. Members went door to door to

attempt to recruit young teenagers, especially young girls. At this time, Nepal was

crippled with a severe caste system, rampant gender discrimination, poverty, and a

struggling government making various human rights violations. It was incredibly

uncommon for girls to receive an education higher than the elementary level, and

arraigned marriages, often to men much older than them, was often the future that many

women faced. For young girls, the PLA offered a "sense of empowerment, a way out of

domestic slavery, freedom from a rigid caste system, and an opportunity to learn from

women leaders," (Kohrt and Koenig 2009, 27). Joining the group, in many cases, was a better alternative from the childhood that they were previously leaving.

In the case of the PLA, education was a major attraction for young people, especially girls. If institutionalized education had been more readily available and accepted, their recruiting may have been less successful. Graça Machel (1996) echoes this sentiment, encouraging countries to utilize education as a way to help children formerly involved in armed conflicts, as well as to attempt to prevent children from being recruited in the future. She claims that education is "more than a route to employment. It also helps to normalize life and to develop an identity separate from that of the soldier," (20). As previously mentioned, education is stressed in DDR programs, as well as release and reintegration programs for similar reasons. Not only does it build skills, but it also helps to stimulate relationships among peer groups and helps to build self esteem (Machel 1996, 20).

This example shows that not everyone experiences childhood the same. Not only does the positivity and experience of childhood differ, but also the view of who is a child and what childhood entails is not the same from culture to culture. David Rosen attempts to dive into this issue, especially concerning the concept of "child" soldiers. Different communities have involved children in conflict in different ages. It all depends on what that culture deems as "mature" enough or "ready" for war. In this way, there are different boundaries, both in age and maturity, between child and adult.

<u>Ghost of a Childhood</u>

Regardless of what their community defines as a "child," and what their "childhood" should look like, regardless of which definition of child they work towards achieving, their involvement in such a violent and traumatic environment may affect them in a way that would hinder their reintegration. There has been a number of negative effects- physical, psychological, emotional, circumstantial- from which children may suffer from as a result of their involvement.

Regardless of what their involvement in conflict is, whether they are associated with an armed group or force or simply living in an affected area, children are at high risk of multiple health problems during wartime. In her report for the United Nations, Graça Machel (1996) identifies multiple physical ailments that frequently affect children. Issues of malnutrition and disease are common. Often, food supply routes are blocked off or otherwise interfered with by combat, landmines, or other issues. Fields of crops are destroyed in the wake of violence and farm animals are slaughtered. Entire communities fall apart, which can limit citizens' access to goods if local stores are closed or farms specializing in high demand crops are abandoned. The negative impact of a lack of nutrients is compounded by the "destruction of health services and programs and of water and sanitation systems," (41) as well as the fact that many vaccination programs cannot reach rural areas for the same reason that food deliveries cannot (44). From not getting enough vitamins and minerals to not receiving proper health care, children in war torn countries are not prepared to fight the numerous diseases that overtake populations, such

as diarrhea, cholera, respiratory infections such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, malaria, and HIV/AIDS (Machel 1996, 42).

In addition to malnutrition and disease, children suffer physically from injuries. Approximately three times as many children that are killed are "seriously injured or permanently disabled," (Machel 1996, 43). In fact, Machel's United Nation report (1996) claims that "armed conflict and political violence are the leading causes of injury, impairment, and physical disability and primarily responsible for the conditions of over four million children who currently live with disabilities," (43).

Psychologically, there are a number of stressors that come to light after a former child soldier has rejoined his or her community. It is no secret that "armed conflict destroys homes, splinters communities, and breaks down trust among people, undermining the very foundations of children's lives," (Machel 1996, 49). Graça Machel (1996) lists "separation anxiety and developmental delays, sleep disturbances and nightmares, lack of appetite, withdrawn behavior, lack of interest in play, and...learning difficulties," as well as "anxious or aggressive behavior and depression" in adolescents and teens (50). These symptoms make sense, as it is obvious that the involvement in armed conflict is a traumatic experience. In a survey done by the United Nations in Rwanda in 1995, it was found that 80% of children surveyed had "lost immediate family members," (Machel 1996, 49). Additionally, "more than one third had actually witnessed their murders," (Machel 1996, 49). Even if children do not participate in violence, they witness the terrible conditions of war.

Although different cultures may define the terms "child" and "childhood" differently, "all cultures recognize adolescents as a highly significant period in which

young people learn future roles and incorporate the values and norms of their society,"

(Machel 1996, 50). Wessells (2006) writes that among them, "uncertainties about

identity, jobs, and roles are among the greatest life stresses for many former child

soldiers," (181). They also often struggle with variations of posttraumatic stress disorder.

Wessells documents an example of this in an interview with a former combatant. The

child testifies that:

> I had bad dreams and I woke up thinking that somebody wanted to kill me. Now I
> wake up still from bad dreams. I don't remember my dreams but I feel afraid
> when I wake up. At this time, I am still constantly afraid. Sometimes I change
> from feeling happy to feeling sad very quickly. The villagers here don't call me a
> militiaman but I am the only one who has come back. (182).

This account provides evidence of Machel's belief that sleep disturbances and nightmares

are a product of the stress felt during conflict. It also shows how seriously returned child

soldiers take their reintegration into society, as well as the question of what role they will

take on once they get there.

Julia Dickson-Gomez (2002) performed case studies on four young adults who

spent the majority of their childhood and adolescence in El Salvadorian guerilla camps

under the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front. Their stories revolve around

negative psychological effects, such as issues of trust and resentment. They are required

to take on the role of "adult," and the responsibilities it implies, much too early either

because their parents were killed or because their parents have simply given up out of

their own depression (335). On the opposite side of the spectrum, there were some that

never learned self-autonomy, responsibility, or how to take care of themselves, thanks to

the rigid disciplinary measures enforced on them in the camps (345). People were

constantly telling them what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. In these ways, children living under the rule of armed forces also suffered.

On top of general psychological wear and tear, the child soldier is also apt to feel extreme guilt. Although there many former child soldiers are not prosecuted for their crimes (none, in fact, have "ever been tried before an international tribunal," as of 2015, and the issue of trying children has been overall ignored by international courts (Rosen 2015, 158)), often because of the belief that they were coerced and not acting of their own free will, they still committed acts of violence and terror. The global community may not hold them responsible, but they often do. Krisa Thomason (2015) writes, "when child soldiers reflect on their actions they report feelings of guilt, shame, and remorse, and they sometimes believe themselves to be bad people for doing what they did," (116). Even if they did not want to join an armed force or, for example, shoot a gun, they did. Many question themselves and wonder if they were "endorsing the intentions of their captors?" (116).

The multiple stressors of armed conflict can affect children long term. Despite efforts at normalcy, they may grow up to be high risk for certain behaviors. Since depression is common, suicide rates among former child combatants are high. Additionally, they are more likely to turn to alcohol, hence high levels of alcoholism (Dickson-Gomez 2002, 347). Young women, especially those who had been forced into sexual slavery, struggle with their past so much so that they become prostitutes (Dickson-Gomez 2002, 349).

<u>Case Study: Uganda</u>

An example of the aspects discussed in this chapter can be seen in the former child soldiers of the Lord's Resistance Army of Uganda. Active since the late 1980s, the Lords Resistance Army has been heavily involved in a conflict between the Ugandan government, themselves, and the citizens of Uganda. Led by Joseph Kony, the rebel group, relying heavily on guerilla warfare, has claimed that it is fighting for the good of the Acholi people, an ethnic group residing mainly in the northern section of the country, while simultaneously targeting them (Dunn 2010, 7). Kony has made claims and allusions that the Acholi people must "be purified by violence," (Allen and Vlassenroot 2010, 10), which can be seen in the "estimated tens of tuhousands of civilians that have been killed or kidnapped," as of 2005 (Dunn 2010, 7). Additionally, Kony and the LRA has specialized in the abduction and forced recruitment of Acholi children (Dunn 2010, 7). There has been much research done on the experiences of these children, as well as on their reintegration and recovery. A thorough and all encompassing source regarding the experiences of children in Northern Uganda is the Survey of War Affected Youths, or SWAY, produced by Jeannie Annan, Christopher Blattman, and Roger Horton, and summarized in "The State of Youth and Youth Protection in Northern Uganda," a report put together for UNICEF (2006). This report will be used throughout the case study to provide real-world examples of the concepts discussed above.

In Uganda the concept of the child, more specifically of "youth" is outlined in their Ugandan National Youth Policy, written in 2004. The policy "does not look at youth as a homogenous group with clear-cut age brackets but rather as a process of change,"

(Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 3). It also takes into consideration that "many young people by the age of twelve have assumed adult responsibilities," (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 3). It seems that the country of Uganda has pinpointed the superfluous nature of the definition of childhood that this thesis stresses. Unlike the United States, where groups attempt to enforce strict, black and white guidelines on age, maturity, and the concept of child, the Ugandan National Youth Policy understands that the "transition to adulthood is less the passing of an age threshold than it is the acts of taking a spouse or having a child," (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 3).

Some of the findings of the report support the previously discussed issue of DDR programs and how they fall short, especially for former child combatants. For children in Northern Uganda, the UPDF, or the Uganda People's Defense Force, set up reception centers to intercept, process, and aid them before they return home. Of those surveyed, SWAY reports that "half of the youth go straight home," without engaging in any kind of DDR, reintegration program, or reception center at all. Additionally, there is only a 30% chance that a child returning home after abduction will receive any sort of service or aid from a nongovernmental organization or governmental program (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 63). Those children that do enter a reception center normally only stay for a short period of time. However, there have been reports of abuse towards former LRA combatants at these centers.

SWAY reports that 10% "report long detentions" and an additional 10% "report beatings or other abuse," (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 63). A long detention is defined as "more than two weeks," which, in comparison to the norm of two days, is long (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 63). As for abuse and aggression, occasionally the

UPDF treats children harshly for their affiliation with the enemy, the LRA. One child is quoted in saying:

> It was unfortunate that when I was just about to cross the Padibe road, I met with the UPDF mobile group. They opened fire at me, so I lifted my gun up and threw it down and headed towards them. At that time, I was no longer afraid. I just put it in my heart that if I was going to die then it will be God's will. They had already shot at my trousers and tore it with bullets. When I reached them, they were very aggressive. They beat me up so badly and tied me up. They said I was a typical rebel that should just be killed but some of them said that I shouldn't be killed (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 65).

Although situations such as this do not happen regularly, it is unfortunate that 10% of children experience this.

Despite these negative aspects of Ugandan boys experience with reintegration, SWAY accounts for certain trends that support previously made claims about the process. One major example of this is the importance of relationships within their home community. As mentioned, family, particularly the existence of strong bonds between family members, is one of the most important social support structures that former combatants can rely on. It is no surprise, then, that those with "high family connectedness and social support were more likely to have lower levels of emotional distress and better social functioning," (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 15). Those that lost immediate family members, especially their fathers, had much higher levels of distress, as well as aggression and depression (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 15). Additionally, former child soldiers in Northern Uganda also reported the importance of having the support of their peer groups. A strong group of friends supplied them with sympathetic listeners who can relate to their story and their current role in society. According to SWAY, 50% of those young men surveyed claimed, "spending time with friends was their way of coping when feeling distressed," (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 18). This was especially

true among those who did not have as much support among their family members. It was also common for those who had been abducted to develop strong bonds with those who had gone through similar traumas. Often, they felt that other abductees were the "only ones they could trust with the details of their own abduction," (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 20).

Along with social support from the community, their families, and their peer groups, the Acholi youth also leaned on spirituality during reintegration. The Acholi culture is heavily intertwined with spirituality and cosmology, an aspect of which is the existence of spirits called "cen." When young people returned to their communities after involvement with the LRA, it was often believed that they were haunted by cen. 50% of those surveyed reported being "cleansed," (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 17). These cleansing rituals were common, community events, often performed by a village elder. The purpose was to rid the individual of the spirit haunting them, thus attempting to separate their being from the "ghost" of what they had experienced.

On top of potential spiritual baggage, a small, yet significant, percentage also obtains injuries. Although only 13% of those surveyed return home with "serious injuries," which, in this case, is defined as an injury that hinders them from doing daily tasks. Of those injured, more than half received the injury while abducted, with 30% being directly caused by members of the LRA (i.e. physical abuse during abduction or training) (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 46). Those that sustained serious injuries struggle upon reintegration because they are unable to get a job or go to school, due to a variety of mobility and pain problems. If they do get a job, it is often less skilled and offers lower wages. Those with injuries were 33% more likely to have difficulties with

family life, which has already been established as an important factor in a successful reintegration (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 46).

Of the young boys surveyed, it is clear that children in regions affected by the LRA, regardless of whether they were abducted or not, were psychologically effected. SWAY lists their own list of symptoms for what they call "emotional distress." It includes:

> Irritability, inability to concentrate, nightmares and insomnia, hyper arousal, feelings of loneliness and helplessness, feeling unloved, feeling sad, extreme fear of losing ones family, keeping to oneself when worried, crying when thinking about the past, headaches, chest pain, and shaking from 'over thinking' (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 13).

Those suffering from "emotional distress" are not just those abducted, but also those who lived in targeted villages. No child was safe, as can be seen in the findings. Of those abducted, 89% "witnessed beatings or torture of other people." Of those who were not abducted, the number who answered yes was still significantly high: 58% (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 11). For the next question, whether they have "witnessed a killing," the numbers were only slightly lower, 78% of those who had been abducted answered yes, as did 37% of those who had not been. In fact, "only three [out of 741 boys surveyed] never experienced any of the traumatic events listed," (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 11). From these statistics, it is clear that the LRA's violence was widespread and public, and negatively affected a majority of Northern Ugandan children.

Although both children who were abducted and those who were not witnessed violence and hardship, former abductees are more likely to be aggressive and emotionally distressed. The trauma of their experiences stays with them for an extended amount of time. One of the surveyed youths, who was twenty five at the time of the interview, still

remembered the day he was abducted by the LRA vividly and said "As I live, there is no single day that has passed when I have not thought of what I went through that day. There were, of course, many other problems afterwards but this was so much that every day I think about it," (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 13). Although he remained with the group for an additional six months, the day of his abduction is something that stays with him.

Because of this emotional distress, it is difficult for former LRA combatants to fully grasp their role in their society. Earlier in this chapter, the issue of finding a roll to fulfill other than that of "soldier" is very important for those reintegrating. In Uganda, "there is a tremendous amount of importance placed on fitting into one's social role, including behaving like others, obeying elders, and being helpful and respectful," (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 16), placing even more pressure on ex-combatants than what already existed. If they struggle with an injury or illness, or excessive emotional distress, it may be more difficult for them to find that role and commit to it.

Similarly, many former abductees struggle with the concept of guilt and self-blame mentioned earlier. In the cases of those interviewed for SWAY, it seems that the most guilt is felt in regards to something that happened to a friend or family member. Although "only a small percentage of the abducted are forced to kill family or friends, many of them seem to struggle with a tremendous amount of self-blame," (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 69). Those that do feel guilt or self-blame feel that there must have been some action they could have taken to prevent harm or death from coming to another person. Understandably so, those who blame themselves or feel guilty are 50%

more likely to show symptoms of emotional distress (Annan, Blattman, and Horton 2006, 15).

These examples from Northern Uganda illustrate almost every aspect of this chapter. It shows that the specific culture has it's own definitions of what a youth, or a child, is. It focuses in on one specific group known for both utilizing children in combat as well as affecting the lives of those living in villages in the Northern Uganda area. With the help of the results from the Survey of War Affected Youths, the reader is given an example of a reintegration program, as well as the multiple set backs it faces. Although the program is not necessarily successful, there are parts of the reintegration process that benefit returning children, such as familial and community support. Additionally, the long-term physical and psychological affects that armed combat has on children can be explained and illustrated.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

It is clear that this chapter cannot answer the question of its title. The term "child" is a socially constructed role, which hinges on the type of culture in which it is imagined. To answer, "what is a child," one would have to take into account every different culture, society, religion, and setting, to create a fully comprehensive definition. What this chapter can do, however, and I hope that it succeeded, is show that, regardless of how you define childhood, often the idea of child soldiers is not conducive to that definition. Armed conflict is never a healthy environment for children, regardless of what a "child" is. There are certain programs, such as DDR and Release and Reintegration, that attempt

to aid children in reconnecting with their communities and reclaiming the childhood that they may have missed out on. However, these are not perfect programs. They lack in many ways, especially when it comes to their success rates with children. To combat this, it is obvious that there need to be programs tailored primarily to children. Not just to young males, but also to females who often fall through the cracks. This will not be an easy transition, nor will it be seamless, but efforts from the United Nations, UNICEF, NGOs, the local government, and local organizations must be put in place that target the specific issues of children, as well as work together to increase success rates.

Hopefully, if the trend of DDR programs veers more towards the inclusion and understanding of children's needs, then the negative psychological and physical effects of armed conflict may be mitigated. No concept of childhood includes the illness, injury, or psychological issues that come from growing up in a climate of violence and conflict. The goal of these programs, a successful reintegration, should attempt to help aid children in with the physical ailments, such as malnutrition with education, diseases with medical aid, and injuries with rehabilitation and physical therapy. Additionally, it should seek to minimize any psychological damage brought on by the trauma of watching/partaking in violent acts. Because current programs fall short in these areas, children who return to their communities are often distressed, anxious, and in both physical and emotional pain. These circumstances are not conducive to having a childhood, any kind of childhood

CONCLUSION

The concept of "child," it seems, is an enigma. Many have an inherent need, as adults, to nurture and protect those under the age of eighteen. This need often goes hand in hand with an assumed level of innocence- children are frequently viewed as the pinnacle of the blameless. This ideal of innocence is not always true, and takes away from the legitimacy of a child's own actions and decisions. Without this belief of innocence, however, the universal trope of "childhood" would crumble. By thinking that all children are vulnerable and in need of protection and supervision, we are able to label all people under the age of eighteen as "child." However, just as we cannot assume religion, sexuality, or any other sort of label based on a person's age, we cannot assume that they are a child without taking into consideration the context of their existence.

As I have established in this thesis, children are not always the passive bystanders- which is how most often they are portrayed. Their innocence, which is used so often to motivate action, is imagined. Although outsiders may consider children to be overly vulnerable, unable to fully form opinions or take political action, they are indeed their own agents of change. In her article "Nation Gender, and Identity: Children in the Syrian Revolution," Manal al-Natour (2013) discusses the role that Syrian children had in revolution. The role they played was not passive: it was one of action and dissent. She writes, "school children ranging from ten to fifteen years of age were the first to declare their protest against Bashar al-Assad by spraying anti regime slogans and graffiti on the walls of their school on March 18, 2011 in Darra," (30). Despite underestimation of children and their moral and mental strength and independence, they are contributing

both positively and negatively to the world of armed conflicts in additional ways than those of which we are aware.

This Syrian example, however, is only a small part of the role children play in armed conflict. More often, the role they play is not one they choose, but one they are forced into. The assumption that they are weak, that they are vulnerable, that they must be saved, is arguably holding children back from truly harnessing the impact that they could have on war. Internationally, the United Nations pushes for the rights of the child to be considered and for their voices to be heard. However, these voices are drowned out by our own utilization of those we work so hard to protect. Both the "good" and the "bad" participants of war, normally seen as the state and the non-state, or the Western and the "other, respectively, "instrumentalize" children.

In a sense, we are no longer fighting wars just with guns or bombs, but also with children. Opposing sides of armed conflicts utilize the children of the region to fight. The armed group uses them as porters, messengers, domestic and sex slaves, soldiers, assassins, bombers, as well as in a number of other ways. They use the threat of abduction to spread fear throughout local communities, and increase that fear when they pit forcibly armed children against their families, neighbors, and friends. On a larger scale, they use the image of the child soldier to spread a similar feeling of fear among international communities, where the thought of a young child holding, let alone using, a gun goes directly against their sensibilities. With the incorporation of children, armed groups are saying, "Yes, we are that dangerous. We are that heartless. Fear us."

In response, other nations fight back with their arsenal of accusations and portrayals of the severely wronged populations of the war torn area. Images of starving

mothers attempting to nurse their small, near dead babies accuse the group of the intense famine caused by the blockage of roads and lack of necessary resources. Pictures of scared, crying children show the spiking numbers of unaccompanied children flowing into refugee camps because their parents have been killed before their eyes. Teenage boys who, if they were American, would be in high school that can't go to school because they are missing a limb show both the dangers of living in a war torn area or being forced to fight alongside rebel forces, as well as the lack of proper health care. The armed forces wreaking havoc across regions are at fault for all of these scenarios, a mantra that the media, human rights organizations, and governments use to their advantage. They use this idea of suffering children to fight back, effectively creating a smear campaign against the group. They use this propaganda to raise money, gain public support, stimulate political or military action, and generally expose the horrific actions on an international scale.

But where are the actual children in all of this? What both sides utilize in this "war" are only images of children. For each camp, the "child" they use as ammunition is simply a role anyone can fill. Any child can hold a gun, just like any child can pose for pictures at a refugee camp or in front of a burning building. Those utilized are simply picked by the opposing groups because of convenience. Based on availability and circumstance, children fill the roles that the armed group, non-state actor, NGO or government need them to embody. This type of utilization goes hand in hand with the issue of the Teju Cole's "White Savior Industrial Complex." In the midst of Western population's need to intervene in other countries, we project our standards- our standards of what a child is, our standards of what constitutes freedom or happiness- onto other

communities and other cultures that simply do not share our interests, beliefs, or values. It does not account for the cultural norms of the society, or any underlying issues that may cause children to feel it is necessary to join armed groups. Instead of fighting root problems in developing countries, the Western world chooses to fight only the blatant human rights violations- the use of children as combatants or sex slaves.

This speaks to the issue of agency of children. If adults across the world write children off as unable to act on their own accord, then how will we separate the mask or role of the "child" from the person beneath it? Despite their age, education level, size, or gender, "children" are people. In times of conflict, they are negatively affected in many ways: economically, socially, physically, and psychologically. When people focus on them as the innocent victims of a war crime, or as the participant in an armed conflict, the larger social and political issues that contribute to why conflict is happening are overlooked.

Regardless of the flawed portrayals of children, from the assumption of innocence to the assumption of the categorization of "child," this young population is heavily intertwined with armed conflict. They are a key functional part of the plan of rebels, revolutionaries, and terrorists. They are a vehicle of motivation and blame via reports and pictures for the media, the government, and humanitarian organizations. Whether they are deemed a soldier, a bride, a refugee, a bomber, or just a civilian, they are, in fact, War's Children.

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