

**A Comparative Analysis of the Recruitment, Deployment and
Treatment of Child Soldiers by Non-State Armed Groups In Sierra
Leone, Sri Lanka and El Salvador.**

Stacey Tamara Al Darmaki.

**This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of Kingston for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.**

May 22nd, 2010.

KP 0924988 5



Abstract.

Over the past decades concern, legislation and research related to the phenomenon of child soldiers has increased in both scope and depth. Much is known about the experiences that children undergo, their recruitment both voluntary and forced by non-state armed groups, their training and deployment and the abuse that they are both forced to endure and forced to commit against others. This thesis builds upon this knowledge by exploring in a systematic and comparative way, not previously undertaken, how the type of conflict impacts on child soldiering.

Three conflicts, each with a non-state entity which used child soldiers were comparatively assessed. One a criminal enterprise rooted in the extraction of resources, one ethno-nationalist in origin and revolving around claims and counter-claims to sovereignty over a particular territory and one a left-wing insurgency which aimed to reconfigure the social, economic and political structures of the state. Each had unique aspects but there were also some similarities. To allow for a fuller understanding of these differences and similarities it was useful to think of the conflicts as ranging along a spectrum. The spectrum that was used was that of new war/old war which allowed the conflicts to be situated according to their characteristics but which also enabled, through use of the moving continuum, the conflicts to be seen over the course of the time period in which they were conducted, as they moved along the spectrum in response to changes in the conflict.

To explore how each conflict affected child soldier's experiences the research included interviews with relevant experts, the collection of quantitative and qualitative data and an extensive overview of the literature. A comparative assessment of how support for the group, access to resources, the groups' use of violence, the manipulation of culture by the groups for their own ends and whether children had space to act on their initiative underpinned by the triangulation of the information collected enabled robust conclusions to be drawn.

The findings showed that the hypothesis that the type of conflict impacts on children's recruitment, deployment and abuse within non-state armed groups holds true. A study of the aforementioned factors highlight that the type of conflict the groups were involved with acted to restrain, or not, the actions of the group towards children in each of the three areas, recruitment, deployment and abuse. Yet the findings showed great complexity, in some important ways the groups' behaviour showed similarities. These were related in part to the trajectory of the conflicts and in part to similarities between the groups in terms of motivation and support, factors that at times mitigated group behaviour and at others times allowed groups to act in extreme ways.

Acknowledgments.

Over the eight long years since the commencement of this research I have built up a long list of those who have aided and abetted the completion of this work. Some of these people I have lived closely with and others I have never met in person. To each I owe a debt of gratitude and heartfelt thanks. Those not mentioned by name nevertheless similarly deserve recognition and despite not publicly acknowledging their contributions for a variety of reasons, I hope they are aware of my appreciation.

Firstly I wish to thank my institution, Kingston University. Without the encouragement and keen desire of the university to encourage students of all backgrounds and all life situations this research would not have been completed. Through illness, multiple national and international relocations, and sabbaticals to have children, the university continued to belief in the worthiness of this project. Without the generous scholarship granted by the Graduate School I would never have been able to undertake this research.

To my supervisor, Philip Spencer, whose loyalty and understanding have been critical factors in the continuation of the work, under often difficult circumstances, I must give particular thanks. The effort shown by him and the other individuals on my supervisory team over the years was outstanding and made every difference to the project. The advice and assistance given to me

was invaluable and the lessons learnt will stay with me. Ilaria Favretto and Spyros Sofos also have my appreciation for their comments and feedback which were always useful and I know often given despite busy schedules of their own.

This research would not have been possible without financial support from a number of organisations and individuals. All those who contributed deserve not only gratitude but genuine respect for encouraging and enabling research in a topic that because of its focus met the criteria of few funding bodies.

Without such organisations, that are willing to fund the less easily categorised research, studies of this type would be almost impossible to finance. The Allen and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust made a sizable contribution towards tuition fees and the cost of research trips. The Reid Trust made a contribution towards living expenses. The Newby Trust also gave a grant for use towards the expenses of my research in the UK.

I spoke with and interviewed many individuals and organisations during the time I spent doing this research. Special thanks go to those who let me interview them during my visits to London, Geneva, New York and Washington. A full list of those involved may be found at the back of the thesis but I would like also to express my gratitude to those sources that had to remain anonymous. Others I spoke with via phone and email but their contributions were equally of value. In addition to supplying me with insights and information, many also validated for me the importance of the

contribution of this type of research and encouraged me to continue to strive in order to complete it.

The time it takes to complete a PhD infringes not only on the life of the student and her supervisory team but also on the lives of those around her. I firstly have to extend thanks to my close friend, Joanne Rice. Your sofa and your company have been invaluable on my many trips to London. Violetta and Analie; thank you for making my trips and my long hours of study the last two years so much easier to endure in so many ways. All of my friends, too many to name here, have been truly supportive during this process and their efforts on my behalf will always remain in my heart.

To my parents, Gareth and Brenda Rees, the encouragement that you have always given, and the self-belief you have instilled in me gave me the confidence to endeavour to achieve my dreams. You have taught me that adversity is just a rock to be climbed and that it is the journey, not the accomplishment that shows a person's true worth. My achievements are your triumphs.

To my husband, Sa'eed, your sacrifices, your support and your belief have been unwavering. You have endured absences, neglect, and being left literally 'holding the baby'. Your practical assistance in providing finance, arranging flights and hotels and holding down the fort while I am travelling have been

central to my ability to continue this research over the last two years. Your belief in me and my project; and your determination that despite all obstacles it will be completed has been critical to its successful conclusion. I thank you for your understanding, your guidance and your constant encouragement.

Finally to my boys, Dhiyab and Idris, your birth gave this project greater meaning. You pushed me to show you by example that with hard work and dedication everything is possible. You ensured that the children about whom I am writing never faded into faceless obscurity. This work is dedicated to you and all the children who like you brought joy and happiness into the world only to have their childhoods stopped short through no fault of their own.

Contents:

Introduction.	p 1
Evolving Concern in the Twentieth Century.	p 5
Defining the Child Soldier.	p 7
Child Soldiers and International Law.	p 10
Intra-State Conflict and Child Soldiers: A Legal Vacuum?	p 15
International Law and the Challenges of Implementation.	p 22
Chapter One: Summarising the existing Literature.	p 26
The Literature: An Overview.	p 26
Understanding Children and Conflict: The UN role.	p 30
Expanding the Debate: Further Research on Child Soldiers.	p 32
Children's agency within specific conflict types.	p 41
The implications of gender in conflict.	p 48
Culture versus conflict.	p 50
Moving Forward: A Conflict Based Approach to Studying Child Soldiers.	p 53

Chapter Two: Research and Methodology.	p 61
Case Studies.	p 67
The emphasis on non-state groups.	p 75
Sources and data: Secondary Data.	p 76
Primary Qualitative data.	p 82
Primary Quantative Data.	p 93
 Chapter Three: Conflict and Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone.	 p 97
Section One: Overview of the Conflict.	p 97
The Systemic Crisis: Protracted Conflict and New War in Sierra Leone.	p 102
Multiple actors.	p 107
External Linkages.	p 112
Section Two: The Nature of the RUF.	p117
Control and Command.	p 120
Military Strategy and Tactics.	p 124
Resources.	p 125
Use of Violence.	p 128
Section Three: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone.	p 132

Recruitment.	p 137
Control and Deployment.	p 144
The Role of Females within the RUF.	p 154
Abuse.	p 161
The “Attraction” of the RUF to Children.	p 165
Conclusion.	p 173
Chapter Four: Conflict and Child Soldiers in Sri Lanka.	p 176
Section 1: Overview of the Conflict.	p 176
Ethno-nationalist Conflict in Sri Lanka.	p 182
Multiple actors.	p 188
External Linkages.	p 191
Why focus on the LTTE?	p 195
Section Two: The Nature of the LTTE.	p 197
Control and Command.	p 200
Military Strategy and Tactics.	p 205
Resources.	p 210
Use of Violence.	p 213
Section Three: Children and conflict in Sri Lanka.	p 217

Recruitment.	p 219
Control and Deployment.	p 227
Girls and the LTTE.	p 233
Abuses.	p 243
The “Attraction” of the LTTE to Children.	p 245
Conclusion.	p 255
 Chapter Five: Conflict and Child Soldiers in El Salvador.	 p 261
Section One: Overview of the Conflict.	p 261
Revolution in El Salvador.	p 267
Multiple actors.	p 273
External linkages.	p 275
Section Two: The Nature of the FMLN.	p 277
The Coalition Effect.	p 281
Control and Command.	p 282
Military Strategy and Tactics.	p 286
Resources.	p 288
The Use of Violence.	p 290
Section Three: Children and Conflict in El Salvador.	p 294

Recruitment.	p 297
Control and Deployment.	p 309
Girls in the FMLN.	p 315
Abuses.	p 320
The “Attraction” of the FMLN to Children.	p 324
Conclusion.	p 337

Chapter Six: Conclusion. p 342

Recruitment: Question of Scale and Age.	p 345
Impact of competition.	p 349
Political constraints: The importance of support.	p 351
Resources.	p 354
Mechanisms for recruitment.	p 356
The impact of violence and the coercion of recruits.	p 360
Control and Deployment: Creating effective soldiers.	p 368
Children as weapons: Strategy, tactics and task allocation.	p 369
Gender and the role of girls.	p 373
Abuse.	p 376
Children’s agency.	p 380

Implications for Policymakers. p 386

Conclusion. p 393

Appendix 1: Bibliography

Appendix 2: List of Interviewees.

Introduction.

The aim of this thesis is simple, to add to the current understanding of the child soldier phenomenon by looking at the topic in a new way. By using a comparative approach, the differences and similarities of children's experiences can be illuminated in a systematic way that has not been undertaken previously. By looking at the issue through a comparative conflict perspective, whereby it can be seen if the type of conflict is responsible for those differences and similarities, the thesis can draw conclusions that can contribute to current debates and increase knowledge of the issues involved, this may also have some resonance for policy and practice in the field.

The main question that this thesis seeks to explore is in what ways the type of conflict impacts on how children are recruited, deployed and abused by armed groups. I propose that the thesis will find that the type of conflict does influence children's experiences of recruitment, deployment and abuse within non-state armed groups in the following ways.

- I believe that groups involved in politically motivated conflicts or in conflicts in which local support is essential to meet group aims, which

includes access to resources to fund the conflict, will show greater restraint in their recruitment, deployment and abuse of children.

- Conversely groups who have few political considerations or whom do not have to rely on the communities in which they are situated because of the type of conflict in which they are involved are more likely to use coercion and force and that the use of violence used against recruits in these conflicts would be more extreme.
- I suggest that groups, which rely on forced recruitment, will have a greater need for indoctrination and are therefore more likely to manipulate local beliefs in order to control recruits than groups who rely on voluntary recruitment where recruits are self-motivated.
- I would propose that groups that use force to recruit children and which have a high level of abuse against recruits are more likely to circumvent children's capacity to use agency than groups that rely on voluntary recruitment.
- I suggest that in times of stress, such as when there is greater competition between groups or when the group faces the prospect of defeat, standards of recruitment and deployment previously adhered to by the group will decline.

To investigate this in a way which is systematic and which offers the greatest understanding of how conflict impacts on child soldier's experiences a comparative approach is called for that looks at set factors within each case study followed by a comparative analysis of the findings. Thus the structure of each case study chapter will be very similar (as discussion of unique factors also need to be included it is impossible for each case study structure to be identical). Each will start with an overview of the specific conflict with attention paid to the role of competition and external actors in each case. This will be followed by overviews of the non-state armed group being studied in each case, its motivations, its structures of command and control, its strategy and tactics, its use of resources, and its use of violence. The second half of each case study will be concerned with how the conflict impacts on children's experiences as soldiers, how they are recruited, how they are deployed and controlled, the role of girls within the group, abuse within the group and in what ways children are attracted to the group. The thesis will conclude by comparatively assessing the findings of the case study chapters. How the type of conflict impacts on the question of scale and age of recruits, the impact of competition, the importance of political considerations and support, the effect of resources, how mechanisms of recruitment were affected by the type of conflict, the impact of violence, indoctrination and the use of children as weapons, the role of girls, the effect on abuse and the impact on children's ability to use agency.

However before we begin the case study analysis it is important that the reader has some knowledge of the issues concerned with the child soldier phenomenon and a deeper understanding of the scope and aims of this research. Thus, the introduction will continue with an exploration of how concern for children used as soldiers developed, the difficulties in defining the problem, how this concern moved on to shape international legislation and the challenges of implementation.

Chapter one will offer a critical summary of the existing literature. It will review the different types of literature available, assess the impact of research and discuss current debates such as the importance of understanding cultural influences, the role of small arms and light weapons, the role of children's agency, girls as soldiers, and the existence of a new military doctrine that sees children as a weapon. Chapter one concludes by offering a conceptual understanding of the thesis and explaining in more detail which areas of interest will be addressed by the research.

The methodology chapter sets out the reasoning behind the selection of the case studies and explains in depth the characteristics of each conflict, where it falls on the old war/new war spectrum and the relevance of the chosen approach to the research. It sets out the reason for the focus on non-state armed groups and critically reviews the sources and data used in the research.

The first three chapters offer a critical overview of where research on child soldiers is currently located and sets out the conflict based approach that this thesis uses to look at the child soldier phenomenon in a new way. They contextualise the findings of the case study chapters. With this in mind, the thesis now turns to highlighting how concern over child soldiers has developed in the twentieth century.

Evolving Concern in the Twentieth Century.

This thesis evolved from a master's dissertation, which looked primarily at legislation and its reach from a European perspective. As the research progressed, I began to understand that although much existed in terms of the legislation available to help protect children it was not always enforceable. Many reports cite that there are 300,000 children working as child soldiers, of which cautious estimates place approximately 120,000 in Africa, and children under 18 years of age have been reported as being used as soldiers in 33 recent conflicts.¹ The secretive nature of child recruitment means that exact numbers of children involved are impossible to calculate.

¹ Machel, G., 2001. The impact of war on children. London: Hurst and Company. p 7. McConnan, I., and Uppard, S., 2001. Children- not soldiers: Guidelines for working with child soldiers and children associated with fighting forces. London: Save the Children. p xiii. Many armed groups target children between 12-16 years of age. Gow, M et al., 2000. The Right to Peace. Children and Armed Conflict. Working Paper no 2. World Vision International. Accessed on www.wvi.org [20/05/2004]. p 42.

It seems clear that the majority of forced child recruitment is in the developing world, although voluntary recruitment of 16/17 year olds does occur, for example, in the UK/USA with parental consent and this is not against international law where the country concerned has not signed up in full to the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child. There are a variety of reasons for the decline in the forced recruitment and deployment of child soldiers in the Western hemisphere. One is that Western nations have enjoyed conditions that have lent themselves to a backlash against child recruitment. Economic conditions, which lengthened childhood and the provision of free and easily accessible education, provided a space for children to be protected from recruitment. Most conflicts, which the West has been involved in during recent times, have been fought far from home, and not for purposes of immediate self-defence. Populations were less willing to sacrifice conscripted persons, including children, under these circumstances, relying instead on professional armies. This can be seen in the abolition of conscription in most Western nations. As troops were sent overseas by the military rather than being embedded within local populations there was greater separation between civilians and the military, and control of who was enlisted and deployed was more easily monitored, assisted by efficient birth registers.

A strong moral argument has developed that it is wrong to use children as combatants. Increasingly since the end of World War Two, Western nations have seen children as protected persons and placed moral barriers to their use in the

field of combat.² Societies' changing concepts of human and child rights altered the perception of child recruitment, re-conceptualizing conscription as negative and dangerous with few benefits for children or the wider society. This is in marked contrast to earlier periods of history in the West, for example, during the American Civil War boy soldiers were celebrated. Nevertheless despite an increasingly vocal moral argument that child soldiering is wrong it is still occurring in many parts of the world.

Defining the Child Soldier.

Before we begin to analyze the problem, we must first be able to define who we mean when using the term 'child soldier'. One of the most important debates concerning child soldiers has to do with how to define the problem. What is a child soldier? At what age is a combatant also a child? Which tasks does a child connected to an armed group have to perform to be defined as a soldier? There is still no clear definition of a child soldier, due in part to ambiguities within the law.

When defining what we mean by 'child soldier' we might distinguish between two types of recruitment at a conceptual level; children either can 'volunteer' or

² The humanitarian case is that modern warfare is particularly brutal and children should be protected from it. Rosen, D., 2005. *Armies of the Young: Child Soldiers in War and Terrorism*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. p13.

are forced to join armed groups. Although in reality distinctions between voluntary and forced recruitment may become blurred, it is still worthwhile trying to distinguish between conflicts in which children are forcibly recruited and conflicts in which they are not. However, as with many areas of child recruitment the issue is a complex one and not easily simplified. Armed groups within the same conflict may choose different recruitment methods. Within specific armed groups recruitment practices may shift over time, they may switch between 'voluntary' and forced recruitment. Why and when this occurs may answer questions about the conflict as well as shedding light on recruitment practices. For children themselves their reasons for choosing to join an armed group or avoid recruitment may tell us something about how the conflict itself is evolving.

Secondly, we must define what we mean by 'child soldier'. It seems clear that legally the use of children from 15-18 years of age as child soldiers is not strictly prohibited; there are many exceptions in which children of this age can be recruited. However, it is also accepted in the majority of states that persons under the age of 18 years are not fully capable of exerting political agency and thus the age at which political rights are granted, such as the right to vote or stand for a parliamentary seat, is set at 18 years.

Which children are soldiers is also contestable.³ Are children that are part of armed groups but who do not actively fight soldiers? Should they be given the same rights and protections as children who are combatants? By not recognising such children we leave them in a vacuum - they are part of the armed group and therefore are likely to face the same penalties if caught. They are equally likely to be a target for enemies of the group to which they belong, and without their logistical support, the group would not be as effective.

This being the case a best practice definition has evolved using the existing legal definitions and building upon them to result in the creation of the Paris Principles (2007), developed during a conference hosted by UNICEF and the French government and attended by representatives of 58 countries.⁴ This non-legally binding declaration, which aims to show commitment by the attending states to complying with their legal obligations towards children in times of conflict, is based on the strictest interpretation of existing international, regional and domestic legislation and offers a strong and clear framework within which to situate the study. As such, this is the definition that will be used by this research. The Paris Principles define ‘any person under the age of 18 years attached to an [state] armed force or [non-state] armed group that has been used in any capacity,

³ Denov, M., 2010. *Child Soldiers: Sierra Leone’s Revolutionary United Front*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p 3. Wessells, M., 2006. *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. p 6.

⁴ UN News Center., 8th February 2007. ‘UN envoy for children in conflict welcomes commitments at recent summit’. www.un.org accessed on 03/04/2012.

directly or indirectly, as a child soldier'.⁵ Most writers on child soldiers, as I will do, use the highest standard definition, which is currently the Paris Principles of 2007, but it should be noted that this definition goes beyond current legally binding legislation.

Child Soldiers and International Law.

The earliest legislation relating to children in combat can be found in the Geneva Conventions (GC) of 1949, which was influenced by the knowledge of the horrors that had come before it during the preceding decades and that those abhorrent practices were increasingly being directed at and experienced by civilians. In recognition of the shortcomings of the GC in 1977 the Additional Protocols were drawn up to extend protection to those caught up in non-international wars or wars of national liberation, which was a type of warfare not covered in the original 1949 Convention.⁶ The importance of the GC and its additional Protocols are that they contain the laws and provisions relating to the regulation of conflict and as such constitute International Humanitarian Law. This includes the rules of engagement as well as laws relating to the protection of civilians and prisoners of war. They are so universally recognized by states that they have become part of customary law that all states are expected to adhere to, whether they are signed up

⁵ Denov, M., 2010. p 5. Dallaire, R., 2010. *They fight Like Soldiers, They Die Like Children*. USA: Random House. p 160.

⁶ Rosenblatt, J., 1998. Children in the War Zone. *Family Law*. 28. p 630.

or not. This means that regardless of which conventions and legislation a specific state has ratified with regards to child protection generally and more specifically the protection of children that are soldiers, it is expected to abide by the minimum standards laid out by the GC.

All the provisions of the GC that apply to adults also apply to children and there is some limited additional protection offered to children in their own right.⁷ The age of the child is set at 15 years and below although some provisions are only for those less than 12 years of age. Most significant was the setting of 15 years as the minimum age for recruitment during times of war. This means that any state force recruiting children during a time of conflict where the child is below the age of 15 years is breaking international customary law regardless of which laws it has actually ratified.⁸ The GC is however only applicable in times of war and thus children that are recruited and deployed in times of peace - where official war has not been declared or recognised, or where the armed groups they belong to are designated as terrorists or criminals- have no protection under the GC. In recognition of this, there was a drive to increase the rights of children in peacetime. In 1959, the United Nations (UN) adopted the Declaration on the Rights of the Child. Under the Declaration, children are awarded special

⁷ Harvey, R., 2003. Children and Armed Conflict, A Guide to International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law. International Bureau for Children's Rights. Accessed through www.essax.ac.uk/armedcon. p 9-10.

⁸ Sainz-Pardo, P., 2008. Is Child Recruitment As a War Crime Part of Customary International Law. *The International Journal of Human Rights*. 12(4). p591.

protection and care.⁹ The right to have access to adequate education, health and housing is awarded and the exploitation of children is prohibited, all issues that relate to children's use as soldiers.¹⁰

As well as general provisions for children, this Declaration also contains the principle that children under the age of 15 years should not be recruited by armed forces. This was the first international declaration specifically regarding children that included a provision on child recruitment. Although the Declaration on the Rights of the Child is not legally binding, it neatly supported the provision made within the GC and was a further step towards protecting children from recruitment at a young age.¹¹

In recent decades, dissatisfaction with this lower age limit has led to calls for an increase to 18 years as the minimum age at which children can be legally recruited.¹² This is in line with the age at which most sovereign states grant political rights. However it can be argued that the GC, formulated in line with the status of childhood at the time of its creation, an era in which most children left education at 14 years and became economic contributors to their family's welfare,

⁹ For a full account of provisions see Human Security Network, 'Children and Armed Conflict: International Standards for Action'. Accessed through www.reliefweb.int.

¹⁰ Freeman, M., 1996. *Children's Rights- A Comparative Perspective*. Aldershot: Dartmouth. p 2

¹¹ The 1977 Additional Protocols to the GC built on this declaration by making the age of 15 years for recruitment legally binding under International Humanitarian Law.

¹² According to Jenny Kuper the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the result of debates over the nature of previous attempts to protect children. Personal communication, 24th March 2004.

still adheres to the reality of life in much of the developing world where childhood is much shorter than in the West. This reality meant that many governments - including even some Western governments who relied heavily on voluntary conscription of 16/17 year olds - were not inclined to increase the minimum age limits for recruitment.¹³

As such even when the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was ratified in 1989 it lacked the degree of protection called for by humanitarian groups, as governments were not keen to completely limit their ability to conscript their own citizens. Two important advances were made however. Firstly, an agreement was reached to limit the recruitment of children between 15-18 years of age to voluntary conscription with parental consent. Forced conscription of minors was prohibited. Secondly, governments legislated that it was unlawful for non-state armed groups to recruit any child under the age of 18 years, even where the child was willing to volunteer.¹⁴

As we shall see in later chapters this double standard has caused innumerable problems. Many armed groups, particularly those who see themselves as de facto state entities or those who are opposing unpopular and corrupt governments, argue that they are not breaking the law by accepting voluntary recruits of 15-18

¹³ British policy is to comply with the CRC OP except in cases whereby withdrawing armed forces personnel less than 18 years of age might endanger troops or risk non-deployment of units. Harvey, R., May 2000. *Child Soldiers- the Beginning of the End*. *Childright*. 164. p 18.

¹⁴ Harvey, R., May 2000. p 18.

years old because they are the legitimate authority of their people. Others take a pragmatic view and argue that if the government can recruit 15-18 year olds it gives them an unfair advantage that the armed group cannot counter except by also recruiting minors. In either case, it is difficult for governments that recruit children from 15-18 years of age to effectively discredit non-state actors that do the same.

The age of 18 years is the standard for all other provisions of the CRC and so this aberration clearly contravenes the spirit of the CRC. Sheppard sees this aberration as a weakening of existing legislation. This belief is echoed by the Council of Europe who felt that ‘in view of the specific nature of military activities, it does not seem possible that the prescribed age limit be lower than that required for dangerous or unhealthy occupations’.¹⁵

In recognition of this anomaly, and taking into account the recommendations of the 1996 Machel report commissioned by the UN to look at children in conflict situations, the Optional Protocol (OP) to the Convention on the Rights of the Child was introduced. This allowed states to voluntarily adopt the age of 18 years for their minimum recruitment age. To encourage ratification of the OP it is possible to sign it without first having signed and ratified the CRC. This was unprecedented within human rights legislation and shows how seriously the UN

¹⁵ Sheppard, A., 2000. Child Soldiers- is the Optional Protocol Evidence of an Emerging ‘Straight 18’ Consensus’. *International Journal of Children’s Rights*. 8(1). p 11.

takes the issue of child soldiers. Yet even though the intent of the CRC Optional Protocol was to strengthen the CRC, it has only had partial success.

Importantly, the CRC Optional Protocol can be applied to all types of conflict.¹⁶ This breaks with previous legislation that focused on international conflicts at the expense of civil strife and addresses the current reality that children are more likely to be recruited and abused in an intra state context.

Intra-State Conflict and Child Soldiers: A Legal Vacuum?

Traditionally internal conflict has been poorly regulated. The thawing of the Cold War led to greater co-operation in formulating legislation at the international level and children's rights were an apolitical issue that unified the UN member states.

A focus on intra-state conflict was much needed given that most child soldiers are involved with internal conflicts and the existing legislation was very patchy.

The first legislation to deal with internal conflicts consisted of Protocol 1 of the GC, created in 1977, which dealt with wars of national liberation. Protocol 1

¹⁶ Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict *Volume 2173, A-27531*. Accessed through www2.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/crc-conflict. [13/06/2011]. p 236.

omitted to define an acceptable minimum age for voluntary recruitment.¹⁷ It was seen as futile to prohibit persons from fighting in these wars as they were fighting for the right to rule themselves, therefore there were no restrictions – including those based on age – placed on voluntary recruitment. This could be read as tactical acceptance that in certain circumstances the recruitment of children is justified.

Protocol II of the GC also applies to conflicts of an internal nature but is more applicable to how most current conflicts are categorised. It extends the same basic protections to civilians and combatants that are granted in international conflicts, but it is difficult to apply so in reality offers little protection to child combatants. This is due to the criteria that must be met to qualify for Protocol II status. By requesting Protocol II status, the government is publicly admitting that the opposition holds territory and is capable of responsible command. Few governments would wish to confer legitimacy on their opposition in this way.¹⁸ The majority of governments would instead choose to deal with the insurgents under domestic criminal law thus leaving those caught up in the conflict unprotected; this leaves children vulnerable to both a loss of protection and the possibility of criminal charges.

¹⁷ Goodwin-Gill, G., and Cohn, I., 1994. *Child Soldiers: the role of children in armed conflict: A Study for the Henry Dunant Institute, Geneva.* Oxford: Clarendon Press. p 57.

¹⁸ Harvey, R., 2003. p 10.

For children where the Protocol is applicable the act of application itself lends some insight into the nature of child recruitment within the conflict. To meet the criteria the opposition must 'exercise such control over a part of its territory as to enable them to carry out sustained and concerted military operations'.¹⁹ The opposition must also have responsible command structures in order that they can implement policies. This suggests implications for child soldier recruitment in such conflicts in two ways. Firstly, application of the Protocol is contingent on the capacity of the armed group to exert its military control over territory. Children in such conflicts may find it difficult to avoid recruitment by leaving the area making it easier for armed groups to use forced recruitment. Secondly, it would suggest that any group using children has done so as a policy choice. Given the degree of control, the armed group must assert for Protocol II to be applied it is unlikely that rogue commanders are recruiting children without permission from the group's leadership.

The difficulties of applying Protocol II are such that since 1977 it has only been applied in two cases, in both of which children have been recruited - that of El Salvador and the Philippines. In reality, many civil wars do not meet Protocol II criteria because often the opposition do not control tracts of territory but instead use purely guerrilla tactics, or the armed group may not appear to have sufficiently responsible command structures, or the government is not willing to publicly admit the extent of the rebels influence and control.

¹⁹ Harvey, R., May 2000. p 19.

Despite the lack of specific legislation regarding child recruitment within internal wars prior to 1989 there did exist various treaties and legislation that could have been used to attempt to address the issue. The development of further alternative avenues of legislation since 1989 could also be used to supplement the 1989 CRC at this moment in time. In order to fully protect children in armed forces in the present climate, with many deficiencies in existing treaties and laws, it is important to look towards all existing legislation and treaties that can be used to complement the GC and the 1989 CRC.

As Weissbrook has shown in his 2002 report on contemporary slavery, some forms of child soldiering, such as those in which girls are forcibly abducted and used for sexual purposes, can have slavery or forced labour legislation applied to them.²⁰ The 1926 League of Nations Slavery Convention states that forced labour is only permissible for public purposes and that states should 'prevent compulsory or forced labour from developing into conditions analogous to slavery'.²¹ This obliges states to prevent the recruitment of children into armed forces that will not offer regular conditions of pay or the chance to leave the armed group.

The Forced Labour Convention no 29 (1930) defines forced labour in Article 2(1)

²⁰ Weissbrook, D., 2002. *Abolishing Slavery and its Contemporary Forms*. New York: Anti-Slavery International.

²¹ Slavery Convention. Signed at Geneva on 25 September 1926. Accessed through www2.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/slavery.pdf. [13/06/2011]. p 2.

as 'all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily'.²² This applies to all forced recruitment of children by any party. The International Labour Organisation Convention 182 also prohibits 'forced or compulsory recruitment of children [under 18] for use in armed conflict'.²³ This is in line with the 1989 CRC, which also prohibits forced recruitment of minors.

This type of convention is of particular importance when looking at the protection available to girls taken by armed forces to act as 'wives' or 'comfort women' for combatants. These girls are usually considered to be the property of the men they are given to and are often prevented from leaving these men in the post-conflict period, especially in cases where they have had children. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that 'no one shall be held in slavery or servitude: slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms'.²⁴

Although many conventions are not legally binding, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court is, and lists in Article 7 'enslavement as a crime against humanity.' This inclusion could be used to aid child combatants that have been forced to work in conditions of slavery and to charge those who have

²² Forced Labour Convention. 1930. Accessed through www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C029. [13/06/2011]. Article 2(1).

²³ Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention. 1999 (no. 182). Accessed through www2.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/childlabour, [13/06/2011]. Article 3a.

²⁴ Weissbrook, D., 2002. p 7.

perpetrated such crimes against children.

Weissbrook's report also raises the question of the trafficking of children, which could apply to children abducted by armed groups that cross international borders. The Trafficking Protocol (November 2000) prohibits under Article 3(c) 'the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation' even without evidence of force or coercion.²⁵ This protocol applies only in situations of international trafficking, yet with the increasing regionalisation of many current conflicts, child soldiers are increasingly being trafficked across borders by armed groups. As the treaty applies even where the child has consented to be trafficked by an armed group it is one of the few pieces of legislation that can be applied to voluntary recruitment of children.

As well as slavery and trafficking conventions, there are also labour conventions that can be used to address the recruitment of children. The Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (Convention no 182, 1999), specifically calls for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour and define child recruitment by

²⁵ United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime and the Protocols Thereto. New York, 2004. Accessed through www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications. p 43.

military groups as one of these types of labour.²⁶ Unfortunately, the convention only applies to forced or compulsory recruitment. However, Convention 182 and also Convention 138 prohibit work that is 'likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children'.²⁷ It is not difficult to argue that actively engaging as combatants in conflict is likely to do all three.

In more recent years the creation of regional treaties has given a boost to the legitimacy of the argument that it is morally wrong to recruit those under the age of 18 years. Given that these treaties have also emerged in the developing world, it would appear that this argument is not as wholly Western-centric as has sometimes been argued. The African Charter on the Rights of Humans and Peoples (African Charter) was passed in 1999 and is a good example of how regional treaties can exceed current international norms and thus encourage further legislation. The African Charter set out a minimum age of 18 years for recruitment. The African Charter defines all persons less than 18 years as children and 'obligates states to take all necessary measures to ensure that no child shall take a direct part in hostilities and refrain in particular, from recruiting any child'.²⁸ The wording of this treaty goes further than any international legislation but is sadly not binding on signatories.

²⁶ Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Adopted by the Conference at its Eighty-Seventh Session. Geneva. 17 June 1999. Accessed through www.ilo.org. [13/06/2011]. Articles 1 and 3.

²⁷ Sweptson, L. 1992. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ILO, *Nordic Journal of International Law*. 61.

²⁸ Harvey, R., 2003. p 15.

However as the CRC states that countries should adhere to the highest standards they are signed up to, the African Charter could be used as a model for other regional treaties to follow. Africa appears to be leading the way in rewriting child protection yet major problems in enforcement continue and more child soldiers can be found in Africa than on any other continent. Problems of enforcement are not, of course, confined to Africa.

International Law and the Challenges of Implementation.

Despite a growing portfolio of charters, treaties and legislation that can be used to protect children and reduce child recruitment it appears that child soldiering is still prolific. Some of this is due to continuing problems with legislation.

Firstly, there are inconsistencies regarding the application of age-based criteria. Within the most recent attempt to legislate, the Optional Protocol to the CRC, only the forced recruitment of those less than 18 years is fully prohibited, which was already previously the case. It says that states should take 'all feasible measures to ensure that members of their armed forces who have not attained the age of eighteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities'.²⁹ This article thus

²⁹ Harvey, R., May 2000. p 18.

enables states to still use those under 18 years in non-combative roles, which makes them legitimate military targets and endangers their lives. The wording 'all feasible measures' also allows states a get out clause as clarification is not offered on what is feasible and what is not. There is also no clarification as to what constitutes indirect as opposed to direct combat.

Secondly, the term 'actively participating' is ill defined and difficult to apply, it is not clear as to what exactly active participation constitutes.³⁰ Is the person handing out the bullets active in his participation or only the person who shoots the gun? The classification of those who are cooks, domestic servants, porters, messengers and 'wives' within armed groups needs to be addressed. Also, as Sheppard has argued, indirect participation does not protect children from being perceived as members of an armed force and thus a legitimate target in conflict situations.³¹

Thirdly, continuing the theme of confusing age limitations found in other legislation concerned with the child soldier issue, a look at the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) shows that recruiting children of 15-18 years of age on a voluntary basis is not a war crime; yet, no provisions are made for dealing with persons in this age bracket who are recruited and commit war

³⁰ Baro, D., 1998. The International Criminal Court: Its Implications for Children, *Childright*. 149 (sept). p 10.

³¹. Sheppard, A., 2000. Child Soldiers- is the Optional Protocol Evidence of an Emerging 'Straight 18' Consensus. *International Journal of Children's Rights*. 8(1). p 11.

crimes.³² This means that legal and illegal recruits of armed forces under the age of 18 years cannot be tried for war crimes under the ICC. There are various ramifications to this oversight. It was believed that national legal systems would be more suitable to deliver rehabilitation measures for offenders less than 18 years of age. It has been suggested that this could encourage governments to continue and expand the voluntary recruitment of those between 15-18 years of age.³³ The government would not be in breach of international law because the recruits have volunteered and it could then use these recruits to commit war crimes and acts of genocide in the knowledge that the recruits would be safe from prosecution.

Fourthly, there are a number of issues related to jurisdiction, which causes problems in the prosecution of cases. The jurisdiction of the ICC only applies in cases where the crime has taken place on the soil of a signatory country or where the perpetrator of the crime is a national of a signatory country. Therefore if none of the parties to the conflict have signed the Rome Statute, the ICC will have no jurisdiction.

Even more alarming is that each country that ratifies the Rome Statute can make a declaration to opt-out of being under the jurisdiction of the ICC in regards of war

³² The International Criminal Court (ICC) came into existence in 2002 following the 60th ratification of the Rome Statute, the legal statutes developed to allow for the effective prosecution and punishment of individuals deemed to have committed serious violations of international humanitarian law.

³³ Baro, D., 1998. p 10.

crimes under Article 124.³⁴ This opt-out lasts for a period of seven years from the time of becoming party to the treaty and could be extended, though this is unlikely. In cases where the government of a country has used children less than 15 years old the opt-out is likely to be invoked and the government will not have to face responsibility for its actions, unless it continues its illegal recruitment practices.

Despite the many problems found within the existing legislation there has clearly been a concerted and consistent campaign to improve child protection and to legislate in order to punish those who abuse children. Notwithstanding this increase in legislation, the fact is that little headway has been made in reducing actual numbers of children involved with armed groups. It is this lack of progress that has fuelled interest and debate and generated research on the child soldier issue by individuals and organizations concerned with the protection of children in conflict. It is to this that we now turn.

³⁴ Baro, D., 1998. p 9.

Chapter One: Summarising the existing Literature.

The previous chapter discussed the plethora of legislation, conventions and treaties in existence. However, these have not had the impact that those drafting the legislation might have hoped.³⁵ The resolution of conflicts in which child soldiers played a role may have reduced the overall numbers of child soldiers globally, but few groups who had already recruited children and who are still in conflict environments have reversed their policy and effectively prohibited the recruitment of children, although increasingly armed groups make public vows to do so.³⁶ The gap between increasing legal mechanisms to prevent child soldiering and the actual reduction in child soldier recruitment has led to an increasing interest in researching the phenomenon of child soldiers. This chapter will take an in depth look at the issues and themes raised by this research.

The Literature: An Overview.

Over the last decade there has been an increasing concern for, and expansion in the literature on, child soldiers. The types of research undertaken on child soldiers can be broadly categorised as follows: research dealing with issues of legislation; literature on children/youth and conflict; literature on specific conflicts in which

³⁵ Denov, M., 2009. *Child Soldiers: Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p 32.

³⁶ Denov, M., 2009. p 23.

child soldiering is discussed but is not the primary focus; case studies looking at specific incidences of child soldiering (these can take the form of specific armed groups or wider reports on specific conflicts that incorporate more than one armed group); continental studies which look at the use of child soldiers within a specific continent; and global studies which can either look at a chosen number of specific case studies from across the globe or use general examples from multiple cases to highlight an argument.

The first area of interest to academics was the issue of legislation - more specifically, offering a critique of existing legislation, its weaknesses and sometimes suggestions for its improvement. I. Cohn; R. Harvey, Hamilton and El-Haj; have been at the forefront of work on international law and the status of child soldiers within the legal framework, predominantly on an international level.³⁷ Kuper has published two relevant texts also concerning international law.³⁸ The first looks at children in conflict in regards to international law and their right to protection, some of which can also be applied to child soldiers. The second focuses largely on the training of military personnel within the context of

³⁷ . Goodwin-Gill, G., and Cohn, I., 1994. *Child Soldiers: the role of children in armed conflict: A Study for the Henry Dunant Institute*, Geneva. Oxford: Clarendon Press. See Harvey. R., May 2000. *Child Soldiers- the Beginning of the End. Childright*, 164. Harvey. R., 2003. *Children and Armed Conflict, a Guide to International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law*. International Bureau for Children's Rights. Accessed through www.essax.ac.uk/armedcon. Hamilton. C., and El-Haj. T.A., 1997. *Armed Conflict- The Protection of Children under International Law. The International Journal of Children's Rights*. 5(1) Hamilton. C., and El-Haj. T.A., 1996. *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. Childright*. 132. El-Haj. T.A., 1995. *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. Childright*. p 122.

³⁸ Kuper, J., 2005. *Military Training and Children in Armed Conflict: Law, Policy and Practice*. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

international laws. This text sets out the duties and obligations of military personnel towards the child soldiers they may face in battle.

Although interest within the research community was first piqued by issues of international law it soon expanded into other fields. There are studies that look at children's experiences as child soldiers indirectly. Boyden and Berry's study focuses on children's knowledge of war and displacement with some reference to child soldiering.³⁹ This is a good example of a study of a conflict issue in which child soldiers are only a part of the research. Other texts focus on a specific conflict and address the issue of child soldiers within this context. A good example is Gberie's 'A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone' which seeks to explain the role of child soldiers within the conflict.⁴⁰ The inclusion of research on child soldiers into specific accounts of conflict has been driven by the recognition that they cannot be fully explained unless the roles of all actors, including children, are taken into account. However the inclusion of the study of the role of child soldiers within the context of the conflict itself is a relatively new phenomenon and analysis of this type has been limited to a few cases, the Sierra Leone conflict featuring heavily.

³⁹ Boyden, J., and Berry, J., 2004. Children and Youth on the Frontline: Ethnography, Armed Conflict and Displacement. *Studies in Forced Migration*. 14. New York: Berghahn Books.

⁴⁰ Gberie, L., 2005. A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone. London: Hurst and Company. Additional examples are Coulter, C., 2009. *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers: Women's Lies through War and Peace in Sierra Leone*. New York: Cornell University Press. Denov, M., 2009.

Alcinda Howana's continental study on child soldiers in Africa focuses upon child soldiers, their recruitment, experiences and rehabilitation.⁴¹ Her work sheds light on the historical and cultural contexts of child soldiering within Africa. Studies of this type can help to shed light on the regional dimensions of child soldiering such as the trafficking of child soldiers across borders and the relationship between armed groups that use children within one region.

In addition to Howana's work are multiple case studies of a global nature. The first of these was 'Child Soldiers: The Role of Children in Armed Conflict' in 1994, by I. Cohn and G. Goodwin-Gill in collaboration with the Henry Dunant Institute, Geneva.⁴² This text used multiple case studies from across the globe to highlight the ways in which international law failed to provide adequate protection, utilising empirical data to show the consequences for child soldiers and concluding with recommendations for both rehabilitation and the prevention of recruitment. Briggs, a journalist and teacher, also used extensive empirical data from primary research across the globe to tell the story of child soldiering from the child's viewpoint.⁴³ However neither of these studies offered insights into how specific conflict types influence children's experiences as soldiers.

⁴¹ Honwana, A., 2006. *Child Soldiers in Africa*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

⁴² Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997.

⁴³ Briggs, J., 2005. *Innocents Lost: When Child Soldiers Go To War*. New York: Basic Books.

Another concern comes from an alternative type of literature, which focuses on youth as opposed to specifically looking at children. An example is Paul Richards' study of youth in Sierra Leone, which was one of the first in-depth books to touch upon the phenomenon of youth as soldiers, and as such its contribution to the literature on the subject is undeniable.⁴⁴ Henrik Vigh's 'Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau' is another example of a text which puts the role of youth at the centre of its discussion.⁴⁵ The focus of these texts is youth but includes research on persons that could also be categorised as children under the Cape Town Principles, which sets the end of childhood at 18 years. However as neither study distinguishes systematically between youth above 18 years of age and youth below 18 years of age one can only draw the broadest of conclusions with regards to what the studies tell us about child soldiers within the specific conflicts that are looked at.

Understanding Children and Conflict: The UN role.

In 1996 the United Nations commissioned Graca Machel to write a substantial report on 'Children and Armed Conflict', the aim of which was to assess the human rights of children in situations of armed conflict.⁴⁶ The themes that the

⁴⁴ Richards, P., 2004. 'Fighting for the Rainforest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone. 5th ed, Oxford: James Currey

⁴⁵ Vigh's, H., 2006. *Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau. Methodology and History in Anthropology*. 13. New York: Berghahn Books.

⁴⁶ Machel. G., August 1996. *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*. UN document A/51/306, New York. Accessed through www.un.org. p ix.

report contained were: displaced and refugee children, children and HIV/AIDS, sexual violence and exploitation in war, physical and mental health problems associated with conflict, the impact of landmines and small arms on children, and protecting children from the impact of international sanctions. This was with the aim of raising standards for child protection. Child soldiering was one component of this study and the report aimed to uncover the scale of the problem and provide answers as to how children could be protected from recruitment.

This work is acknowledged as being of fundamental importance to the emergence of research of child soldiers and the report's author claimed that it 'has in many ways broken new ground', which it is widely agreed it did.⁴⁷ It resulted in a growing interest in the topic of child soldiers and fuelled a more informed debate on the issue. The increase in attention to this issue can be seen in the multitude of research that followed the publication of the Machel report.

The resources and influence of the United Nations enabled Machel to write an interesting and informative report incorporating the experiences of children from numerous conflicts. The access to children, their caregivers and the agencies that worked with them was unprecedented, as was the scale of the research

⁴⁷ Machel. G., August 1996. p 89.

undertaken. Consultations were held with government officials, intergovernmental organisations, regional bodies and NGO.⁴⁸

The report's findings influenced policy not only at the United Nations but also amongst other organisations working around the issue of children in conflict. It drove research on the subject of child soldiers, an area of children's experience of conflict that prior to the report had often been overlooked. Rosen goes so far as to describe the report as serving as a 'template for virtually all human rights reporting on child soldiers since it was published'.⁴⁹ Much of the subsequent research followed the Machel report's emphasis on giving children their own voice, and in working within a human rights framework whilst remaining informed by current legislation.

Expanding the Debate: Further Research on Child Soldiers.

As previously mentioned, the publication of the Machel Report stimulated further research. Much of this subsequent research was conducted by NGO, which used investigations and reports to inform campaigning. According to Rosen, humanitarian groups have had 'an enormous influence in shaping the international

⁴⁸ Machel, G., August 1996. Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. UN document A/51/306, New York. Accessed through www.un.org [05/11/2003]. p 12.

⁴⁹ Rosen, D., 2005. Armies of the Young: Child Soldiers in War and Terrorism. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. p 12.

treaties that seek to ban the use of child soldiers'.⁵⁰ However, despite great efforts in campaigning to reduce the numbers of child soldiers and great strides in pushing through legislation the continued use of children by armed groups is still problematic.

One explanation for this may be that, as was touched upon in the introduction, there is no universal definition of a child soldier that is adhered to by all concerned scholars, organizations and armed groups.⁵¹ Definitions of childhood and children's roles are equally ambiguous. Whilst no one would argue that children are not deserving of special protection, the boundaries of childhood are not clearly delineated, and there is no universal age at which children are seen to become adults. The ending of childhood is dependent upon social, economic and political norms within a society and varies in time and space.⁵² The increasingly lengthened childhood of the Western developed nations is for the most part a Western phenomenon. Even in developing countries that seek to ape the West in their rhetoric of childhood, the reality is that for many children adult responsibilities and duties are often assumed at a young age. Even within the West, inconsistencies threaten the ideal of childhood as a stage in life that ends at the age of 18 years when children are granted political rights and become adults. In the UK for example, children from 16 years are considered adult enough to

⁵⁰ Rosen, D., 2005. p 9.

⁵¹ Mancini, C., Ed. 2010. *Child Soldiers, Global Viewpoints* Farmington Hills: Greenhaven Press. p 98.

⁵² Singer, P., 2006. *Children at War*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p 7.

have sexual intercourse and have children of their own. They are also able to get married and volunteer for the armed forces under the age of 18 years, albeit with parental consent. The reality is that in many nations, including those of the West, the ending of childhood is a gradual and staggered progress and the attainment of adult status is not granted merely because a child has attained a specific chronological age.⁵³

This is especially the case in the developing world where adulthood is much more closely linked with social responsibility rather than with political rights. In many societies a person may be considered a child until they marry or have children of their own, regardless of at which age that may be. It is therefore a balancing act, to ensure that children get as much additional protection as possible without forcing Western-centric notions of childhood on other nations and peoples.

A second explanation may be that small arms have impacted significantly on child soldier recruitment and deployment.⁵⁴ Many reports state that now children as young as 10 years can effectively carry and use an AK-47 there are fewer barriers to their recruitment thus increasing the numbers of children recruited by armed groups, but this assumption is being challenged.⁵⁵ In Rosen's statistical analysis of the weight of modern weaponry he clearly highlights that small weapons are no

⁵³ Mancini, C., 2010. p 14. Rosen, D., 2005. p 4.

⁵⁴ Mancini, C., 2010. p 20. Denov. 2009. p 38. Singer, P., 2006. p 45-49.

⁵⁵ Coulter, C., 2009. p 15.

lighter or easier to use than those of the American Civil War or World War One. Indeed, as he points out, the AK 47 has been available since 1949 but concern over child soldiers is more recent. It could be argued that modern weaponry is lighter than that of the medieval period as Wessell surmises, and that the spread of small arms has enabled greater militarization of some parts of the world, but a closer look at many of the conflicts in which children are involved shows that child soldiers and the armed groups they belong to are just as likely to wield machetes as they are guns.⁵⁶ It would seem that the links between proliferation of small arms and child soldiering are not fully proven.

A third explanation may be that it is that the changing nature of conflict since the ending of colonialism that has impacted on children in situations of war.⁵⁷

Concerns about child protection with regards child recruitment is a relatively recent phenomenon, which appears to be linked to the implicit suggestion in NGO and UN reports, as well as many other publications, that previously warfare was political in nature, that it had clear objectives and a set of rules including those concerning the treatment of civilians. This is in contrast to modern conflicts where children are manipulated and abused by brutal and criminal armed groups who have few clear objectives and even fewer standards of conduct.

⁵⁶ Wessells, M., 2006. p 18. Denov, M., 2009. p 39.

⁵⁷ Denov, M., 2009. p 33. Wessells, M., 2006. p 18. Singer, P., 2006. p 49-52. Rosen, D., 2005. p 10.

Indeed Machel herself was part of the leadership of FRELIMO, a guerrilla force in Mozambique that recruited children during the struggle for independence, so she has first-hand experience of an armed group that recruited children, yet this experience is not alluded to in the report. Instead she distinguishes in her report between wars of national liberation and post-colonial warfare, a distinction continued in the subsequent literature, which appears to accept the belief that only 'new wars' are worthy of attention without delving into why the differences between these types of conflict are important.⁵⁸ The portrayal of actors in postcolonial conflicts as irrational and their resulting demonization whilst ignoring the use of children in previous decades is illogical and suggests that the use of child soldiers was unimportant before but the distinctions are not so clear-cut. Demonization can obscure the reasons for why the group is using children.

There has been over time an evolution in the way child soldiering is perceived - children have been recorded as being used in combat as early as during the time of the Spartans (Ancient Greece), during the Napoleonic wars, and the American Civil War. They are portrayed in much of the earlier literature as heroic in stark contrast to the current position of viewing children as in need of protection, and the current portrayal of armed groups that use child soldiers shows them as irrational and anarchic, whereas in reality the use of children by armed groups is perfectly logical.⁵⁹ Children have certain traits that make them desirable to armed

⁵⁸ Rosen, D., 2005. p 13.

⁵⁹ Mancini, C., 2010. p 15-16. Denov, M., 2009. p 21.

groups; they are still undergoing identity formation and thus are more open to propaganda and indoctrination, they are greater risk takers, and they are easier to control.⁶⁰ This can make the deployment of children appear attractive.

The notion that children are used because of the benefits they can bring to the group is central to the works of scholars such as Singer and Richards, who place instrumental reasoning at the heart of their work. Singer takes a systematic approach to the question of whether the use of children by armed groups is a deliberate choice and strategy, and part of a new military doctrine.⁶¹ He seeks to abolish the perception that the use of children is a last resort by highlighting their skill as fighters and their usefulness to armed groups.⁶² He explores the evolution of this 'new doctrine', in which actors make rational decisions to recruit children, through the use of global data. The concept that children are used strategically by armed groups can be linked to Richard's argument – as set out in *Fighting for the Rainforest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone* – that conflicts in which children are used should not be categorized as random or anarchic. If the reasons why groups recruit children are not anarchic or random but are instead linked to a cost-benefit analysis then it seems important to understand the factors that influence this analysis; these are likely to be linked to the group's aims, which are intimately connected to the type of conflict that the group is involved in.

⁶⁰ Wessells, M., 2006. p 2.

⁶¹ Singer, P., 2006. p 6. Child soldier doctrine is a militaristic approach which analysis at a HR organisational level cannot assess. Interview with Enrique Restoy, Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, London. 19th January 2007.

⁶² Singer, P., 2006. p 38. Wessells, M., 2006. p 2.

Brocklehurst supports the notion that instrumental reasoning is the key to children's use in conflict and argues persuasively that 'the use of children is illustrative of the depth of social involvement in the conflict, not societal demise' indicating that children are more likely to be used in conflicts where the community feels the need to utilize all resources.⁶³ They may be held hostage by their communities to strengthen claims to territory, they may be recruited to bolster the military capacity of a group both in times of active conflict and during times of negotiations when groups wish to show strength, and they may be strategically targeted by the opposition due to their status as 'the future' of their communities.⁶⁴ Regardless of how children are used politically in conflict it is because they are viewed as a valued resource that they are used at all. The perception that children are a resource is not a wholly new idea. Children are and have often been cited as the 'future' of a nation. However their large-scale use in the modern era as a resource or weapon by armed groups is more recent and takes the notion of children as a resource to new extremes.

Within the range of contemporary conflicts one can find political struggles, conflicts rooted in ethnic and religious divisions, class based rebellions, and criminally motivated terrorism and children can be found at the heart of them all.

⁶³ Brocklehurst, H., 2006. *Who's Afraid of Children? Children, Conflict and International Relations*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, p101.

⁶⁴ Interview with Enrique Restoy, Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, London. 19th January 2007. Brocklehurst, H., 2006. p38-39.

Conflict in the modern age is as diverse and complex as it has always been and thus to understand children's involvement you also need to understand the conflict. There are multiple different types of conflict containing multiple groups with different agendas and worldviews. Understanding how these groups operate and why will illuminate how children are used and why. Scholars such as Stanton, Humpreys and Weinstein attempt to offer an explanation of what influences a group's choice of strategy with regards to violence. Knowledge of how the group wields violence is one of the keys to understanding how children experience violence at the hands of the group. Wood states that over the course of a conflict the use of violence will change in response to changes in the power dynamics between the opponents and this appears to have had a powerful impact on the Sri Lanka case.⁶⁵ Conflict is not a static being - it ebbs and flows and is both transformed by and in turn transforms the actors who engage in it. Understanding this is essential if we want to understand how the use of child soldiers varies over the course of a conflict.

The role of the specific type of conflict in children's recruitment and deployment is one that at best has only been implicitly suggested in the NGO literature; a comparison of children's experiences in different types of conflict to elucidate exactly which role conflict type plays in their recruitment and deployment reaches

⁶⁵ Wood, R., 2010. *Competing for Control: Conflict Power Dynamics, Civilian Loyalties and Violence in Civil War*. Ph.D. University of North Carolina. (Accessed through Proquest Information and Learning. LSE, [28/09/2011]).

beyond the scope of current NGO research, which focuses on specific conflicts or themes such as the role of small arms.

Whilst NGO implicitly suggest that they understand that the conflicts in which children are involved differ, their research fails to actually delve more deeply into how and why children's experiences in different types of conflict have such variations. One part of their failure to differentiate between conflicts can be seen in how often within the literature the child soldier is denoted as 'victim'. That children are always to some degree victims is undoubtedly true; it cannot be argued that children that fight in combat are not in some way damaged by their experiences. However some conflicts in which children are involved have seen large numbers of 'volunteers' and some children have gone beyond what they must merely to survive being part of an armed group - some child soldiers have seemingly excelled at their jobs and won accolades from commanders and fear from the communities they helped to terrorize. Indeed a survey of conflicts in Africa in which children are involved highlights that voluntary recruitment is more common than forced recruitment.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Schmidt, A., 2007. Volunteer Child Soldiers as Reality: A Development Issue for Africa. *New School Economic Review*. 2(1). pp 49-76. p 49.

Children's agency within specific conflict types.

Children's agency - the child's right to make decisions, whether the child is capable of making decisions in their best interest and whether in a conflict environment 'true' choice exists- is a topic of debate that is contested.⁶⁷ Earlier literature, which predominantly derived from the human rights field, tended to portray children as entirely passive.⁶⁸ Rosen counters this view, arguing that armed groups and children both act with some degree of rationality and that children are not just victims of conflict but have to make difficult choices about their own involvement.⁶⁹ Rosen's argument is part of a wider move to portray children as political actors in times of conflict and peace.

One of the most articulate proponents of the argument that children are political beings is Brocklehurst. She argues that children are political because they have the capacity to be agents in their own right and because the construction of the 'child' is manipulated by adults for political advantage. However what is noticeable is that regardless of how children are actually used politically, in reality they are often portrayed as non-political which has repercussions for how they and the conflicts in which they are involved in are understood. This view is supported by Hart who argues that it is 'important to remember that many young

⁶⁷ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 35-36. Brett, R., and Specht, I., 2004. p 1.

⁶⁸ Wessells, M., 2006. p ix. Coulter, C., 2009. p 8.

⁶⁹ Rosen, D., 2005. p 1. Denov, M., 2009. p 17.

people engage in these activities not only because they are forced by circumstances, but also because they feel that such involvement offers them a sense of independence', and that that the role of the child as defender of its community is often delegitimized by the international community.⁷⁰ When viewed as victims, which of course they are, they are often treated in an entirely apolitical way, as empty vessels in a sense, incapable of making any decisions of their own, of identifying benefits or opportunities in what are profoundly difficult and complex situations.⁷¹ On the other hand, when children are portrayed as non-political and aggressive, the conflict is often portrayed as anarchic and without political motivation to some extent precisely because of the portrayal of children as non-political entities.⁷² Either view fails to adequately represent children's experiences or the conflicts in which they are involved.

These two views of child soldiers, one as a political being with agency and the other as non-political and without agency, both subtly inform much of the literature on children in armed conflict, although the view of children as victims currently has dominance, in part because most of the literature on child soldiers still derives from a human rights perspective.⁷³ One of the main components of the argument for abolishing the use of child soldiers is the assumption that

⁷⁰ Hart, J., Ed. 2008. *Years of Conflict: Adolescence, Political Violence and Displacement*, *Studies in Forced Migration*. 25. USA: Berghahn Books. p 28.

⁷¹ Denov, M., 2009. p 8.

⁷² Denov, M., 2009. p 6.

⁷³ As such the literature is mainly concerned with legalistic terms and policymaking which makes more nuanced notions of right and wrong, victim and perpetrator more difficult to apply. Coulter, C., 2009. p 8.

children are not capable of true agency, that instead they are manipulated by the adults surrounding them who in situations of conflict may fail to adequately protect them; that even in situations of what might appear at first sight to be voluntary recruitment, enlistment cannot be seen as fully voluntary because of the circumstances surrounding the child.⁷⁴

Rosen questions whether the portrayal of children as victims in humanitarian literature is true to reality, without resorting to arguments reducing child involvement to anarchic chaos. His focus on children as active agents is an expansion of preceding work – such as Richards’ study on youth in Sierra Leone – which acknowledges that children can, in certain circumstances, have some influence over their lives as combatants and the choices they make.⁷⁵ It can be argued that children can be capable, within severely constrained limits, of acting in their own interest and can feel that they have gained benefits from their involvement in armed groups.⁷⁶ In Richman and Fraser it is argued that in situations where children realise that adults cannot protect them they seek to protect themselves, thus using agency albeit in circumstances shaped and channelled by necessity.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Brett, R., and Specht, I., 2004. p 1.

⁷⁵ Rosen, D., 2005. Richards, P., 1996.

⁷⁶ Rosen, D., 2005. p 17. Wessells, M., 2006. p 32.

⁷⁷ Richman, J., and Fraser, M., Ed. 2001. *The Context of Youth Violence: Resilience, Risk and Protection*. Westport: Praeger Publishers. p 88.

Rather than seeing children as victims of desperate and irrational armed groups or as mindless aggressors, these texts suggest that both children and armed groups can undergo rational and complex decision-making processes, leading to children's involvement in armed groups. The arguments put forward point towards a need to adopt a more nuanced approach regarding the study of child soldiers, one that does not see children as simply either 'victim' or 'aggressor', but one that can appreciate different shades of grey.

One possibility is that the opportunity to act, to use agency, is directly related to the type of conflict in which children are involved. Children can have greater or lesser freedom depending on whether they are with the group voluntarily or whether they have been forcibly recruited. Whether this is the case is a key focus of this research. Although increasing attention has been paid to the question of children's agency, there has been to date little assessment or comparison of how children's actions are affected by the specific types of conflict in which they are involved.

In conflicts where armed groups only use 'voluntary' recruitment, children can use their agency to seek out armed groups or avoid recruitment. The literature suggests several reasons for why children may join armed groups. Firstly the perception that children have that they may gain from the conflict may lead some

children to ‘voluntarily’ join armed groups.⁷⁸ Many conflict-afflicted regions suffer from poor development and infrastructure, lack of opportunities and low living standards; this makes recruitment for material gain such as access to food, money and goods more likely. According to the literature child soldiers are overwhelmingly from low socio-economic backgrounds regardless of whether they are from a conflict afflicted regions or not. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo there is a close correlation between the level of poverty and vulnerability to recruitment. 61% of child soldiers asked responded that their family had no income and more than half were from large families with at least six siblings.⁷⁹ It seems then that for many children becoming a child soldier may be a way out of poverty and starvation.⁸⁰

Poverty and poor socio-economic conditions also impact on children’s education, which appears to make them more vulnerable to recruitment. Children regularly cite the closure of their school or the inability of their families to send them to school as the precipitating factor that leads to their involvement in an armed group.⁸¹ With few alternatives offered to children that cannot attend school, the prospect of gaining a wage or access to food and clothing appeals to them and

⁷⁸ Brett, R., December 2003. Adolescents volunteering for armed forces or armed groups. *International Review of the Red Cross*. 85(852). p 860/861. Wessells, M., 2006. p 3.

⁷⁹ McConnan, I., and Uppard, S., 2001. Children- not soldiers: Guidelines for working with child soldiers and children associated with fighting forces. London: Save the Children. p 38. Singer, P., 2006. p 62.

⁸⁰ Mancini, C., 2010. p 22.

⁸¹ Brett, R., 2003. p 860.

often to their families.⁸² Boys in particular mention the desire to provide for themselves and their families as a reason for why they joined an armed group, becoming conditioned in some cases as Brett has argued, to meet their basic needs through using a gun.⁸³ However, not all children who find themselves in situations where they experience poverty, lack of schooling and lack of alternative opportunities will choose to join armed groups. So it would seem as though children's reasons for volunteering are more complex and may involve a combination of factors some of which may be linked to the child itself, its personality, its home environment, and its specific experiences of conflict.⁸⁴

For some children, particularly in conflicts where the armed group has support within the child's community, membership may be equated with power, respect and status. In many countries militarization and the glamorisation of guns and violence can create an environment in which guns are equated with status and respect.⁸⁵ Regimes, such as those in Columbia and Uganda, have used arbitrary arrest, torture and extra-judicial killings to create a culture of impunity, and as a consequence, an environment exists in which violence as a method of gaining and maintaining power is acceptable. This thinking applies as much to children as adults and in conflicts where law and order has broken down and adults can no

⁸² Alfredson, I., 2002. Child soldiers, displacement and human security. *Children and Society*. 3. p 21.

⁸³ David, P., 2000. Rwanda: the tragic solitude of children. *International Children's Right Monitor*. 11(4). p 8.

⁸⁴ Brett, R., and Specht, I., 2004. *Young Soldiers: Why They Choose to Fight*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Colorado. p 3.

⁸⁵ UNICEF, 2001. 'No guns please, we are children' www.unicef.org. p 3. This can also be seen in countries such as Colombia and El Salvador. Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 31.

longer be relied upon to provide protection, children may seek to align themselves with an armed group that appears able to offer the child security and status. The child may not view this as manipulation by the adults in the group but instead as salvation. This is not an irrational argument as for example Jewish child partisans in the Second World War had a higher survival rate than Jewish children who did not join the partisan movement.⁸⁶

It would seem that those who deny children agency believe that children are not capable of truly understanding the causes that they are attracted to, and it is undoubtedly true that many children are exploited by military leaders who cite religious, ethnic or ideological causes in order to bolster numbers.⁸⁷ Despite the potential for manipulation however, joining an armed group, especially one founded on ideas of social change, can be an empowering experience for those that previously felt excluded or marginalised by society.⁸⁸

It would seem that it is unhelpful to ascribe children's involvement solely to push factors. We also need to listen to what children say about their reasons for joining and to award them some recognition for being able to make decisions, even within severely constrained circumstances, regarding how they live their lives during

⁸⁶ Rosen, D., 2005. p 20-21.

⁸⁷ In the DRC there is a close correlation between the level of poverty and vulnerability to recruitment. 61% of children asked responded that their family had no income and more than half were from large families with at least six siblings.⁸⁷

⁸⁸ Brett, R., 2003. Amazons appear. *The World Today*.

conflict. It is likely, in some conflicts at least, that children could have opted not to join the armed group and that children from similar backgrounds and circumstances chose to take different paths, thus how the type of conflict impacts on children's reasons for joining armed groups is likely to offer more understanding than focusing primarily on push factors such as poverty and a lack of opportunity. Trying to understand these issues is not to condone child recruitment, regardless of what choice a child makes and how free that choice may be, it is always preferable that a child is not involved in armed conflict. However it is important to locate within a political context the choices that children make.

The implications of gender in conflict.

Notions of agency and how conflict affects children's experiences would not be complete without an account of gender issues. Girls are often hidden in the literature as Denov found particularly in the case of the Sierra Leone conflict. She writes that she chose to look at females in the Sierra Leone conflict to correct the male bias inherent in most of the literature available on child soldiers and to demonstrate 'the diversity and context specificity' of female involvement.⁸⁹ Where girls are discussed, they are even more likely than their male counterparts to be depicted as 'victim', in part because their femininity perceivably makes

⁸⁹ Denov, M., 2009. p 8.

them more vulnerable to trauma such as rape, forced marriage and unwanted pregnancy with the associated mental and physical health risks, which are further exacerbated in times of conflict when health provision is often lacking.⁹⁰ The most obvious and publicised difference between girls' and boys' recruitment is the use of girls as sexual slaves. Girls appear to be actively recruited for sexual purposes; something that can affect boys once recruited but does not seem to be a factor in their initial recruitment. The reasons for using girls in this way appears to vary from using access to girls as a reward for troops to seeking to increase numbers through procreation as in Northern Uganda.⁹¹ Yet conversely, little attention has been paid to girls' roles as fighters.

Intriguingly, some contradictions to the view of 'victim' have appeared in a number of conflict specific reports. Girls have been described as more terrifying and abusive than boy recruits.⁹² Girls have been known to pick which civilian girls to abduct for male commanders to abuse, they have been reported to have carried out human rights abuses and many girls around the world have admitted to having 'volunteered' to join the armed groups with which they were involved.⁹³ For girls especially, joining an armed group can appear an opportunity to gain

⁹⁰ Denov, M., 2009. p 13.

⁹¹ Keairns, Y., 2002. The voices of girl child soldiers. Geneva: Quaker UN Office.

⁹² Coulter, C., 2009. p 14.

⁹³ Wessells, M., 2006. p 50.

equality with men in societies where women are viewed as second-class citizens where the armed group espouses publicly an agenda of equality.⁹⁴

In order to fully understand the diversity of children's experiences within armed groups and to fully understand how the type of conflict interplays with children's experiences it is imperative that girls are included within research and analysis. Within this research, particular attention has been paid to the experience and roles of girls within specific types of conflict and how girls use their own agency to make choices about their involvement.

Culture versus conflict.

The factors that impact on whether children; and especially female children, are viewed as potential recruits are myriad and complex, and often interplay with one another. It is, at times, difficult to separate one factor fully from another due to their interwoven nature. Culture and conflict are two areas that interweave in this way. The balance between them varies and even changes within a specific conflict over a period of time. Thus it is important to understand the influence that culture may have on conflict related factors.

⁹⁴ Ayissi, A., and Poulton, R., 2000. Bound to cooperate: Conflict, peace and people in Sierra Leone. Geneva: UN Institute for Disarmament Research. p 144. Brett, R., 2002. Girl Soldiers: Challenging the assumptions'. Geneva: Quaker UN Office, p 4.

It is not strictly correct to infer that children are recruited because they are not viewed as children within the cultures in which they are recruited. Children are found in fighting forces in societies in which Western notions of childhood prevail and in societies in which the ending of childhood may be significantly different to that which is found in the West. Their absence from armed groups in the latter type of society also reveals as much about motivations for using children as it does their appearance within armed groups. There are conflicts in which children are not used or are not used by all armed groups and others in which children make up a large percentage of the fighters. Some groups feel it is counter-productive to recruit children as they are often inferior to adult recruits. In Burma some armed groups are trying to decrease the numbers of children they use. The Shah State Army, the Karen National Liberation Army and the Karenni Army all encourage underage 'volunteers' to attend school until they are of a 'suitable' age (approximately 15 years).⁹⁵ Commanders insist that children and conscripted recruits are more dangerous as they are unprofessional and are more likely to panic and waste ammunition. They are also considered more likely to desert.⁹⁶

Broader policy aims also appear to impact on whether an armed group will use children. Karen National Liberation Army personnel have attended training by the

⁹⁵ See Human Rights Watch, 2002. *My gun was as tall as me: child soldiers in Burma*. New York: Human Rights Watch. pp 138-139, p 125, p 119.

⁹⁶ See Human Rights Watch, 2002. p 119.

International Committee of the Red Cross and have publicly committed to observing the Geneva Conventions, which contain clauses relating to the special status of children. In Sudan armed groups also committed to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The existence of groups who choose not to recruit children, even within conflicts in which other groups are culpable, highlights the importance of situating each group within the context of the conflict. The reality of whether children are used is complex and appears to often be rooted more within the political and logistical considerations of the armed group than within local notions of childhood.

Conflict does not take place within a cultural vacuum.⁹⁷ Therefore it must be made clear where possible which aspects of child recruitment can be attributed to the type of conflict and what is due to local cultural norms. Traditions are something that can be manipulated or ignored by the armed group in order for the group to further its aims. The customs that existed in peacetime will have some effect on the conflict, and on individual and organisational behaviour.⁹⁸ However, conflict dynamics and group motivations will also impact on individual and organisational behaviour. Which of these takes precedence and how the two interplay in terms of group behaviour, wider support for the group and children's choices are important for a full understanding of how, why and when children are recruited, deployed and treated.

⁹⁷ Coulter, C., 2009. p 5. Wessells, M., 2006. p 35.

⁹⁸ Coulter, C., 2009. p 7-8.

Moving Forward: A Conflict Based Approach to Studying Child Soldiers.

The child soldier phenomenon is an issue receiving increasing attention and it needs to be addressed on a number of levels. The transformation of global conflict post-Cold War from international to predominantly intra-state conflict has resulted in greater numbers of children being directly affected by war. Throughout the world the failure of many states to consolidate democracy and the corruption, political decay and economic retrenchment inherent in many state systems has enabled the growth of opposition movements, which resort to violence because repression and lack of access leave few alternatives.⁹⁹ In some instances groups evolve, or are created, to exploit the chaos and insecure environment in order to make financial gains, and these gains drive them to ensure the conflict continues. With greater numbers of civilians living in conflict zones and the intensity and duration of conflicts escalating it is no surprise that civilians, including children, are increasingly the target of armed groups.¹⁰⁰ The situation may have been exacerbated by the proliferation of small arms, which enables both the continuation of the conflict and the use of ever-younger children. It is these developments which has lead to an increased concern over the affects of conflict on children, including the use of children as soldiers.

⁹⁹ Denov, M., 2009. p 35.

¹⁰⁰ Singer, P., 2006. p 4. Denov, M., 2009. p 34.

Recent scholars of the child soldier issue point to a need to contextualise research, to correct biases found within previous research and to delve more deeply into areas of research implicitly alluded to but not yet fully explored. Singer argues that most of the literature focuses on specific conflicts or indirectly linked issues such as the arms trade.¹⁰¹ Rosen is critical of the humanitarian based literature which he believes does not acknowledge that views of childhood and child soldiering have altered over time and which he also appears to believe is based around a set of flawed concepts that mythologize the past use of children and reduce child soldiers to manipulated and abused puppets.¹⁰² Denov notes that reports tend to depict children as victim, perpetrator or hero, iconography that fails to understand the complex realities of most children's experiences as soldiers.¹⁰³ Coulter argues that women's and girls' experiences and roles as combatants in conflict have been overlooked and that not enough attention has been paid to how pre-existing structural conditions impact on wartime experiences and post-war reintegration.¹⁰⁴ Wessells acknowledges that more recent studies which have sought to address flaws within the literature; have provided a 'more grounded, contextualised understanding of child soldiers' have contested Western concepts of childhood, looked more closely at children as agents in their own right, has corrected biased perceptions of children as either victim or perpetrator and studied the contribution of girls in conflict situations.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Singer, P., 2006. p x.

¹⁰² Rosen, D., 2005. p 1-18.

¹⁰³ Denov, M., 2010. p 5-10.

¹⁰⁴ Coulter, C., 2009. p 4-30.

¹⁰⁵ Wessells, M., 2006. p ix.

What has not been done is to look at child recruitment from a comparative conflict perspective.

Conflict is a complex, diverse and interactive phenomenon; it works in tandem with the actors involved and neither the conflict nor the actors' experiences can be fully understood without reference to one another. Literature concerning children and conflict is at present usually researched and written about as though the two topics are separate subjects. Works specifically on conflict usually fail to adequately explain children's roles within armed groups whilst research that studies children's experiences in armed groups lacks sufficient analysis of the impact the conflict itself has on child recruit's experiences, although there are a few exceptions which look at specific conflicts and include analysis of child soldiers roles within these individual cases.¹⁰⁶ There are also studies based on a regional approach, which look at child soldiering in specific regions such as Africa or Asia. Finally there have been case study approaches in which authors have used multiple case studies to highlight an argument such as that of children's agency in conflict situations or to address issues of legislation. This study differs in that it not only takes a conflict based approach to study children's recruitment, deployment and treatment but it also takes a comparative approach.

¹⁰⁶ Gberie, L., 2005. Coulter, C., 2009. Denov, M., 2009.

Firstly, different armed groups have different agendas and aims, which are directly linked to the type of conflict with which they are involved. These need to be fully understood and taken into account analytically in order for differences in recruitment, deployment and treatment to be understood. Some groups have political motivations, some are seeking to preserve traditions or cultures that they feel are under attack, some are motivated by religious beliefs and some have criminal motivations. The aims and motivations of the group will affect how it makes decisions regarding the use of resources including recruits, the use of tactics which conscripts are expected to comply with and its behaviour towards members and the local population within which it is situated.

Secondly, when looking at conflict and child soldiers the question of support is an important one in many respects and understanding whether support, or the lack of it is linked to the type of conflict or the local culture is essential if a full understanding of the dynamics of child recruitment is to be developed. Not all societies and cultures hold the same universal views of childhood and conflict.¹⁰⁷ In some cultures conflict is avoided, whereas other cultures are more militaristic. In some cultures childhood is prolonged and sacrosanct, in rhetoric at least, whilst in others marriage and childbirth, financial contributions and social responsibilities are expected at a younger age. In countries with low life expectancy or high adult fatalities; due to HIV/AIDS for example, childhood may

¹⁰⁷ Denov, M., 2009. p 2.

be cut short.¹⁰⁸ Whilst we can impose Western-centric notions of childhood on governments it is not always the case that these are adopted in cultures where local notions of childhood and conflict may influence support for both armed groups and child recruitment by such groups. In situations of conflict where children are recruited issues of support may play an important role in determining not only which methods of recruitment armed groups use but also when and where children are recruited, at which ages and how much contact they continue to have with communities outside of the armed group. The type of conflict is likely to be closely correlated with questions of support and a study of the two may tell us much about child soldier's recruitment and experiences.

Thirdly, linked to the question of support but deserving of its own analysis is the question of children's agency and how they used their agency to support or withhold support from the armed groups that they come into contact with. As children are seen to be playing an increasingly active role within conflict and in some conflicts could be described as major actors, it is imperative that the relationship between children's choices and agency, and the specific conflicts that they are involved in are more closely looked at. It is clear in the literature that in some conflicts children actively support armed groups whereas in other conflicts they are forcibly recruited, even within conflicts there may be armed groups that children seek out and others that they avoid if possible. Given that children within one conflict scenario will face similar levels of economic hardship and the same

¹⁰⁸ Mancini, C., 2010. p 15.

security concerns but not all children join armed groups; I will investigate what drives those children who use their agency to join armed groups to do so.¹⁰⁹

Children's agency may be affected in numerous ways during conflict. Children may find their agency curtailed due to their security situation, especially if they become displaced or are relocated in camps, due to there being members of armed groups that seek to control them or because their families' economic situation is adversely affected. However, children can also find opportunities in conflict, to access resources, to transcend cultural norms and to gain control over their own protection from their enemies. The question of agency is a complex one, as it involves not only the reduction in some instances of children's options, but also how agency can be used by the child to embrace or avoid other choices. Which scenario a child finds itself in may well be linked to the type of conflict and even the dynamics of a specific dispute that the child finds itself within. How much agency a child has and how the child chooses to exercise its agency will have repercussions for that child's recruitment, deployment and treatment within a group.

Finally, the recruitment, deployment and treatment of girls deserve special attention due to their gender-based experiences, which differ to those of boy recruits. This is especially the case for those girls who actively seek to join armed

¹⁰⁹ Wessells, M., 2006. p 43.

groups often going against locally held notions of femininity and what is acceptable for females to engage in.¹¹⁰ The choice girls take is of particular interest given the specific risks and abuses girls face within armed groups, these additional risks and abuses do not mean that girls have no agency but their choices are different to those of their male counterparts and thus are deserving of additional attention.¹¹¹

Girls face particular choices based on their gender, which boys do not to the same extent. Their gender impacts on their experience of both conflict and armed groups. As child soldiers, girls are more vulnerable than boys but despite appearing to face greater restraints they still may get the opportunity to exercise their own agency. How girls make choices within these limits, and how much greater these limits are than for boys is likely to be directly related to the type of conflict that the girl is situated within. The influence of the type of conflict on girl's agency and girls experiences of recruitment, deployment and treatment may also interplay with how culture impacts on girl soldiers. The interplay and balance of these factors needs to be explored more fully within a comparative approach so that girl's experiences within conflict can be more fully understood.

Having set out the parameters of this study, signposting which topics will be used to shed light on how the type of conflict interplays with children's recruitment,

¹¹⁰ Mancini, C., 2010. p 55. Denov, M., 2009. p 41.

¹¹¹ Coulter, C., 2009. p 4.

deployment and treatment, the next chapter will look at the methodological issues of import to this research.

Chapter Two: Research and Methodology.

Having overviewed the legislation and the current literature, this chapter will look at how the research will be carried out. The research takes the form of a comparative analysis of three case studies. The research uses two approaches, the first is to look at each conflict individually, to separate and understand each feature of the specific conflict and how it influences the child soldiers in each case. The unique features of each conflict are critical to children's experiences and will be discussed in more detail (see below).

However, whilst the study of individual cases can offer many insights both into the specific conflict and in a more limited way, other conflicts of the same type, it is difficult to generalise such findings in any meaningful way. To address this, a second approach was utilised that combined theories of new and old war within a spectrum. Each conflict could then be seen in relation to the others on the spectrum and conclusions could be drawn more generally as to how the conflicts shifted on the spectrum over time, how they were influenced in similar ways by the dynamics of conflict itself but without losing a sense of how the unique features of each conflict could act as mitigating factors.

At the root of how I approach conflict is the debate over whether conflict has shifted in aim, method and economy. At the end of the twentieth century, a new way of thinking about conflict emerged. Kaldor's theory of 'new war', which put forward the proposition that the waging of conflict had shifted in important ways. The first of these changes is related to the goal of the armed group; new wars are purportedly about identity politics, adherence to a label rather than an idea. More exclusivist in nature, the dangers of extreme violence against 'the other' appears more of a threat. Armed groups in new wars use a combination of guerrilla warfare and counterinsurgency tactics, they seek to destabilise, to rid their territories of those who are different or whom they cannot control, rather than seeking to win 'hearts and minds'. New wars are seen to be less civilian orientated in the sense that the civilian 'other' appears to have become a target within these strategies of destabilisation, which often include forms of territorial cleansing such as forced expulsions and the infliction of terror (pillaging, rape, mutilations) to encourage the 'other' it is not safe to remain within the territorial influence of the group or to punish civilians for non-conformity or lack of support. The distinctions between civilians and combatants are perceived to be more blurred than in old wars. The decentralised war economy, which characterises new war, encourages looting and makes the armed group reliant on the continuation of the conflict for its access to resources. The non-reliance on the civilian population for access to resources, or in the case of criminality motivated 'new wars' the capacity to coerce them without having to consider the affect on

political support which is after all not a key goal of the armed group, also makes civilians, including children, more vulnerable to abuse.

This is in contrast to ‘old wars’, those conflicts between states that were over ideology or geo-political goals, that were fought by conventional means where the aim was to capture territory, and through ‘hearts and minds’ campaigns the allegiance of the populations within the territories they sought to control. In old wars, armed groups are perceived to have had political goals and as such required popular support and political constituencies. Such support was vital both for the legitimisation of the political project and for the drawing of resources which such groups collected and spent using heavily centralised bureaucracies. Of course, as this thesis proposes, not all ‘old wars’ are inter-state in nature. Many civil conflicts more closely match the stylised descriptions of ‘old war’ than they do the characteristics of ‘new wars’. Such conflicts are based around ideas, rather than identity or criminality, as such they are inclusive and are not perceived to propagate the idea of the ‘other’ to the same extent as that described in ‘new wars’. As forward thinking political projects they have built in constraints, which the armed group have to accede to if, they wish to maintain popular support. This is seen most clearly in the adoption of conventional or guerrilla techniques, which purportedly are more civilian friendly, and an avoidance of counterinsurgency tactics, which are not. Such armed groups organise themselves in similar ways to the state forces they are opposing. They wish to be viewed as orderly, legitimate, even as de facto state forces, they subscribe to the very rules of war that

theoretically govern states involved in inter-state conflicts. As such civilians, including children, in 'old wars' are viewed as being more protected from the trauma of war.

Steinhoff argues that new and old wars are perceived to differ in four key respects.¹¹² Old wars are motivated by grievance and ideology, had broad popular support, limited violence to the instrumental and largely respected the distinction between combatants and non-combatants. Whereas new wars in contrast are seen to be motivated by greed, lack popular support, have high levels of gratuitous violence and target civilians. He states that in reality such clear-cut distinctions fall down upon closer inspection. He aptly describes examples of old and new wars that share characteristics, and indeed as shown below, this can be seen to be the case to some degree when looking at the specific conflicts studied in this thesis.

In addition to the new war / old war, debates are those alternative, but to some degree complementary, theories that emerged in the same period. For example, echoes of the new war / old war debate can also be found in the discussions on greed versus grievance. In the past, most scholars looked for grievances to explain the outbreak of conflict in the form of ideology or geo-political motivations. The

¹¹² Steinhoff, U., 'Why there is no Barbarization but a Lot of Barbarity in Warfare' in Kassimeris, G., Ed. 2006. *Warrior's Dishonour: Barbarity, Morality and Torture in Modern Warfare*. Aldershot: Ashgate. pp 101-111. p 101.

quest for resources was seen merely as a means to an end. In the 1990's, in parallel to the emergence of the 'new war' doctrine, an emphasis on resources as the object of struggle evolved.¹¹³ The theory that it is greed not grievance that fuels conflict. This shares some similarities with Kaldor's theory, which stresses the globalisation of warfare and the ability of state and non-state actors to financially benefit from conflict and thus seek its continuation rather than seeking political solutions that may reduce their access to resources.

However, it is important to recognise that these are theorised descriptions of war. Kaldor herself recognises that in old wars, 'actual warfare never exactly fitted the stylised description' and the same can be said of new war theory, which has some critics.¹¹⁴ Hendriks, for example, argues that the usual association of new war with intrastate conflict and old wars with interstate conflict has 'clearly clouded some observers' judgement on the characteristics of contemporary African conflicts'.¹¹⁵ She argues that far from being civil in nature, many of the 'new wars' in Africa are in actuality international conflicts in which stronger opponents act as 'vultures', using various techniques to plunder and control weaker neighbouring states.

¹¹³ Arnson, C., and Zartman, W., Eds. 2005. *Rethinking the Economics of War: The Intersection of Need, Creed and Greed*. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Press. p 2-3.

¹¹⁴ Kaldor, M., 2004. *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p 15.

¹¹⁵ Hendriks, K., 2012. *African Vultures: The New Prevalence of Interstate War in Africa*. *Amsterdam Social Science* 4(1). pp 49-66. p 50.

Such concerns over the weaknesses of strict theoretical dichotomies have in recent years influenced theorists. For example, scholars working on the grievance versus greed approach have started to combine the two theories looking instead at how both factors play a role in creating and sustaining conflict, with particular reference to how conflicts can change over time. This type of thinking has informed this thesis. The case studies chosen highlight how both old war and new war theories have relevance in the modern era and that in actuality conflicts can shift between both stylised descriptions of war and even exhibit characteristics of both at the same time. Whilst the author agrees that the evolution in warfare resulting in 'new war' has occurred, and that new war in its use of global networks and modern technologies differs from the wars of the past, this shift is not absolute. New wars described by many as classic examples, such as Sierra Leone, often exhibit practices that can be shown to have historic roots or fail to fully meet the criteria on identity seen as inherent to new wars. Whilst those such as El Salvador that are described as old style conflicts can show new war characteristics in their use of modern technology. Other conflicts like that in Sri Lanka appear to shift from one to the other over time. Recognising that stylised descriptions of war are not absolute is not to say that differentiating between types of conflict is not also useful. Despite the inherent difficulties of applying any theory to multiple cases I found that thinking about the three cases as a spectrum of new/old war allowed for a more complex understanding of the differences and similarities between the three cases and how these were related to the type of

conflict and its characteristics and the dynamics of conflict itself. This was particularly useful when thinking about how the conflicts changed over time.

Case Studies.

The case studies were chosen because each represented a different type of conflict in which children were recruited by non-state armed groups. They are as follows:

Sierra Leone, an example of new war in which access to resources drove the conflict, Sri Lanka, an ethno-nationalist conflict which was fought over claims and counterclaims to a defined territory by two competing ethnic groups, and El Salvador, an ideologically driven revolution in which the two sides were homogenous with regards to ethnicity, language and religion but had opposing views as to the structure and nature of the state.

The first kind of conflict discussed here, the Sierra Leone case, is the kind of war that Mary Kaldor in her influential work 'New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era' calls 'new war'.¹¹⁶ New wars differ from old wars and are characterised in particular by the decline of the state, the involvement of multiple actors, transnational linkages, and the adoption of counterinsurgency techniques, the use of modern technology and the emergence of a self-sustaining war

¹¹⁶ Kaldor, M., 2004. p 8.

economy. The boundaries between public and private, civilian and combatant become blurred.

The starting point when looking at new war is the decay of national frameworks, which in Sierra Leone occurred in part because of a lack of economic development characterised by a weakening and decline of the state, corruption, and incompetence. This was exacerbated by the impact of structural adjustment programmes, reductions in foreign aid and drops in commodity prices.¹¹⁷ The decline of state revenue and lack of political legitimacy led to state disintegration and the emergence of a shadow state.

The emergence of multiple non-state actors competing for power and resources – and whom the state was too weak to counter effectively – led to a privatisation of violence and an increase in the number of armed groups and organised crime. The government during the war resorted in part to allowing pro-government militias to supplement the work of the armed forces (and from the point of view of the militias to protect the population from the army) further complicating the situation on the ground and making it difficult to separate private and public, formal and informal.

¹¹⁷ Brown et al., Eds. 2001. *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, Revised Edition. London: The MIT Press.

There is one aspect of Kaldor's theory that is difficult to apply to the Sierra Leone case. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was not a group that based their claim to power on any fully accepted form of identity. Some scholars (see case study) put forward the argument that the RUF, as excluded intellectuals, had political ambitions that were poorly expressed, but this claim is not widely accepted. However, as seen above, the case study does exhibit most of the features of a new war, despite being a criminally motivated group, rather than one based on identity. As in other new wars, the RUF continued the conflict in the violent pursuit of resources. In a situation where the economy had been transformed into a self-sustaining war economy, in which parties to the conflict could gain economically from the continuation of the war there existed group elements that operated through a mixture of co-operation and confrontation even when on opposing sides, often in order to gain economic benefits. Illegal resources exploitation was rife and the scramble for resources was accompanied by large-scale human rights violations.

These were often, in the beginning, committed by mercenaries who were supported by external actors, Charles Taylor and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, and who used a combination of guerrilla tactics and counterinsurgency techniques to control the population and access resources for themselves and their sponsors through their involvement with the RUF. External influences in the form of mercenaries, international agencies and regional actors complicated the

situation on the ground and resulted in the conflict taking on an international or regional dimension, which made it more difficult to resolve.

The second case study was one in which identity figured in a more significant way. Ethnic conflicts – such as that found in Sri Lanka - were built upon perceived discrimination and antagonistic group histories, and the claim to power was based as much on a need to feel secure as it was on access to resources and territory. This was the most challenging of the three case studies in many ways, as it was more complex and took place over a longer period of time.

The central state in Sri Lanka used the political system to indulge in ethnic outbidding, solidifying their support bases by using patronage and appealing to the grievances and historical antagonisms of their constituents. Political discrimination can be seen in the passing of laws by the government, which reduced political access for minority groups, and by the introduction of resettlement programmes, which attempted to change the demographics of minority areas. Unequal access to resources, economic opportunities and variations in living standards created tension, and cultural discrimination such as discriminatory language practices, restraints on religious freedoms and unequal access to education or employment on the basis of cultural background led to inter-group antagonism.

The perceived discrimination by the state generated a response from the Tamils, who sought to mobilise on the basis of identity and demanded not only resources but the right to autonomy or secession. The claims of the group were based on exclusive concepts of ethnicity so the armed group sought to maintain an exclusive membership, mobilising on an exclusionary basis with a rigid identity. In common with other exclusionary armed groups they only recruited from within their own ethnicity and people outside the ethnic group were usually viewed as legitimate targets.

The Sri Lanka case was interesting due to its mixture of characteristics. In keeping with the nature of old wars it was a state building project along the lines of the anti-colonial movement. The Sinhalese dominated government was viewed in many ways as a colonial regime. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) stressed their right to self-determination and their legitimacy as a de facto state. The armed faction of the movement was created and regulated in similar ways to state armies around the world. Territory was controlled through the establishment of a quasi-state, which attempted to fulfil many of the functions associated with states: tax collecting, providing internal security and welfare assistance. However the conflict also exhibited characteristics of new wars. The LTTE employed strategies of destabilisation such as suicide bombing; they employed rhetoric of the 'other' in keeping with their ethnically based identity. The use of resources by the LTTE came to resemble a criminal enterprise with extortion and involvement in illegal activities. There was a strong international element to the LTTE both in

terms of how they accessed resources but also in how they used technology. They sought to cleanse from the areas under their control anyone who was not Tamil, even other minority groups such as the Sri Lanka Muslims. This mix of characteristics in many ways makes the Sri Lanka case a bridge between the more obvious new war that is found in Sierra Leone and the conflict in El Salvador which as we shall see is more consistent with an old war.

Neither an ethnic conflict nor a new war, the conflict in El Salvador was in many ways ideologically based but with social/economic factors that were significant. Social and economic discrimination was part of the status quo and there was a long history of political repression and uprisings, which met with severe reprisals from the State. As a conflict that can be described in many ways as an old war, the discord in El Salvador was primarily about re-ordering the state. The Farabundo Marti Nacional Liberation Front (FMLN) wished to implement a forward thinking political project. FMLN rules of engagement were along conventional lines that sought to restrict as much as possible civilian casualties and resources were not central to the conflict or the group other than to support military operations.

The FMLN mobilised on an ideological basis, which was not identity based and did not include mercenaries, although a very limited number of foreign sympathisers could at times be found within the group. The FMLN was not

exclusionary, welcoming any potential members regardless of ethnicity, gender, class or religion as long as they were willing to fight for the cause. The group sought to mobilise society at a grass roots level against the state, emphasising popular support and collective action - this was particularly important as an emphasis on prolonged war theory necessitated long term access to resources, and a grassroots constituency made such access more likely in the long term. As revolution from below was a key concept of the FMLN it sought to build support from the masses via the raising of political consciousness and the introduction of collective action.

Each of these conflicts had some similarities; each was situated outside of the Western developed world and each became protracted over time. Each also had unique characteristics relating to the type of conflict. These differences and similarities between the conflicts offer an explanation for variations in child recruitment. Although each of the conflicts, most notably Sierra Leone, has been the focus of research on child soldiers the research has not offered a substantial comparative assessment of how conflict may account for variations in children's recruitment, deployment and treatment.

The approach chosen was to undertake an in-depth analysis of the case studies in order to assess whether the type of conflict significantly impacts on a child's experiences of being part of an armed group. The case studies for this research

were chosen for several reasons. Each allowed for the conflict to be approached from a number of angles. Each represents a different type of conflict, each is situated at a different place on the old war/new war spectrum, each over time developed conflict dynamics related to the protractedness of the conflict. They come from different continents but each is situated within the developing world, and they are also all reasonably recent.

A different case study is analyzed in each of the following chapters and the following structure will be observed. Each chapter starts with an overview of the conflict specific to that case study and will also look at how the conflict became protracted and its key players. Then the non-state armed group that is the focus of the research will be analyzed; its aims, command structures, strategy and tactics, use of resources and wielding of violence will be evaluated. The implications that these have for the recruitment, deployment and abuse of children, including gender differences, are then discussed. Conversely, how children act in these conflicts given the above factors will conclude each chapter.

Following the case study chapters will be the concluding chapter, which will give a comparative assessment, based on the three case studies, of how and why conflict impacts on children's recruitment, deployment and abuse. This analysis will pay close attention to gender differences and issues of agency, both that of the group and that of the child.

The emphasis on non-state groups.

Firstly, it is imperative to explain why only non-state armed groups are being analysed in this study despite the presence of government and pro-government forces in each conflict which also recruited children. In part this decision was taken because the legal definitions are clearer in the case of non-state groups. Under the Geneva Conventions and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child the recruitment of children aged 15-18 years is allowed in some circumstances by government forces, for example if the child has volunteered with written parental consent. It is thus more difficult to prove whether children of this age within government forces have been unlawfully recruited. On the contrary recruitment of any child less than 18 years of age is strictly prohibited for non-state groups.¹¹⁸ It is thus easier to pinpoint illegal recruitment of children in this age bracket as the armed group cannot claim that the child has been recruited lawfully.

Another reason for focusing on non-state armed groups is that they often use younger children than government forces, who can often resort more readily to conscription of older recruits. This makes them more susceptible to NGO attention. Children are also more widely recruited by non-state armed groups on a

¹¹⁸ Harvey, R., May 2000. Child Soldiers- the Beginning of the End. *Childright*. 164. p 18.

global scale, making them the primary violators of international law with regard to child recruitment.¹¹⁹

Sources and data: Secondary Data.

The literature reviewed offered much information on when, where, how and why children were recruited, both from the group's viewpoint and from the point of view of children themselves. It is not the aim of this research to add to this information, which is already extensive. This research instead hopes to use the existing information available to look at children's experiences in a different way - by looking at the relationship between conflict and child soldiers in three specific case studies and then going further to compare these three conflicts.

As the main thrust of the hypothesis is that it is the type of conflict which impacts upon children's experiences, I draw upon a number of conflict theories to understand more fully how and why conflict type can impact on children's recruitment, deployment and treatment. The main debates and arguments concerning conflict were studied.¹²⁰ Texts on specific types of conflict were also

¹¹⁹ Becker, J., 2003. Child Soldiers and Armed Groups. Notes for a Presentation to the Conference on Curbing Human Rights Abuses by Armed Groups. Centre of International Relations. University of British Columbia. Vancouver, 14-15 November 2003. Accessed through www.armedgroups.org [16th March 2008]. p 1.

¹²⁰ For example, Starr, H., Ed. 1999. *The Understanding and Management of Global Violence: New Approaches to Theory and Research on Protracted Conflict*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd. Brown, M., Ed. 1996. *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*. Cambridge: The MIT

looked at.¹²¹ As the case studies are composed of one example of ‘new war’, an ethnic nationalist conflict and a left wing revolution these, once identified, were the types of conflict concentrated upon.

Adding to this were publications on conflict whose content directly related to aspects of what this thesis is looking at, usually with regard to the groups relationship with civilians and which I have extended to illuminate each group’s relationship with its child recruits. Stanton analyses how armed groups use strategies of restraint and violence to achieve their aims, this feeds into the idea that different groups actively use violence and restraint in their recruitment methods and that such actions are not irrational.¹²² In a similar vein, Humphreys and Weinstein discuss how the organisation of the group impacts on how groups choose strategies of abuse and coercion which can again be applied to recruitment practices.¹²³ R. Wood examines how the type of violence a group uses and its strategies of violence alter over the course of the conflict in reaction to changes in

Press. Arnsperg, C., and Zartman, I.W., Eds. 2005. *Rethinking the Economics of War: The Intersection of Need, Creed and Greed*. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press. Linke, U., and Smith, D.T., Eds. 2009. *Cultures of Fear: A Critical Reader*. London: Pluto Press.

¹²¹ For example Kaldor, M., 2001. 2nd Ed. *New and Old Wars: Organised violence in a global Era*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Brown, M et al., Eds. 2001. *Nationalism and Ethnic conflict*. Cambridge: The MIT Press. Wolff, S., 2007. *Ethnic Conflict, A Global Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Harff, B., and Gurr, T.R., 2004. *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*. USA: Westview Press. Brockett, C., 2005. *Political Movements and Violence in Central America*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

¹²² Stanton, J., 2009. *Strategies of Violence and Restraint in Civil War*. Ph.D. Columbia University. Accessed through Proquest Information and Learning. Accessed at LSE, [13/09/2010].

¹²³ Humphreys, M., and Weinstein, J., 2006. *Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War*. *American Political Science Review*. 100(3). pp 429-447.

power dynamics between the state and armed group.¹²⁴ Beardsley and McQuinn write about armed groups as predatory organisations shedding light on how groups may act to further their own continuation in ways that ultimately impact on the children within those groups.¹²⁵ Complementing this is Weinstein's work on how the type of resources a group has can act to attract certain types of recruits.¹²⁶ Wood and Alison both address gender issues such as female agency in times of war and how sexuality and sexual abuses can be used politically by both females and armed groups.¹²⁷ Cohen also looks at sexual violence but from the perspective of the group; how does the organisation of the group lead to variations in sexual abuse against civilians?¹²⁸ This again can be applied to the relationship between the group and its recruits. Given the sheer volume of sexual abuse of child recruits in some conflicts, it is imperative that this issue is explored with a view to offering a fuller explanation of why groups abuse children. These theories are written primarily with respect to the group's relationship with civilians or recruits in general in times of conflict. Over the course this research I will be applying these concepts to the case of child soldiers and seeing if such an application can illuminate the variations in children's recruitment, deployment and abuse.

¹²⁴ Wood, R., 2010. *Competing for Control: Conflict Power Dynamics, Civilian Loyalties and Violence in Civil War*. Ph.D. University of North Carolina (Proquest Information and Learning.) accessed at LSE, [28/09/2011].

¹²⁵ Beardsley, K., and McQuinn, B., 2009. Rebel Groups as Predatory Organisations: The Political Effects of the 2004 Tsunami in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 53(4).

¹²⁶ Weinstein, J., 2005. Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 49(598).

¹²⁷ Wood E.J., 2009. Armed Groups and Sexual Violence: When is Wartime Rape Rare? *Politics and Society*. 37(1). Alison, M., 2004. Women as Agents of Political Violence: Gendering Security. *Security Dialogue*. 35(4).

¹²⁸ Cohen, D., 2010. *Explaining Sexual Violence during Civil War*. Ph.D. Stanford University (Proquest Information and Learning. Accessed at LSE, [28/09/2011].

Once the specific conflicts to be studied more closely were agreed then information on each conflict was assembled to allow comparisons to be drawn. This included country profiles from the US State Department and reports from NGO on specific aspects of the conflicts, such as conflict diamonds in Sierra Leone by Global Witness and Partnership Africa Canada and on militarization and small arms by War Resisters International.¹²⁹ Publications of particular note were those on the armed group itself which looked in detail at the leadership, structure, motivations and policies of the group.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Ross, R., and Savada, A., Ed. 1988. A Country Study: Sri Lanka. US Library of Congress (DS489.568.1990). US State Department, *Background Note: Sierra Leone*. Accessed through <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5475.htm>. [30/07/08]. Williamson, J., February 2005. Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone. US Agency for International Development. Accessed through http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACH599.PDF [15/06/2005]. UNICEF, Sri Lanka Country Statistics. Accessed through www.unicef.org/infobycountry. [29/05/2011]. Richards, P., Bah, K., and Vincent, J., 2004. Social Capital and Survival: Prospects for Community Driven Development in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone. Social Development Paper no 12. World Bank. Accessed through www.worldbank.org. Goreux, L., 2001. Conflict Diamonds. Africa Region Working Paper no 13. World Bank. Accessed through www.wds.worldbank.org. [31/08/2008]. p 7. Gberie, L., 2002. War and Peace in Sierra Leone: Diamonds, Corruption and the Lebanese Connection. Occasional Paper 6. Partnership Africa Canada. Accessed through www.pacweb.org. Global Witness, 2004. Broken Vows: Exposing the "Loupe" Holes in the Diamond Industry's Efforts to Prevent the Trade in Conflict Diamonds. Accessed through www.globalwitness.org [22/02/2005]. War Resisters International, 1998. Refusing to Bear Arms: A Worldwide Survey of Conscription and Conscientious Objection to Military Service. Accessed through www.wri-irg.org [15/06/05].

¹³⁰ Swamy, M.R., 2008. Inside an Elusive Mind: Prabhakaran, The First Profile of the World's Most Ruthless Guerrilla Leader. Colombo: Yapa Publications. Gberie, L., 2005. A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone. London: Hurst and Company. Bracemonte, J., and Spencer, D., 1995. Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas: Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts. USA: Praeger Publishers. Spencer, D., 1996. From Vietnam to El Salvador: The Saga of the FMLN Sappers and Other Guerrilla Special Forces in Latin America. USA: Praeger Publishers. Viterna, J.S., 2006. Pulled, Pushed and Persuaded: Explaining Women's mobilisation into the Salvadoran Guerrilla Army. Published by the University of Chicago. Accessed through www.yale.edu. [10/08/07].

In addition to publications on conflict theory, specific types of conflict, themes of conflict relevant to this study (such as the organisation of armed groups and sexual abuses by armed groups) and literature on the case studies, a second type of literature which discussed child soldiers was also studied. General literature on child soldiers was particularly useful at the start of the study to give an overall impression of how children are recruited, deployed and treated by armed groups.¹³¹ Most of this literature is written by NGO and intergovernmental agencies working to eradicate the use of children as soldiers. Of particular use were reports by Human Rights Watch, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and Amnesty International, who have issued many country studies on the use of children in specific conflicts which when read together help to build a picture of the various ways in which children can be used by armed groups, and the Quaker UN Office in Geneva who have lead the way in researching the use of girl children as soldiers.

¹³¹ McConnan, I., and Uppard, S., 2001. *Children Not Soldiers: Guidelines for working with child soldiers and children associated with fighting forces*. London: Save the Children. Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. *Child Soldiers: The role of children in armed conflicts*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Wessells, M., 2006. *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. Singer, P., 2006a. *Children at War*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Boyden, J., and de Berry, J., 2005. *Children and Youth on the Frontline: Ethnography, Armed Conflict and Displacement*. *Studies in Forced Migration*, 14. USA: Berghahn Books. Honwana, A., 2006. *Child Soldiers in Africa*. USA: University of Pennsylvania Press. Rosen, D., 2005. *Armies of the Young: Child Soldiers in War and Terrorism*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. Reich, S., and Achvarina, V., 2005. *Why Do Children Fight? Explaining Child Soldier Ratios in African Intra-State Conflicts*. Ford Institute for Human Security, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh. Machel, G., 2001. *The Impact of War on Children*. London: Hurst and Co. Brett, R., and Specht, I., 2004. *Young Soldiers: Why they choose to fight*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Understanding how conflict type impacts upon child soldiers - their recruitment, deployment and abuse - is the aim of this research. To fully understand this several issues must be addressed; the motivation of the group and its cultural, economic, and political context, the child's agency within the circumstances of the specific conflict in which it finds itself, the role of gender within armed groups, the role that support, resources and violence has in enabling or hindering the group and the child, and the changing dynamics of the conflict.

Once the areas of importance to the study were clearly established, the study narrowed to publications and data specifically on child soldiers in the case study conflicts.¹³² Data on recruitment, deployment and treatment in each of the three cases was extracted from these sources. Information on the dynamics of the conflict was taken from these sources and also from publications on the conflict which did not deal with child soldiers. This combined with the work already

¹³² For example Ricca, C., June 2006. El Salvador: Children in the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the Armed Forces of El Salvador (FAES). Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. Accessed through www.child-soldiers.org [30/07/2008]. Dickson-Gomez, J., 2002. Growing Up in Guerrilla Camps: The Long-Term Impact of Being a Child Soldier in El Salvador's Civil War. *Ethos*. 30(4) pp 327-356. Shepler, S., 2005. Conflicted Childhoods: Fighting Over Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone. Unpublished PhD thesis. Given to the author in 2006. Restoy, E., June 2006. Sierra Leone: The Revolutionary United Front. Trying to Influence an Army of Children. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. Accessed through www.child-soldiers.org. Pham, J., 2005. Child Soldiers, Adult Interests: The Global Dimensions of the Sierra Leone Tragedy. New York: Nova Science Publishers. Human Rights Watch, Jan 2003. We'll kill you if you cry: Sexual violence In the Sierra Leone conflict. 15(1) Accessed through www.hrw.org [30/07/2008]. Coulter, C., 2009. Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers: Women's lives through War and Peace in Sierra Leone. USA: Cornell University Press. Denov, M., 2010. Child Soldiers: Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front. USA: Cambridge University Press. Charu Lata Hogg, 2006. Child Recruitment in South Asia: A Comparative Analysis of Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. An Asia Program Report. Chatham House UK: The Royal Institute of International Affairs. Accessed through www.chathamhouse.org.uk. [28/01/09]. Human Rights Watch, November 2004. Living in Fear. Child soldiers and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. 16(13c). New York: Human Rights Watch. Keairns, Y., 2003. The Voices of Girl Soldiers: Sri Lanka. New York: Quakers UN Office. Accessed through www.quno.org. [21/01/09].

carried out on the three specific case studies, each a different type of conflict, allowed comparisons to be made between the cases so that a clearer picture could emerge of how conflict type impacted on children's recruitment, deployment and treatment.

Primary Qualitative data.

Each of the three case studies has been resolved and has, to a varying degree, official documents issued by the mechanisms set up to assist with the resolution of the conflicts - the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission and the UN's Commission on the Truth for El Salvador.¹³³ These are a good source of qualitative data on the conflicts including, in the case of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone, interviews with children published in their own words. However, although more recent documents mention children specifically, the documents relating to older conflicts such as that in El Salvador do not in any significant way. Such documents can still be used as a source of information on the conflict, the armed groups and recruitment more generally. Therefore it is important to use other

¹³³ Verhey, B., The Demobilisation and Reintegration of Child Soldiers: El Salvador Case Study. World Bank. Accessed through www.worldbank.org. [19/08/07)], Deng Deng, W., 2001. A Survey of Programs on the Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Accessed through www.mofa.go.jp [12/07/2009]. Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone. (3b) in The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone. Accessed through www.trcsierraleone.org. [13/07/08].

sources such as NGO reports and some of the non-NGO publications which also include extracts from interviews with children in their own words.

In a similar vein, memoirs and biographies have also been considered as they offer further insights into children's views of their experiences, especially for comparative purposes. The first are biographies that people have written about their lives or their experiences of war in which their time as a child soldier is only one part. Mehari's 'Heart of Fire' which discusses her involvement in the Eritrean war and Ung's 'First They Killed my Father' which takes place under the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia are two such texts.¹³⁴ The authors remember their experiences of child soldiering as part of a greater story. Indeed, in both cases the children involved were very young and it appears that neither was engaged in active combat, although both underwent training with weapons and lived as part of a military unit. Both children seemed understandably more preoccupied with their respective family situations and their own individual survival than with wider issues relating to their experiences within armed groups.

Beah's 'A Long Way Gone' which is written about his experiences as a child soldier in Sierra Leone, Keitetsi's 'Child Soldier' which is set in Uganda and tells the story of her recruitment into Museveni's National Resistance Army, and Shin's 'Remembering Korea 1950' are representative of the second type of

¹³⁴ Ung, L., 2007. *First They Killed my Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers*. Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Company. Mehari, S., 2007. *Heart of Fire*. London: Profile Books Ltd.

memoir concentrating solely on the author's time as a child soldier.¹³⁵ These three accounts offer greater illumination of what it is like to be a child soldier, offering insights into children's experiences once they have been recruited. These child soldiers all fought in active combat and discuss the effect this had upon them. These accounts are particularly important in terms of offering insights into how children themselves view their involvement. Shin's account particularly shows the complexities of children's agency within conflict situations. He shows a complex grasp of his situation, accepting that he joined the armed forces as a matter of survival – something he would not have done if he felt he had other options – but he also views his involvement as vital to his country's survival. He feels empathy for his enemies but understands that the outcome of the war will directly affect himself and his loved ones and thus killing is a necessary though unwelcome obligation. Although he wrote his book with an adult's comprehension, his account gives credence to the view that children are capable of making difficult choices and displaying agency in their own right.

Yet as powerful as these accounts are, they have limitations. As individual accounts of a child's experience, they clearly offer valuable insights. However it is difficult to draw convincing conclusions and generalisations concerning the wider experience of child soldiers. There are still only a handful of such accounts from a limited number of cases. It is difficult even to draw conclusions about

¹³⁵ Beah, I., 2007. *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*. London: HarperCollins Publishers. Keitetsi, C., 2004. *Child Soldier*. London: Souvenir Press. Shin, H., 2001. *Remembering Korea 1950: A Boy Soldier's Story* USA: University of Nevada Press.

child soldiering within the conflicts in question, as often there may be only one published account concerning a specific conflict.

Indeed, although Mehari makes clear the negative impact her child soldier experiences had on her life, especially the sexual abuse she suffered, she also contemplates that her friend who remained in Eritrea is proud to have fought for her country and feels it is right to have done so although she was only a child. She comments that 'if they were to come and live in Europe their pride would quickly evaporate. No Eritrean abroad is proud to have been a soldier – they realise how terrible it was for them to have been forced to fight so young'.¹³⁶ This suggests that the beliefs the child holds about their involvement in the conflict - beliefs linked to the type of conflict in which they were involved, and the beliefs of those around them - can impact on how children view their involvement even once they are adults. A related factor to keep in mind is that four of these books concern people that were child soldiers prior to the existence of the CRC (1989) and prior to the wars of post colonialism that are the focus of most child soldier research. Each is published significantly after the events took place and after over a decade of increasing campaigning by advocacy groups seeking to highlight the negative impacts soldiering has on children.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Mehari, S., 2007. p 247.

¹³⁷ Keitetsi, C., 2004 whose account is of the Ugandan civil war in the mid 1980s. Mehari, S., 2007 whose account is of the Eritrean War of Liberation in the early 1980's. Shin, H., 2001. His account is of the Korean War in 1950. Ung, L., 2007 whose account is of the Cambodian war in the 1970's.

Memoirs and interviews (and indeed reports based in large part on interviews) have specific limitations attached to them which are in many ways similar. The question of reliability is an important one, and is in part related to the extended period of time that has occurred in many cases between the events taking place and the recounting of the story.¹³⁸ Recollections of events and time sequences may become less clear. It may become more difficult to verify the accuracy of the information offered. Emotions and feelings regarding involvement may have undergone shifts related to changing perceptions of the legitimacy of the conflict and the child's involvement, or even depending on whether the person at a later date felt they gained or lost by their involvement.

Two memoirs in particular have faced allegations of containing inaccuracies. Mehari admits in her account that some factions of the Eritrean Diaspora contest that child soldiers were used in the War of Liberation and her book has been the object of threatened legal action. Beah has been accused of inaccuracies in his dating of events – most notably that the event he claims led to his recruitment took place two years later than he claims in his book, resulting in some critics expressing the opinion that his length of service as a child soldier would have been less than a year, not the 2 years claimed.¹³⁹ Given that it was largely his experiences as a child soldier that lead to his later relocation to the United States there remains some question as to whether his individual account may be

¹³⁸ Coulter, C., 2009. p 19.

¹³⁹ Mehari, S., 2007. p 254. Numerous articles concerning the Beah controversy can be found on The Australian's website, www.theaustralian.news.com.au

exaggerated and if so to what extent. This does not in any way detract from the very real and horrific experiences of child soldiers – including Beah - in Sierra Leone which have been documented extensively. Rather I seek to make the point that such reported inconsistencies in author's accounts may in some instances derive in part from the benefits they may accrue by exaggerating their experiences. A factor that has also been noted in other sources, such as NGO reports, where the research subjects may hope to gain materially from their participation in the research.

One last important point to note is that some of the details setting the wider context of many memoirs are not derived from first-hand experience. For example Mehari gives very general figures for child recruitment by the armed group she was conscripted by but admits in the same paragraph that she did not have much contact with units outside of her own.¹⁴⁰ Thus it would seem that when offering data on scales of recruitment and when making more general observations regarding child recruitment or the conflict itself, authors have often relied on external sources which in turn have their own strengths and weaknesses.

Despite the methodological issues that arise when using memoirs, and indeed interviews, they are still an important source of information. The memoir can be used as a key source when addressing questions of children's agency. When

¹⁴⁰ Mehari, S., 2007. p 64.

reading memoirs it becomes apparent that the way the child in question feels about their involvement is linked to their beliefs about the wars they were involved in, both at the time of their involvement and later as adults. Mehari was given to the Eritrean Liberation Force in Eritrea by her father and admits to understanding little of their cause; she views her experience as very negative and detrimental to her childhood.¹⁴¹ Shin, in contrast, whilst accepting that he would rather have been able to continue his education, sees his experience as having many positive aspects, not least because he saw his involvement as necessary in order to maintain his country's sovereignty and protect his family from possible suffering under a North Korean communist invasion.¹⁴² What these memoirs suggest is that the backgrounds and experiences of children prior to their recruitment are not uniform, and neither is their experience as soldiers, nor their interpretations of their experiences once they are adults. These are questions that do not arise so obviously from the reading of other forms of literature on child soldiers and so memoirs have an important role to play. Having been written in most part by adults, removed for some time from their experiences as soldiers, memoirs give a more complex picture of the thinking of former child combatants than texts that set out the thinking of former child soldiers interviewed almost straight from the battlefield, although these too are of course valuable sources of information.

¹⁴¹ Mehari, S., 2007. p 254.

¹⁴² Shin, H., 2001.

When looking to understand how conflict type impacts on child soldier's experiences, accounts that look at children are important but so too are accounts that deal with the armed group and its motivations and policies. Publications by the armed group itself hold particular interest as they give an insider's view of the organisation. Some of these, such as in the case of the LTTE in Sri Lanka, are written by individual members of the armed group itself, others are written by official bodies within the group that then issue them to the press or on the internet.¹⁴³

Following on from the review of primary sources were a number of interviews which were conducted with a view to expand upon the knowledge gained during the literature review, to take the opportunity to find the answers to questions that were not sufficiently answered within the existing narratives and to enable cross-checking of the information collected. The aim of the interviews was to further understanding of the case studies and of the use of children within these conflicts. Areas of interest discussed with interviewees included how the length and changing dynamics of the specific conflict impacted on children's experiences, and the question of support for the armed group and how this impacted on the recruitment, deployment and abuse of children within the group. The role of ideology and resources within each conflict and its influence on conscription, and

¹⁴³ RUF, 1995. Lasting peace in Sierra Leone: The RUFSL perspective and vision. Accessed through www.Sierra-Leone.org [06/11/2003]. RUF, 1995. Footpaths to democracy: Towards a new Sierra Leone Accessed through www.Sierra-Leone.org [06/11/2003]. Villalobos, J., 1989. Popular Insurrection. Desire or Reality? *Latin American Perspectives*. 16(3). Balasingham, A., 2001. The Will to Freedom: An Inside View of Tamil Resistance. England: Fairmax Publishing Ltd.

the role of violence and gender within the armed groups were also broached.

Questions led the discussions with those interviewed responding dependent upon their own knowledge, mainly drawn from observations they had made when carrying out field research or from the study of the literature and data available to them, including that from unpublished sources.

The people chosen were a reflection in part of the types of organizations and individuals that have been involved in previous research. Thus interviews were held with NGO and government officials and staff from intergovernmental organisations. Some scholars who, in conjunction with their academic posts, have worked also with NGO were also approached and interviewed. Organisations were approached that worked in campaigning, in the field in rehabilitation and relief work, and within the UN system. Many of the interviewees had direct experience of working with children in the case study countries, and could offer valuable insights into the case study country in question. Others were approached because they or their organization had already carried out substantial research into the topic of child soldiers and could verify information gleaned from other sources and because such individuals/organisations do not always have the freedom within reports to discuss pertinent points which they may be able to share during interviews.

Given the sensitive nature of the topic, most of those approached who were happy to be interviewed had already completed research that was in the public domain or were linked with organizations that worked openly and publicly on the issue. The sensitive nature of the work also meant that many contacts were snowballed through existing contacts who vouched for the validity of the research. In line with previous studies on this subject ethical considerations were paramount as many issues relating to the use of children in conflict are sensitive to those involved. In the case of Sri Lanka where the conflict was ongoing for a period of the research, consideration needed to be taken to protect the safety of contacts, thus anonymity was granted to those interviewees who requested it. In addition some information was given to the author by interviewees on the understanding that it could only be used to inform the author; this material has therefore been withheld from the text.

The El Salvador case was particularly problematic in terms of arranging interviews for a number of reasons. The concluding of the war at a time prior to large-scale scholarly or NGO interest in the topic of child soldiers which was at this time still largely concentrated on issues of legislation resulted in little expertise on child soldiers involved in conflicts at this time. The length of time since the ending of the conflict made current experts who did not work on the issue at the time understandably unwilling to broach an opinion. Thirdly the resources required to overcome the language barriers necessary to approach El Salvadorans directly were beyond the scope of the research, especially given the

time passed and the transformation of the FMLN into a political party focused on the present and not on the less edifying aspects of its past history. Because of these issues interviews with experts on child soldiers in El Salvador were not forthcoming. Where possible more general interviews have been used to supplement the other sources of data used in this case study.

The question of ethics again arose over the question of whether research directly with children should be carried out. Having discussed the matter at considerable length with experts on children generally and child soldiers more specifically, the conclusion was reached that to work directly with former child soldiers for a short period of time and then withdraw would be to the detriment of the children who would be involved in the study. It is not within the resources of this study to offer further assistance to children whose recounting of their experiences may produce negative repercussions for them. Although this may be considered a shortcoming of the study I believe that the use of multiple data, the interviews with numerous individuals who are experts in this field and the public availability of research with quotes and interviews with children act to give sufficient information for the study to be robust. The focus of the study is not to follow in the footsteps of other more experienced researchers who have already successfully interviewed children in these cases. It is to offer a new approach for explaining the recruitment, deployment and abuse of children, which builds upon current knowledge and extends it with reference to how the conflict itself impacts in different ways on children's experiences.

Primary Quantative Data.

In addition to both secondary and primary qualitative data, the thesis also utilises primary quantative data which is especially useful for helping to make comparisons between the three case studies. Where possible, quantative data will be used to make the comparisons as vigorous and accurate as possible.¹⁴⁴ This data includes information that is concerned with the case study country more generally as well as more detailed data on the use of child soldiers within that country.

Amongst the list of factors believed to increase children's vulnerability to recruitment are poverty levels, the country in question having a youthful population, poor access to education and alternative opportunities. Throughout the case studies and conclusion the data will be analysed and compared to see how much influence these factors may have had on child recruitment, deployment and treatment. Publications from UNICEF which publish statistics on the state of children on a country by country basis were the main source of this information.

¹⁴⁴ Verhey, B., World Bank. Deng Deng, W., 2001. Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone. Volume 3b.

Having assessed the influence of the factors currently held to be important in child soldier recruitment and having drawn conclusions as to their influence in these countries, the thesis will then go on to use more detailed quantitative child soldier statistics. The World Bank, which has funded and assessed several rehabilitation programmes for child soldiers, has information which includes statistical breakdowns of data, and is one source for this information, as is the Government of Japan. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Sierra Leone also provided statistics that have been widely used within the relevant chapter.

In the case of El Salvador quantitative data on child soldiers includes forced recruitment rates, ages of children at recruitment, breakdowns of rank by age, gender and literacy levels, the breakdown of tasks according to age and gender, and children's motivations to join the group. These help to give a picture of children's experiences of child soldiering and the groups' use of children.

There are, however, many limitations on using statistics concerning child soldiers.¹⁴⁵ Firstly they are rarely wholly accurate, often they are guesses based on sample surveys or reintegration data, and as has been noted by others, reintegration processes often fail to incorporate and account for all the children

¹⁴⁵ Daillaire, R., Lancaster, P., O'Neil, J., and Spencer, S., *Children in Conflict: Eradicating the Child Soldier Doctrine*. Carr Centre for Human Rights Policy. USA: Harvard University. p 6. Denov, M., 2009. p 23. Wessells, M., 2006. p 8.

involved in a conflict. Many ex-combatants remain hidden, especially the most vulnerable such as girls. In addition, due to the fluid nature of child soldiering itself it can be difficult to ensure data is accurate. Children are recruited and released throughout conflicts; children grow older and are no longer defined as child soldiers.¹⁴⁶

Secondly, in times of conflict it is difficult to carry out accurate statistical surveys. Armed groups may not allow researchers into their areas of control and personal safety is perilous. Therefore most research is undertaken in the post-conflict environment. Delays between events and research can have multiple impacts as was discussed more fully in the section on the use of memoirs.

Thirdly, given the relatively recent emergence of research on child soldiers, most of the child soldier 'data' is derived from a few sources; this makes it difficult to cross check data for accuracy. Finally it must be noted that the selection of data is not consistent across conflicts and even where comparable data can be found its collection has often been carried out by disparate organizations that may have utilised different methodologies. Due to all these difficulties in data collection, research on child soldiers has been predominantly qualitative in scope.

¹⁴⁶ Wessells, M., 2006. p 9.

Despite the difficulties in carrying out research about child soldiers, the benefits that may be accrued by understanding the phenomenon more fully cannot be understated. Now that the literature review has been concluded, the legislation relating to child soldiers and the context in which the topic has emerged has been discussed and the methodological issues have been laid out, the research will turn to the case studies.

Chapter Three: Conflict and Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone.

Overview of the Conflict.

The Revolutionary United Front's (RUF) launching of an incursion into Sierra Leone in 1991 started a conflict which was to last a decade. The war was initially contained in the provinces of southern and eastern Sierra Leone. After the 1992 coup by the National Provisional Ruling Council (who ruled until multi-party elections in 1996) the stated aim of the RUF to overthrow the government was achieved, but the RUF did not disband. Instead by October 1992 the RUF had gained control over the diamond producing areas and the National Provisional Ruling Council responded by escalating the conflict on a national scale.¹⁴⁷

During 1993 the RUF were forced back into their remote base camps and the threat they posed appeared to subside. However, the scaling down of operations by government troops enabled them to regroup and re-arm. A resumption of operations by the RUF followed and the result was military and political stalemate between the government and the rebels, with the RUF continuing to operate effectively using guerrilla tactics throughout the country.

¹⁴⁷ Shepler, S., 2005. p 41.

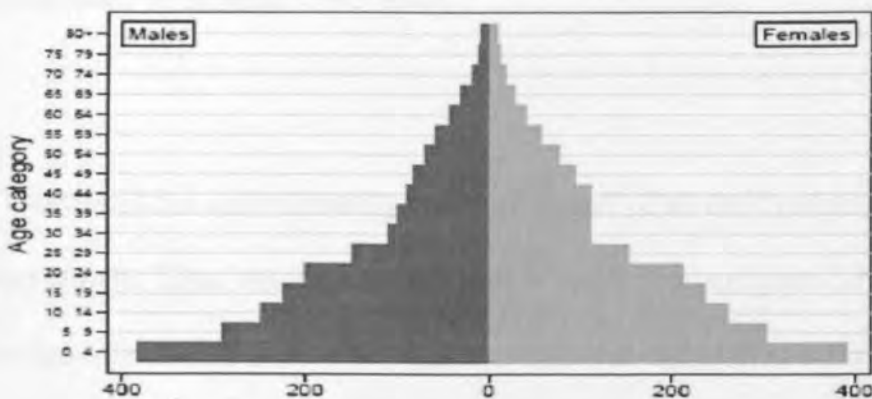
By 1996 the emergence of the Civil Defence Forces, and the governments use of private military companies, had once again forced the RUF away from the diamond areas and weakened its capacities. Skirmishes continued to occur throughout the year despite the Abidjan Peace Process between the RUF and the government. This period ended with a coup in May 1997, by elements within the Sierra Leone Army who called themselves the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. They formed a government and issued an invitation to form a coalition, which the RUF accepted.

After the coup the ousted government worked with international actors to resume control of Sierra Leone. In 1998 the RUF-AFRC alliance was pushed out of Freetown but heavy battles continued throughout the nation. Then in 1999 the RUF-AFRC alliance attempted to retake Freetown, succeeding briefly. This period contained some of the worst abuses and violence seen, but was, concluded with the agreement of the Lome Peace Accord. However, although peace was official on paper it took further interventions by the British and continuing intervention by the UN and ECOWAS, for it to become a reality in practice.

During the conflict children were used by all armed groups but the number of children used by each group varied. At the end of the conflict the RUF had only an estimated 5-7,000 core members, although actual membership including abducted recruits could have been as high as 28,000 at the height of the

conflict.¹⁴⁸ Estimates as to how many children were involved in the war vary widely as different individuals and organisation use different criteria to categorise what is a child soldier. Coulter (2010) states that 37% of recruits were children but the Truth and Reconciliation Commission database says that 63% of forced recruits were less than 18 years.¹⁴⁹ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission reported that children aged 10-14 years were especially targeted.¹⁵⁰

Figure 1: Population of Sierra Leone in 1991 (in thousands) divided according to age category and sex



‘Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone’ (volume 3b), in ‘The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone’ accessed 13/07/08. www.trcsierraleone.org

As illustrated in the graph, approximately half of Sierra Leone’s population was under 19 years of age at the onset of the conflict. As Singer has argued, during the

¹⁴⁸ Silenger, B., 2003. Sierra Leone: Current Issues and Background. New York: Nova Science Publishers Inc. p 20.

¹⁴⁹ Coulter, C., 2010. p 12. Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone. Volume 3b. Section 139. in ‘The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone’ accessed 13/07/08. www.trcsierraleone.org The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created with the support of the international community to record the history of the war and offer victims a voice with which to express their experiences in order to promote national healing.

¹⁵⁰ Truth and Reconciliation Commission. 2004. Report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (2) Accessed through www.sierra-leone.org. [24/08/11] p 28.

1990's, states with 40% of their population at adolescent age or younger were 2.3 times more likely to experience conflict, which made children in Sierra Leone particularly vulnerable.¹⁵¹ The high proportion of children within a population may increase their vulnerability to recruitment, as adults are in shorter supply therefore children are the group's only alternative source of manpower. A vulnerability that may be compounded in the Sierra Leone case by a wider cultural trend which views those over the age of 14 years as youth, a category which spans those aged 15-35 years.¹⁵²

It is believed that approximately one-third to half of all child recruits in the RUF were female. These numbers are difficult to verify as many girls did not pass through official demobilisation programmes at the end of the conflict. Other groups including the Sierra Leone Army and the Civil Defence Forces are not commonly recorded as having actively recruited girl children but may have had girls associated with their causes in less obvious ways.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Singer, P., 2006a. *Children at War*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p 42.

¹⁵² Under Sierra Leone law only persons up to 14 years are considered as children. Children and Young Person Act. Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone 3(b), in '*The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone* section 65. Accessed through www.trcsierraleone.org. [13/07/08].

¹⁵³ Williamson reports that the Civil Defence Force's did have girls associated with them. Williamson, J., 2005. *Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone*. US Agency for International Development. Accessed through http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACH599.PDF. p 12. As these militias were rooted and located in local communities it could well be that girls had some level of involvement with the militias although it seems clear that they were not used in combat.

It is difficult to assess regional variations in Sierra Leone with regards to recruitment. It has been argued that recruitment and abduction in Sierra Leone were greatest in the areas of most conflict.¹⁵⁴ The eastern and southern areas of Sierra Leone were the sites of the original invasion and experienced the most prolonged period of conflict, with many groups recruiting in these areas. Lower levels of abduction initially in the south and east may have been due to some level of support for the RUF in these areas (prior to the fall of the APC regime in 1992) as these areas traditionally supported the political party opposing the APC.¹⁵⁵ The increased level of abductions as the group moved northwest may be accounted for by more support for the APC regime and by a growing awareness of the nature of the RUF who quickly garnered a reputation for ruthless treatment of the civilians it encountered.¹⁵⁶

When children were first recruited is also somewhat unclear. The conflict started in 1991 but, according to Bernath, it was only in 1994 that reports of child recruitment became common knowledge.¹⁵⁷ This is apparently despite child

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Martin Mcpherson, Director, Amnesty International, London, 25TH September 2007.

¹⁵⁵ The two main political parties in Sierra Leone during the post-independence era were the Sierra Leone People's Party and the All People's Congress. The APC ruled from 1968-1992 during this time introducing a one party state and prohibiting the SLPP. The SLPP re-emerged after the fall of the APC government in 1992 and became the ruling party after democratic elections were held in 1996. Both parties have used repression at times in their history and both have been accused of fostering regional and tribal differences within Sierra Leone.

¹⁵⁶ Restoy, E., 2006. Sierra Leone: The Revolutionary United Front. Trying to Influence an Army of Children. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. Accessed through www.child-soldiers.org. p 6.

¹⁵⁷ Telephone interview with Sarah Spencer, GBV and Child Protection Practitioner, New York, 19th September 2007. Interview with Tania Bernath, Researcher on Sierra Leone, Amnesty International, London, 28th September 2007.

recruitment actually starting as early as 1992, corresponding with the RUF's loss of support after the fall of the APC regime and the withdrawal of most of the mercenaries it initially used by 1993.¹⁵⁸ The discrepancy may be accounted for by the nature of such recruitment. Child recruitment started to become common knowledge around the time in 1993/1994 that the RUF experienced rising shortages of recruits and was increasingly turning to forced recruitment methods, suggesting that it was the forced nature of the recruitment that was seen as problematic and not the recruitment itself.

The Systemic Crisis. Protracted Conflict and New War in Sierra Leone.

Increases in forced recruitment by the RUF closely followed the trajectory of the war.¹⁵⁹ The switch to guerrilla tactics in 1993 following heavy defeats against the Sierra Leone Army heralded an increase in forced recruitment by the RUF. Forced recruitment increased again followed renewed fighting in 1995 and again in 1997 after the collapse of the Abidjan Peace Process.¹⁶⁰ Children were most vulnerable to recruitment at times when the conflict was most active and the

¹⁵⁸ Pham, J., 2005. *Child Soldiers, Adult Interests: The Global Dimensions of the Sierra Leone Tragedy*. Nova Science Publishers Inc. p 102. Arnson, C., and Zartman, I., 2005. *Rethinking the Economics of War: The Intersection of Need, Creed and Greed*. Washington: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press. p 87.

¹⁵⁹ See figure 3. Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone 3(b) in 'The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone' accessed through www.trcsierraleone.org. [13/07/08].

¹⁶⁰ Singer, P., 2006a. p 98.

armed groups were under the most pressure with regards to maintaining recruitment figures.

In Sierra Leone there was a systemic crisis underlying the conflict which resulted from poor governance, which was in turn linked to structural and economic problems and flaws in the political process. The economic problems faced by the country were, in part, a product of colonialism. During this time significant distortions arose which were exacerbated by an over reliance on primary resources. There was little development and the colonial authorities encouraged reliance on overseas production.

The failure of post colonial governments to diversify the financial system left Sierra Leone vulnerable to a deterioration of the economy. This failure was a result of the elite's ability to make financial and political gains via the exploitation of Sierra Leone's diamond industry, which was concentrated upon at the expense of long term economic development.¹⁶¹ In Sierra Leone the acquisition of wealth and power was often linked to the diamond trade. The elites used the wealth they gained via this trade to buy support through the patrimonial system. As Singer argues, control over the diamond producing regions – which

¹⁶¹ The economy was a wholly extractive one. Gberie, L., 2005. p 23.

offered financial benefits, power and status – consequently became significantly more important for the elites than control over government apparatus.¹⁶²

Control over diamond wealth occurred in several ways. Political elites acted as rent seekers, selling concessions to foreigners in return for funds. These funds could then be used for the upkeep of the patrimonial system. At the same time access to diamonds was used as a tool by which support could be garnered for political elites directly. This can be seen in the actions of Siaka Stevens's (Prime Minister and President of Sierra Leone, 1967-1985). Stevens had a history of using the diamond fields to garner political support. Even prior to independence, as Minister of Lands, Mines and Labour, he set up a Diamond Mining Scheme which legitimised, under his control of the licences, illegal diamond trading bringing himself a measure of political support.¹⁶³ After his rise to power he continued to use his control over access to legitimate and illicit diamond mining to increase his political power and personal revenues.

The impact of redistribution policies, developed to exchange access to diamond mining for political support and revenue, generated an increase in informal mining, and this in turn reduced official government revenues. Official exports

¹⁶² Ibid. p 50.

¹⁶³ The alluvial Diamond Mining Scheme was introduced in 1956 and its aim was to increase the participation of the indigenous population. In reality the Lebanese and other non-indigenes benefited as they had the capital to set up fake Sierra Leone companies. Oludipe, O., 2000. Sierra Leone: One Year after Lome. One-Day Analytical Conference on the Peace Process in London. London: Centre for Democracy and Development. p 62. It was a semi-populist measure that won Stevens support in the mining towns. Gberie, L., 2005. p 25.

virtually ceased during the 1980's as informal mining was unregulated, unaccountable, untaxable and difficult to monitor.¹⁶⁴ This reduced official government revenues and the capacity of the government to provide services.

The use of diamonds as a resource to attract support had a multitude of impacts. It was not necessary for the government to pay attention to wider societal needs due to the entrenchment of patrimonial politics. Instead, the governing elites relied on bribery and force, rather than the provision of services, to govern. In these circumstances there was no need to develop democratic structures or allow a competitive electoral system. Instead there developed a system of one-party rule under which the creation of a shadow state emerged, based primarily on diamond exploitation.

The RUF itself claimed political motivations for the movement and its members, a claim which could seem well-founded in the context of Sierra Leone's history.¹⁶⁵ Anger over poor governance and a lack of representation was aggravated by the nature of patrimonial politics. RUF ideologues published limited documents citing that the political and social structure was hierarchical, constituting a form of structural inequality under which there was no fair or

¹⁶⁴ Goreux, L., 2001. Conflict Diamonds. Africa Region Working Paper 13. World Bank. Accessed through www.wds.worldbank.org [31/08/2008,] p 7.

¹⁶⁵ See RUF. Lasting Peace in Sierra Leone: The RUFSL Perspective and Vision. RUF Statement Accessed through www.sierra-leone.org. Gberie, L., 2005.p 6.

balanced system to determine individual status.¹⁶⁶ There was some support for this view as shown in statements by Civil Defence Force recruits who said after the war that if the RUF had not targeted civilians and had just targeted the government they would have had a lot of support.¹⁶⁷ This suggests that although the RUF did not receive popular support, at least at the start of the conflict, there was some sympathy for their stated aims amongst some sectors of the population.¹⁶⁸

By 1991 Sierra Leone was virtually a collapsed state with a corrupt and violent ruling class, confined mainly to the capital, Freetown. Political thuggery became the norm as the ruling elites used youth to harass and control their opponents.¹⁶⁹ Large numbers of children and youth were mobilised and ‘youth violence was encoded into the normative structure of everyday politics’.¹⁷⁰ That youth should be used during the war is, according to Rosen, not surprising as ‘the template for the contemporary child soldier in Sierra Leone was forged under the APC regime....Pre-war political violence was the training ground for warfare’. He argues an understanding of the nature of Sierra Leone’s pre-war politics is essential ‘because the problem of child soldiers grew out of the breakdown and

¹⁶⁶ Lord, D., 2000. *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*. 9. *Paying the Price: the Sierra Leone Peace Process*. London: Conciliation Resources.

¹⁶⁷ Shepler, S., 2005. p 107.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Jane Lowiki-Zucca, UNDESA. New York, 21st September 2006.

¹⁶⁹ Gberie, L., 2005. p 10. Sesay, A., Eds. 2003. *Civil Wars, Child Soldiers and Post Conflict Peace Building in West Africa*. College Press and Publishers Ltd. p 171. Murphy, 2003. *Military Patrimonialism and Child Soldier Clientism in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean Civil Wars*. *African Studies Review*. Accessed through www.findarticles.com [27/07/08]. p 7.

¹⁷⁰ Rosen, D., 2005. p 59.

criminalisation of the Sierra Leone state'.¹⁷¹ The criminalisation of the state also meant that if those opposed to the government could gain control over the illicit resources used to fund the state, they could control the country without having to be in command of the bureaucratic machinery.

Multiple actors.

As is common in new wars, the fighting occurred between numerous groups, which increased in number as the conflict continued.¹⁷² Over time existing groups splintered, with recruits often following their immediate commanders, to whom they owed allegiance. The lengthening of the conflict saw the emergence of the National Provisional Ruling Council, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Front, and the West Side Boys, all of whom broke away from the Sierra Leone Army, the Civil Defence Forces, the involvement of a variety of private security forces from abroad and national /international missions. The most pertinent groups will now be discussed.

¹⁷¹ Rosen, D., 2005. p 79 and p 2.

¹⁷² Kaldor, M., 2001. p 8. Starr, H., Ed. 1999. *The Understanding and Management of Global Violence: New Approaches to Theory and Research on Protracted Conflict*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.

The National Provisional Ruling Council took control in a coup in April 1992.¹⁷³ Made up of young army officers, they were initially welcomed by the population, and declared a state of emergency, banning political parties. During its rule the National Provisional Ruling Council oversaw a rapid expansion of the Sierra Leone Army from 3,000 to approximately 15,000 soldiers which included the employment of underage recruits.¹⁷⁴ This expansion reduced the professionalism of the army and made it increasingly ill-disciplined and prone to large scale human rights abuses. Like the RUF they recruited child soldiers, forced them to take drugs and used war movies to motivate them.¹⁷⁵ They were known to, at times, attack villages in order to get recruits and resources, and would use stories of RUF abuses or the threat of withholding food and protection to coerce children and youth to join them.¹⁷⁶ The conduct of the newly enlarged army and their perceived willingness to co-operate with the RUF at times for economic gains quickly reduced civilian support for the National Provisional Ruling Council government.¹⁷⁷ In October 1993 the National Provisional Ruling Council declared a transition to democratic rule, for which elections were held in 1996.

The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council seized power from the newly elected Kabbah government during a coup in May 1997 and quickly 'suspended the

¹⁷³ Conciliation Resources. Sierra Leone: Chronology. Accessed through <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/sierra-leone/chronology.php> [30/07/08].

¹⁷⁴ Conciliation Resources [accessed on 30/07/08]

¹⁷⁵ Beah, I., 2007. *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*. London: Fourth Estate. p116, p 125.

¹⁷⁶ Beah, I., 2007. p 122, p 106.

¹⁷⁷ It has been estimated that by 1994 40% of the Sierra Leone Army had deserted or defected to the RUF. Pham, J., 2005. p 94. Hirsch, J., 2001. *Sierra Leone: Diamonds and the Struggle for Democracy*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers. p 32.

constitution, banned political parties and public meetings, and announced rule by military decree'.¹⁷⁸ They consisted of elements of the Sierra Leone Army and quickly joined forces with the RUF. They were ousted by ECOMOG after nine months and the remnants were incorporated into the RUF.¹⁷⁹

The Civil Defence Force (CDF) was a reaction to the RUF, emerging during the course of the war rather than being a driving force. As the largest armed group in Sierra Leone with significantly different motivations to the RUF, a brief study of the Civil Defence Forces enables us to see how variations within a conflict can occur in the recruitment, deployment and treatment of children. What the CDF also shows us is that child recruitment was not objected to as a matter of course. Children recruited by the Sierra Leone Army and RUF were incorporated into the CDF upon their return home. What disturbed many in Sierra Leone was not the lost innocence of child combatants but the concept of a lost generation via separation from family and formal training, seen to have occurred when children were involved in the RUF.¹⁸⁰

The involvement of children with the CDF was not just viewed as necessary for the survival of the community. It was also viewed as that of an apprenticeship in

¹⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch, 1999. World Report 1999: Sierra Leone. Accessed through <http://www.hrw.org/worldreport99/africa/sierraleone.html>. [30/07/08]. Kabbah was the leader of the Sierra Leone People's Party and President of Sierra Leone from 1996-2007. Prior to returning to political life Sierra Leone (he had previously worked at district level) he worked for the United Nations.

¹⁷⁹ ECOMOG are discussed in greater depth in the next section on external linkages.

¹⁸⁰ Shepler, S., 2005. p 24.

which the child could learn valuable skills, as was the case with secret society membership. For CDF recruits, training in the art of war took, unlike the informal training offered by the RUF, the traditional, formal route, only coming after initiation which required money or a sponsor. Recruits saw themselves as learning a craft through an apprenticeship model.¹⁸¹ The training offered and received was viewed by recruits and their families as an investment; they expected the conflict to be prolonged and thus to recoup their expenses and make gains.¹⁸² The decision to join the CDF was thus a practical and financial choice as well as a desire to fulfil a civic duty. It was sanctioned by the family and community, which affected children's experiences. The CDF had a high level of popular legitimacy and children after the war who had fought for the CDF were open about their involvement and even proud.¹⁸³

Community ties and strict control of recruits in the interest of the community seems to have moderated the ways in which children were treated and expected to act.¹⁸⁴ CDF recruits were not routinely expected to carry out large scale human rights abuses; Johnston reports that instead 'kamajor elites successfully reined in

¹⁸¹ Shepler, S., 2005. p 99.

¹⁸² Families may encourage children to join armed groups if they think benefits will occur from the association. Singer, P., 2006a. p 63. In prolonged conflicts knowledge of military skills can be a long-term economic asset. Andrig, J., 2006. *Child Soldiers: Reasons for Variations in Their Rates of Recruitment and Standards of Welfare*. Norway: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. Accessed through www.isn.ethz.ch. [04/10/07] p 23.

¹⁸³ Denov, M., 2010. p 59, p 165.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Susan Shepler, Professor of Anthropology, American University. Washington DC, 27th September 2006.

followers to pursue organizational objectives'.¹⁸⁵ Interestingly CDF units did seem more susceptible to abusing civilians when they were deployed away from their home areas, highlighting that it was the involvement of their local communities and the ties between communities and the CDF which tempered the actions of the organisation in regards recruits and civilians.¹⁸⁶

Like the RUF, the CDF appears to have been heavily influenced by traditional beliefs. It was believed that magical powers grew stronger over time and if the war was long, bringing children into the group at a younger age would act to strengthen them as a future asset. Children were also seen to have special powers of protection due to their youth and innocence that could help protect the group and the community. Children as young as three who were believed to have strong magical abilities were co-opted for the protection of the group.¹⁸⁷ Thus it seems that children were used by the CDF because of their youth and because they were seen as valuable in their own right, which is not dissimilar to the beliefs of the RUF.

¹⁸⁵ Kamajor's were another name used to refer to CDF members. Johnston, P.B., 2006. The Geography of Insurgent Organization and its Consequences for Civil Wars: Evidence from Liberia and Sierra Leone. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Town and Country Resort and Convention Center, San Diego, California, USA. Accessed through www.allacademic.com/meta/p100555_index.html p 4.

¹⁸⁶ This study showed that groups rooted in their area of operations treated recruits better. Andrig, J., 2006. p 29. Human Rights Watch, Jan 2003. p 4.

¹⁸⁷ Shepler, S., 2005. p 61.

It is clear then that children were used extensively by the CDF and seen as valuable in ways that paralleled the RUF. They were essentially a defensive reaction and aptly demonstrate that the impact of the group went beyond that of the RUF itself.

External Linkages.

The Sierra Leone conflict is in many ways an example of a new war, one of these ways is the involvement of external actors of whom there were several. From the start of the RUF incursion international organisations were embroiled in the conflict. ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) sought a solution to the insurgency. Firstly it mandated ECOMOG (Military Observer Group) to protect the government. After the coup that overthrew the government ECOWAS moved towards negotiating a settlement. Later in the conflict it sought to enforce peace agreements negotiated by parties to the conflict.

Alongside regional organisations such as ECOWAS and the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) who both worked towards negotiating a settlement to the conflict we find UNAMSIL (United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone).

UNAMSIL was the culmination of UN efforts to assist in resolving the conflict, it was mandated in 1998 to assist the Sierra Leone government in DDR

(disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration) efforts and continued to function until the end of the conflict.

Another external actor that proved pivotal in the Sierra Leone conflict was the United Kingdom. The former colonial power initially became involved to evacuate UK, EU and Commonwealth nationals and to assist the UN's efforts to secure Freetown airport. It went on to lead the restructuring of the Sierra Leone army and as such was instrumental in the last months of the conflict.

Without a doubt the most important external actor involved in the Sierra Leone conflict, and one of the most widely cited reasons for its outbreak, is Charles Taylor, leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia and Liberia's serving president through much of the second half of the Sierra Leone conflict.¹⁸⁸ Ellis has argued that Taylor supported the RUF in its embryonic stage due to a personal dislike he had of the APC regime in Freetown who had supported the ECOMOG forces opposing his then rebel organisation in Liberia.¹⁸⁹ He had also realised the economic potential of the conflict and cultivated the opportunity to gain access, via the RUF, to Sierra Leone's diamond fields. Indeed the scale of diamond smuggling into Liberia can be clearly seen by looking at the statistics. Liberia's annual diamond mining capacity is 100,000-150,000 carats, yet the Antwerp

¹⁸⁸ Global Witness, 2003. *The Usual Suspects*. Accessed through www.globalwitness.org. [20/05/04].

¹⁸⁹ Ellis, S., 1995. *Liberia 1989-1994: A Study of Ethnic and Spiritual Violence*. *African Affairs*. 94. pp165-197. p 170.

based Diamond High Council records 31 million carats leaving Liberia in the years 1994-98, approximately 6 million per annum.¹⁹⁰

If the RUF had political motivations at its creation, under Taylor's influence it quickly appears to have realised the importance of access to resources. Taylor encouraged the RUF to extract diamonds, exchanging them for guns, funding and support which he then used to both increase his personal wealth and maintain his power base in Liberia. Some have argued that Taylor's financing, training and influence were key factors in the evolution of the movement and the methods which they adopted, particularly the use of children as combatants and as a weapon of terror.¹⁹¹ However the use of youth in violence by political parties had already been established in Sierra Leone. It would therefore perhaps be more accurate to say that the involvement of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, NPFL, encouraged the recruitment and deployment of children on a larger scale.

Tactically the RUF appear to have adopted many of the methods used by the NPFL.¹⁹² Some of its original members had been Sierra Leonean exiles in Liberia, who had fought for the NPFL and had learnt about 'youth-orientated guerrilla tactics and media-smart presentation of war for international audiences'. In

¹⁹⁰ Smillie, I., Gberie, L., Hazleton, R., 2000. *The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone, Diamonds and Human Security*. Ottawa: Partnership Africa Canada. p 4.

¹⁹¹ Telephone Interview with Michael Shieler, Director of Programmes, Search for Common Ground, Nepal, 13th October 2006. After Taylor's role enlarged post 1992 the war in Sierra Leone began to resemble the war in Liberia both in terms of combat strategies and objectives. Arnson, C., and Zartman, I., 2005. p 99.

¹⁹² Pham, J., 2005. p 85.

addition, many of fighters at the start of the conflict were Liberians who brought the tactic of using children with them.¹⁹³

Both the NPFL and the RUF abducted and persuaded young people to join, killing authority figures such as traditional chiefs and government representatives who were the best placed to offer rival patrimonial support, and abusing the civilian population, looting, raping, mutilating and killing.¹⁹⁴ Taylor's apparent lack of control over his troops was also a characteristic which was shared with the leadership of the RUF.

The widespread use of drugs and incorporation of local beliefs and rituals including cannibalism were also common to both conflicts.¹⁹⁵ Although it cannot be said for certain that this occurred in Sierra Leone because of the precedents set in Liberia, it is likely to have had an influence on Sierra Leone's conflict given the strong links between the two armed groups.

Due to the creation of the RUF on the fringes of Sierra Leone territory and society, from 1991-1993 the majority of command posts and a significant number of recruits were foreign mercenaries, primarily from Liberia and Burkina Faso,

¹⁹³ Gberie, L., 2005. p 59. Pham, J., 2005. p 85. Richards, P., 1996. *Fighting for the Rainforest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone*. Oxford: James Currey. p 4. Restoy, E., 2006. p 4.

¹⁹⁴ Ellis, S., 1995. p 171. Richards, P., 1996. p 8.

¹⁹⁵ Ellis, S., 1995. p 194.

some of whom were NPFL members.¹⁹⁶ Economic gain rather than the achievement of local political goals was the chief motivation of these mercenaries and winning over local populations was not a priority.¹⁹⁷ The primary aim of the mercenaries matched Taylor's; they wanted access to material benefits. The emphasis on acquiring resources - necessary to pay the mercenaries and Taylor – and the violent means used to achieve this aim alienated local populations and quickly made local voluntary recruitment difficult.

The RUF had very quickly become an organisation strategically focused on gaining access to resources above all else.¹⁹⁸ The control of populations and territory was an economic, rather than a political objective and therefore control could be brutal as there was no political constituency to consider.¹⁹⁹ When necessary to ensure that manpower was maintained, a strategy of forcible recruitment from the local populations (children in particular), was easily adopted.

As in many cases of new war the role of external actors and resources in both creating the conditions for rebellion and in fuelling the continuation of the conflict

¹⁹⁶ Human Rights Watch, 13th April 2005. *Youth, Poverty and Blood: The lethal legacy of West Africa's Regional Warriors*. Accessed through www.hrw.org. p 13. According to Pham approximately 100 of the fighters in the RUF at this time were from Sierra Leone, the rest of the Invasion forces were NPFL fighters. Pham, J., 2005. p 84. Gberie, L., 2005. p 59. Hirsch, J., 2001. p 31.

¹⁹⁷ Regional warriors were usually concerned with survival and earning money to support their families, few had ideological or political commitments to the groups they belonged to. Human Rights Watch, 13th April 2005. p 17-19.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with David Rosen, Professor in Anthropology, Farleigh-Dickinson University, New York, 19TH September 2006.

¹⁹⁹ Arnson, C., and Zartman, I., 2005. p 3.

was decisive. With this in mind we now turn to a closer study of the main perpetrator of forced child recruitment in Sierra Leone, the RUF.

Section Two: The Nature of the RUF.

The RUF was a very distinct group even in the context of new wars. There is a minority view that the RUF had an ideology of sorts which they failed to express adequately. If this idea has any purchase it was at the beginning of the conflict.

Richards (1996) in particular argues strongly that the RUF had a political ideology and that RUF combatants genuinely had political motivation as their principle reason for joining the movement. He argues that in some respects the RUF were fanatically ideological to the end, 'convinced it still has a chance to instruct the people, it fights doggedly on, wreaking havoc on the livelihoods of the rural poor it purports to champion'.²⁰⁰ He insists that it was the inability of the RUF to successfully communicate their political beliefs that resulted in the movement appearing irrational and apolitical.²⁰¹ Gberie supports Richard's view that the RUF failed to articulate a coherent ideology or practical political aims but

²⁰⁰ Richards, P., 1996. p 1.

²⁰¹ Richards, P., 1996. p xvii. Sesay, A., 2003. p 118.

argues this was because the RUF were 'mainly aimed at criminal expropriation, not social protest'.²⁰²

Most writers saw the group as essentially predatory and lacking an ideological agenda. They sharply disagree with Richards, arguing that far from having a solid ideological basis from which their motivation was drawn, at best the RUF were adept at using political rhetoric when it suited their purpose; there was a clear difference between their political tracts and actual behaviour.²⁰³ Whilst it may be the case that some political motivations were in play at the start of the conflict and that some volunteers, including children, may have held such political views, later events made it clear that these did not remain the primary goal of the movement's leadership, which was hijacked by criminal elements early in its development.²⁰⁴

For the core members of the RUF it would appear that it was access to resources that was the primary motivating factor for remaining within the group. They continued to fight through a succession of regime changes and the transformation of the state from one-party rule to multiparty democracy.²⁰⁵ Demands for power sharing and resource control during peace negotiations with a democratically

²⁰² Gberie, L., 2005. p 7-8.

²⁰³ Interview with Tania Bernath, Researcher on Sierra Leone, Amnesty International, London, 28th September 2007. Ideology was not strong in Sierra Leone. Telephone interview with Theresa Betancourt, Assistant Professor of Child Health and Human Rights, Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, 4th October 2007. Interview with David Rosen, Professor in Anthropology, Farleigh-Dickinson University, New York, 19TH September 2006. Gberie, L., 2005. p 11.

²⁰⁴ Arnson, C., and Zartman, I., 2005. p 85.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Ambassador Rowe, the Sierra Leone Ambassador to the UN, New York, 22nd September 2006.

elected government indicate that despite the rhetoric, political aims had become a façade to legitimise economic goals.²⁰⁶ As Gberie argues, ‘the RUF was thus largely conceived as a mercenary enterprise.... It never became a political, still less a revolutionary struggle. This is why....it was so excessively brutal and why it had to resort to the mass recruitment of children’.²⁰⁷

Children were recruited regardless of religion or ethnicity or class.²⁰⁸ Recruits had little common identity prior to being taken by the group, on which the RUF could base an insurgency. As a result of the lack of a collective identity to be found within the RUF and the forcible nature of recruitment, the RUF had to find ways of increasing the cohesion of the group so that it could function effectively. The RUF are a prime example of Humphreys and Weinstein’s findings that groups that have no common purpose and that contain individuals with private goals tend to lack internal discipline and are more abusive.²⁰⁹ Certainly, as will become increasingly clear, in Sierra Leone group identity was structured primarily by abuse and manipulation (see below).

²⁰⁶ For RUF political statements see ‘*Lasting peace in Sierra Leone: The RUFSL perspective and vision*’ and ‘*Footpaths to democracy: Towards a new Sierra Leone*’ 1995. Both RUF statements can be accessed at www.Sierra-Leone.org

²⁰⁷ Gberie, L., 2005. p 153.

²⁰⁸ Telephone interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007. Interview with Ambassador Rowe, the Sierra Leone Ambassador to the UN, New York, 22nd September 2006. The RUF maintained a non-religious ideology. Restoy, E., 2006. p 6.

²⁰⁹ Humphreys, M., and Weinstein, J., 2006. Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War. *American Political Science Review*. 100(3). pp 429-447. p 430.

Control and Command.

The RUF was purportedly run by a war council of 21 people.²¹⁰ Characteristically of groups involved in new wars, the RUF appeared to have been lacking in hierarchy, vertical command structures and the order that is found in guerrilla groups involved in conflicts that can be categorised as old wars.²¹¹ As the conflict progressed and the group grew larger, the leadership lost further control over command structures.²¹² As the RUF expanded geographically, their managerial resources were stretched, resulting in a delegation of authority to local sub-commanders.²¹³ For lower level commanders the pay off of military victory was lower, making immediate material gains more of an incentive. As elsewhere the availability of resource wealth and the pursuit of greed had an impact on the RUF, resulting in a lack of centralised leadership, command and control.²¹⁴ This fuelled the mercenary nature of the conflict.

Despite Sankoh's (founder and leader of the RUF) seeming lack of control over his local-level commanders and recruits he had little incentive to try and rein them

²¹⁰ Richards, P., 1996. p xix.

²¹¹ Kaldor, M., 2001. *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in the Global Era*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p 95. The RUF lacked organisation and discipline. Sesay, A., 2003. p 118. Interview with Susan Shepler, Professor of Anthropology, American University. Washington DC, 27th September 2006.

²¹² Telephone Interview with Michael Shieler, Director of Programmes, Search for Common Ground, Nepal, 13th October 2006.

²¹³ Johnston, P.B., 2006. p6.

²¹⁴ Arnson, C., and Zartman, I., 2005. p 9.

in.²¹⁵ For the RUF leadership, this lack of control over local-level commanders appears to have been accepted by the movement's elites who used the chaos deliberately engineered by local level commanders to profit materially, whilst looting reduced the need for them to pay their recruits. This loose form of command structure was more cost-efficient for the RUF, an important consideration in a group concerned predominantly with economic gains.²¹⁶ That the leadership were capable when the need arose of implementing top down policies appears to be confirmed by Gberie who convincingly demonstrates that amputations were standardised across the movement and as such must have been sanctioned by the RUF leadership.²¹⁷ Some units within the RUF sent letters threatening local communities and their leaders which were followed up with hit-and-run raids.²¹⁸ Towns and villages were often infiltrated prior to attacks; sometimes the RUF would attack small villages and then join the internally displaced fleeing to larger towns in order to infiltrate them.²¹⁹ During the 1999 invasion of Freetown there are reports that the RUF had sent spies in advance to draw up lists of targets. Many government workers, police staff etc. were targeted in what appears to be a systematic attack on the state apparatus. Some fighters dressed as EGOMOG combatants; if civilians showed support for these troops

²¹⁵ If a group doesn't have long term goals then it doesn't care about the behaviour of its troops. Telephone Interview with Manuel Fountain, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF, New York, 3RD October 2006.

²¹⁶ Johnston, P.B., 2006. p 7.

²¹⁷ Gberie, L., 2005. p 134.

²¹⁸ Richards, P., 1996. p 6. The RUF sent letters telling villagers they were coming and expecting a welcome since they were fighting for the people. The people sent with the letters were spared their lives but sometimes mutilated. Beah, I., 2007. p 21.

²¹⁹ Gberie, L., 2005. p 77, p 125.

then they were killed as enemies of the RUF.²²⁰ The RUF are also known to have employed strategic retreats when faced with strong opposition, regrouping in the bush.

In terms of implementing a de facto authority over the areas they controlled the evidence is even thinner. Pham (2005) argues that in some areas the RUF made efforts to co-opt civilian collaborators, in order to oversee the civilian population. In these areas, traditional hierarchies and structures were abolished and resources were distributed according to need.²²¹ Human Rights Watch also concedes that the RUF did have 'courts' although they report that 'justice' was harsh and women in contact with 'court' officials were at risk of rape.²²² However they also point out that none of the rebel groups in West Africa have established a legitimate judicial authority in the areas under their control.²²³ Thus the evidence for the RUF maintaining a de facto authority is weak and although it appears that the RUF could possibly impose some level of administration, most scholars appear to be sceptical that this was the case.²²⁴

Without political ambitions to temper their actions, the RUF appeared prepared to use any method to maintain their economic gains and had little incentive to

²²⁰ Shepler, S., 2005. p 71.

²²¹ Pham, J., 2005. p 104-105.

²²² Human Rights Watch, Jan 2003. p 45.

²²³ Human Rights Watch, 13th April 2005. p 30.

²²⁴ Sesay, A., 2003. p 119.

enforce control. There appears to have been little in the way of centralised command structures, with different units following their individual commanders rather than adhering to a central policy.²²⁵ Human Rights Watch conclude in their report 'Youth, Poverty and Blood: The lethal legacy of West Africa's Regional Warriors' that the degree of effective control and command was the greatest indicator in the likelihood of human rights violations, and this certainly appears to hold true in Sierra Leone.²²⁶

Individual treatment of civilians and recruits could veer drastically between kindness and brutality within a short space of time. There appears to have been no enforcement of general standards by the leadership although Pham (2005) argues that RUF recruits were kept strictly disciplined, which suggests that at least at local level commanders were in control of their recruits.²²⁷ Indeed Human Rights Watch state that ex-combatants reported receiving explicit orders to carry out atrocities, a belief shared by Denov who cites her research participants stating that the more violently they acted the more they were rewarded.²²⁸ As one girl attested,

'I committed a lot of violence..... We were cherished by the senior officers for our wicked deeds.'

(Girl Child Soldiers, RUF)²²⁹

²²⁵ Shepler, S., 2005. p 39.

²²⁶ Human Rights Watch, 13th April 2005. p 31.

²²⁷ Pham, J., 2005. p 103.

²²⁸ Human Rights Watch, 13th April 2005. p 32.

²²⁹ Denov, M., 2009. p 112.

For members of the RUF, proving to the hierarchy that you could fully embrace and carry out their strategy of terror meant promotion and reward. In return children promoted to the position of commander got status and the associated benefits such as greater protection from abuse, recruits of their own to control and abuse - particularly in the case of being awarded female recruits - who could work for them doing chores and bringing back assets from looting. This encouraged violent competition between recruits and increased the suffering of civilians.

Military Strategy and Tactics.

A key question that arose from the Sierra Leone war was whether the level of human rights abuses could be attributed to anarchy and ill-discipline within the RUF, or a deliberate strategy of violence. Whilst a failure to enforce standards and rampant drug use obviously played a role in the level of human rights violations, this failure to rein in recruits was no accident; rather it was part of a deliberate attempt to ensure access to resources via a strategy of terror used to guarantee the continuation of the conflict.

As Kaldor and many writers who have followed her argue, although in new wars guerrilla warfare is drawn upon, so are counterinsurgency techniques meaning the

mode of warfare has some distinct characteristics.²³⁰ In guerrilla warfare the aim of the group is to control populations rather than territory, and as such, hearts and mind campaigns are utilised to increase support as can be seen in El Salvador and to a lesser extent in Sri Lanka. In new wars such as that found in Sierra Leone however, control of the population is sought only so far as it enables the group to acquire benefits. This is due to a combination of criminal goals and less professional forces which leads to new strategies towards civilians in which terror is used rather than winning the hearts and minds of the local population.²³¹ Counterinsurgency techniques of destabilisation are used in which civilians are targeted to create a climate of chaos which the group can benefit from. New war tactics used by the RUF included attacks on civilians in unprotected towns and villages during which children were captured for use as child soldiers.²³²

Resources.

The adoption of terror tactics was linked to the group's resource base. Whilst economic resources have always been needed to fund rebel groups, in new wars resources have become the object of the struggle, not a means to an end. This is particularly the case in Sierra Leone where a particular resource in the form of

²³⁰ Smillie, I., Gberie, L., Hazleton, R., 2000. p 7-9. Kaldor, M., 2006. *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in the Global Era*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Polity Press. p 8-9.

²³¹ Singer, P., 2006b. *The enablers of war: Casual Factors Behind the Child Soldier Phenomenon*. Ford Institute for Human Security, University of Pittsburgh. accessed through www.fordinstitute.pitt.edu [03/10/07]. p 11.

²³² Gberie, L., 2005. p 62-64, p81. Sesay, A., 2003. p 119.

diamonds was attractive to external and internal actors alike. Diamonds played a key role both in determining the roots of the conflict and shaping the type of conflict it was to become. Their mismanagement by government created adverse economic and political conditions, which caused stresses within society and exacerbated the root causes of the conflict.²³³ In turn, they were a key asset for the RUF, who exchanged diamonds for arms, mercenaries and external support.²³⁴

The RUF took great efforts to retain physical control over the diamond regions, as this was where true power in Sierra Leone derived from. According to Gberie they maintained special armed mining units to oversee their mining interests, which were both extensive and well-coordinated throughout the conflict.²³⁵ The diamond fields were also the scene of elite co-operation as individuals collaborated with those on opposing sides in order to make financial gains. Indeed it was the civilians who bore the brunt of the conflict in these areas, whilst the Sierra Leone Army and the RUF often avoided direct confrontations, leading to accusations of collaboration and the use of the word ‘sobels’, to describe those who worked as regular soldiers by day and rebels by night.

²³³ Arnson, C., and Zartman, I., 2005. p 85.

²³⁴ The RUF mined between \$25-125 million worth of diamonds annually. Global Witness, 2004. Broken Vows: Exposing the “Loupe” Holes in the Diamond Industry’s Efforts to Prevent the Trade in Conflict Diamonds. Accessed through www.globalwitness.org. P 7. Gberie, L., 2005. p 124.

²³⁵ Gberie, L., 2005.p 183.

As well as providing resources of a financial nature, the diamond regions were also an important source of combatants with which to seek and maintain physical control over diamond exploitation. The RUF used their control over diamond areas to lure youth away from the weakened APC patronage networks.²³⁶ In Sierra Leone the mining regions and urban centres acted as a Mecca for migrants, and an underutilized pool of labour from which to seize and attract recruits.²³⁷ However as Weinstein argues, recruits attracted to groups that offer payouts are usually poor quality, low commitment recruits.²³⁸ This certainly seems to have been the case in Sierra Leone where a lack of economic opportunity and influxes of youth looking for work fused to create a social underclass that turned to crime and the informal economy. Drug based sub-cultures emerged in which members used theft and violence to survive, creating an ideal recruiting ground for all armed groups.

Because the RUF sought only to profit from the conflict and had little, if any, true political motivation, they used a mixture of confrontation and co-operation.

Avoiding confrontation where possible reduced the likelihood of casualties and meant that they could concentrate on accessing benefits. This was important for the group as voluntary participation was low due to a lack of legitimacy. That the group was prepared to co-operate with its enemies highlights the predatory, rather than political, nature of the RUF.

²³⁶ Rosen, D., 2005. p 85.

²³⁷ Smillie, I., Gberie, L., Hazleton, R., 2000. p 10.

²³⁸ Weinstein, J., 2005. Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 49(598). p 603.

The leadership of the RUF knew well how unfettered access to diamond wealth could bring them power, status and support. In addition to funding the continuation of the war and thus the survival of the group along with the benefits that would accrue for the leadership, access to resources also enabled some level of support from predominantly criminal elements both within and outside of Sierra Leone. According to Singer such 'predatory armed groups...which are focused on asset seizure, are particularly dependant on... using children'.²³⁹ The need for labour to access raw materials made children vulnerable to coercion; for example the ease of mining diamonds in Sierra Leone aided the recruitment of children as unskilled labour by armed groups; they were considered good workers by the RUF who believed that they were less likely to steal the diamonds than adults.²⁴⁰

Use of Violence.

Stanton argues that where groups fail to articulate a clear political objective, they will not succeed in gaining support and will be forced to use strategies of

²³⁹ Singer, P., p 54.

²⁴⁰ Gberie, L., 2002. War and Peace in Sierra Leone: Diamonds, Corruption and the Lebanese Connection. Occasional Paper 6. Partnership Africa Canada. Accessed through www.pacweb.org [01/02/2004]. p 20.

destabilisation.²⁴¹ This is true of Sierra Leone, where the RUF wished to create an environment in which exploitation could occur. Certainly it would have been difficult for the RUF to have accessed resources at the level at which they did without such an environment of chaos; the use of children to spread terror was an effective strategy for the RUF, creating maximum returns for minimum output.

Despite many concluding that for the most part the use of terror was a deliberate strategy, some others have argued that this was not the case. Abdullah believed that the violence against the population was due to the 'composition of the movement, its lack of discipline, its indiscriminate use of drugs of all sorts, and the absence of a concrete programme'.²⁴² This looks doubtful if RUF statements are taken into consideration. In 1999 Sam Bockarie - Sankoh's number one commander and in charge of the RUF after Sankoh's arrest in 1997 - declared on the BBC African Service the start of 'Operation No Living Thing' in retaliation for the ousting of the RUF from Freetown. In this broadcast he stated that he would kill everyone in the country to 'the last chicken'.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Stanton, J., 2009. *Strategies of Violence and Restraint in Civil War*. PhD. Columbia University. (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [13/09/2010]. p 9.

²⁴² Conteh-Morgan, E., and Dixon-Foyle, M., 1999. *Sierra Leone at the End of the Twentieth Century: History, Politics and Society*. New York: Lang Publishing. P 208.

²⁴³ Gberie, L., 2005. p 120.

Kaldor argues that in new wars the adoption of terror is not due to irrationality but rather due to a deliberate refusal to abide by normative constraints.²⁴⁴ This was an effective strategy for some time at the height of the conflict; despite the RUF movement being a small force of predominantly coerced and poorly trained recruits, they held 70% of the territory of Sierra Leone.²⁴⁵ From his own perspective Richards also argues that the RUF used terror as a strategic weapon.²⁴⁶ For example, one common terror tactic was to amputate the limbs of civilians.²⁴⁷ This has often been used to show the movement's irrational brutality but it can be argued that even these barbaric actions were part of an overall strategy with amputations used as a warning, during harvests and elections to prevent civilians from acting in ways detrimental to the RUF.²⁴⁸ Early amputations had a rational quality but amputations after 1996 did not. This may be because from 1997 the RUF worked with rogue elements of the Sierra Leone Army, incorporating members into its ranks after the ousting of the AFRC-RUF junta from Freetown. Many of the later atrocities are believed to have been carried out by these affiliates of the RUF, the Sierra Leone Army having a long history of brutality against civilians.²⁴⁹

Amputations were not adopted en masse until after the CDF started to pose a serious threat in the mid-1990s. He describes how ex-RUF commanders told of

²⁴⁴ Kaldor, M., 2001. p 100.

²⁴⁵ Oludipe, O., 2000. p 66.

²⁴⁶ Richards, P., 1996. p xvi.

²⁴⁷ Beah, I., 2007. p 27.

²⁴⁸ Gberie, L., 2005. p 137.

²⁴⁹ Gberie, L., 2005. p 15.

their frustration at the difficulties of countering the CDF which led to an escalation of violence against villagers, including mass amputations. He suggests that the RUF resorted to extreme violence at times when they felt most under threat. For example in 1993/94 when they faced defeat villagers had their lips, noses and fingers cut off and the letters 'RUF' carved into their bodies.

This strategy of terror in turn fed the recruitment of children, both by the CDF as children sought protection and revenge, and by the RUF who used the climate of fear they had engineered to abduct the people, including children, they needed to maintain their reign of terror.²⁵⁰ Indeed, Restoy argues that patterns of recruitment were consistent with wider patterns of behaviour during the war.²⁵¹

It also guaranteed further access to resources – in the form of diamonds - which the leadership could use to maintain the group and thus their wealth, status and power all of which could be lost if the conflict ended.

²⁵⁰ The greater the chaos the easier it is to recruit children. Interview with Susan Shepler, Professor of Anthropology, American University. Washington DC, 27th September 2006.

²⁵¹ Restoy, E., 2006. p 3.

Section Three: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone.

The recruitment of children in Sierra Leone also needs to be placed in the context of particular perceptions of children, the traditional structures in which the child has a place and more importantly within the context of a society under stress.

During the post-colonial era, the country suffered from poor governance and a distorted economy in which diamonds played a key role. This process laid the roots for a deep and protracted conflict which took the form of a new war and in which children were involved.

Western centric models of childhood, as noted in chapter one, imply that any person under the age of eighteen is a child and should therefore not be engaged in warfare. This is one concept of childhood; it is not a universal norm and childhood in Sub-Saharan Africa has less definitive markers than this concept allows for. Unlike in the West, the attainment of adult status did not depend solely on chronological age.²⁵² Honwana has argued forcibly that the child instead goes through a process of maturation which varies according to each individual.²⁵³ The child becomes a youth, and the youth becomes an adult entirely dependent on reaching set milestones determined by the community.

²⁵² Interview with Tania Bernath, Researcher on Sierra Leone, Amnesty International, London, 28th September 2007. Boyden, J., and de Berry, J., 2005. *Children and Youth on the Frontline: Ethnography, Armed Conflict and Displacement. Studies in Forced Migration*. 14. USA: Berghahn Books. p 211.

²⁵³ Honwana, A., 2006. *Child Soldiers in Africa*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. p 42. Jackson, M., 2011. *Life Within Limits: Well-being in a World of Want*. Durham: Duke University Press. p 91.

In general terms, according to these writers, a youth in Sierra Leone is someone no longer a child but not yet a 'big' man/women. Attaining this status depends on gender, class, ethnic group, geographical location and age so it is difficult to define one age at which 'youth' ends; it can span a period from approximately 15 years of age to 35 years of age.

Children were traditionally seen as investments and were expected to contribute to the family –both during childhood and afterwards.²⁵⁴ In poor families children were often relied upon to contribute financially both in regards labour and income.²⁵⁵ Obedience of children and youth to the elders was considered paramount, parents only invest in good children whom they believe they will make a return on; 'bad' children may be left to themselves.²⁵⁶

This may have aided recruitment in two ways. Children excluded and left to their own devices provided a pool of labour from which the armed groups could draw

²⁵⁴ Interview with Tania Bernath, Researcher on Sierra Leone, Amnesty International, London, 28th September 2007.

²⁵⁵ Richards, P., Bah, K., Vincent, J., 2004. Social Capital and Survival: Prospects for Community Driven Development in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone. Social Development Paper no 12. World Bank. Accessed through www.worldbank.org. p 44.

²⁵⁶ Interview with Ambassador Rowe, the Sierra Leone Ambassador to the UN, New York, 22nd September 2006. Beah, I., 2007. p 33. Kielland, A. and Tovo, M. 2006. Children at Work; Child Labour Practices in Africa. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p 7.

upon; and a cultural trait of obedience played a role in attracting armed groups to use 'good' children, by force if necessary.²⁵⁷

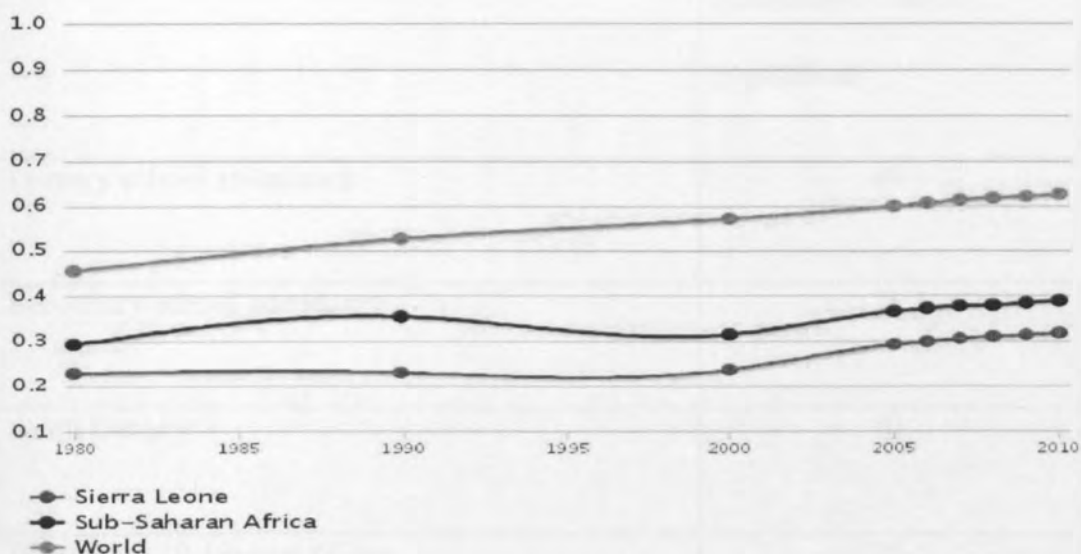
Rosen convincingly argues that the inclusion of youth and children by force into armed groups in Sierra Leone is linked to pre-existing forms of slavery, that 'the history of slavery in Sierra Leone, with the exploitation of youth and youth labour as its primary objective, became a template for the brutality of wartime oppression'.²⁵⁸ Within West Africa there is also a history of child trafficking for the purposes of both work and slavery; 'slaves' within the West African slavery system are often not bought and sold anymore but are enslaved via the use of violence and terror.²⁵⁹ The abduction, transportation and use of children, especially girls, by armed groups in Sierra Leone fit this pre-existing model.

However it must be remembered that modern economic pressures also contributed to the use of children as soldiers. As can be seen in the graph below Sierra Leone was a country that, compared to global and regional averages, had poor health, education and income indications. 75% of the population in Sierra Leone lived below poverty level during the war.

²⁵⁷ Singer, P., 2006b. p 4.

²⁵⁸ Rosen, D., 2005. p 59.

²⁵⁹ Kielland, A., and Tovo, M., 2006. p 42.



Human Development Human Development Index: Trends 1980 – present²⁶⁰

Children faced an uncertain and precarious future in a country where education provision and achievement was low. Literacy as a result was poor and poverty was extensive.

Few children (see chart below) attended secondary education; some barely received a primary education and nearly half of all children were involved in child labour. Armed groups, especially those such as the RUF who required children's commercial labour as well as their military labour, are attracted to such children because they have already highlighted their capacity to work.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SLE.html>

²⁶¹ Andrig, J., 2006. p 14.

	Percentage % (of population)
Primary school attendance	69
Secondary school attendance	25
Adult literacy	40
Population 10-19years of age	22
Child labour	48

Sierra Leone, Country Statistics, UNICEF²⁶²

The phenomenon of child soldiers in the Sierra Leone context can therefore be thought about to some extent as a combination of historical practices of slavery and as an extension of the modern child labour issue.

²⁶² Figures taken from www.unicef.org/infobycountry, accessed on 29/05/2010

Recruitment.

The RUF was a predatory organisation primarily concerned with resource exploitation and engaged in a strategy of terror. For the RUF, the use of children was a central part of this strategy. Being a small movement with little support was not detrimental to their aim of accessing resources, as long as they could control the population via terror and thus use the ensuing chaos to benefit financially.²⁶³ As a movement that desired economic rewards and relied on terror tactics child recruits were an asset; they were cheap, expendable, and more compliant than adults, and their status as children made their involvement more terrifying to the society under subjugation.²⁶⁴

Although the use of children as part of this strategy was tactical, local beliefs made this strategy very effective. The RUF was able to exploit ambivalence about children in particular ways. Childhood in Sierra Leone is a time when individuals are considered to be close to the spirit world and thus children are viewed with both joy and alarm. The very fact that they are not fully formed as a person makes them both insignificant and dangerous. As Ferme noted, children

‘have not yet incorporated social values of shame

²⁶³. Interview with David Rosen, Professor in Anthropology, Farleigh-Dickinson University, New York, 19th September 2006.

²⁶⁴ It is more traumatic to be attacked by children. Telephone Interview with Manuel Fountain, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF, New York, 3rd October 2006. The recruitment of children was used to terrorise the population. Interview with David Rosen, Professor in Anthropology, Farleigh-Dickinson University, New York, 19th September 2006.

and respect.....and thus they move freely in zones
of danger.’²⁶⁵

In addition for Sierra Leoneans, being targeted by youth represented an inversion of traditional age based hierarchies and thus a fundamental breakdown in the social order; civilians became scared of youth as they heard how the RUF made them kill family members and burn villages.²⁶⁶ This was an effective weapon in demoralising the civilian population. The news of atrocities in one village spread to surrounding villages and the people fled leaving their assets and local resources unprotected.

The tactics of terror used by the RUF served a dual purpose, also acting to attract some youth to the movement. The RUF killed authority figures such as traditional chiefs and government representatives; some in the population endorsed the RUF’s targeting of the elites due to grievances, and so these tactics may have placated recruits who had joined voluntarily; teenage fighters are known to have humiliated chiefs and local ‘big men’.²⁶⁷ The destruction of traditional sources of power and patronage in some areas also left the RUF as the only option for ambitious youths who sought patrons and economic advancement. The permissive

²⁶⁵ Ferme, M., 2001. *The Underneath of Things*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p 199. How children are viewed as dangerous is also discussed at some length in Shepler’s work. Shepler, S., 2005. p 114.

²⁶⁶ Beah, I., 2007. p 37. Shepler, S., 2005. p 116.

²⁶⁷ Richards, P., Bah, K., Vincent, J., 2004. *Social Capital and Survival: Prospects for Community Driven Development in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone*. Social Development Paper no 12. World Bank. Accessed through www.worldbank.org [15/06/2005]. p IV. Conteh-Morgan, E., and Dixon-Foyle, M., 1999. p 127. Pham, J., 2005. p 109.

attitude of the RUF towards looting and raping served as a reward to encourage recruits, including children, to be obedient and see the group as a way to receive benefits. Commanders understood that 'denying their troops the 'right' to loot and pillage was tantamount to a potentially lethal breach of contract'.²⁶⁸

As well as encouraging good behaviour from existing recruits, the lure of material benefits also acted to bring some volunteers into the RUF. However, as predicted in Beardsley and McQuinn's theory that armed groups that rely on material benefits to attract recruits do not need community support and will therefore be more exploitative, it can be seen that such volunteers in the RUF were often criminal in nature.²⁶⁹ The inclusion of criminal elements and use of resources to placate recruits meant that the aims of the RUF became ever more resource orientated. As the conflict shifted in its initial stages and the mercenary elements took greater control it became more violent.²⁷⁰

The protracted and violent nature of the new war in Sierra Leone impacted on the recruitment practices employed by the RUF. At the initial outbreak of the conflict the RUF enjoyed the backing of marginalised rural elites in addition to the

²⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, 13th April 2005. p 23.

²⁶⁹ Beardsley, K., and McQuinn, B., 2009. Rebel Groups as Predatory Organisations: The Political Effects of the 2004 Tsunami in Indonesia and Sri Lanka', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53(4). Sage Publications. p 631. Interview with Susan Shepler, Professor of Anthropology, American University. Washington DC, 27th September 2006.

²⁷⁰ Telephone Interview with Michael Shipler, Director of Programmes, Search for Common Ground, Nepal, 13th October 2006. Once access to diamonds became the main focus the war became less ideological and more brutal. Interview with Karen Colvard, New York, 22nd September 2006.

support of marginalised youth.²⁷¹ Many of the RUF's earliest voluntary recruits came from Pujehun district where the RUF were supported due to disagreements between the Ndogboyosoi movement and the APC government which had resulted in government incited massacres.²⁷² Excluded landowning elites in the Southern and eastern areas had also supported the RUF. These elites had not been recognised by the British or the post-colonial government, ensuring few rights and creating social grievances. This support and the use of mercenaries meant that the RUF did not at first need to practice child recruitment. However the new war tactics of the RUF – which included the use of terror - quickly alienated the rural elites and support was rapidly withdrawn. This was particularly so after the fall of the APC government in 1992.²⁷³

The prolonged nature of the conflict combined with low levels of local support which weakened the RUF meant that the RUF, in order to contest the conflict successfully, felt the need to use forced recruitment methods to maintain their military capacity to fight. This created a cycle in which the RUF could only continue the war via the use of forced recruitment but were, understandably, increasingly demonised by the population for doing so.

²⁷¹ Interview with David Rosen, Professor in Anthropology, Farleigh-Dickinson University, New York, 19TH September 2006.

²⁷² Shepler, S., 2005. p 53. Richards, P., 1996. p 8.

²⁷³ Arnson, C., and Zartman, I., 2005. p 87.

Although voluntary recruitment did occur for a short period of time at a low level during the start of the conflict, forced recruitment was arguably much more common by the RUF.²⁷⁴ Both Lord (2000) and Silenger (2003) believe as many as 20,000 people were forcibly recruited into the RUF.²⁷⁵ According to the Carter Centre (2003) approximately 10,000 children were forcibly abducted, amounting to half of all abducted fighters.²⁷⁶ However this figure is disputed; Lord (2000) puts the figure at 5,000 children whilst Shepler cites estimates of 7000.²⁷⁷

According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission database, 63% of forced recruits were under 18 years.²⁷⁸ This breaks down further as 10.5% being 16-18 years, 24.2% being 13-15 years and 28.3% being under 12 years. It appears that, at least in regards forced recruitment in Sierra Leone, younger children and youth were the preferred targets.

²⁷⁴ Majority of children voluntarily joined the Civil Defence Forces. Sesay, A., 2003. p 173.

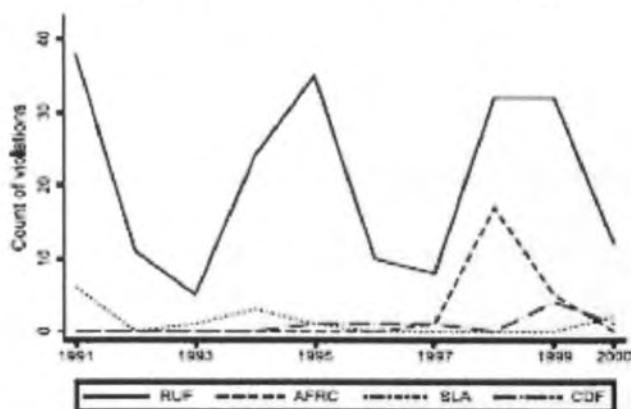
²⁷⁵ Lord, D., 2000. p 12.

²⁷⁶ Carter Centre, 2005. Observing the 2002 Sierra Leone Elections. Atlanta: The Carter Centre. p 15.

²⁷⁷ Lord, D., 2000. p 14.

²⁷⁸ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone. 3(b). Section 139.

Figure 3: Annual rates of forced recruitment violations reported to TRC (comparing the violations of the four main perpetrator factions)



Annual rates of forced recruitment violations reported to TRC (comparing the violations of the four main perpetrator factions)

‘Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone’ (volume 3b), in ‘The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone’ accessed 13/07/08.
www.trcsierraleone.org.

Children could be abducted from any place that the RUF came across them, in the villages and cities, in the bush, in public and private places. Transport routes were unprotected and thus places of forced recruitment for both children and adults.

The RUF - and at times the Sierra Leone Army - would ambush trucks and force civilians on and nearby the routes to carry goods to their base camps.²⁷⁹ Children were also forcibly recruited when their villages were attacked.²⁸⁰ The RUF had few criteria that children had to meet in order to be abducted; recruitment for the

²⁷⁹ Shepler, S., 2005. p 58.

²⁸⁰ Beah, I., 2007.p 24.

most part seems to have been opportunistic. Parents had little ability to resist their children's recruitment as anyone who contested RUF actions were executed.²⁸¹

The RUF made some effort to deny using forced recruitment, saying that it was an inferior method which posed long term security risks as escapees may have led enemy troops back to locations they were familiar with.²⁸² However despite these denials, such claims are not plausible given that the RUF did clearly forcibly recruit children. In Sierra Leone it was not uncommon for children to be fostered or 'abducted' by the secret societies such as the Poro and Sande and hidden in the bush so that formal training could be given. According to Richards, in Sierra Leone the method of abduction used by the RUF was similar to the rites of passage rituals used by the traditional hunting guilds.²⁸³ Children were taken from their homes in the night to the forest where they were taught the 'secrets' of the movement and underwent initiation rites – often a form of scarification to replace circumcision.²⁸⁴ For those children that were abducted by armed groups, Richards, in Mjoset, L and Van Holde, S, argues that it is the historical tradition of using abducted warrior slaves for military purposes that enabled the use of similar techniques successfully.²⁸⁵ Rosen argues that such abductions, alongside

²⁸¹ Gberie, L., 2005. p 61-62. Denov, M., 2010. p 97.

²⁸² RUF, 1995. *Footpaths to Democracy: Towards a New Sierra Leone*. RUF Statement. www.sierra-leone.org [06/11/2003]. p 4.

²⁸³ Wessells, M., Although many scholars disagree with much of Richards work on the RUF they do not refute his analysis of RUF recruitment tactics. Gallagher, M., 2001. Soldier boy bad: Child soldiers, culture and bars to asylum. *International Journal of Refugee Law*. 13(3). p 329.

²⁸⁴ Shepler, S., 2005. p 102-103. Denov, M., 2009. p 116

²⁸⁵ Mjoset, L., and Van Holde, S., Ed. 2002. *The Comparative Study of Conscription in the Armed Forces*. Comparative Social Research. 20. Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd. p 255.

the forced alienation from society, show the trademark violence of a slave regime and is in part a result of historical traditions.²⁸⁶

Control and Deployment:

Once initiated by the RUF, children were usually sent to distant base camps for training, to make them reliant on the group and to make it physically difficult to leave.²⁸⁷ They were not allowed to talk about their former lives, and as no outside contact was allowed, over time children accepted the group and its patronage-client structures.²⁸⁸ This was aided by the use of peer mentoring to socialise new recruits.²⁸⁹

RUF recruits primarily received military training which could last between one week and six months, however there is little evidence that training was standardised.²⁹⁰ War movies such as *Rambo: First Blood* were used to encourage

²⁸⁶ Rosen, D., 2005. p 59.

²⁸⁷ Interview with Tania Bernath, Researcher on Sierra Leone, Amnesty International, London, 28th September 2007. Telephone interview with Sarah Spencer, GBV and Child Protection Practitioner, New York, 19th September 2007.

²⁸⁸ Wessells, M., 2006. p 63. Coulter, C., 2010. p 117. Maclure, R., and Denov, M., 2006. I Didn't want to Die so I Joined Them: Structuration and the Process of Becoming Boy Soldiers in Sierra Leone. *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 18(1) p119-135, p119-135, p125.

²⁸⁹ Maclure, R., and Denov, M., 2006. p125.

Wessells, M., 2006. p 19.

²⁹⁰ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone. 3(b). Section 247.

recruits and teach basic military tactics.²⁹¹ Recruits, including children, were terrorised within the movement both during recruitment, training and after deployment and were often forced to commit atrocities, including being forced to kill people known to them, including family members.²⁹² According to Singer this is a popular tactic amongst armed groups most reliant on children and aims to both desensitise them to killing and to break children's ties to their communities.²⁹³ Wood argues that the 'brutalisation of recruits is intended to enhance aggression, which the discipline of drill is intended to control'.²⁹⁴ However there is little evidence that children were trained in drills or in the laws of war, children were controlled only through the wielding of violence and were taught to control others in the same way.²⁹⁵

Children were also branded so that it would be known they had been with the RUF if they managed to escape.²⁹⁶ Stories of revenge by the Sierra Leone Army and civilians meant that many abductees felt safer remaining with their abductors. This resulted in all members having a stake in ensuring victory for the movement. Once tied into the movement it was in their interest to act to enable its victory whatever methods were chosen.

²⁹¹ Wessells, M., 2006. p 69. Sesay, A., 2003. p 177.

²⁹² Children were often forced to commit atrocities at the time of their abduction. Telephone interview with Theresa Betancourt, Assistant Professor of Child Health and Human Rights, Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, 4th October 2007. Gberie, L., 2005. p 65. Wessells, M., 2006. p 59.

²⁹³ Singer, P., 2006a. p 74.

²⁹⁴ Wood, E., 2009. p 138.

²⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch, 13th April 2005. p33.

²⁹⁶ Beah, I., 2007. p 25. Coulter, C., 2010. p 122.

Many ex-RUF combatants reported indoctrination sessions at which they were taught about the political goals of the RUF and were made to understand the rationale behind the insurgency.²⁹⁷ Post abduction propaganda was, in some cases, an effective tool for subordination to the group.²⁹⁸ Recruits were encouraged to become proud of their contribution to the group's survival, and material gains and access to girls for sexual purposes were often linked to a combatant's performance, drawing them further into a mercenary worldview. Those recruits that performed well could rise through the ranks and it was possible for boy recruits to become commanders of their own units; many commanders, especially towards the end of the war were under 18 years old.²⁹⁹

Children in Sierra Leone were naturally included as a part of adult activities, carrying out tasks deemed as suitable by the adults. Some domestic tasks, such as fetching water, cooking, doing laundry and cleaning were seen as children's tasks - or women's tasks that boys would carry out if within a group of men - and thus in Sierra Leone it was not seen as strange for armed groups to use children for such duties.³⁰⁰ Non-domestic tasks within the RUF ranged from working as

²⁹⁷ Maclure, R., and Denov, M., 2006. p124.

²⁹⁸ Telephone Interview with Mike Wessells, Child Protection Practitioner, Christian Children's Fund and Professor at both Columbia University and Randolph-Macon College, 28TH September 2006. Denov, M., 2009. p 101.

²⁹⁹ Restoy, E., 2006. p 5. Whereas the leadership for the girl's units was drawn from the Women's Auxiliary Corps. Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone. 3(b). Section 255.

³⁰⁰ Pham, J., 2005. p108. Kielland, A., and Tovo, M., 2006. p 27. Interview with Susan Shepler, Professor of Anthropology, American University. Washington DC, 27th September 2006. Andrig,

porters or miners to actual combat, these were often also fitted into existing models of child labour such as tasks where adult supervision – but not active participation – was seen as necessary i.e. working roadblocks.³⁰¹

The RUF also recruited adults but there were particular advantages to recruiting children.³⁰² Children were often used by commanders because they were seen to have special qualities such as their malleability.³⁰³ The fact that children were seen as more malleable and less demanding may have resulted in commanders feeling safer having children guard them, as they were considered easier to control and less likely to turn on superiors. Certainly it was mainly children that made up the units of bodyguards that commanders created.³⁰⁴

The RUF is a good illustration of Andvig and Gates argument that commanders will use children if they are sufficiently cheap to compensate for their lack of efficiency.³⁰⁵ Children that have been forcibly recruited do not have to be paid –

J., 2006.p 14. Sometimes children in armed groups are doing similar tasks to in the domestic sphere. Interview with Karen Colvard, New York, 22nd September 2006.

³⁰¹ Kielland, A., and Tovo, M., 2006. p 53.

³⁰² Interview with Tania Bernath, Researcher on Sierra Leone, Amnesty International, London, 28th September 2007. Interview with Ambassador Rowe, the Sierra Leone Ambassador to the UN, New York, 22nd September 2006.

³⁰³ Children globally are seen as more malleable. Telephone interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007. In groups that use forced recruitment the child: adult ratio is much higher as children are seen as easier to coerce. Andrig, J., and Gates, S., 2007. Recruiting Children for Armed Conflict. Ford Institute Working Papers. Accessed through www.fordinstitute.Pitt.edu [15/01/2008]. p 23. Andrig, J., 2006. p 26.

³⁰⁴ Gberie, L., 2005. p 184.

³⁰⁵ See p 9. Group leaders see the mobilisation of children as a cost-effective and efficient way to generate force. Singer, P., 2006a. p 38.

an asset in a conflict where the leadership is economically motivated.³⁰⁶ Even if they wished to benefit they are less able than adults to demand a greater share of any profits accessed by individual commanders, whether this be the spoils of combat or revenue from diamond exploitation, a key factor for commanders motivated by material wealth.³⁰⁷ This is not necessarily the case with children who have volunteered who may confront their commanders or take their services elsewhere if not rewarded.³⁰⁸

Children were also recruited and deployed because they were seen as expendable.³⁰⁹ In addition to their expendability was their ability to increase the status of their commanders. Senior commanders within the RUF gained prestige by the numerical strength of their followers, even if these followers were children or only had support roles which lead to competition between commanders and the de-centralised recruitment of children.³¹⁰ As Murphy has argued this is because in the Sierra Leone patrimonial system the number of clients a 'big man' has is directly related to his status. It could be argued that the ease with which children could be forcibly recruited and indoctrinated may have prompted commanders to use them in large numbers to enhance their own position within the movement.

³⁰⁶ Telephone Interview with Manuel Fountain, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF, New York, 3RD October 2006. Singer, P., 2006a. p 14.

³⁰⁷ Andvig, J., and Gates, S., 2007. p 16. Singer, P., 2006a. p 99.

³⁰⁸ Human Rights Watch, 13th April 2005. p 23.

³⁰⁹ Telephone Interview with Manuel Fountain, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF, New York, 3RD October 2006. Singer, P., 2006. p 106.

³¹⁰ Shepler, S., 2005. p 68. Denov, M., 2009. p 113.

As well as looking at why children were deployed it is also important to know how they were deployed. Children were often organised into small boys/girls units. It is important to note that children were only arranged in small boys/girls units until they were 14 years old.³¹¹ Once they reached this age they were dispersed amongst the adult units. This fits with wider societal beliefs of children becoming youths at 14 years.

Tasks for recruits were generally allocated based on a combination of age, strength and time served.³¹² The youngest children were usually assigned to work as porters or domestic labour graduating to combat duties and with girls being made 'wives' as they got older.³¹³ However in some areas – due to the risk of capture – recruits under 16 years of age were kept away from the front lines and were instead used for 'civilian relations', which included looting and the intimidation of civilians.³¹⁴ In other areas children as young as 12 years old were sent into frontline combat engaging against opposition armed forces or partaking in raids against the local population; this was particularly the case towards the end of the conflict. Children were also preferred to adults in the mining areas and

³¹¹ Murphy, 2003. p 11.

³¹² Maclure, R., and Denov, M., 2006. p 128.

³¹³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone. 3(b). Section 132.

³¹⁴ Restoy, E., 2006. Sierra Leone: The Revolutionary United Front. Trying to Influence an Army of Children. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. Accessed through www.child-soldiers.org [30/07/2008]. p 5.

were used in the diamond mines which were used to provide wealth for commanders and the leadership.³¹⁵

Children were either designated as ‘soldier’ or ‘civilian’ depending upon which tasks they were assigned.³¹⁶ Those who were deployed in combat were ‘soldiers’, these recruits were usually boys although some girls did become fighters. Children that were deployed in support roles and those given as ‘wives’ were thought of as ‘civilians’. Which tier a child belonged to had implications for its treatment, this was particularly well highlighted in the differences in treatment between boy ‘soldiers’ and ‘civilian’ girls living as commanders ‘wives’ (see below).

The RUF used a variety of techniques to bond soldiers and forge a common identity, in an attempt to control recruits during their deployment. Through the use of patronage systems, integral to advancement within the wider society and within the RUF, the leadership could offer rewards in return for service. Children that performed well and did as their commanders (patrons) requested could be promoted.

³¹⁵ Telephone Interview with Mike Wessells, Child Protection Practitioner, Christian Children's Fund and Professor at both Columbia University and Randolph-Macon College, 28th September 2006. Gberie, L., 2005. p 184.

³¹⁶ Keen, D., 2005. Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone. Oxford: James Currey Ltd. p 43.

‘if you were successful in your missions and you brought back lots of [looted goods], you were promoted’
(Boy Child Combatant, RUF)³¹⁷

Promotion meant many things to children; increased status, access to subordinates so that life became easier as chores/dangerous tasks could be delegated, greater access to material goods including food and clothes, and some greater protection from abuse as recruits gained in status and moved up the hierarchy. Thus child soldiers had many reasons to integrate within the system that they had been forced to participate in.

As they were more fully integrated into the RUF they began to become instigators of abuse as well as continuing to be victims of those of a higher status. Child soldiers would use their position/weapons to ensure that they received goods and money for themselves and their commanders; civilians were often abused during the extraction process. Male child soldiers were also introduced to and participated in the exploitation of girls for sexual purposes. As one boy confessed,

‘Once I became a commander, I could choose any girl that I wanted [as a wife]...if they weren’t willing to have sex with me....I would force them.... I felt good.’
(Boy Child Combatant, RUF)³¹⁸

³¹⁷ Denov, M., 2009.P 113.

³¹⁸ Denov, M., 2009 p 118.

That the group used rape to socialise recruits can be seen in the prevalence of gang rape which Cohen reports accounted for 75% of rapes.³¹⁹ Published interviews with female recruits also indicate that girls faced gang rape within the group.³²⁰ According to Cohen gang rape ‘involves collective responsibility for a crime, the loss of individual identity and values, and the creating of cohesion and camaraderie’.³²¹ Unlike individual rapes which can be fuelled by desire, anger or to enjoy a sense of power over the victim, in gang rape the victim is not important, it is the shared humiliation of her body resulting in a sense of shared experience and bonding which is important. Thus sexual abuse of girls was a vehicle that the leadership and individual units could use to forge a sense of cohesion that in the other two conflicts was invoked through shared goals and political aims.

Cohen does argue his point convincingly. However he argues that the use of rape as a method of socialisation was carried out at the unit level and was not a top down command. To assess this we need to concentrate for a moment on the RUF’s rape of civilians which young boys often carried out. Firstly a command does not have to be explicitly vocalised in order for recruits to follow it; in an armed group where commanders were publicly raping women and punishment of rapists did not occur the leadership are implicitly inferring that rape is acceptable. Secondly he argues that because specific types of women were not targeted, based

³¹⁹ Cohen, D., 2010. p 25.

³²⁰ Rosen, D., 2005. p 83.

³²¹ Cohen, D., 2010. p 28.

on ethnicity, economic or political status, rape could not have been an official policy. Cohen views rape as a weapon in the classical sense where it is wielded by one ethnic, economic or political group against another. This supposition is clearly based on the premise that the RUF were driven by political goals. In reality the RUF leadership did not need to explicitly give an order for rape, nor did they need to target certain types of women. As a criminal group in which the leadership were motivated only by how they could continue to access resources, mass rape was enough, it did not matter who was targeted, only that women were and the terror that ensued created an environment that the RUF could work within.

In addition to using systems of patronage that rewarded those who complied and punished those who failed in their duties in order to create a sense of belonging to the movement, the RUF also used other methods of forging a collective identity. Denov shows how the RUF used peer mentoring to socialise soldiers; this was partly incidental as abducted child soldiers watched and observed more experienced child soldiers and partly a matter of policy as the RUF sent child soldiers into villages to 'recruit' new children. They also used collective tattooing of soldiers, usually after successful battles, to instil group solidarity.³²²

³²² Maclure, R., and Denov, M., 2006. p 128. Rosen, D., 2005. p 59.

That the RUF were to some extent, particularly amongst boy recruits, successful at instilling a sense of collective identity is verified by some of the responses given during the course of Denov's research.

‘We still like to see each other and we always meet with great joy.

I would really like to see the commander who recruited me....I think

he might provide me with assistance now. I also see another commander sometimes. He gives me advice – he's like a mentor’

(Boy Child Combatant, RUF)³²³

Although many children like the one above were integrated into the RUF and often became perpetrators as well as victims of abuse many others were solely victims of those they were subjugated to. This was particularly the case for girls.

The Role of Females Within the RUF.

Women traditionally have a low status within society in Sierra Leone.³²⁴

According to Human Rights Watch ‘women and girls in Sierra Leone are subjected to structural discrimination by practice, custom and law’.³²⁵ The treatment and status of a woman is in the hands of firstly her father and after marriage her husband. Girls are married off at a young age so that they do not

³²³ Denov, M., 2009.p 151.

³²⁴ Interview with Tania Bernath, Researcher on Sierra Leone, Amnesty International, London, 28th September 2007.

³²⁵ Human Rights Watch, Jan 2003. p 4.

bring shame on their families by becoming sexually active before marriage, with 48% of the total population having experienced child marriage.³²⁶ Physical violence against women and children is common.³²⁷

Although few in number, women and girl volunteers in the RUF were typically unmarried and it has been argued that some expressed frustration at the lack of opportunities available to them and were attempting to gain more equality through leaving traditional society and joining the rebels. However, few women are willing in the post-war context to admit to this publicly given the level of demonization of the RUF.³²⁸ It could be said that the desire of some women to rebel against a system that oppressed them led to conflict between them and their communities and was a factor in their recruitment by the RUF. The literature available on youth rebellion in Sierra Leone concentrates predominantly on men or fails to denote gender; however it could be argued that just as men were considered rebellious so too did women have the potential to act in a similar way.

The CDF, however, did not recruit girls at all. The phenomenon of 'bush wives' for example did not occur within the CDF.³²⁹ There was no need for girls as they were based within existing communities. Boys joined with the aim of protecting

³²⁶ Figures taken from www.unicef.org/infobycountry, accessed on 29/05/2010

³²⁷ Human Rights Watch, Jan 2003.p 19.

³²⁸ Shepler, S., 2005. p 184. Coulter, C., 2009. p 99.

³²⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone. 3(b). section 170.

their families and communities and did not need to be lured into the group which was acting as a defensive measure in response to the RUF. The lack of sexual abuse by the CDF highlights even more the predatory nature of the RUF.

There were differences in how girls and boys were used and these were related to gender roles within the wider communities. Girls were usually used in support roles or as 'wives' in line with women's roles in the wider society, within this role 'wives' were often responsible for looking after younger girls.³³⁰

According to Coulter, the rebel insurgency would have failed if the rebels had not had access to the forced productive labour of women, and girls. Women and children were the ones sent out to acquire food; to farm, to harvest and prepare food. Such tasks are highly gendered in Sierra Leone and Coulter argues that this is why women and girls, were so essential to the rebel movement which based its camps on traditional villages and exploited traditional family structures – with commanders in the place of father – to control children and use them effectively as a resource.³³¹

In some ways the life of girls in the camps was constructed by the RUF to parallel that which could be found in rural villages throughout Sierra Leone, they

³³⁰ Wessells, M., 2006. p 97. Restoy, E., 2006. p 5.

³³¹ Coulter, C., 2010. p 102.

belonged to their 'husband' who could punish them as he liked, he could also demand sexual relations when he liked. Within Sierra Leonean society sex on demand was considered the husband's right and marital rape was not recognised as a crime until 2007. However within the RUF the types of sex demanded often violated local taboos, sex during the daytime, in public, with multiple partners and whilst women were pregnant and breastfeeding are not allowed in Sierra Leone society but could all be found within the group.³³² The RUF aptly exploited societal norms, manipulating beliefs and practices and then presenting them as traditional.

For example the RUF adopted initiation ceremonies. Taboos existed surrounding the act of sex with uninitiated girls.³³³ As girls within the RUF movement were often subjected to sexual abuse, and given to male recruits to reward them, it was imperative that the RUF had access to initiated girls. Young girls were often targeted by the group due to fears of HIV prevalence in older females, and because of their age some may not have undergone initiation and would therefore not be considered available for sexual duties. Adopting initiation rituals enabled the group to sexually abuse younger girls and there are reports of the RUF abducting female leaders of the Sande (Secret Society) to carry out initiations on

³³² Keen, D., 2005. p 44.

³³³ Shepler, S., 2005. p 117.

their behalf.³³⁴ This fits in with the naming of girls as ‘wives’ so that their sexual abuse appeared to fit in with societal norms.

Within the camps girls were tightly controlled because of their value as sexual slaves and labourers. They were discouraged from participating in social networks within the group, unlike boys who underwent rites such as tattooing to instil a sense of solidarity, and therefore they had even less protection from their husbands than in the wider community. Due to drug abuse within the RUF the frequency and extremity of beatings and sexual demands were seen to be greater than within a normal marriage.³³⁵

However for many girls the position of ‘wife’, with all its abuse and control was still preferable to being available to any man who wished to force sexual relations; many women saw their ‘husbands’ as a limited form of protection.³³⁶ Despite ‘marriage’ being seen as the better option most recruits seem to have still been brutally treated by their husbands, although some recruits said they knew of commanders who did not beat their ‘wives’ and some that tried to protect their ‘wives’ from other men.³³⁷ As well as some protection from gang rape, ‘wives’ also had status according to the status of their husband therefore some of the girls yielded some limited power, particularly over other female captives, which they

³³⁴ Shepler, S., 2005. p 117.

³³⁵ Coulter, C., 2010. p 130, p 228.

³³⁶ Keen, D., 2005. p 44.

³³⁷ Wessells, M., 2006. p 1. Human Rights Watch, Jan 2003. p 44.

could use to their advantage.³³⁸ Many 'wives' had people working for them so they did not have to undergo hard labour and they also received many material goods from their 'husbands'.

At times the ways in which women were used countered local expectations of behaviour.³³⁹ They were used for controlling populations, they underwent special missions to get supplies from enemy territory and at times were deployed in active combat - although this was usually after the men and small boys units were sent to the front.³⁴⁰ Girls were also sent to spy on targets and get information prior to attacks and this was at times carried out through the use of sex, 'the girls in fact will love the soldiers or other people in the town', this was a task that women were particularly suitable for as they were assumed to be under less suspicion than fighting aged males.³⁴¹ Thus local norms regarding women's roles were ignored in situations where the use of females was seen as beneficial to the group.

Although girls, particularly those married to commanders, were overall given less freedom than boys, with many 'wives' being guarded when their husbands were away from camp, they still had opportunities to wield some limited agency. Girls used their power in different ways. In two recorded cases the 'wives' of senior

³³⁸ Rosen, D., 2005. p 83.

³³⁹ Coulter, C., 2010. p 215.

³⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch, Jan 2003. p 45.

³⁴¹ Pham, J., 2005. p 103. Girls were preferred for spying as they could enter markets to glean information more easily. Wessells, M., 2006. p 97. Sesay, A., 2003. p 152. Coulter, C., 2010. p 104.

commanders had used their status, the first to protect her friend – who she took as her cook to protect her from other men after her ‘husband’ died – and the second to protect her half-sister who she took to work for her when she found her about to undergo amputation during an attack.³⁴² However their power was limited. Firstly the girls had to be careful that people did not suspect they were assisting other women or had a previous relationship to them, they had to publicly act as though they only wanted them for their labour. Secondly, they were not in a position to offer unlimited protection; the first girl could do nothing when a more senior commander wished to make her friend his ‘wife’. Girls also used their agency on occasion to protect themselves. Some made an attempt to escape, whilst some others admitted in interviews to, when the situation allowed without being at risk at getting caught, finding ways to kill those that had abused them.³⁴³

However there is also some evidence of girls using their agency in less benevolent ways. There are reports of ‘wives’ attacking other girls that they felt their ‘husbands’ were interested in and of girls abusing the babies of other girls that were fathered by their ‘husbands’. Some girls were also reported to have sexually abused girls in their command.³⁴⁴ Attacks on other women are likely to have often been an attempt to protect their own position with their ‘husband’; if cast off for another woman the ‘wife’ would again be at the mercy of all the men in the camp

³⁴² Coulter, C., 2010. p 112, p 120.

³⁴³ Denov, M., 2009. p 134.

³⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch, Jan 2003. p 43. Denov, M., 2009. p 124-125.

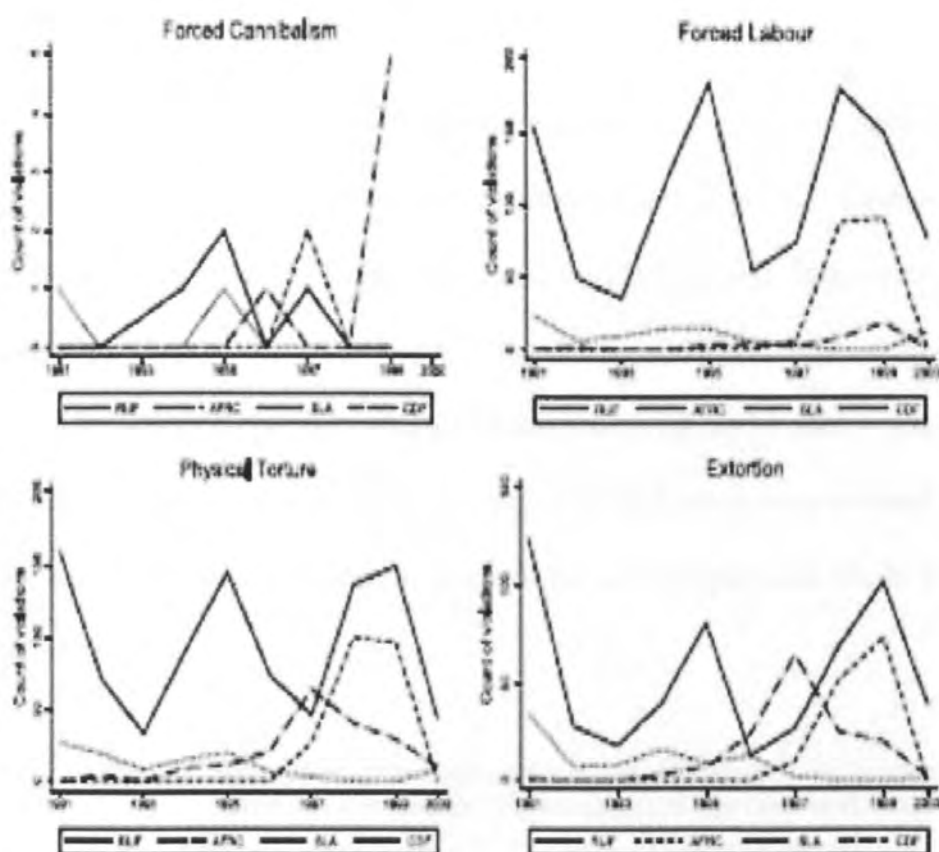
and would also struggle more as she would not have her 'husband's' subordinates to work for her.

Abuse.

Compared to many conflicts the level and sheer brutality of abuses against civilians and recruits appears to have been very high in Sierra Leone. This can be attributed in part to the RUF's deliberate campaign of terror which it used to guarantee access to resources. However as Rosen convincingly argues, current events in Sierra Leone cannot be separated from their historical context and the use of children is not simply a 'modern-day abhorrence'.³⁴⁵ Historically in much of Sierra Leone during combat, captive males were murdered or sold as slaves in the external slave trade whilst women were taken as 'wives' and used for forced labour and sexual duties. The use of strong palm wine to give courage also mirrors the use of drugs by modern Sierra Leoneans.³⁴⁶ It could be said then that it was a combination of historic traditions and strategic intent that engineered an environment in which civilians and child recruits alike were so terribly abused.

³⁴⁵ Rosen, D., 2005. p 64.

³⁴⁶ Coulter, C., 2010. p 76. Rosen, D., 2005. p 63-64.



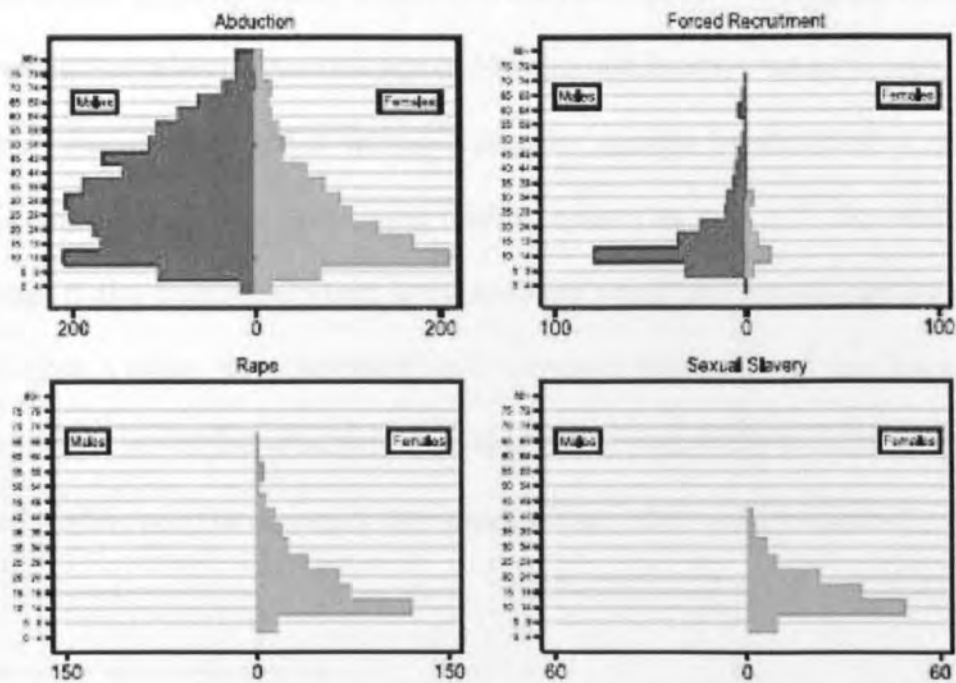
‘Chapter Four: Nature of the Conflict’ (volume 3a), in ‘The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone’ accessed 13/07/08. www.trcsierraleone.org.

As can be seen in the graph above the RUF had the worst record for forced labour, physical torture and extortion. Abduction, rape and sexual slavery were also violations that occurred alongside forced recruitment. The RUF were also known – as were the CDF – for forcing people, including child recruits, to commit acts of cannibalism, although it is believed that this practice caused divisions within the RUF between those who carried out the practice and those who opposed it.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Chapter Four: Nature of the Conflict. 3(a), section 116.

The statistics depicted in the tables demonstrate that abuses against children occurred within all of the armed groups, although the majority of violations were carried out by the RUF. As can be seen in figure 2, whilst abduction of all ages and genders was common it is clear that boys between 10 and 14 years were most targeted for forced recruitment and girls between the age of 10 and 14 years were preferred for rape and sexual slavery. Many older abductees were released or killed after being forced to help move goods or carry out physical labour for the RUF.

Figure 2: Selected violations categories in which children were targeted (violations reported to TRC, according to age / sex of victims)



'Chapter Four: Nature of the Conflict' (volume 3b), in 'The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone' accessed 13/07/08. www.trcsierraleone.org.

The graph above shows the most likely reason for the recruitment of girls was rape and sexual slavery. Younger girls were preferred for sexual abuse as they were considered less likely to carry sexually transmitted infections. Often girls were incredibly young when they were first raped.

The Major was a bad man and he raped me many times,
I was a child of three or four or five'
(ex-child combatant, RUF)³⁴⁸

The decision to recruit young girls seems to have been in part a practical one made possible by skilful manipulation of some local beliefs. Consensual sex is allowed in Sierra Leone from the age of 14 years and indeed younger – even without consent - if the girl is 'married'; this may account for the desire of many RUF combatants to name their young female captives as 'wives'.³⁴⁹ Sex within marriage is also traditionally seen as the husband's right and marital rape was not, at this time, a crime. By undergoing bush 'marriage' boys and men may have on some level believed that what they were engaged in was within societal norms, indeed Andvig and Gates remark that armed groups often copy traditional

³⁴⁸ Butcher, T., 2010. *Chasing the Devil: On Foot Through Africa's Killing Fields*. London: Vintage. p 128

³⁴⁹ There are a variety of forms of marriage in Sierra Leone and there is no legal minimum age of marriage. Civil weddings cannot take place unless a girl is at least 16 years old but traditional and religious marriages are recognised even if the girl is significantly younger. Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone. 3(b). in 'The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone' www.trcsierraleone.org accessed on 13/07/08.

organisation forms such as those used by families or for labour and this appears to have been the case with the RUF.³⁵⁰

However rape of girls who were not ‘wives’ was also common and frequent; girls in the RUF were expected to provide sexual services on demand and could be punished or killed for refusing.³⁵¹ Within the wider society the rape of a virgin, which many young female recruits were, was considered a social disaster as girls were expected to be virgins when they married. The RUF raped women regardless of age (including postmenopausal women and those pregnant and breastfeeding which broke taboos) but young girls thought to be virgins were most preferred and female members of the RUF were known to physically check girls to see if they were virgins.³⁵² Although less well reported, rape and sexual molestation by female RUF combatants was also recorded, as was the rape of males by other males.³⁵³

‘I told him ‘no’ and was flogged and made to do hard work’
(Ex-combatant, RUF)³⁵⁴

Girls suffered immensely due to beatings, with reports showing that even pregnant females were beaten and raped.³⁵⁵ Many girls were given as ‘wives’ to

³⁵⁰ Andvig, J., and Gates, S., 2007. p 6. Coulter, C., 2010. p 102.

³⁵¹ Wessells, M., 2006. p 89. There is a public acknowledgement in Sierra Leone that rape was a common occurrence during the war. Telephone interview with Sarah Spencer, GBV and Child Protection Practitioner, New York, 19th September 2007.

³⁵² Coulter, C., 2010. p 134. Human Rights Watch, Jan 2003. p 28.

³⁵³ Wessells, M., 2006. p 1. Human Rights Watch, Jan 2003. p 42.

³⁵⁴ Wessells, M., 2006. p 73.

male members of the group regardless of whether they had been voluntarily or forcibly recruited.³⁵⁶ Even this did not always stop them from being sexually abused by multiple men.³⁵⁷ Girls whose 'husbands' were away or who were given to men who were not senior commanders were particularly at risk of being raped by additional men.³⁵⁸ As well as being used as a punishment for female recruits, the rape of girls was also used as a reward for male group members.³⁵⁹

When it came to the treatment of recruits the RUF sought to abuse, dehumanise and control them. Abuse took many forms but was frequent; the main areas of abuse appear to have been physical punishment, withholding of food, sexual abuse and forced drug taking. Physical punishments were delivered for the slightest infractions; children could be beaten or killed for refusing to obey orders, refusing to take drugs or asking questions.³⁶⁰ Overall provision of food was sporadic and recruits were given poor quality food rations which could be withheld as a punishment, individual units were expected to provide their own supplies, there was no central distribution of food or arms.³⁶¹

³⁵⁵Wessells, M., 2006. p 1. Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone. 3(b). Section 174-186.

³⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch, Jan 2003. p 3.

³⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch, Jan 2003. p 3.

³⁵⁸ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone. 3(b). Section 171.

³⁵⁹ Singer, P., 2006a. p 104-105. Coulter, C., 2010. p 139.

³⁶⁰ Wessells, M., 2006. p 73. Sesay, A., 2003. p 152.

³⁶¹ Coulter, C., 2010. p 103. Denov, M., 2009. p 125.

Another method of ensuring compliance was the use of drug dependence to create a bond between recruited children and their commanders, who also controlled the supply of drugs.³⁶² 75% of all the recruits in Sierra Leone who experienced forced drugging were under 17 years of age.³⁶³ Many of these children became addicted and later sought to continue taking drugs. The ability of drugs and alcohol to alter the state of children's minds was an effective weapon in ensuring their compliance in the RUF's terror tactics and this is why commanders pursued this policy.³⁶⁴ As one child soldier attested,

‘we smoked weed [marijuana] and took so many pills [amphetamines].
When we went into combat, we felt no fear’.
(Child Combatant, RUF).³⁶⁵

During the 1999 attack on Freetown, RUF recruits wore bandages under which incisions were packed with drugs.³⁶⁶ The bonds of dependency created were used to manipulate children into fighting and carrying out large scale human rights abuses.³⁶⁷ According to Martin McPherson, in environments where the situation was more chaotic and especially where drug abuse is involved criminality and

³⁶² Telephone Interview with Michael Shipler, Director of Programmes, Search for Common Ground, Nepal, 13th October 2006. Perters, L., 2005. War is No Child's Play: Child Soldiers from Battlefield to Playground. Occasional Paper No 8. Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Geneva. Accessed through www.isn.ethz.ch [04/10/07]. p 10.

³⁶³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone. 3(b). section 301. Drug use was common, Sesay, A., 2003. p 152. The RUF forcibly drugged recruits. Kielland, A., and Tovo, M., 2006. p 113.

³⁶⁴ Denov, M., 2009. p 100.

³⁶⁵ Wessells, M., 2006. p 76.

³⁶⁶ Gberie, L., 2005. p 127. Wessells, M., 2006. p 76.

³⁶⁷ Richards, P., 1996. p 29.

abuses were more frequent.³⁶⁸ This certainly appears to hold true in the Sierra Leone case.

Despite general patterns of abuse there were exceptions because individual commanders were responsible for the treatment of children under their command.³⁶⁹ Some recruits were treated with paternal benevolence by their commanders and some children – particularly those in personal protection units – wielded great power, perhaps due to their closeness to their commanders.³⁷⁰

The “Attraction” of the RUF to Children.

Sierra Leone is a particularly good example of Boas’ argument that in countries where the state has receded disaffected youth are left with no way to improve their lives except as combatants.³⁷¹ That this can be the case is illustrated in Sierra Leone, as militarisation meant that by 1995 75% of state revenue went to the army and in some parts of Sierra Leone the army was the only source of revenue,

³⁶⁸ Interview with Martin Mcpherson, Director, Amnesty International, London, 25th September 2007.

³⁶⁹ Telephone interview with Theresa Betancourt, Assistant Professor of Child Health and Human Rights, Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, 4th October 2007.

³⁷⁰ Telephone Interview with Theresa Betancourt, Assistant Professor of Child Health and Human Rights, Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, 4th October 1007. Some commanders treated children well. Interview with Susan Shepler, Professor of Anthropology, American University. Washington DC, 27th September 2006. Interview with Jane Lowiki-Zucca, UNDESA. New York, 21st September 2006.

³⁷¹ Boas, M., 2004. Africa’s Young Guerrillas: Rebels with a Cause? *Current History*. 103. pp 221-214. p 214.

drawing many vulnerable children into its sphere of influence, or leaving them to join other groups.³⁷² The idea that economic hardship contributes to youth and child recruitment is supported by many NGO such as Human Rights Watch and Save the Children. It is a reoccurring theme in many publications and is also mentioned in the 1996 Machel report.³⁷³

‘The young are susceptible to recruitment by rebel factions because of the promise of future rewards and the belief that those with guns can eat.’
(Conteh-Morgan et al, 1999, p134).

It is undoubtedly the case that some socially excluded youth came to see war as part of their survival strategy, or a way to access opportunities for making money.³⁷⁴ Some of the children found in the conflict had their own economic motivations for the actions they undertook and were not necessarily working purely for the group’s financial benefit.³⁷⁵ In these circumstances children could be attracted to armed groups.

Although the vast majority children in Sierra Leone were forcibly recruited, a few did make the choice to voluntarily join armed groups. That the RUF did attract

³⁷² Rosen, D., 2005. p 85.

³⁷³ McConnan, I., and Uppard, S., 2001. ‘Children not soldiers. London: Save the Children.

³⁷⁴ Sesay, A., 2003. p 44. Human Rights Watch, 13th April 2005. p 12.

³⁷⁵ Youth navigate war as an event and may seek to enhance their life chances through its opportunities. Vigh, H., 2006. Navigating Terrains of Youth: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau. Methodology and History in Anthropology. 13. USA: Berghahn Books. p 7. Coulter, C., 2010. p 104.

some voluntary recruits is acknowledged within the literature although there is some debate as to the proportions. Shepler identified three types of youth involved with the RUF; firstly the urban marginalised; secondly san-san boys otherwise known as illicit miners who joined in large numbers when mining towns were taken by the RUF and thirdly socially disconnected village youths who were contemptuous of rural authority and institutions and saw the war as a chance to settle scores.³⁷⁶

An important factor to consider in recruitment by the RUF is intergenerational conflict. Disagreements over the role of traditional institutions and hierarchies in rural Sierra Leone created significant generational divisions. Many youth complained about the restrictions placed on them and that elders in the society abused their positions to gain financially. Elites within rural areas were blamed for labour exploitation, abuses with the marriage system and corruption of local resources. Youth were arguably the most adversely affected by the consequences of such elite manipulation and were driven out of the traditional rural social structures in large numbers, seeking opportunities instead in mining regions and urban centres. This left many young people disenfranchised and disconnected from local traditional institutions and hierarchies.

³⁷⁶ Shepler, S., 2005. p 40.

The exploitation of marginalised youth by their elders within the various armed groups was assisted by society's adherence to local notions of advancement. This concept can be understood more fully if local structures of advancement and their use in military recruitment are taken into account. In Sierra Leonean culture each person has standing based upon who they have dependent on them.³⁷⁷ Clients are worth more if they also have clients of their own and so each person strives to increase their standing so as to be of greater worth to their patron. A structure builds up in which each person is both a patron and client and benefits are passed along the hierarchy. Those outside of the hierarchy have no claim on its benefits and thus become marginalised both economically and in terms of social standing.

The co-option of marginalised children was possible to some extent because of the structure for advancement in Sierra Leone which took the form of patron-client relationships. However it was systemic failures within the society that enabled this co-option to develop more fully.³⁷⁸ Some ex-combatants in Sierra Leone have cited political motivations concerning the injustice of resource distribution by the political elites as their reason for joining the RUF. Many children said that they enjoyed the benefits that they received as members of the RUF and that they missed both the material benefits and the power that they had wielded as child soldiers.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁷ Murphy, W., 2003. p12

³⁷⁸ Rosen, D., 2005. p 59. Murphy. 2003. p 7. Interview with Matthew Emry, Senior Analyst, Jewish World Service, New York, 20th September 2006.

³⁷⁹ Denov, M., 2009. p 128-129. Coulter, C., 2010. p 221.

Early in its history, the RUF offered positive incentives such as medicines, material goods such as clothing, and schooling which encouraged some youths and children to join.³⁸⁰ Richards argues that some youth joined the RUF to gain access to training in the art of war, the only education available to them.³⁸¹ If alternative opportunities had been available it is likely that many of these recruits would never have sought out membership of an armed group.

In many ways it is not surprising that a large proportion of the RUF were children and youth, as they are easier to co-opt and forcibly recruit and they also have more reason to volunteer. However the inclusion of large numbers of economically marginalised youth seeking opportunities further exacerbated the mercenary character of the RUF. The pursuit of material gain via armed groups such as the RUF enfranchised the youth that joined whilst further destroying the existing social and economic structures, making younger children yet more vulnerable to recruitment.

Once children were within the RUF they also had the opportunity for some limited agency and each child chose how to wield this power. Some children would hide some of the food and assets that they had looted before handing the

³⁸⁰ Richards, P., 1996. p28-29.

³⁸¹ Shepler, S., 2005. p 98. Wessells, M., 2006. p 50.

bulk of their loot over to commanders.³⁸² Some would try to escape or would assist civilians to escape; many continued with secret friendships when commanders were not around, others would actively try to avoid being given drugs, some deliberately fired so as not to hit civilians during combat.³⁸³ These stories highlight that even within the RUF, which sought to control and contain its child recruits through indoctrination, abuse, isolation, and fear there was still space for some extremely limited agency which was actively utilised by some child recruits.

Conclusion.

In Sierra Leone, as in all such cases, the use of children by armed groups is a complex matter. Notions of childhood, its traits and its associated duties and responsibilities subtly influence how children are viewed by armed groups. Social, economic and political issues act as a catalyst for some children and youth leading them to volunteer. The aims and tactics of the armed group shape public perceptions of it and have an effect on recruitment practices.

In Sierra Leone the rhetoric of the RUF was one of social, political and economic change. Given the social, political and economic stresses within Sierra Leone,

³⁸² Coulter, C., 2010. p 103.

³⁸³ Denov, M., 2009. p 135-137, p 142.

especially for the disenfranchised youth, one would have expected to see the RUF gaining credence and support. What reason then could the RUF have had for adopting a strategy of terror and forced child recruitment? The answer lies in the type of conflict found in Sierra Leone. Whilst RUF propaganda suggests a war based on political motivations, a study of events and tactics reveal a greater likelihood of an instance of 'new war'. In such wars the mode of warfare is different to old wars based on ideology.

Because the RUF fought for economic gain rather than political goals they did not need to concern themselves with attracting support beyond what was needed to continue the conflict. Indeed in conditions of new war there are usually few benefits to pass onto supporters thus groups often have to rely on fear and insecurity to maintain control. As such the RUF based their power on control over production and exchange processes rather than through mobilising support. The RUF's main motivation was self-enrichment and their tactics were strategically chosen with this end in mind. The adoption of terror tactics was a considered choice.

As a predatory group that existed to make economic gains for the leadership and that used terror to achieve such aims, it did not gain much popular support. Voluntary recruits were not forthcoming and the group instead quickly introduced

forced recruitment. That this method was used in Sierra Leone can also be seen to have been linked to historical practices of slavery and warfare.

As the Sierra Leone case study demonstrates, forced recruits balked at being involved in a strategy of terror against their own communities, had no commitment to the group, and methods needed to be found to make them comply with the group's actions. Brutal treatment, drug use and indoctrination were effectively used to make recruits both compliant and capable of carrying out a strategy of terror. Brutality and indoctrination were more effective methods when used on child recruits, again providing justification for their use.

In the Sierra Leone case it was a combination of historical traditions, the strategic intent of a group characterised by criminality and violence and the place of children within the society which fused to create a conflict environment in which children could be recruited and deployed and abused in specific ways. The recruitment, deployment and abuse of these children by the RUF involved severe brutality and was linked to the strategy of terror utilised by the group, a strategy which saw recruits and civilians alike become the victims of a violent and predatory leadership.

Chapter Four: Conflict and Child Soldiers in Sri Lanka.

Section 1: Overview of the Conflict.

The conflict in Sri Lanka was one rooted in ethnic differences, but where economic and political grievances were also key factors. The wish of the Tamils to secede grew out of the increasing discrimination they faced within the Sri Lankan state, which was fuelled by ethnic outbidding on the part of Sinhalese politicians. Sri Lanka is a country made up of a number of different groups; characterised by religious, linguistic and some cultural differences. According to the 1981 census 74% of the population were Sinhalese, 18% Tamil, 7% Muslim and 1% consisted of other ethnic groups.³⁸⁴ The failure to include protection for minorities during the drafting of the Constitution prior to independence led to increasing polarisation between the majority community, the Sinhalese, and the largest minority group, the Tamils. From the declaration of independence in 1948 up until 1956, ethnic tensions took the form of demands for balanced representation and co-operation between different groups. From 1957-72 increasing discrimination by the state led to calls from the Tamil minority for a federal state with protection for minorities, and 1973-76 experienced increasingly vociferous separatist rhetoric, culminating with the demand by Tamil militant

³⁸⁴ Ross, R., and Savada, A., Ed. 1988. *A Country Study: Sri Lanka*. US Library of Congress. (DS489.568.1990). US State Department, '*Background Note: Sierra Leone*', Accessed through (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5475.htm>). [30/07/08].

groups for Tamil Eelam, a separate Tamil State in 1976.³⁸⁵ At this stage the militant groups had little widespread support, with most Tamils still hoping for a political settlement.

Throughout the early 1980s Tamil militant groups engaged sporadically with state armed forces. An increase in violence and allegations of abuses by both sides culminated in 1983 in the death of Sri Lanka security forces personnel at the hands of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a Tamil militant group.³⁸⁶ The Sinhalese backlash came in the form of a pogrom in which 2,000-3,000 Tamils were killed.³⁸⁷ Nearly 70% of Colombo based Tamils were displaced and 160,000 Tamils fled to India.³⁸⁸ The pogrom galvanised the Tamil community and dramatically increased support for the Tamil militant groups. Although polarisation had been steadily increasing since independence, 1983 is the date at which most scholars pinpoint the start of the conflict.

As was the case in El Salvador, Tamil protests had evolved from peaceful political pressure to civil disobedience before turning to violence.³⁸⁹ The violence itself evolved from sporadic acts to a more systematic campaign against the

³⁸⁵ Perrin, B., 2004. Terrorism, Secession and Multinational Constitutions: The challenge of Sri Lanka. *Sri Lanka Journal of International Law*. 16.

³⁸⁶ Ross, R., and Savada, A., Ed. 1988.

³⁸⁷ Krishna, S., 1999. Postcolonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka and the Question of Nationhood. *Borderlines*. 15. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p 45.

³⁸⁸ Krishna, S., 1999. p 116.

³⁸⁹ Bouffard, S., and Carment, D., 2006. The Sri Lankan Peace Process: A Critical Review. *Journal of South Asian Development*. 1(2) New Delhi: Sage Publications. p 156. Alison, M., 2004. Women as Agents of Political Violence: Gendering Security. *Security Dialogue*. 35(4). p 449.

state.³⁹⁰ From the early 1980s the Tamil militant groups, funded and trained by the Indian government, engaged militarily with the Sri Lankan state.

Indian policy was to maintain the balance of power between the Sri Lanka Tamils and the government.³⁹¹ In order to achieve this goal the Indians adopted a two-track approach. In the early 1980s this saw them overtly engaging in mediation whilst covertly assisting Tamil militants.³⁹² In 1987 the Indians changed direction and signed the Indo-Lanka Agreement with the Sinhalese government.³⁹³ They saw the agreement as a way to achieve their own regional aspirations and also believed their demands and guarantees on the behalf of the Sri Lanka Tamils would allow a resolution of the conflict.³⁹⁴ However the LTTE had not been involved in the agreement and did not support its objectives. Thus the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) was drawn into a counter-insurgency war against the LTTE, as the group refused to abide by the peace agreement signed by the two

³⁹⁰ De Silva, K.M., 1998. *Reaping the Whirlwind: Ethnic Conflict and Ethnic Politics in Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Penguin Books. p 151. Balasingham, A., 2001. *The Will to Freedom: An Inside View of Tamil Resistance*. England: Fairmax Publishing Ltd. p 33.

³⁹¹ Indian involvement is partially related to the ethnic divide in Sri Lanka. Tamil Nadu, one of the largest and most influential of India's states, has a predominantly Tamil population. The Indian central government must be seen to respond to concerns arising in the state- which has a history of proposing secession from India- but fears that a Tamil success in Sri Lanka may lead to further demands for independence and a base for Indian Tamils to use in the event of an independence struggle. The Indian government also saw the Sri Lanka conflict as an opportunity to increase its regional power.

³⁹² Keethaponcalan, S., 1998. Third Party Rule in an Ethnic Conflict: Indian Involvement in Sri Lanka. *Sri Lanka Journal of International Law*. 10. p 123. Krishna, S., 1999. p 25-27.

³⁹³ Krishna, S., 1999. p 123.

³⁹⁴ As part of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement the Sri Lankan government agreed to cancel an agreement with the US giving the Voice of America rights to extend its transmissions, agreed to repair the Trincomalee oil tank as a joint Indo-Lanka venture, to not employ foreign military/intelligent advisors and gave India the right to veto which foreign states could use Trincomalee harbour thus cementing Indian as the regional hegemon. For more detailed information on the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord see Gunewardene, R., 1991. *Indo-Sri Lanka Accord: Intervention or Invitation*. *Sri Lanka Journal of International Law*. 3.

governments. This situation continued until the IPKF withdrew from the country in 1990.³⁹⁵

The LTTE and the Sri Lankan state continued to wage war against each other throughout the 1990s. In 2002 a ceasefire was agreed under the auspices of the Norwegian government. Despite violations of the ceasefire agreement by both parties, the official ceasefire held for some time. However the LTTE continued to fight other Tamil militant groups, including its own splinter group the Karuna Faction, many of whom were believed to have been funded by the Sri Lankan state. Some view this period of the official ceasefire as a proxy war between the Karuna group (fighting on behalf of the government), and the LTTE.

In 2006 the official ceasefire agreement broke down and overt conflict resumed between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE. In 2009 the Sri Lankan military waged a strong assault on the LTTE. In January 2009 they retook Kilinochchi, the administrative capital of the LTTE and in May 2009 they killed Prabhakaran, the leader of the LTTE, resulting in the apparent defeat of the organisation and an end to the current conflict.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ Krishna, S., 1999, p 192.

³⁹⁶ MSN News, 25 January 2009. Sri Lanka Troops Enter Stronghold. Accessed through www.news.uk.msn.com [25/01/09].

The LTTE continued to recruit children until its defeat by the government in May 2009. In the year prior to the end of the conflict increasingly younger children were employed on the frontlines with little experience or training as the LTTE retreated from the government, using civilians as human shields. Children were recruited into the LTTE by force and expected to shoot any civilians trying to escape to the government controlled safe zones in the lower limbs, to prevent the expulsion of Tamils from the areas the LTTE were trying to hold.³⁹⁷ The LTTE became increasingly brutal in a last ditch attempt to prevent defeat but they never resorted to the most extreme abuses of civilians and recruits seen in the Sierra Leone conflict.

According to the US Department of State, by 2003 the LTTE's estimated fighting capacity was 8,000-10,000, with 3,000-6,000 of these core trained fighters.³⁹⁸ The exact figures of active fighters were only known by the central committee of the LTTE and so it is impossible to cite hard data on recruitment numbers.³⁹⁹ However, there is evidence that the Sri Lankan conflict is drawn on ethnic lines, and recruitment followed the same lines. Throughout its history the LTTE only recruited adults and children from within the Tamil community.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ Human Rights Watch, 2009. War on the Displaced: Sri Lankan Army and LTTE Abuses Against Civilians in the Vanni. Accessed through www.hrw.org. [27/10/2010]. p 1, p 8.

³⁹⁸ Mukarji, A., 2005. Sri Lanka: A Dangerous Interlude. USA: New Dawn Press Group. p 96.

³⁹⁹ Trawick, M., 2007. Enemy Lines: Warfare, Childhood and Play in Batticaloa. Berkeley: University of California Press. p 241-242.

⁴⁰⁰ Interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007. Telephone Interview with Charu Lata Hogg., South Asia Researcher for Human Rights Watch and Associate Fellow for the Asia Program at Chatham House, 24th October 2007.

Mukarji claims that all child recruitment prior to 2002 was carried out in the eastern province although this cannot be substantiated.⁴⁰¹ A suggestion for why is that children in the east are poorer and of lower caste although potential areas of internal division such as caste and religion appear to have been played down by the LTTE, who appeared eager to attract all Tamils. It may be that as the armed forces had a more permanent presence in the Eastern region and Tamils in this area experienced a greater number of state sponsored abuses, the LTTE sought to take advantage of children's greater vulnerability. The resulting recruitment of greater numbers of children from the East came to be perceived by Eastern Tamils as discriminatory. Finally the eastern region underwent a profound demographic change due to government resettlement policies. Tamils in this region faced the greatest and most immediate threat to their lives, identities and culture.

The LTTE had a long history of child recruitment and were known to recruit children as young as 9 years old, although the average age of child recruits was between 14-17 years.⁴⁰² The Sri Lankan government estimates that 60% of LTTE fighters were less than 18 years old, although another study put the figure at 40%.⁴⁰³ Of the total number of recruits the Sri Lankan military believe half were

⁴⁰¹ Mukarji, A., 2005. p 42.

⁴⁰² Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001. *Child Soldiers Global Report: A global report to stop the use of child soldiers*. London: Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. Accessed on www.childsoldiers.org. [24/11/2004].

⁴⁰³ Charu Lata Hogg, 2006. *Child Recruitment in South Asia: A Comparative Analysis of Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh*. An Asia Program Report, Chatham House (The Royal Institute of

female, and this figure is close to UNICEF estimates that 40% of child recruits were female.⁴⁰⁴

Ethno-nationalist Conflict in Sri Lanka.

There is extensive literature which discusses the Sri Lankan conflict, and which covers many angles and multiple causal factors. Despite differences in emphasis there is a fundamental agreement across the literature that the Sri Lankan conflict is essentially an ethno-national conflict involving interplay of social, political and economic factors, which generated a sense of social, political and economic injustice. As these grievances grew and were not addressed the conflict became increasingly protracted lasting for several decades before finally coming to a violent conclusion.

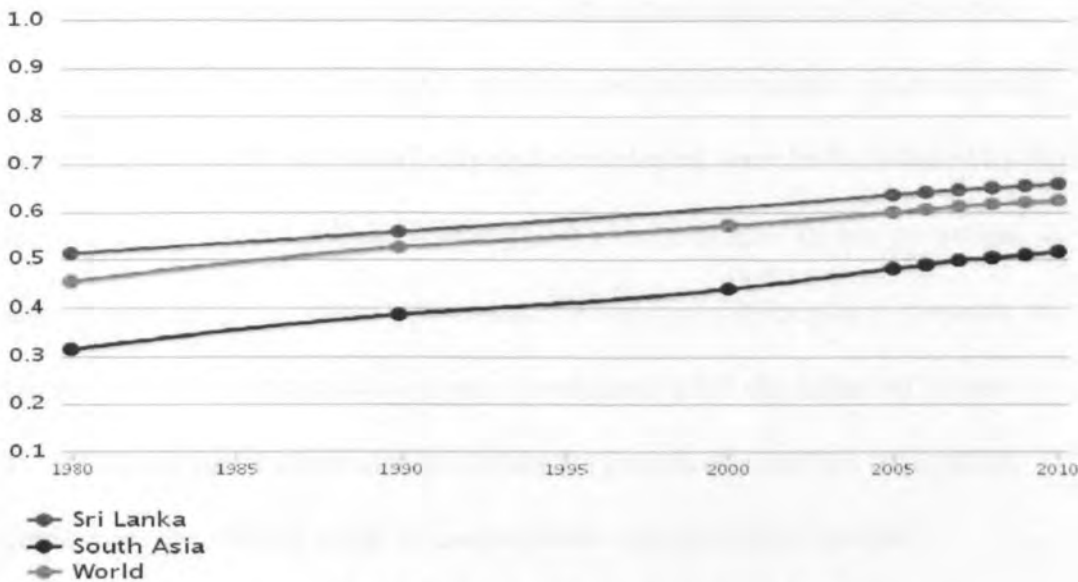
Throughout the post-colonial period the state had been dominated by Sinhalese. By the mid-1970s Sinhalese politicians held 80% of seats in the legislature – and Sinhalese political parties used chauvinistic politics to lobby for votes amongst the majority Sinhalese population.⁴⁰⁵ As a result of this ethnicisation of politics,

International Affairs, UK). Accessed through www.chathamhouse.org.uk. [28/01/09]. p 9. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001.

⁴⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 6. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001.

⁴⁰⁵ Tampoe, M., 2006. From Spices to Suicide Bombers and beyond: A Study of Power, Politics and Terrorism in Modern Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka: Marga Institute. p 506-507. Yiftachel, O., and

the post-colonial parliamentary system moved from a concept of representation to one of ‘numerically proportional representation’ in which economic and political power was matched to the numerical composition of the population.⁴⁰⁶



Human Development Human Development Index: Trends 1980 – present⁴⁰⁷

Grievances within the majority Sinhalese community over poor economic conditions and reductions in living standards were directed by elites into ethnic channels through the use of rhetoric. This fuelled resentment against Tamils and their supposedly historic disproportionate access to state sector employment and

Ghanem, A., 2004. Understanding ‘Ethnocratic’ Regimes: the Politics of Seizing Contested Territories. *Political Geography*. 23(6). p 658.

⁴⁰⁶ Krishna, S., 1999. p 5. In ethnocratic regimes ethnicity forms the basis for resource allocation, minority rights are limited, the dominant ethnic group dominates the political apparatus, politics are ethnicised and polarisation occurs, ethnic segregation and socio-economic stratification are maintained. Yiftachel, O., and Ghanem, A., 2004. p 650.

⁴⁰⁷ UNDP, Human Development Human Development Index. Accessed through <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SLE.html> [10/05/11].

higher education institutes under colonial rule.⁴⁰⁸ The Sinhalese political elites used their dominance in parliament to pass legislation that would redress the perceived imbalance that was said to have occurred in the colonial era. Legislation (such as the Sinhala Only Act of 1956) was combined with measures to reduce the number of Tamils in higher education institutes and state sector employment. At the same time, the northern and eastern regions, predominantly populated by Tamils and historically underdeveloped, were badly affected by the lack of growth in Sri Lanka's economy post-independence. As Abeyratne has argued, population increases in Sri Lanka post-independence placed pressure on the government to maintain economic development, but the failure of import substitution made it impossible to sustain the growth of a welfare state which could meet the societal needs of a population raised within a 'welfare democracy'.⁴⁰⁹ The economy suffered from declining exports, reliance on foreign aid, high interest rates caused by the cost of government projects and borrowing, and the devaluation of the rupee by two thirds.⁴¹⁰ Although (as can be seen in the chart above) by the 1980s-1990s human development (based on access to health care, education and income levels) was increasing at a higher rate than the global average, Tamils did not benefit to the same extent as the Sinhalese.

⁴⁰⁸ Bouffard, S, and Carment, D., p 152.

⁴⁰⁹ Abeyratne, S., 2004. Economic Roots of Political Conflict: The Case of Sri Lanka. *The World Economy*. 27(8) p 1297, p 1306.

⁴¹⁰ Winslow and Woost, 2004. *Economy, Culture and Civil War in Sri Lanka*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p 52.

The failure of the political system to offer safeguards to minorities, and discrimination which resulted in Tamils being disproportionately affected by Sri Lanka's failing economy in the 1970s and blocked their access to the resources that improve human development during the 1980s-90s, undermined the democratic system and facilitated conflict.

In the case of Sri Lanka, the Tamils responded to state sanctioned discrimination with calls for greater autonomy in Tamil majority areas, then later with demands for secession; moderate Tamil politics eventually gave way to militancy as the political conflicts between the two communities were not resolved. The emergence of militant groups was a direct result of the failure of the political system to award the Tamils basic rights such as recognition and acceptance of their separate culture, the right to economic participation and access to fair political representation. The strident rhetoric of militant ethno-nationalist groups appealed especially to disillusioned Tamil youth who had grown up witnessing the failure of moderate politics. As these youths came of age and began to actively participate in the Tamil opposition movement, moderate Tamil political parties were sidelined and militant Tamils became the principle actors.⁴¹¹

Behind and beyond this lay claims to territory and sovereignty; issues which, as Yiftachel, O, and Ghanem, A, have argued, are central to ethno-nationalist

⁴¹¹ De Silva, K.M., 2005. *A History of Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Penguin Books. p 693. Ross, R., and Savada, A., Ed. 1988.

politics. Both ethnic groups had traditions and myths of origin which link them to the land on which they reside.⁴¹² The Sinhalese believed in the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka and in its continuation as a unilateral Sinhalese Buddhist state in which the Sinhalese, as the dominant group, should get preference.⁴¹³ In an attempt to undermine Tamil claims of traditional homelands the state sponsored settlement programmes, which aimed to alter the demographics in historically Tamil regions.⁴¹⁴ Colonisation by Sinhalese settlers was intended to reduce the credibility of Tamil claims that these areas were predominately Tamil and should be granted autonomy or independence. Tamil militant groups responded by attacking settlements and driving out non-Tamils to retain Tamil numerical dominance. In the early 1990s the LTTE expelled 60,000 Muslims from the Jaffna peninsula and were accused of targeting and pushing out Muslims in the eastern province in an attempt to create a Tamil majority - in the eastern province only a third of the population were Tamil; one third were Muslim and the remaining third were Sinhalese. The Tamil community, dominated politically and militarily

⁴¹² Krishna, 1999, p 48. Yiftachel, O., and Ghanem, A., 2004. p 653. For a comprehensive study of the impact of Buddhist fundamentalism in Sinhalese/Tamil relations within Sri Lanka see Bartholomeusz, T., and De Silva, C., Ed. 1998. *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

⁴¹³ For the Sinhalese masses resurgent Buddhist nationalism which emphasis the superiority of the Sinhalese and the important of the continuing unity of the state was paralleled by ethnic outbidding on the part of the Sinhalese political elites fuelling a hard line response to Tamil demands. Throughout the conflict government attempts to compromise have been derailed by Sinhalese nationalists - including nationalist government officials who supplied addresses and weapons to aid the 1983 pogrom - who believed that any devolution of power negatively affects the unity of Sri Lanka which must be maintained. From the 1970's the JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) conducted a terror campaign against the state to voice objection to a federal solution amongst other aims. The JVP are a left wing Sinhalese political organisation who have used insurrection as a tactic in the past and are currently working within the Sri Lanka political system. Bigdon, C., May 2003. *Decentralisation, Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka*. *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics*. 14. Accessed through www.hpsacp.uni-bd [06/04/2004]. p 12. Ross, R., and Savada, A., 1988.

⁴¹⁴ Yiftachel, O., and Ghanem, A., 2004. p 659. In the eastern districts of Ampari, Batticaloa, Polonnaruwa, Trincomalee and Anuradhapura the Sinhalese proportion of the population increased from 33% to 51% in the years 1946-1971. Bouffard, S., and Carment, D., 2006. p 154.

by the LTTE, saw its future under threat due to Sinhalese chauvinistic politics which denied them opportunities and attacked their ability to preserve their culture and traditional homelands. The ethno-nationalist ambitions of the LTTE appealed to many Tamils. Independence, keeping within the boundaries of earlier Tamil kingdoms in the North and East, was offered by the LTTE as a solution to the problem of Sinhalese discrimination. The conflict was thus primarily about sovereignty over a set territory.⁴¹⁵ The territorial ambitions of each group were incompatible and this is why the conflict became protracted and could not be resolved politically.

In Sri Lanka the ethno-nationalist projects of both sides enabled justifications of extreme violence, both by Sinhalese against the Tamils - pogroms of 1956, 1958, 1977, 1981 and 1983 - and terrorist activities by militant Tamil groups which targeted the Sinhalese. As each group experienced abuses committed by the 'other', fear and antagonism increased and reprisals quickly escalated as neither side was willing to compromise; the conflict developed its own trajectory, in which violence by one side resulted in a hardening of the position of the opposing side, and resulted in retaliations which caused the violence to spiral. The number of actors involved in the conflict and the changing positions of many of them complicated the situation on the ground and added to the violence.

⁴¹⁵ Yiftachel, O., and Ghanem, A., 2004. p 669. Somasundaram, D., 1998. *Scarred Minds: The Psychological Impact of War on Sri Lankan Tamils*. New Dehli: Sage Publications. p 85. Bloom, M., 2005. *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*. New York: Colombia University Press. p 68-69. Roberts, M., Ed. 1979. *Collective Identities, Nationalisms and Protest in Modern Sri Lanka*. Sri Lanka: Marga Institute. p 509. Krishna, 1999, p 48.

Multiple actors.

Although this thesis looks primarily at the LTTE, for reasons that will be elucidated at the end of this section, the presence of multiple groups has had an impact on the trajectory of the conflict.

According to Jeyaratnam Wilson there were 37 Tamil militant groups in 1983, of which only 5 were significant.⁴¹⁶ Competition for resources and support was an important issue for all groups in the early 1980s.⁴¹⁷ According to Gamage and Watson this led to confusion and disunity within the Tamil community.⁴¹⁸ Internal rivalries between Tamil groups – and also within them – led to human rights abuses as groups targeted supporters and members of their competitors, in

⁴¹⁶ LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), PLOTE (People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam), TELO (Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation), EPRLF (Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front) and EROS (Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students). The LTTE, TELO and PLOTE were primarily ethno-nationalist, seeking an exclusive Tamil state. PLOTE also held a strong Marxist-Leninist line advocating social revolution despite most of its members being from the high-caste Vellalar group. EROS and the EPRLF were primarily Marxist groups which wanted a Tamil state but one in which minority groups had a place. The emphasis on Marxism narrowed the appeal of many of these groups. Wilson, J., 2000. *Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism: Its Origins and Development in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. London: C. Hurst. p 126.

⁴¹⁷ Gamage, S., and Watson, I., Ed. 1999. *Conflict and Community in Contemporary Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. p 120. Swamy, M., 1994. *Tigers of Lanka: From Boys to Guerrillas*. Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications. p 186-188.

⁴¹⁸ Gamage, S., and Watson, I., Ed. 1999. p 62.

addition to Tamils seen as associated with the government such as Mayors and MPs.⁴¹⁹

In Sri Lanka recruitment linked to group competition is complex. Multiple groups competed for resources and for recruits but the LTTE did not start to recruit children as a matter of policy until 1987 when they had already attained a position of dominance. Although inter-group competition in the early 1980s does not appear to have been the catalyst for the commencing of child recruitment, it did play a role in child recruitment later in the conflict. An important event in the history of the LTTE occurred in 2004 when the LTTE suffered from a serious internal split, which complicated the situation on the ground and weakened the LTTE at a difficult time, resulting in inter-Tamil conflict on a large scale.⁴²⁰

Colonel Karuna, an eastern Tamil who had joined the LTTE in 1983 and was the military commander of the eastern region, defected.⁴²¹ Prior to the split the LTTE had been renowned for its cohesion. Indeed Karuna was a long-serving commander in the LTTE with a service record stretching 17 years.⁴²² The split had a dramatic effect on the LTTE and the Tamil people and 'profoundly altered the political and military situation in the east'.⁴²³ The LTTE were reduced in

⁴¹⁹ De Silva, K.M., 1998. p 148. Swamy, M., 1994. p 191-192.

Mukarji, A., 2005. p X.

⁴²¹ IISS Armed Conflict Database. Accessed through www.armed-groups.org. [10/03/2010].

⁴²² Mukarji, A., 2005. p 38.

⁴²³ Amnesty International, 2006. Sri Lanka: A Climate of Fear in the East. Accessed through www.amnesty.org [29/03/09]. p 1.

manpower and lost influence in the East, at one point having to close political offices due to Karuna faction attacks on LTTE cadre.⁴²⁴

The Tamil people also experienced a worsening security situation and faced fighting their own people if recruited by either armed group. This resulted in a drop of support for the Tamil militant groups and an increase in avoidance of recruitment.⁴²⁵ In the immediate aftermath of the split, during the campaign of attrition between the two forces, many parents demanded the release of their children.⁴²⁶ Parents appeared to become more vocal when their children were recruited and appeared more willing to report abductions to agencies or demand the return of their children directly.⁴²⁷ However, most civilians trod a dangerous line between the two groups, often trying to appease both.⁴²⁸

The emergence of a rival group at this difficult time resulted in a perceived increase in forced recruitment by the LTTE.⁴²⁹ The LTTE were keen to increase their manpower, which had been reduced by the split, and they were keen to

⁴²⁴ Human Rights Watch, 2007a. *Complicit in Crime: State Collusion in Abductions and Child Recruitment by the Karuna Group*. 19(1c) USA: Human Rights Watch. p 19. Amnesty International, 2006.p 12.

⁴²⁵ Human Rights Watch, 2004. *Living in Fear. Child soldiers and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka..* 16(13c) USA: Human Rights Watch. p 40.

⁴²⁶ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 33.

⁴²⁷ Mukarji, A., 2005. p 43. Interview with an Anonymous Source, by phone, 26th October 2007.

⁴²⁸ Amnesty International, 2006. p 4. Interview with an Anonymous Source, by phone, 26th October 2007.

⁴²⁹ Amnesty International, 2006. p 6. Mukarji, A., 2005. p 12. Interview with an Anonymous Source, USA, 27th September 2006. Telephone Interview with Charu Lata Hogg, South Asia Researcher for Human Rights Watch and Associate Fellow for the Asia Program at Chatham House, 24th October 2007.

regain control and influence in the east, which was a traditional source of recruits and funding.⁴³⁰ At this point in the conflict, with child recruitment firmly established, the LTTE were prepared to consider options that had either not occurred to them or had been dismissed prior to 1987. Not only did they condone child recruitment by 2004 but they also felt threatened enough as an organisation to use forced child recruitment.

External Linkages.

Given the LTTE's reputation for recruiting child combatants, it seems almost inconceivable that children were not recruited at the start of the conflict or that it was not the LTTE who first recruited children in Sri Lanka. However it was a Tamil militia group, the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), working with the Indian Intelligence Agency (RAW) that first started recruiting children in order to get greater funding from RAW who paid per recruit, and which set a precedent within the Tamil community.⁴³¹ In response the LTTE also began recruiting children. However it was not a straightforward case of following the competition. The EPRLF worked alongside the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) who at this time was engaging the LTTE on a large

⁴³⁰ Mukarji, A., 2005. p 38-39.

⁴³¹ The EPRLF reportedly used the abduction of boys aged 12-13 years to assist in the fight against the LTTE on behalf of the IPKF. Allegedly the Indian security agency RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) paid these groups for each conscript and it was not uncommon for the groups to make addition money selling children back to their families. Krishna, S., 1999. p 201.

scale.⁴³² This was a critical time for the organisation, and it appears to have been the changing dynamics in the conflict which led the LTTE to make the decision to start recruiting children. It was a decision based on military expediency and in response to preceding events.

The introduction of child recruitment was, like in Sierra Leone, facilitated by an external actor. The Indian security services may not have intentionally introduced the concept of child combatants into the conflict but they did expedite their introduction. The presence of Indian troops had an influential impact on the Sri Lankan conflict and its continuation. The LTTE gained positively from its experiences against the IPKF, gaining valuable experience it would later use effectively against government forces.⁴³³ It is also alleged that Premadasa, a member of the United National Party (UNP) and Prime Minister from 1978-1988 and President of Sri Lanka from 1988 until his assassination in 1993, armed the LTTE in their fight against the IPKF after agreeing a ceasefire with them in 1989.⁴³⁴ If this is true then the LTTE would have benefitted from access to resources during a time that they had been weakened by extensive engagements against the IPKF.

⁴³² Trawick, M., 2007. p 151. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001. *Child Soldiers Global Report: A global report to stop the use of child soldiers*. London: Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers.

⁴³³ De Silva K.M., 2005. p 706.

⁴³⁴ Krishna, S., 1999. p 200. DeVotta, N., 2004. *Blowback: Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka*. USA: Stanford University Press. p 173. Bloom, M., 2005. p 57. Balasingham, A., 2001. p 244.

The LTTE also benefitted from IPKF abuses, which fuelled support for the LTTE amongst the Tamil population and bolstered the status of the movement, enabling the LTTE to project its own hard-line separatist agenda onto the Tamil population. Other Tamil militant groups who had previously developed closer ties with India became vulnerable to accusations of betrayal and the LTTE used such links as a justification for a campaign of annihilation which targeted rival groups and cemented their position as the sole representative of the Tamil population.⁴³⁵ This had the effect of pushing other Tamil groups into making alliances with the government and in some instances it is believed that these groups even worked in collaboration with the state security services.⁴³⁶

A study of the major actors in the Sri Lankan conflict requires some reference to the Sri Lankan security forces, which has been heavily criticised for its human rights records, including abuses against children. Widespread abuses by the

⁴³⁵ Unlike the other Tamil groups the LTTE, which by the mid-1980's was the primary Tamil militant group, distrusted the Indians and saw them as using Tamil militant groups to serve their own purposes. They believed that India was serving her own hegemonic interests and as such did not wish to be dependent on Indian aid. They had - whilst taking advantage of the training, finance and munitions supplied by the Indians to all Tamil groups - ensured that they had multiple external contacts and access to the assistance that they required which went beyond that offered by the Indians. As such they were in a position to declare war on the IPKF in objection to their presence in Sri Lankan Tamil territory. Krishna, S., 1999. p 126-127. Balasingham, A., 2001. p 114.

⁴³⁶ Ties to non-Tamil groups were partly aided by the nature of some of the other Tamil groups, those who were Marxist in ideology with a concept of Eelam that was more inclusive were able to seek links with non-Tamil revolutionary groups and later with mainstream centre-left political parties. Collaboration on any level angered the more militant ethno-nationalist groups who accused their fellow Tamils of being little more than government militias. Gamage, S., and Watson, I., Ed. 1999. p 97.

Security Forces were a key factor in the Tamil populations' continuing support for the LTTE.⁴³⁷

The Sri Lankan security forces had approximately 48,000 personnel including reservists on active duty in 1988.⁴³⁸ There was no reported recruitment of persons less than 18 years of age directly into government armed forces and in February 2006 the Sri Lankan government made recruiting and engaging children in armed combat a crime punishable by 20 years in prison.⁴³⁹ However government forces allegedly had links to militias such as the Muslim Home Guard and to pro-government Tamil armed groups who did recruit children.⁴⁴⁰ Some reports go so far as to say that the government were complicit in enabling such groups to recruit children, aiding their movement through state checkpoints for example and these allegations are worthy of further research. However, Sri Lankan government forces had no need to directly recruit children. As the Sinhalese population was proportionally larger than the Tamil population, manpower shortages were not experienced by the Sinhalese dominated army and police forces. The government, although criticised by human rights NGOs for not ensuring that its alleged allies stopped recruiting children, does appear to have had some limited effect on reducing recruitment of children into pro-government Tamil militias. Those, such as the breakaway Karuna faction, who formed alliances with the government and

⁴³⁷ For examples of Security Forces human rights abuses see Gamage, S., and Watson, I., 1999. Ed. p 223-225.

⁴³⁸ Ross, R., and Savada, A., Ed. 1988.

⁴³⁹ Child Soldier Global Report, 2008. Child Soldier Global Report 2008: Sri Lanka. Accessed through www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org. [21/01/09].

⁴⁴⁰ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001.

had shifted emphasis onto the political wings of their organisations, do appear to have made some efforts to end child recruitment. On December 4th 2008 the Tamil People's Liberation Tigers signed an action plan with UNICEF to ensure the end of child recruitment, and to demobilise existing child recruits. It appears as though the Tamil Liberation Tigers did stop recruiting children and released those still within the group. This may be linked to Karuna's political interests. On 7th October 2008 Karuna was sworn into the national parliament as a member of the United Party Freedom Alliance. However more recently reports have surfaced from NGO that rogue commanders within the Tamil Liberation Tigers have again started to abduct children for the purposes of recruitment.⁴⁴¹

Why focus on the LTTE?

Although this case study makes reference to multiple armed groups, its primary focus is the LTTE. The fundamental reason for this is the LTTE's role in the conflict. By the mid-1980s the LTTE had come to dominate the Tamil scene. Through the use of propaganda, assassination and military attacks the LTTE had

⁴⁴¹ Watch list for Children and Armed Conflict, Children and Armed Conflict in Sri Lanka: Recommendations to the Security Council Working Group. 2010. Accessed through www.child-soldiers.org. [11/03/2010]. p 2. Human Rights Watch, 2007a. p 18. Interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007. Amnesty International, 2008. Sri Lanka: Karuna's Presence in Parliament a Travesty of Justice. Accessed through www.amnesty.org. [21/01/09]. UNICEF, 2008. Action Plan on Ending Recruitment of Child Soldiers Signed in Sri Lanka. Accessed through www.unicef.org. [21/01/09].

weakened their rivals and monopolised Tamil political life.⁴⁴² Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO), the oldest of the groups was annihilated by the LTTE in 1984. The EPRLF worked with the IPKF during the 1980s which reduced its credibility amongst the Sri Lankan Tamils. Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS) splintered in several factions some of which were incorporated into the LTTE in the early 1990s. Thus the LTTE were, throughout the conflict, the primary armed group in confrontation with the government.

The LTTE were not the only armed group to have used children in Sri Lanka. They are not even the first group alleged to have recruited children nor are they solely responsible for the recruitment of children. Nevertheless their position as the dominant armed group which claimed to be the sole representative of the Tamil population, at times acting as a de facto government in Tamil areas, made them an obvious choice for analysis.⁴⁴³ They were also the group for which there was the most significant evidence of the use of child recruits.

⁴⁴² EPRLF had a similar lower-class leadership background to the LTTE - although it had closer links to India which made it vulnerable to accusations of betrayal after 1987 - but the other Tamil groups (TELO, EROS and PLOTE) were led by youth of upper-caste origin although their social base was comprised of youth from the non-dominant castes.⁴⁴² Gamage, S., and Watson, I., Ed. 1999. p 307. Krishna, 1999. p 108-109.

⁴⁴³ De Silva, K.M., 2005. p 697. IISS Armed Conflict Database, www.armed-groups.org, accessed on 10/03/2010. Mukarji, A., 2000. *The War in Sri Lanka: Unending Conflict?* New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications. p 54.

Section Two: The Nature of the LTTE.

The conflict in Sri Lanka is not straightforward to classify, although it was clearly an ethnic-nationalist conflict. The Tamil elites sought to mobilise support for their political claims to statehood on an ethnic basis, yet the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) uprisings in the south of Sri Lanka by Sinhalese youth sprang from many of the same complaints about economic and social exclusion.⁴⁴⁴ Secondly in a number of ways the conflict was what Kaldor describes as an 'old war'.⁴⁴⁵ The LTTE set itself up as a nation building project. In ambition and rhetoric the conflict was not dissimilar to that of many anti-colonial struggles, with the leadership of the LTTE seeking a return to independence and the re-emergence of a sovereign Tamil state within the boundaries of pre-existing Tamil kingdoms.⁴⁴⁶ The organisation was strictly hierarchical, disciplined and controlled. It was created to emulate a state armed force and was known to use conventional tactics. Human rights abuses such as the rape of civilians were not widely reported. At the same time it shared features with many 'new wars'; the use of modern technology such as the internet, the use of counterinsurgency techniques such as suicide bombing and the cleansing by expulsion of territory, the increasing criminality of its resource extraction, the use of identity politics. This dichotomy can be seen to have had an impact on recruitment practices and can clearly be correlated to how the conflict evolved as it became protracted.

⁴⁴⁴ Tambiah. S.J., 1991. *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p 14.

⁴⁴⁵ Kaldor, M., 2001. p 6-11.

⁴⁴⁶ Swamy. M., 1994. p. 33. Tambiah. S.J., 1991. p 121.

Until the 1983 pogroms the LTTE had few recruits, but this event led many to join Tamil militant groups for protection.⁴⁴⁷ Roberts declares that the LTTE had only 27 fighters until 1983 which is close to Swamy's estimate of less than 50, although Bloom cites 600 members which swelled to 10,000 after the pogroms.⁴⁴⁸ Despite the discrepancies in numbers it seems clear that the 1983 pogrom was a pivotal moment for the LTTE leading to a strengthening of the group.

The LTTE were in a good position to take advantage of the outrage created by the 1983 pogroms, which alienated Tamils and resulted in increased support for militancy and the idea of a separate Tamil state. Each of the Tamil militant groups benefited from these circumstances in terms of increased membership and support. The other militant groups were more advanced in terms of their political activity, having, according to Anton Balasingham, already 'established contacts with the Research and Analysis Wing' (India's Intelligence Service).⁴⁴⁹ However the LTTE had a longer history of militant action in the field and already had cadre situated within Sri Lanka. Once they established links with Indian officials who could help with financing and additional training, they had a military advantage on the ground over their rivals who at this time were based solely on the Indian

⁴⁴⁷ Bjorgo, T., 2005. Ed. *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*. Oxford: Routledge, p 135.

⁴⁴⁸ Roberts, M., 2007. *Blunders in Tigerland: Papes Muddles on "Suicide Bombers" in Sri Lanka*. Heidelberg Papers in South Asia and Comparative Politics. Working Paper 32. Accessed through <http://www.sai.uni-heidelberg.de/SAPOL/HPSACP.html> [20/02/08]. p 16. Bloom, M., 2005. p 53. Swamy, M.R., 2008. *Inside an Elusive Mind: Prabhakaran, The First Profile of the World's Most Ruthless Guerrilla Leader*. Sri Lanka: Yapa Publications. p xiv.

⁴⁴⁹ Balasingham, A., 2001. p 71.

mainland. Despite the presence of other Tamil militant groups, the LTTE were, by the mid 1980s, the dominant Tamil group opposing the government.

The LTTE considered itself to be the sole legitimate representative of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. Its political objective was to impose a one-party state within an independent 'homeland'.⁴⁵⁰ As an ethno-nationalist movement which sought an exclusive Tamil state, the LTTE used populism and ethnic chauvinism to gain support. According to Balasingham, political advisor to the LTTE, the movement was 'the national freedom movement of the people of Tamil Eelam, and a predominant actor in Sri Lankan politics. It was both a political organisation as well as a military power, running a de facto administration in the majority of areas in north-eastern Sri Lanka, the historical homeland of the Tamil speaking people'.⁴⁵¹ The LTTE articulated their struggle in political and linguistic terms, as they did not appear to wish to emphasise differences within the Tamil community or cause divisions within the movement based on religion, caste or region.⁴⁵² However it must be noted that within the movement, disparities based on regional affiliation were believed to exist and even led to a split in the LTTE. In March 2006 Colonel Karuna split from the LTTE taking approximately 6,000-8,000 troops with him.⁴⁵³ Karuna's publicised reason for defecting was the alleged concentration of power in the hands of northern Tamils and the disproportionate

⁴⁵⁰ Jeyaratnam Wilson, A., 2000. p 168. Swamy, S., 2007. Sri Lanka in Crisis: India's Options. New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications. p 61.

⁴⁵¹ Balasingham, A., 2004. War and Peace: Armed Struggle and Peace Efforts of Liberation Tigers. Mitcham: Fairmax Publishing. p v.

⁴⁵² Mukarji, A., 2005. p XIII. Gamage, S., and Watson, I., Ed. 1999. p 198.

⁴⁵³ Mukarji, A., 2005. p 3. Bloom, M., 2005. p 71-72.

numbers of eastern Tamils sent to the frontlines.⁴⁵⁴ According to Mukarji of more than 30 Administrative positions in the LTTE, not one was filled with a Tamil from the Batticaloa-Ampara region in the east.⁴⁵⁵ Having noted the disparity between the rhetoric and reality it must be stressed that the LTTE's self-proclaimed strategy was to unite all Tamils in order to achieve Tamil Eelam. The publicised ideology of the LTTE was social egalitarianism within the boundaries of a political struggle for self-determination.⁴⁵⁶ As a nation seeking survival through the creation of its own state and as an 'egalitarian' movement the LTTE could attempt to justify the recruitment of children, including girls.

Control and Command:

Beardsley, K and McQuinn, B argue that resources are not the only consideration when studying group behaviour patterns; territorial objectives are also important.⁴⁵⁷ As an ethno-nationalist movement the LTTE aspired to be in control of a separate Tamil state. When the situation gave them the opportunity they imposed a de facto government within areas that they controlled. All Tamils within these areas, including children, were viewed as subjects and at the same

⁴⁵⁴ IISS Armed Conflict Database, www.armed-groups.org, accessed on 10/03/2010.

⁴⁵⁵ Mukarji, A., 2005. p 39. Interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007.

⁴⁵⁶ Balasingham, A., 2001. p 44-45. Swamy, M., 2008. p 53. LTTE objective was to found a one-party socialist Tamil state. Verma, D., 1991. Indo-Sri Lanka Accord: Intervention or Invitation. *Sri Lanka Journal of International Law*. 3. p 159.

⁴⁵⁷ Beardsley, K., and McQuinn, B., 2009. Rebel Groups as Predatory Organisations: The Political Effects of the 2004 Tsunami in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 53(4). Sage Publications. p 625

time as a national resource. Understanding the dual perception that the LTTE had of Tamils within its control is essential for understanding the LTTE's behaviour towards them. As subjects children were, at times, protected by the LTTE. Punishments of child recruits were harsh but not arbitrary, sexual abuse is not reported. However as an authoritarian movement for whom survival and the attainment of Tamil Eelam preceded all other concerns, the LTTE could be extremely brutal, even towards those subjects within its care. In the later stages of the war, when defeat seemed inevitable, the LTTE sacrificed large numbers of recruits, including children, in a last ditch attempt to hold off government forces and retain the territory it had controlled. Sacrificing children in the short term in order to realise national independence in the long-term appears to have been acceptable. As an extreme ethno-nationalist movement which viewed its 'citizens' as a resource to be used according to military and political necessities, citizens appear to have been considered, under certain circumstances, expendable, as demonstrated by the failure to demobilise child recruits or allow surrender when facing imminent defeat. Control over the traditional 'homeland' and the 'citizens' of that homeland took precedent over the safety and wellbeing of those same citizens in times of crisis.

However, as in many conflicts where armed groups claim sovereignty over an area, the LTTE sought to create an institutional structure for the political and administrative control of the territory that it held, which did include welfare

measures.⁴⁵⁸ The creation of an administrative apparatus assisted the LTTE in keeping control over the population in its de facto territories. As part of its system of control the LTTE stationed a representative from the good-conduct unit in each village, whose job was to report on matters such as illegal use of alcohol and domestic violence against women and children, both of which were discouraged and punished by the LTTE.⁴⁵⁹ The Tamil Eelam Bank, founded by the LTTE in 1993 had a revolving loan system which benefitted the poor, food was distributed, long term development projects implemented and caste discrimination challenged through legislation. Community services were also provided. The LTTE administered a local health and education authority and a child protection authority although preventing child recruitment by the group's commanders does not appear to have been part of its remit.⁴⁶⁰

A Tamil currency was introduced and taxes were collected from residents.⁴⁶¹ A justice system with a police force in the north-east and a system of courts was introduced and a mechanism whereby civilians could make complaints.⁴⁶² However, the complaint mechanism was, at best, selective in which complaints it was willing to address; investigating complaints concerning LTTE imposed policies such as taxation and child recruitment does not appear to have been

⁴⁵⁸ Interview with an Anonymous Source, USA, 27th September 2006. Jeyaratnam Wilson, A., 2000. p 168.

⁴⁵⁹ Cheran, R., Ed. 2009. *Pathways of Dissent: Tamil Nationalism in Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Sage Publications Ltd. p 132.

⁴⁶⁰ Interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007. Somasundaram, D., 1998. p 66.

⁴⁶¹ Verma, D., 1991. p 159. Mukarji, A., 2005. p216.

⁴⁶² Mukarji, A., 2005. p 216. Trawick, M., 2007. p 163. Human Rights Watch, 2007a. p 34.

undertaken. The efforts taken to impose de facto political, social and economic control over the north of Sri Lanka highlights that like the FMLN in El Salvador, the LTTE wished to be viewed as a credible force, as an entity capable of administering a separate state.⁴⁶³ The creation of a parallel system of administration allowed the LTTE to showcase its vision for the future and gave credence and legitimacy to claims for statehood. Part of this process was the creation of a de facto state armed force. As the potential national armed force of a Tamil state there was a requirement for some semblance of professionalism and discipline.

In addition to tight control over the territories they held, the LTTE's leadership was perceived to have had tight control over members for most of the conflict, through a strict hierarchy of commanders.⁴⁶⁴ Given the widespread public acknowledgment of the strict levels of control the leadership had over the organisations structures, it would seem that recruitment processes, even those involving children, were institutionalised and under the authority of the leadership. This was supported by anecdotal sources which suggested that the LTTE used its networks to assess the recruitment potential of families. Each family was registered with local level LTTE officials who used the data to determine which families (those with members in the correct age brackets) were

⁴⁶³ Verma, D., 1991. p 159. Interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007.

⁴⁶⁴ Interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007. Interview with an Anonymous Source, Researcher, London, 28th September 2007. Interview with Manuel Fountain, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF, New York, 3rd October 2006.

required to 'volunteer' recruits.⁴⁶⁵ It makes it clear that recruitment practices, including the recruitment of children were deliberate and endorsed by the movement.

Although the LTTE had an organisational hierarchy topped by a central command, the movement was dominated by the leader, Prabhakaran. Bjorgo argued that Prabhakaran's 'ruthlessness and military genius have been crucial motivating factors within the LTTE'.⁴⁶⁶ He was viewed as a leader with organisational and military skills and appeared capable of taking measures to maintain his dominant position within the movement. Within and outside the movement anyone who sought to oppose Prabhakaran was eliminated.⁴⁶⁷ As found with many of the members within the leadership of the FMLN in El Salvador, Prabhakaran became actively involved in militancy at a young age; reportedly when he was around 16 years old.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch, 2009. p 9.

⁴⁶⁶ Bjorgo, T., Ed. 2005. p 134.

⁴⁶⁷ Trawick, M., 2007. p 75. Jeyaratnam Wilson, A., 2000. p 24. Swamy, M.R., 2008. p xiv

⁴⁶⁸ Christian Science Monitor, 2006. Outrage Over Child Soldiers in Sri Lanka. Accessed through www.csmonitor.com. [21/01/09]. However, he was introduced to militant concepts whilst still a child and dropped out of school to pursue militancy after the 10th grade. Swamy, M., 2008. p 22-27. Balasingham, A., 2004. p 23.

Military Strategy and Tactics.

The LTTE's military strategy had several components which impacted on child recruitment. The numerical supremacy and greater firepower of the Sri Lankan military is not in question.⁴⁶⁹ This resulted in the LTTE using a combination of military warfare – using both conventional and guerrilla tactics - political manoeuvres and terrorist tactics such as suicide bombing.⁴⁷⁰

Two aspects of LTTE strategy deserve brief discussion because of their uniqueness in the case studies and their impact on child recruits. The first of these is the LTTE's use of suicide bombing and the second is the expectation that all recruits would resort to death by cyanide if captured. The use of suicide attacks served to spread fear amongst the targeted population, in this case the Sinhalese. This was expected to increase the likelihood of claims for a separate Tamil Eelam being granted. Such extreme tactics highlighted the group's commitment to the cause. However there is little clear evidence that children themselves were used as suicide bombers.

In order to maintain support for suicide campaigns, the LTTE had to ensure certain criteria were met. As is found in many new wars in which

⁴⁶⁹ Mukarji, A., 2005. p 21. Verma, D., 1991. p 160-161.

⁴⁷⁰ Mukarji, A., 2005. p 76. Interview with an Anonymous Source, Researcher, London, 28th September 2007.

counterinsurgency techniques are adopted, they used identity based politics to show the enemy to be a threat. Like the policy of actively recruiting women and children, the use of suicide attacks did not occur until 1987 and appears to have been in response to the deployment of the IPKF.⁴⁷¹ It seems to be at this point, faced with the IPKF who were vastly superior in terms of manpower and resources, that the LTTE began to adopt a total war strategy which included both extreme tactics such as the use of suicide attacks and the active and extensive recruitment of children.

Suicide bombing combined with the successful but controversial use of cyanide death as a symbolic element resulted in the LTTE gaining an edge over other Tamil militant groups. The population believed that the LTTE, as a movement, was devoted to the cause of Tamil Eelam.⁴⁷² However the expectation that child recruits would kill themselves rather than face capture by the state is a gross violation of their right to life. The use of children in such ways, through the manipulation of their very real – and arguably justifiable – fears illuminates not only the levels of control that the LTTE had over its child recruits but its ruthless ambition.

⁴⁷¹ Tosini, D., 2009. A Sociological Understanding of Suicide Attacks. *Theory, Culture and Society*. 26(4). pp 67-96. p 72

⁴⁷² Roberts, M., 2007. p 18. Somasundaram, D., 1998. p 63.

The LTTE did not only utilise counterinsurgency and guerrilla tactics. According to Adele Balasingham, the LTTE leader Parabakaran's 'politics place[d] him squarely in the camp of a patriotic nationalist' but he did not proscribe any particular model of national liberation warfare.⁴⁷³ What seems clear is that, as a group aspiring to be a government, the LTTE often used conventional strategies and at all times operated along similar lines to a conventional army, with a strict hierarchy and command structures, specialist units and institutionalised recruitment practices.⁴⁷⁴ LTTE subdivisions included the Black Tigers (suicide units), Sea Tigers (Naval attack unit), Air Tigers (air force division), women's military units, and Baby Brigades, special battalions of child soldiers which were formed in 1984 and used extensively against the IPKF.⁴⁷⁵ The 'baby brigands' had a reputation for being keen, efficient and fearless.⁴⁷⁶ In the latter stages of the conflict these brigades seem to have been disbanded and children were incorporated within other units.⁴⁷⁷

The LTTE were believed to have carried out 'meticulous planning of attacks and retreats and had an ability to dent the fighting morale of the security forces'.⁴⁷⁸ Sri Lankan troops found dealing with the militants, who often adopted guerrilla

⁴⁷³ Balasingham, A., 2001. p 334-335.

⁴⁷⁴ Bloom, M., 2005. p 60.

⁴⁷⁵ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001. Charu Lata Hogg, 2006. p 9. Bloom, M., 2005. p 60. Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, 2006. Annual Report 2006. section 2. Accessed through http://slmm-history.info/SLMM_Archive/Annual_reports [30/07/2008]. Roberts, M., 2007. p 27.

⁴⁷⁶ Clarence, W., 2007. *Ethnic Warfare in Sri Lanka and the UN Crisis*. London: Pluto Press. p 134. Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 6.

⁴⁷⁷ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 5.

⁴⁷⁸ Mukarji, A., 2005. p 78. Trawick, M., 2007. p 192.

tactics, very difficult and so often targeted civilians, thinking it would destabilise the militants' base of support.⁴⁷⁹ On the contrary it increased support for the militants and drove the recruitment of children who saw the LTTE as protectors in the face of government abuses.

The LTTE used pre-emptive strikes and contingency planning.⁴⁸⁰ They used heavily fortified posts as a defensive measure, and camouflaged trucks to prevent attacks on supplies.⁴⁸¹ They often depended on surprise attacks, for which good mobility was vital; commanders of other armed groups which have used children as combatants have remarked that children are particularly useful for tactics which depend on surprise and mobility.⁴⁸² To counter the state's security force's greater manpower they utilised more advanced weaponry, such as night-vision goggles and rocket-propelled grenades before the security forces had acquired them.⁴⁸³ Their use of sophisticated weaponry and tactics may have accounted for why their child recruits were older than those used in Sierra Leone, where more rudimentary and easy to use weapons such as machetes and AK47's were preferred and attacks usually took place against unarmed civilians.

⁴⁷⁹ Gamage, S., and Watson, I., Ed. 1999. p 61.

⁴⁸⁰ Roberts, M., 2007. p 28.

⁴⁸¹ Clarence, W., 2007. p 99.

⁴⁸² Clarence, W., 2007. p 79.

⁴⁸³ Bjorgo, T., Ed. 2005. p 135.

In addition to accessing resources on an international scale, the LTTE also spent a considerable amount of time playing to the world's media. As an ethno-nationalist movement seeking to create a new nation state the LTTE was keen to court international recognition and legitimacy. The LTTE used international propaganda to argue that they were a minority facing discrimination and as such deserved to be allowed to work towards self-determination. In response, the government of Sri Lanka sought to counter these claims. They saw the LTTE as a terrorist organisation and worked towards preventing the LTTE from acquiring arms and funding abroad.⁴⁸⁴ In a counter measure the LTTE used their international front organisations to criticise the human rights record of the government. This was a vital part of their strategy. Not only did they highlight government abuses but they carefully timed press releases to coincide with military actions. By targeting the government's human rights record against civilians prior to campaigns the LTTE hoped to reduce the operational effectiveness of the government's military response.⁴⁸⁵

However, the LTTE also received international criticism of its actions, particularly those relating to its involvement in human rights abuses. At times the LTTE appeared to make every effort to acquiesce to demands from global actors who sought a resolution to the human rights tragedy brought about by the conflict and the actors immediately involved in the conflict. This was particularly the case

⁴⁸⁴ Gamage, S., and Watson, I., Ed. 1999. p 67.

⁴⁸⁵ Mukarji, A., 2005. p 78.

for the continuing use of children, especially after the Karuna split. The perceived increased in child recruitment after the Karuna split in 2004 led to negative publicity for the LTTE. The LTTE subsequently released some children publicly via UNICEF but told children and parents to expect to be sent for at a later date; they also took information on the children and their families.⁴⁸⁶ Such releases were clearly a public relations ploy in the wake of local objections over the Tamil in-fighting between the two groups. In reality, despite the LTTE's desire to receive international recognition and its attempts to manipulate the media, to present itself as a minority group fighting a state with superior manpower the LTTE clearly felt that ending child recruitment completely was not in its best interest.

Resources.

An area of study that can shed much light on an armed group is its attitude towards resources. Some conflicts, such as that found in Sierra Leone, were primarily rooted in an armed group's interest in accessing resources for personal gain. Even in Sri Lanka and El Salvador where this was not the group's primary motivation the importance of resources, and group access to them should not be underestimated. As Beardsley, K and McQuinn, B argue, whether a group has access to low or high return investments has an impact on its relationship with the

⁴⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 36.

local population.⁴⁸⁷ The LTTE's reliance on high return strategies as a primary source of income replaced low return strategies over the course of the conflict. They could make decisions for the benefit of the group rather than for the Tamil civilians, as the organisation became less reliant on the local population. As aptly demonstrated in Sri Lanka, this meant that the group was more able to exploit the local population.

Beardsley, K and McQuinn, B state that the 'availability of high return resources [has] made the LTTE more prone to the types of violent behaviour and disregard for the interests of the local population exhibited by what Weinstein terms "opportunistic" rebellions'.⁴⁸⁸ This was because the LTTE were a group that relied on high return, predominantly overseas, resources. As such the local population had little to offer in terms of financial support. They were however useful in terms of supplying recruits. These circumstances shed some light on LTTE recruitment practices. At the start of the campaign the LTTE relied more on low return and internal resources. As an ethno-nationalist movement they also exploited recent abuses of the population to win support and attract voluntary recruits. As the conflict progressed the LTTE grew efficient at overseas fund raising and investment. At the same time their control over tracts of territory increased and the population experienced a reduction in abuses at the hands of the government. The population became less willing to volunteer and the LTTE were

⁴⁸⁷ Beardsley, K., and McQuinn, B., 2009. p 629-631.

⁴⁸⁸ Beardsley, K., and McQuinn, B., 2009. p 626-627.

in a position where adopting forms of recruitment not acceptable to the local population was not going to affect their resource base.

In the eyes of some observers, the LTTE appeared to have carried out campaigns based purely on military expediency rather than to make economic gains as is seen in Sierra Leone.⁴⁸⁹ However despite their interest in resources being primarily as revenue with which to fund the conflict there was, in the latter years of the conflict, growing evidence of a war economy in Sri Lanka.⁴⁹⁰ Individuals within both groups of actors appeared to have had a vested interest in the continuation of the conflict. Officials awarding defence contracts gained commissions and inflated prices on goods in the north-east benefited those who controlled trade.⁴⁹¹ Politicians and army officers were believed to have siphoned off money earmarked for the military as were LTTE members during the final stages of the conflict.⁴⁹² The conflict also gave the LTTE's criminal activities some level of legitimacy within the Tamil community. However there was little indication that the LTTE used children to increase their access to resources such as was found in Sierra Leone. In Sri Lanka the importance of resources was their ability to enable to continuation of the conflict, the continuation of the survival of the LTTE and as a consequence the continuation of child recruitment.

⁴⁸⁹ Interview with Manuel Fountain, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF, New York, 3RD October 2006.

⁴⁹⁰ Charu Lata Hogg, 2006. p 31.

⁴⁹¹ Winslow, D., and Woost, M., Ed. 2004. p 89.

⁴⁹² Tampoe, M., 2006, p 231.

Use of Violence.

As it has been established that the LTTE had tight control over the territories it held, the populations within them and the members of its movement, it seems reasonable to assume that the use of violence was regulated by the group. That the LTTE were brutal in their methods and even the treatment of their own population at times cannot be denied. Human Rights Watch claims that the LTTE 'brutally and systematically abused the Tamil population on whose behalf they claim[ed] to fight'.⁴⁹³ Indeed the LTTE had a poor human rights record, and are believed to have carried out numerous political killings (over 200 during the ceasefire), the murder of Sinhalese and Tamil civilians, using suicide bombings and the use of forced labour and recruitment.⁴⁹⁴ These abuses are not best understood as simply criminal; they could for the majority of the conflict be seen to have been part of a military and political strategy. The LTTE did not appear to have been involved in criminally motivated violence.⁴⁹⁵ Indeed the leadership of the LTTE articulated that they did not believe in violence but were forced to choose it to preserve the Tamil nation, and the organisation's use of violence and restraint appears to fit with this claim.⁴⁹⁶ Political killings eliminated rivals and ensured unity within the

⁴⁹³ Human Rights Watch, December 2008a. Trapped and Mistreated: LTTE Abuses Against Civilians in the Vanni. Human Rights Watch. p 2-3.

⁴⁹⁴ Human Rights Watch, December 2008a. p 3. Human Rights Watch, 2006. p 14.

⁴⁹⁵ Although as previously noted all Tamil militant groups did use criminal acts initially to fund their respective movements.

⁴⁹⁶ Balasingham, A., 2004. p 69.

Tamil population, strengthening the cause. The murder of the 'other' was used to homogenise 'traditional' Tamil areas and strengthen claims to a traditional Tamil homeland; used with the addition of suicide bombings it also served as a warning to the Sri Lankan political classes that the LTTE was an organisation prepared to use violent methods and should thus be taken seriously. The use of forced labour and recruitment ensured that the LTTE's military capacities were maintained.⁴⁹⁷

Whilst these human rights abuses were clearly abhorrent, they appear for the most part to have been militarily and politically motivated, unlike the abuses carried out in the final stages of the conflict.

The LTTE itself was keen to legitimise its use of violence in political terms; in an open letter to the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka in 1979 the LTTE stated 'nor are we a band of terrorists or vandals who kill and destroy at random for anarchic reasons'.⁴⁹⁸ Evidence suggests that the LTTE did often kill Sinhalese civilians and it is easy to describe the murder of civilians as a terrorist act, however it is interesting that the LTTE are not reported to have used rape as a weapon of terror, despite its use in many ethnic conflicts (and indeed its use by the Sinhalese dominated state forces who are widely reported to have raped Tamil women) and without using extreme mutilation as a method of terror.⁴⁹⁹ This, when taken alongside LTTE statements suggests that the LTTE did, in keeping with Stanton's argument, impose restraints upon their actions in accordance with what

⁴⁹⁷ Human Rights Watch, 2009. p 9.

⁴⁹⁸ Wickramasinghe, N., 2006. *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History of Contested Identities*. London: C Hurst and Co. p 252.

⁴⁹⁹ Mukarji, A., 2000. p 67.

they perceived as acceptable violence within a political context.⁵⁰⁰ The LTTE leader Prabhakaran declared in November 2001 that groups using violence for a concrete political objective should be excluded from terrorist lists.⁵⁰¹ He clearly viewed the LTTE at this time as a genuine people's movement. He defended his more ruthless tactics as necessary in light of his militarily stronger enemy and the Sri Lankan armed forces capacity for extreme violence.⁵⁰² In Sri Lanka, as military options prevailed over political negotiations violence spiralled and reciprocation resulted in the protraction of the conflict and an increase in its brutality.

Much of the LTTE's anti-Tamil violence was a product of the nature of the movement. The LTTE were exclusionary and did not tolerate rivals; they sought to eliminate other Tamil groups, even those seeking the same goals. As a high return resource based group they were, to some extent, removed from the general Tamil population, which was subjugated to the LTTE's will rather than being seen as an equal partner in the fight for Tamil Eelam. The LTTE identified themselves as the 'nation'; in their eyes the survival of the group was intrinsically tied to the survival of the Sri Lankan Tamils and as such all necessary measures to protect the group and therefore the nation were justifiable.

⁵⁰⁰ Stanton, J., 2009. *Strategies of Violence and Restraint in Civil War*. PhD. Columbia University. (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [13/09/2010]. p 5.

⁵⁰¹ Mukarji, A., 2005. p 70.

⁵⁰² Balasingham, A., 2001. p 335.

That the LTTE were a party that wished for power for itself is difficult to dispute given their declarations supporting the idea of a one-party Tamil state under their rule and their attempts to eliminate all potential rivals.⁵⁰³ Some believe that the LTTE deliberately blocked attempts to resolve the conflict, and thus protect Tamil children from the hardships of conflict and recruitment, and instead actively sought its continuation over fears of losing their position as representatives of the Tamil population in Sri Lanka if they agreed to a democratically based autonomous region.⁵⁰⁴

A further note should be made concerning the impact of the March 2004 split on abuses carried out by the LTTE. After the 2004 Karuna/LTTE split, political killings increased in scale and the range of people targeted by both groups appeared to expand; this was particularly the case in the eastern region where the Karuna group were located.⁵⁰⁵ The majority of LTTE killings took place in government controlled areas - that this occurred in areas supposedly under government control, including the capital city Colombo, showed the inability of the government to impose law and order within Sri Lanka at this time. There was also an increase in the numbers of adult abductees who were taken to LTTE camps, questioned and tortured. Such individuals were suspected of opposing the LTTE.⁵⁰⁶ Even after twenty years of dominating the Tamil military and political

⁵⁰³ Jeyaratnam Wilson, A., 2000. p 168. Cheran, R., Ed. 2009. p 123.

⁵⁰⁴ Mukarji, A., 2005. p 217-218. Bose, S., 2007. p 32.

⁵⁰⁵ Amnesty International, 2006. p 3. Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, 2006. section 3. Child Soldier Global Report, 2008.

⁵⁰⁶ Amnesty International, 2006. p 8-9.

scene in Sri Lanka the LTTE still felt it was necessary to maintain its position via the political killing of potential rivals.

Section Three: Children and conflict in Sri Lanka.

As researchers were rarely allowed into the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka during the conflict, studies on childhood have concentrated on the Sinhalese community, making it difficult to fully appreciate the role of children within contemporary Tamil culture in Sri Lanka. According to Trawick the Tamil ideal was that children should be protected and cherished.⁵⁰⁷ However, as in many developing countries, protection appears to have had a different connotation to that defined by the industrialised West.

In Sri Lanka an individual's gender, economic status and birth (combined within the caste system) can all impact on when responsibilities and entitlements are given.⁵⁰⁸ Girls are considered to have entered womanhood when they start puberty and boys have no coming of age ritual, but individuals are often treated as though they are still children until they are married regardless of how old they

⁵⁰⁷ Trawick, M., 2007. p 126.

⁵⁰⁸ Charu Lata Hogg, 2006. p 13. Skjonsberg, E., 1982. *A Special Caste: Tamil Women of Sri Lanka*. London: Zed Press. p 46.

are.⁵⁰⁹ Within the Tamil areas the war actually resulted in a decrease in the average age of marriage due to the belief that the LTTE would not recruit married people.⁵¹⁰ This perhaps signifies that the Tamil population were not always fully supportive of the LTTE and sought to evade joining the movement in ways that affected pre-existing cultural norms.

As in many other countries that experienced child recruitment by armed groups, child labour in Sri Lanka was common due to necessity.⁵¹¹ According to Charu Lata Hogg, the social acceptance of child labour in countries such as Sri Lanka was a significant factor in a reduction in resistance to child recruitment.⁵¹² For her, as for a number of other observers', children joined armed groups to escape harsh conditions within the community, only to find harsher conditions within the group.⁵¹³

In terms of punishment and behaviour towards children, Sri Lankan society was viewed as often abusive and violent towards women and children; it was not uncommon in Sri Lanka for children to be physically punished by their parents, and teachers in schools used corporal punishment.⁵¹⁴ Aggression, violence and

⁵⁰⁹ Interview with an Anonymous Source, Researcher, London, 28th September 2007. Skjonsberg, E., 1982. p 47.

⁵¹⁰ Charu Lata Hogg, 2006. p 22.

⁵¹¹ Interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007. Trawick, M., 2007. p 157.

⁵¹² Charu Lata Hogg, 2006. p 13.

⁵¹³ Charu Lata Hogg, 2006. p 14.

⁵¹⁴ Keairns, Y., 2003. *The Voices of Girl Soldiers: Sri Lanka*. New York: Quakers UN Office. Accessed through www.quno.org. [21/01/09]. p 10. Interview with an Anonymous Source, USA,

control appeared to be the main instruments with which authority was established within the domestic sphere.⁵¹⁵ Punishment appeared to be much harsher than in the West, in accordance with cultural beliefs in Sri Lanka on control and discipline. The recruitment, deployment and abuse of children within the LTTE can only be properly understood within this context.

Recruitment.

A key role in the recruitment of children was ethno-nationalist propaganda, which appealed to the LTTE's constituency. Propaganda via videos, speeches, parades and street theatre were used at rallies and in schools to encourage families to send a child to fight for 'the cause' and children to volunteer even without their parents consent.⁵¹⁶ The broadcast of propaganda videos showing live combat operations and training exercises in schools showed how militarised life in the LTTE zones became in the attempt to aid the movement's ambitions.⁵¹⁷ Schools in Tamil areas - especially between 1987 and 1996 when the LTTE had a de facto government in

27th September 2006. Interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007. Charu Lata Hogg, 2006.p 9.

⁵¹⁵ Telephone Interview with Charu Lata Hogg., South Asia Researcher for Human Rights Watch and Associate Fellow for the Asia Program at Chatham House, 24th October 2007. Violence against wives is common. Skjonsberg, E., 1982. p 61. 54% of females aged 15-19 years old answered in the affirmative when asked if physical punishment of wives was acceptable in some circumstances such as burning the dinner or neglecting the children, UNICEF, Sri Lanka Country Statistics. Accessed through www.unicef.org/infobycountry. [29/05/2011].

⁵¹⁶ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001. Human Rights Watch, 2007a. p 73. Interview with an Anonymous Source, USA, 27th September 2006. Interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007.

⁵¹⁷ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 31. See also Human Rights Watch, 2007a. p 73.

Jaffna - were increasingly militarised, with parades and training exercises in and around school grounds and commemoration areas for martyrs set up in playgrounds.⁵¹⁸ The LTTE were reported to recruit children, train them and then place them back into schools to serve as recruiters of their peers.⁵¹⁹ In the Trincomalee district in 2002 parents were so worried about children being recruited that less than 50% of students were attending school. Instead they were kept at home, a sign of resistance to child recruitment that should not be overlooked.⁵²⁰ Parents at times did also attempt to actively prevent their child's recruitment. As one child recalled,

‘I was fast asleep when they came to get me at one in the morning.... These people dragged me out of the house. My father shouted at them, saying, “What is going on?”, but some of the LTTE soldiers took my father away towards the woods and beat him.... They also pushed my mother onto the ground when she tried to stop them’.
(Girl combatant, LTTE)⁵²¹

As the LTTE managed many aspects of life within its areas of control, it was not easy to circumvent recruitment. Recruits were targeted via their family's identity papers which gave the dates of birth of family members; information was kept accurate due to monitoring by village level officials in the LTTE areas who kept records of how many fighting aged people were in each household.⁵²² As the use of monitoring implies recruitment was systematic.

⁵¹⁸ Trawick, M., 2007. p 64. Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 31. Charu Lata Hogg, 2006.p 9.

⁵¹⁹ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 40.

⁵²⁰ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 15. Amnesty International, 2006. p 6.

⁵²¹ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 2.

⁵²² Human Rights Watch, December 2008a. p 6. Trawick, M., 2007. p 61.

‘They [the LTTE] got the lists of IDPs from the GS [grama sevaka, a village official]—every family had to register there—and then visited every family several times. If anybody tried to hide their sons and daughters, they would come back at night and search the house.’
(Tamil Civilian, Sri Lanka)⁵²³

As a consequence it was difficult to avoid recruitment if targeted by the LTTE.

Although the LTTE preferred voluntary recruitment they were not averse to using more coercive practices when it was considered militarily necessary. Many recruits cannot be considered truly voluntary. For example when volunteers were not plentiful enough, children were abducted from temples; or LTTE members visited homes and placed pressure on families through implied threats of violence.⁵²⁴ There are several reports of families being threatened with property confiscation or violence if they did not hand over their children.⁵²⁵ Such tactics ensured that children would ‘volunteer’ in order to protect their families.

The LTTE took its institutionalisation of child recruitment very seriously. They operated orphanages which served to militarise children and prepare them for future membership of the organisation.⁵²⁶ Children placed in LTTE run orphanages reportedly studied but also spent time in LTTE military camps during school holidays.⁵²⁷ This militarisation was effective. The elite and feared Sirasu

⁵²³ Human Rights Watch, 2009. p 9

⁵²⁴ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 17. Child Soldier Global Report, 2008. Amnesty International.,2006. p 5. Trawick, M., 2007. p 175.

⁵²⁵ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 31. Human Rights Watch, 2007a. p 53. Mukarji, A., 2005. p 44.

⁵²⁶ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001.

⁵²⁷ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 19.

Puli unit was reportedly composed of recruits who were formerly residents at LTTE run orphanages.

Despite the strength of the LTTE, demonstrated by its ability to institutionalise its recruitment practices, it is difficult to assess how much public support they actually had. As demonstrated, it was difficult for adults and children alike to avoid recruitment if targeted by the LTTE. However, whilst individuals may have wished to have avoided their own conscription this did not mean that the general population wished for the LTTE's demise. Despite some known resentment over taxation and child recruitment, a survey by Bloom showed that even after twenty years of conflict the Sri Lankan Tamil population supported the LTTE whilst support for alternative groups was insignificant.⁵²⁸ Yet according to DeVotta many Tamils disliked the LTTE, its methods and its abuse of the civilian population, including its forced recruitment practices, although they still preferred the LTTE to the Sri Lankan government.⁵²⁹

The position the Tamil population were placed in, whereby they felt unable to trust their government to govern them responsibly but also felt somewhat ambivalent towards the LTTE may help to explain fluctuations in recruitment. In times when the population felt at most risk from the government the actual

⁵²⁸ See Bloom, M., 2003.

⁵²⁹ DeVotta, N., 2004. p 180-181. Shanmugaratnam, N., Ed. 2008. *Between War and Peace in Sudan and Sri Lanka*. Oxford: James Currey Ltd. p 130.

support in terms of recruitment they gave increased. However during times of greater security, such as during the ceasefire, voluntary recruitment declined, as civilians including children no longer believed that their involvement with the LTTE was necessary for the immediate protection of the Tamil people. As Wood predicts, as families reassessed the benefits that the LTTE could offer they were less keen to offer their children as recruits and as a result of the drop in civilian support the group chose to adopt more violent recruitment practices and children became more likely to be forcibly recruited.⁵³⁰ As one Tamil civilian put it,

‘The Tamil people had no option, our children had to fight but it has been going on for too long’
(Tamil Civilian)⁵³¹

It appears that the default position of the LTTE was that when voluntary recruits were not forthcoming they would instead adopt more coercive measures to ensure that their military capacities were not affected. Due to the ceasefire and greater perceived security by Sri Lankan Tamils in recent years there appears to have been a marked increase in forced recruitment. This was aided by the realities of the 2002 ceasefire, which enabled recruitment in government controlled areas through allowing unarmed LTTE members to venture beyond LTTE zones.⁵³²

This concession widened the pool of recruits that the LTTE could coerce. It appears that the LTTE used its political offices, which were allowed to operate in

⁵³⁰ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 16. Wood, R., 2010. *Competing for Control: Conflict Power Dynamics, Civilian Loyalties and Violence in Civil War*. PhD. University of North Carolina. (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [28/09/2011]. p 10-11.

⁵³¹ Shanmugaratnam, N., Ed. 2008. p 130.

⁵³² Human Rights Watch, 2004. Amnesty International, 2006. p 6.

government held territory, to facilitate recruitment.⁵³³ The LTTE were known to use ceasefires to regroup and rearm. The number of LTTE recruits is believed to have risen from 5,000-6,000 in 2001 up to 20,000 within two years.⁵³⁴ Most of these recruits were forcibly conscripted. The use of forced recruitment appears to have been a trend on the increase especially during the period of the ceasefire (2002-2006). In 1994 only 1 in 19 child recruits was abducted, in 2004 only 1 in 19 volunteered.⁵³⁵

Despite forced recruitment increasing it would appear that the LTTE did at times make efforts to reduce the numbers of child recruits in LTTE areas.⁵³⁶ Statistics provided by UNICEF suggest child recruitment did drop. Known recruitment decreased from 1,494 children in 2002 to 166 in 2007; however as of 2007 there were still 1,424 child recruits whose fates were unknown, including 108 who were still under 18 years.⁵³⁷ These temporary reductions in child recruitment were linked to the LTTE's desire to achieve a level of international recognition and legitimacy. When it was deemed militarily feasible the LTTE would increase its international standing through the public reduction of the children in its ranks.

⁵³³ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 16.

⁵³⁴ DeVotta, N., 2004. p 177.

⁵³⁵ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 16.

⁵³⁶ Human Rights Watch, December 2008a. p 3. Telephone Interview with Charu Lata Hogg, South Asia Researcher for Human Rights Watch and Associate Fellow for the Asia Program at Chatham House, 24th October 2007.

⁵³⁷ Human Rights Watch, December 2008a. p 5. Child Soldiers Global Report give the figures as 1500 child recruits in 2002 down to around 125 in 2007. Child Soldier Global Report, 2008.

With legitimacy in mind LTTE officials made intermittent verbal promises to completely end the recruitment of children, and at times insisted that children under 18 years old were not 'child recruits' but were in actuality orphans and war-affected children that the LTTE were providing welfare to. However there is little evidence that children were released or their recruitment stopped on a significant level.⁵³⁸ As an ethno-nationalist group limited to recruiting from within a minority community, the LTTE was always heavily reliant on child recruitment to supplement its fighting strength.⁵³⁹ Whenever that strength was eroded the LTTE turned to children to fill its ranks. Maintaining an acceptable international image appears to have been an important part of their overall strategy, as they were keen to be viewed as a de facto state, but one that still came second to military necessities. According to Amnesty International, local agencies stated that the LTTE often let children run away instead of formerly demobilising them and issuing them with the relevant demobilisation papers. This meant that they could appear to respond to international demands to release children but call them up again when needed. This was particularly the case where the children in question were repeatedly mentioned by UNICEF.⁵⁴⁰

In order to increase its international standing, the LTTE became party to a variety of child protection measures. In 2003 UNICEF and the LTTE signed a

⁵³⁸ Machel, G., 2001. *The Impact of War on Children*. London: Hurst and Co. p 16 . Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001. Balasingham, A., 2004. p 420.

⁵³⁹ Mukarji, A., 2005. p 41.

⁵⁴⁰ Amnesty International.,2006. p 7.

Memorandum of Understanding that included issues of child conscription.⁵⁴¹ In 2004 the LTTE and the government of Sri Lanka signed the Action Plan for Children Affected by War which contained clauses relating to child recruitment and demobilisation. However it is believed that there were still twice as many children recruited by the LTTE as were demobilised.⁵⁴²

In 2006 the Tamil Eelam Justice Division declared a new Child Protection Act to come into force on the 1st January 2007, which set 17 years as the minimum age for recruitment and prohibited those less than 18 years old from being deployed in combat.⁵⁴³ New recruits were supposed to be screened twice and sent home if underage. The Child Protection Authority was said by the LTTE to have been strengthened and field officers were given written instructions concerning their mandate. However recruitment standards declined dramatically from 2008 when the government increased its military campaign. The age of recruits declined and forced recruitment was drastically increased.

Prior to 2008, when the government launched a fierce military campaign against the LTTE, reports suggested that in addition to reducing the numbers of underage

⁵⁴¹ Seneviratne, W., 2003. International Legal Standards Applicable to Child Soldiers. *Sri Lanka Journal of International Law*. 15. Mukarji, A., 2005. p 44.

⁵⁴² Human Rights Watch, 2004.

⁵⁴³ Human Rights Watch, 2007a. p 77.

recruits, the LTTE had also increased the age of recruits targeted.⁵⁴⁴ In 2002 the average age of recruits was 14 years old; by 2007 this had increased to an average age of 16 years and in 2008 the average age reached 17 years.⁵⁴⁵ LTTE claimed to restrict those less than 18 years to training and support functions.⁵⁴⁶ A reason for the LTTE's increase in the age of recruits may be linked to its use of ever more sophisticated heavy weaponry which is easier for an adult to use effectively.⁵⁴⁷ The LTTE also argued that as a de facto government they should be allowed to recruit persons from 17 years old in line with international legislation that allows governments to recruit children between 15-18 years of age as long as they have not ratified the Optional Protocol in full.⁵⁴⁸

Control and Deployment.

In the earlier stages of child recruitment the LTTE promised to continue recruits' education once enlisted due to opposition to recruitment. Some younger children do appear to have been placed in special units where they spent a considerable

⁵⁴⁴ Interview with Manuel Fountain, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF, New York, 3rd October 2006. Interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007.

⁵⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch, December 2008a. p 6. The LTTE viewed itself as professional and seem to prefer recruits approximately 16-17 years of age. Interview with Manuel Fountain, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF, New York, 3rd October 2006. Interview with an Anonymous Source, Researcher, London, 28th September 2007.

⁵⁴⁶ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001.

⁵⁴⁷ Interview with an Anonymous Source, USA, 27th September 2006. Interview with an Anonymous Source, Researcher, London, 28th September 2007.

⁵⁴⁸ Interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007.

amount of each day studying.⁵⁴⁹ They were also encouraged to play sports, possibly to encourage fitness.⁵⁵⁰ However the LTTE was an ethno-nationalist group for which survival and the attainment of Tamil Eelam was the top priority; military capacity took precedent over children's education which appears to have been sidelined as the conflict progressed.

Once recruited, children were given a new name, a common occurrence in groups which practice child recruitment; and girls had their hair cut short.⁵⁵¹ The giving of a new name was a security measure taken so that recruits' histories could not be traced.⁵⁵² Discipline was strict and children were usually isolated with little or no familial contact, although the LTTE became more accommodating in this matter over time due to negative feedback from recruits' families.⁵⁵³ Isolation during the training period made children more dependent on the group. For girls the compulsory cutting of hair to a short length which easily identified them as LTTE cadre made escape from the group very difficult.

Children were provided with clothes including a uniform, necessities for menstruation if the recruit was female and a wooden dummy gun which they had

⁵⁴⁹ Interview with an Anonymous Source, USA, 27th September 2006. Charu Lata Hogg, 2006. p 9.

⁵⁵⁰ Charu Lata Hogg, 2006. p 10. The LTTE arrange community sports contests. Trawick, M., 2007. p 11.

⁵⁵¹ Interview with an Anonymous Source, by phone, 26th October 2007. Trawick, M., 2007. p 165.

⁵⁵² Swamy, M.R., 2008. p 96.

⁵⁵³ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 96. Human Rights Watch, 2007a. p 75. Interview with an Anonymous Source, by phone, 26th October 2007.

to carry everywhere until they got used to it.⁵⁵⁴ Within the movement there was strict discipline and procedures in regards the handling of weapons. Only once recruits were considered capable were they issued a real gun; this was viewed and experienced as a major achievement and shows a high level of group discipline.⁵⁵⁵ This is in stark contrast to Sierra Leone where the RUF gave children weapons almost instantly regardless of their ability to use them.

Although little is known about LTTE training methods it is believed that child units were trained in the jungle for approximately four months.⁵⁵⁶ It is believed that between 250-300 people could be trained at one time.⁵⁵⁷ Military training consisted of skills training and propaganda lessons. According to a survey carried out by Keairns, military training encompassed weapon handling, including landmines and bombs, military tactics, map reading, using a compass, how to escape if captured, how to undertake a night raid, how to enter enemy territory and collect intelligence, how to write up reports, how to track materials as stores keepers and intense physical exercise.⁵⁵⁸ The inclusion of professional military skills such as store keeping and the writing of reports shows some similarities with the FMLN who also depicted themselves as a professional force and is in

⁵⁵⁴ Interview with an Anonymous Source, Researcher, London, 28th September 2007. Keairns, Y., 2003. p 15.

⁵⁵⁵ Balasingham, A., 2001. p 60. Keairns, Y., 2003. p 8.

⁵⁵⁶ Charu Lata Hogg, 2006. p 9. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001.

⁵⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 24.

⁵⁵⁸ Keairns, Y., 2003. p 8-9. Interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007.

sharp contrast to the RUF in Sierra Leone who concentrated solely on weapons training, fitness and enforcing obedience.

After 1990 basic training of recruits became more problematic due to the increased number of child recruits. Attacks on poorly defended villages in contested regions were often used to prepare children for combat against government forces.⁵⁵⁹ Children were expected to train in all weathers and do the same training regardless of age or gender.⁵⁶⁰ According to a Quaker UN Office report 'The Voices of Girl Soldiers: Sri Lanka', children typically experienced the following schedule.⁵⁶¹ They woke up at 4am- 5am and carried out their ablutions whilst seeking to ensure that water supplies were protected and used sparingly; from 7am-8am the recruits had breakfast, followed by physical training from 8am-12pm. They were allowed one short break for water. Lunch was followed with special skills training 1.30pm-4pm. This included map reading, using a compass, knot tying, communications and hunting. Recruits were also expected to self-report during this period. Tea at 4pm would be followed by a parade at 5pm. At 6pm all recruits gather to say their oath and they retired to bed at 10pm. They slept on sacks laid on the ground in small sheds.

⁵⁵⁹ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001. Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 6.

⁵⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 24-25. Interview with an Anonymous Source, Researcher, London, 28th September 2007.

⁵⁶¹ Keairns, Y., 2003. p 7. Swamy also gives an account of LTTE training which has similar components. Swamy, M.R., 2008. p 98.

After basic training children were given advanced training for a further 5-7 months according to the areas they appeared most skilled in.⁵⁶² This training included combat operations, the use of specific weapons, security (as bodyguards for LTTE leadership) intelligence or non-military skills such as administration or medical care. Charu Lata Hogg argues that children were typically used initially in support roles, as cooks or guards for example, and then graduated to more demanding roles such as messengers or spies. When they were older they were inducted into the fighting forces, firstly in support roles and then in active combat.⁵⁶³

Children were used as, amongst other things, infantry troops, medics, and intelligence officers. It seems clear that children were inducted into the group tasks immediately, not restricted to certain duties that were seen as children's tasks, and not protected from more dangerous jobs because they were children.⁵⁶⁴ Rather they were assigned duties based on military necessity. Children with the least education were usually assigned to combat units; in this respect the LTTE's strategy was similar to many state armies where more educated recruits are steered towards more skilled roles and the uneducated become foot soldiers.⁵⁶⁵ During times of military inactivity children were sometimes used for political

⁵⁶² Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 26. Tasks were allocated according to skill, not age. Telephone Interview with Charu Lata Hogg, South Asia Researcher for Human Rights Watch and Associate Fellow for the Asia Program at Chatham House, 24th October 2007.

⁵⁶³ Charu Lata Hogg, 2006. p 9. Trawick, M., 2007. p 72.

⁵⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch, 2007a. p 3.

⁵⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 26. Human Rights Watch, 2007a. p 3.

activities, working to increase support for the movement.⁵⁶⁶ The wide range of jobs assigned to children suggests that they were deployed in the same way as adults rather than being kept for mundane and dangerous unskilled tasks as in found in Sierra Leone.

During periods of active combat the LTTE were known to deploy children in mass attacks during major battles.⁵⁶⁷ According to a Human Rights Watch report 'Living in Fear: Child Soldiers and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka' during the 1990s assessments found that 40-60% of dead LTTE fighters were less than 18 years old.⁵⁶⁸ It must be noted that this is in line with estimates of what percentage of total LTTE forces were underage and so it seems that child recruits did not experience disproportionate casualties to their numbers. This indicates that the LTTE used child and adult recruits in the same ways during active conflict rather than seeing children as more expendable and employing them disproportionately on the front lines.

A key element of deployment was the potential use of cyanide capsules by children. This started in 1984 and it was part of the oath of allegiance to commit to take cyanide if captured.⁵⁶⁹ Some former girl soldiers reported that they felt

⁵⁶⁶ Trawick, M., 2007. p 211.

⁵⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch, 2007a. p 3. Telephone Interview with Charu Lata Hogg, South Asia Researcher for Human Rights Watch and Associate Fellow for the Asia Program at Chatham House, 24th October 2007.

⁵⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 6. Bloom, M., 2005. p 65. Charu Lata Hogg, 2006. p 9.

⁵⁶⁹ Roberts, M., 2007. p 6.

safer having this option as they believed they would be abused and tortured if captured by the security forces.⁵⁷⁰ As the Sri Lankan government viewed the conflict as a security issue they viewed combatants, even those underage, as terrorists and usually detained and imprisoned them if captured. Children were often held in adult detention and it is believed that at least some underwent interrogation by state security forces. This mistreatment of captured child soldiers by the government goes some way to explaining the use of cyanide death by child recruits. The advantage for the LTTE was that it meant recruits would not be able to pass on information to the enemy and they ensured that all recruits knew of the brutal treatment to be expected at the hands of government forces. It is believed that a third of all LTTE deaths until 1992 were as a result of taking cyanide.⁵⁷¹

Girls and the LTTE.

The relationship between the LTTE and girls, both within and outside the movement, Tamil and non-Tamil, offers many insights into the movement. This section offers insights into the LTTE's relationship with its girl recruits. Girl recruits made up a significant percentage of the total LTTE child recruits. Of the total number of recruits within the LTTE the Sri Lankan military believe half

⁵⁷⁰ Keairns, Y., 2003. p 8.

⁵⁷¹ Roberts, M., 2007. p 7. Somasundaram, D., 1998. p 63.

were female; this is close to UNICEF estimates that 40% of child recruits were female.⁵⁷²

Alison argues that the LTTE recruited females for three main reasons; girls themselves were pressuring to join armed groups, the armed groups had manpower concerns and the inclusion of egalitarian principles by the LTTE allowed it to portray itself as a mass social movement.⁵⁷³ Girls often sought to join the LTTE to gain protection from situations of domestic abuse or in some cases to escape impending forced marriages.⁵⁷⁴ For other girls, traditional repression within the Tamil community restricted their opportunities, and girls received opportunities within the LTTE that they would be denied in the wider community.⁵⁷⁵ The capacity of the LTTE to attract girls can be seen in Adele Balasingham's account of the first female recruits, who initially went to India to train with TELO, a rival Tamil militant group.⁵⁷⁶ She reports that females were disillusioned with the lack of a women's organisational structure within the TELO movement; the LTTE were quick to capitalise on this offering the opportunity to

⁵⁷² Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 6. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001.

⁵⁷³ Alison, M., 2004. p 453.

⁵⁷⁴ Brett, R., and Specht, I., 2004. *Young Soldiers: Why they choose to fight*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers. p 48. Keairns, Y., 2003. p 11. Fox, M.J., 2004. *Girl Soldiers: Human Security and Gendered Insecurity*. *Security Dialogue*. 35(4). p 473.

⁵⁷⁵ Interview with an Anonymous Source, by phone, 26th October 2007. Somasundaram, D., 1998. p 98.

⁵⁷⁶ All Tamil militant groups emphasized that women had a role to play in national liberation. Alison, M., 2004. p 453.

undergo military training once there were enough recruits to set up a female only camp.⁵⁷⁷

The LTTE leadership used a mixture of egalitarian and nationalist rhetoric to justify the inclusion of girls and to encourage their recruitment. Girls were welcomed, because as citizens of a future Tamil state they were essential to the full mobilisation of the Tamil community; thus, egalitarian principles were utilised by the leadership as a way to attract female recruits. However, whilst the LTTE's adoption of total warfare and therefore the recruitment of girls is straightforward enough its true stance on women's liberation seems less clear cut.

It seems certain from the rhetoric that women's liberation was, at best, seen as coming second to national liberation. Only after national liberation was won would girls be free to achieve greater equality within a socialist Tamil state. What was also clear is that for girls within the LTTE traditional concepts of womanhood were disregarded. As in Sierra Leone and El Salvador, men dominated traditional civilian society and girls were expected to remain within their established gender roles.⁵⁷⁸ The recruitment of girls, particularly their use on the frontlines, went against these traditions. These breaks with tradition were acceptable to the LTTE because it was pursuing a strategy of total war. It is less clear how the general population felt about girls' involvement.

⁵⁷⁷ Balasingham, A., 2001. p 82.

⁵⁷⁸ See Skjonsberg, E., 1982.

However the LTTE's behaviour towards civilian girls highlights the complexities of the movement. Girls within the LTTE wore military uniforms and cut their hair short yet the LTTE enforced a strict code of dress for civilian girls based on traditional concepts of proper dress, prohibiting the cutting of a hair and issuing proclamations insisting on girl's modesty in appearance in keeping with tradition.⁵⁷⁹ Such actions seem to contradict the supposed egalitarian principles of the movement and it is suggested in the LTTE's literature that this was because 'the changes which have been taking place in our culture will only demean our society'.⁵⁸⁰ It would appear that the LTTE supported women's liberation as long as it was within traditional cultural boundaries. For example it was reported that they took action against husbands accused of domestic violence, they advocated eliminating the dowry system and they allowed women to sit on the local courts and arbitrate disputes so some advancement of women's rights occurred but women were still expected to comply with traditional norms in terms of behavior and appearance.⁵⁸¹ What is clear, however, is that as an ethno-nationalist group the nation always came before other concerns.⁵⁸² The LTTE were undoubtedly committed to the goal of Tamil Eelam and were prepared to manipulate gender related cultural norms in any way necessary to achieve their goals. That the LTTE

⁵⁷⁹ Gile, W et al., Ed. 2003. *Feminist under Fire: Exchanges across War Zones*. Toronto: Between the Lines. p 64. Alison, M., 2004. p 459. Wood, E., 2009. *Armed Groups and Sexual Violence: When is Wartime Rape Rare? Politics and Society*. 37(1). p 150.

⁵⁸⁰ Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2004. *Between Reality and Representation: Women's Agency in War and Post-Conflict Sri Lanka*. *Cultural Dynamics*. 16(23). p 154 .Gile, W et al., Ed. 2003. p 64. Alison alleges that there was a tension in the LTTE between the necessity of recruiting women and the desire to preserve gender norms. Alison, M., 2004. p 461.

⁵⁸¹ Cheran, R., Ed. 2009. p 129.

⁵⁸² Alison, M., 2004. p 455.

still enforced expected female cultural norms outside of the group, despite having little reliance on the local population for support, hints that the emancipation of women and girls within the military sphere was done out of military necessity, it was not wholly embraced on a social or cultural level.⁵⁸³ The ability to disregard societal norms and traditions when it suited the cause can also be seen to have occurred in the recruitment of children more generally.

The recruitment of girls happened in response to what other groups were doing; this parallels the recruitment of boys. The LTTE started to recruit girls because to have not recruited them would have put the group at a military disadvantage at a time when other groups were extending their manpower strategies. They were not the first group to recruit girls and it therefore seems unlikely that the LTTE recruited girls primarily because of ideological beliefs. It was not that the group's ideology drove recruitment, but rather that the group had no ideological deterrent to prevent recruitment from occurring once it appeared to be a military option.

Post recruitment, girls and boys underwent the same training. As girls were placed in separate units to boys, they had to undertake all tasks required of a military unit.⁵⁸⁴ It would not have been possible to allocate tasks within a unit based on gender. However, Alison states that female units were initially used in support

⁵⁸³ Alison cites interviewees as saying that there was some resistance within the LTTE to female involvement. Alison, M., 2004. p 455.

⁵⁸⁴ Eyewitness account of a military attack on a Sinhalese village by a unit of girls, Mukarji, A., 2000. p 68.

roles such as information collection, fundraising, recruitment, propaganda units and medical units before being deployed in battle from 1986.⁵⁸⁵ She goes on to say that the recruitment of females, of whom some were girls, was aggressive by the mid-1980s and that by 1989 the women's wing had its own leadership structure and thus some autonomy.

Although boys and girls appear to have been used in the same ways by the LTTE, there was one role in which females dominated. In addition to their roles as medics, political officers and front-line combatants, they were also regularly used as suicide bombers as they could evade security forces more easily than males.⁵⁸⁶ There are some limited reports that girls were used for suicide bombings.⁵⁸⁷

An area concerning female recruitment that can shed light on the LTTE is that of the sexual abuse of female recruits. An area where the LTTE differed to other groups - and where they were in marked contrast to the RUF – was that of the sexual abuse of girls. Relationships including of a sexual nature were strictly prohibited and sexual abuse appeared to be rare; the LTTE were known to arrest members for the rape of other cadres.⁵⁸⁸ Although girls and boys both fought in

⁵⁸⁵ Gile, W et al., Ed. 2003. p 57. Alison. M., 2004. p 450.

⁵⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch, 2004. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001.

⁵⁸⁷ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 6-7.

⁵⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 6. Keairns, Y., 2003. p 8. Fox, M.J., 2004. p 473. Interview with an Anonymous Source, by phone, 26th October 2007. Interview with Manuel Fountain, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF, New York, 3rd October 2006. Interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007. Telephone Interview with

battles it was LTTE policy that males and females should keep a 'respectful distance'.⁵⁸⁹ Boys and girls were separated for basic training and within single sex military units once deployed.⁵⁹⁰ Segregation of the sexes and the lack of drugs and alcohol within the LTTE (also prohibited by the movement) would have assisted commanders in enforcing policies prohibiting sexual relationships and at the same time also reduced the opportunities to engage in sexual abuses.

However, the LTTE did not just seek to reduce casual sexual relationships.

Marriage – at least until 1997 - was forbidden between members unless each had served a minimum of five years.⁵⁹¹ There were two motivations for such strict segregation of the sexes. Firstly, separation of the sexes meant less distraction for recruits, allowing them to commit more fully to the group.⁵⁹² There was, in Hindu thought, a belief that chastity and sexual purity gave moral strength and energy for self-sacrifice and thus aided recruits to be more self-sacrificing in the name of the cause.⁵⁹³ Secondly, the LTTE emerged within a traditional culture. Although they went against this culture in their recruitment of girls, keeping the sexes

Michael Shieler, Director of Programmes, Search for Common Ground, Nepal, 13th October 2006. The LTTE have also arrested people for supplying pornography. Interview with an Anonymous Source, Researcher, London, 28th September 2007.

⁵⁸⁹ Trawick, M., 2007. p 67.

⁵⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 24. Interview with an Anonymous Source, USA, 27th September 2006. Interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007. Roberts, M., 2007. p 23.

⁵⁹¹ Trawick, M., 2007. p 100-101. Interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007. The suspected affair of the Chairman of the Central Committee with a female LTTE cadre resulted in an internal crisis and both parties to the supposed affair were eventually expelled from the movement. Balasingham, A., 2001. p 51. Swamy, M.R., 2008. p 51.

⁵⁹² Swamy, M.R., 2008. p 37.

⁵⁹³ Cheran, R., Ed. 2009. p 126.

separated may have allayed some fears within the wider community, and possibly within the group, regarding the proprieties of girls being involved.⁵⁹⁴ Although this sheds some light on the possible reasons for the lack of sexual relationships and opportunities for sexual abuse within the LTTE, it does not clarify the lack of sexual abuse against civilians perpetrated by recruits.

The lack of sexual abuse perpetrated against Tamil civilian girls appeared to be attributable to the nature of the movement. As an ethno-nationalist movement, the LTTE saw Tamil civilians as their future constituency.⁵⁹⁵ As a movement seeking legitimacy and governance, allowing troops to rape girls of their own ethnic group would have damaged the LTTE's claim that it was the true representative of the Tamil nation. Indeed the LTTE used the figure of the raped woman as a symbol of the 'debased Tamil nation'.⁵⁹⁶ The LTTE sought to appeal to potential female recruits through highlighting the dangers of remaining within a unitary Sri Lankan state.⁵⁹⁷ Sexual abuses by state security forces were publicised by the LTTE and served as an example of why the recruitment of girls and thus the achievement of Tamil Eelam was necessary. Such a strategy served to minimise sexual abuses by the LTTE, which could not highlight sexual abuses by the state security forces if its own troops were also engaging in sexual abuse of Tamil civilians. Thus, girls came to see membership of the LTTE as a way to circumvent becoming a victim

⁵⁹⁴ Alison, M., 2004. p 455.

⁵⁹⁵ Wood, E., 2009. p 141.

⁵⁹⁶ Cheran, R., Ed. 2009. p 123.

⁵⁹⁷ Alison, M., 2004. p 453.

of sexual abuse and rape by government agents and the ending of violence against females became a key part of the agenda articulated by the LTTE.⁵⁹⁸

What marked the Sri Lankan case as unusual was the absence of sexual violence in context of the extreme levels of other types of violence directed at non-Tamils.⁵⁹⁹ Whilst concerns over group cohesion and efficiency, legitimacy and attracting recruits may account for the lack of sexual violence against Tamil civilians and LTTE members, it is a less likely argument to account for the lack of sexual violence against non-Tamils. Firstly, if the LTTE's primary concern was international legitimacy, why continue with suicide bombing, general abuses against non-Tamil civilians and child recruitment? Secondly many armed groups use rape of the ethnic 'other', to attract recruits (reward) or bind them as a group (some scholars believe that gang rape can promote group cohesion especially in groups that used forced recruitment methods) or as a tool to promote ethnic dominance and subjugation of the 'other' so why did the LTTE not do the same?⁶⁰⁰

LTTE troops had the opportunity to engage in the sexual abuse of non-Tamils. In 1990 the LTTE expelled all Muslims from the Jaffna Peninsula; this was a clear

⁵⁹⁸ Cheran, R., Ed. 2009. p 123.

⁵⁹⁹ Wood, E., 2009. p 134.

⁶⁰⁰ Cohen, D., 2010. Explaining Sexual Violence during Civil War. PhD. Stanford University. (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [28/09/2011].
Wood, E., 2009. p 140.

case of ethnic cleansing yet the rape that often accompanies such actions was absent. The LTTE also regularly attacked non-Tamil villages (especially during training). Again, despite the violence, rape was not reported. As the state security forces were already known for raping Tamil women and girls (and non-Tamil women in institutional settings such as police stations and prisons) it was not the fear of retaliation that stopped LTTE cadres from committing sexual violence. It seems more likely, given the group's strategy of highlighting rape by its enemy, that the LTTE sought to maintain the moral high ground by also prohibiting the rape of non-Tamil females. Certainly the hierarchy of the LTTE appeared to have been strong enough to control its cadres if the leadership had decided on such a policy. That the LTTE leadership had command of their troops and control over the abuses those troops committed was demonstrated by the lack of sexual abuse that occurred. Wood argues that a strong hierarchy is necessary in order to enforce a policy of no sexual violence.⁶⁰¹ It may also be that cultural restraints acted to prevent sexual violence on an individual level. Sexual relations of any type outside of marriage and between castes was (and is) prohibited in Tamil culture, as was the rape of non-spouses (marital rape is common) and this may have had some impact on preventing sexual abuses.⁶⁰² Whilst cultural prohibitions regarding sexual violence may have aided the LTTE to prevent sexual abuses it most likely would not have prevented the LTTE from introducing sexual violence into its repertoire of violence had it wished to do so.

⁶⁰¹ Wood, E., *Armed Groups and Sexual Violence: When is Wartime Rape Rare? Politics and Society*. 2009. 37(1). p 136.

⁶⁰² Human Rights Watch, 2007b. *Exported and Exposed: Abuses Against Sri Lankan Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon and the UAE*. 19(16c) Accessed through www.hrw.org [30/07/2008]. p 11.

Abuses.

Some abuse drew on the manipulation of cultural beliefs.⁶⁰³ Children were often punished via beatings in Sri Lanka and this was considered an acceptable punishment within the LTTE.⁶⁰⁴ Children were usually treated within the boundaries of cultural acceptance but in some instances the LTTE used harsher punishments than that found in the wider community. These punishments were not randomly allocated as found in Sierra Leone, but were instead standardised and for military purposes. They were carried out strategically on individuals/units as an example rather than en mass, for example children who had transgressed LTTE rules were beaten to instil fear and send a message to other children about their behaviour.⁶⁰⁵

Child recruits within the LTTE were seriously punished for even minor transgressions such as disobedience. Punishments ranged from kitchen duties, extra physical training and public beatings to detention in isolation rooms, which

⁶⁰³ Telephone Interview with Charu Lata Hogg, South Asia Researcher for Human Rights Watch and Associate Fellow for the Asia Program at Chatham House, 24th October 2007. Interview with an Anonymous Source, USA, 27th September 2006.

⁶⁰⁴ Interview with an Anonymous Source, USA, 27th September 2006. Interview with an Anonymous Source, Researcher, London, 28th September 2007.

⁶⁰⁵ Interview with an Anonymous Source, USA, 27th September 2006. Interview with an Anonymous Source, by phone, 26th October 2007.

were kept at extreme temperatures.⁶⁰⁶ Collective punishment of units also occurred.⁶⁰⁷ Recruits were, at times, forced to march for long periods of time with no food or continue with missions even if suffering from minor illnesses such as skin complaints. Recruits who didn't kill the enemy could be punished and also had to observe fellow cadre being shot by their own side if they were captured to prevent them giving information to the enemy.⁶⁰⁸

Arbitrary punishment, however, appears to have been uncommon. Children were most likely to be punished when they committed an infraction that damaged the military capacity of the LTTE such as refusing to engage with the enemy in battle, disobeying commanders, or threatening the cohesion of the group via attempted escape or by voicing public discontentment. Children in the LTTE had value as future citizens as well as worth as military assets, particularly as they were members of a minority group. It would not have been in the LTTE's long-term interest to reduce its future constituency by employing extreme and capricious punishments that may have resulted in injury or death.

⁶⁰⁶ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001. See also Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 24.

⁶⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 28.

⁶⁰⁸ Keairns, Y., 2003. p 9.

The “Attraction” of the LTTE to Children.

The voluntary recruitment of children in Sri Lanka needs to be understood within a complex set of personal, economic, social and political motives.⁶⁰⁹ Often it was a combination of factors that led to child recruits seeking to join the LTTE. As for the organisation it appeared to have been happy to encourage child volunteers and claimed that it would be unthinkable to ‘refuse their desire to combat Sinhalese imperialism, which is the concern of all Tamils’.⁶¹⁰

As is the case in many conflicts children were part of their family’s response to the armed group. Family involvement with the LTTE encouraged some children to become involved.⁶¹¹ Although other families that supported the LTTE went to great lengths to stop their own children from enlisting due to fears over the dangers that their children would face.⁶¹² However family involvement was not the only reason children sought to join the LTTE. In some instances peer pressure from older siblings and friends who had joined, and encouragement from within the wider community, persuaded children to join even against their parent’s wishes.

⁶⁰⁹ Brett, R., and Specht, I., 2004. p 11.

⁶¹⁰ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 35.

⁶¹¹ Trawick, M., 2007. p 175. Brett, R., and Specht, I., 2004. p 24.

⁶¹² Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 39. Trawick, M., 2007. p 61.

According to Adele Balasingham, the leader of the LTTE was known as a disciplinarian as early as the 1970s when the movement was first founded. She refers to his belief that discipline contributed to morale and the high performance of cadres, and argued that his popularity was partially related to his disciplined approach and high moral character, which appealed to many within the Tamil community.⁶¹³ The LTTE prohibition on alcohol and smoking, and fairness in only taking taxes according to what families could afford in the earlier stages of the conflict encouraged support for them during this time. As many adults in the community were drawn to the LTTE because of the image of its leader, so too were children, leading many to join the LTTE over other Tamil groups.⁶¹⁴

Language issues are a large part of the conflict in Sri Lanka. This is due to the perception by Tamils that the Tamil language is an integral part of their culture and also because of the importance of language for employment. Tamil was portrayed as the language of emigrants and thus not on a par with Sinhalese. The 1956 Sinhala Only Act gave greater credence to the idea of the two populations as separate entities, making language a key factor in ethnic tensions.⁶¹⁵ Tamil identity and demands were subsequently portrayed by those associated with the

⁶¹³ Balasingham, A., 2001. p 41.

⁶¹⁴ The LTTE have a strict stance on alcohol and the use of alcohol or drugs could result in expulsion from the movement. Interview with Manuel Fountain, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF, New York, 3rd October 2006. Balasingham, A., 2001. p 58. Human Rights Watch, 2007a. p 48.

⁶¹⁵ De Silva, K.M., 2005. p 626. For a detailed discussion of language in Sri Lankan politics see 'Chapter two, The Language Problem: The Politics of Linguistic Nationalism', in De Silva, K.M, 1998.

LTTE as having ‘developed mainly as a reaction to the increasing dominance of the Sinhala-Buddhist identity’.⁶¹⁶

Somasundaram argues that the young are particularly vulnerable to identity based issues (language is a key component of identity) as they experience a period of intense identity formation during adolescence.⁶¹⁷ He goes on to state that they are also clannish and so are adept at pledging blind loyalty to their own group whilst excluding those perceived as being from outside the group. Thus the state’s attack on Tamil language, with its cultural and economic implications, was often seen as a key factor for the involvement of Tamil youth with militant groups.

Children, whilst attracted to the LTTE due to its stated ideals; to fight for the creation of an independent state, Tamil Eelam, and protect the culture, language and basic rights of the Tamil nation (which also had widespread appeal amongst the Tamil population), were also driven to join the group due to more material concerns and security fears. As one mother confided,

‘My daughter was fourteen when she joined the LTTE. My husband died. We had no income. No food’.
(Tamil civilian, Si Lanka)⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁶ Somasundaram, D., 1998. p 95. IISS Armed Conflict Database. Accessed through www.armed-groups.org. [10/03/2010].

⁶¹⁷ Somasundaram, D., 1998. p 97.

⁶¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 21

The issue of children joining the LTTE for material reasons was rooted in the economic environment of their communities. A lack of jobs and frustrated ambitions for adolescents with education and no prospects played a role in voluntary recruitment. The LTTE provided for families but in return children had to be given to the movement. For some families the knowledge that children would be fed was enough to ensure their recruitment.

‘I can feed my family but only after my sons joined the LTTE.

Every LTTE cadre gets three square meals a day and that is a considerable attraction for poor families’.

(Tamil father)⁶¹⁹

Political marginalisation was exacerbated by the worsening economic conditions which disproportionately affected Tamils, due to the introduction of discriminatory economic policies. Higher educational standards within certain sectors of the Sri Lankan population who took advantage of the universal education system weren’t matched by comparable job creation. These circumstances resulted in a growing number of ‘educated unemployed’ and gave little hope to children following the same educational pathways.⁶²⁰ This was exacerbated in the Tamil areas by Sinhala only language policies and the standardisation of education, under which Tamils needed higher grades than their Sinhalese counterparts and fluency in the Sinhalese language for access to the

⁶¹⁹ Mukarji, A., 2000. p 46.

⁶²⁰ De Silva K.M., 2005. p 659.

same jobs and university courses, resulting in the historical route of public sector employment being closed to the majority of Tamils.⁶²¹

By the mid-1970s Tamil unemployment rates, particularly high amongst the youth, were 43%, increasing socio-economic marginalisation and feelings of resentment. Frustrated ambitions amongst Tamil youth were a large part of their grievance against the state and created the 'socioeconomic underpinnings of a militant guerrilla movement'.⁶²² Most of the young militants were state school educated, property-less and lower middle class.⁶²³ The LTTE viewed themselves as a professional army and as such offered skills and training to recruits.⁶²⁴ The perceived professionalism of the LTTE, its position as the de facto government and a willingness to offer skills training offered an alternative in an environment where traditional education and employment opportunities had been drastically reduced and children saw no future. Children had little economic incentive to remain outside of the LTTE and they often gained a career and economic benefits by their membership. Poverty and the lack of opportunities within Tamil dominated areas aided recruitment.⁶²⁵

⁶²¹ De Silva, K. M., 2005. p 610. Bigdon, C., 2003. p 9.

⁶²² Krishna, S., 1999. p 76. Verma, D., 1991. p 159. Bouffard, S., and Carment, D., 2006. p 156.

⁶²³ Gamage, S., and Watson, I., Ed. 1999. p 306-307. This was paralleled within the Sinhalese community where unemployment also increased enlistment of Sinhalese youth into the Sri Lankan Security Forces. Christian Science Monitor. November 29th 2006. Youth are joining the military from poor areas. Interview with an Anonymous Source, USA, 27th September 2006.

⁶²⁴ Interview with an Anonymous Source, Researcher, London, 28th September 2007. IT, photography, film or political classes can be taken via the LTTE. Trawick, M., 2007. p 172.

⁶²⁵ Telephone Interview with Charu Lata Hogg, South Asia Researcher for Human Rights Watch and Associate Fellow for the Asia Program at Chatham House, 24th October 2007. Interview with

Other children were pushed into joining due to more immediate material concerns. There were benefits associated with being a member of the LTTE that encouraged some children to enlist; these were social - as in enhanced status - and material.⁶²⁶ LTTE provided food and clothes to members which was a reason given by children from families who could not provide for them adequately.⁶²⁷ The families of child recruits and LTTE dead were considered martyrs and their families were provided with free transport and food.⁶²⁸ Knowing that involvement in the armed group would not damage the family's interests in the event of death but actually enhance it would possibly have helped to convince some to join.

In addition to economic incentives membership of the LTTE also conferred other benefits, such as protection within the group. Some children saw LTTE membership as a way of learning when government attacks were going to take place and being safeguarded by the movement, rather than remaining as civilians and being left to fend for themselves.⁶²⁹ The LTTE had hospitals and trained medics; former recruits report that when ill or injured they were treated, either by medics on the frontline or in LTTE run hospitals.⁶³⁰ LTTE members who were injured either returned to combat units or were transferred depending on the

an Anonymous Source, USA, 27th September 2006. Human Rights Watch, 2007a. p 73. Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (2006) section 4.

⁶²⁶ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 5. Keairns, Y., 2003. p 11. Bloom, M., 2005. p 65.

⁶²⁷ Brett, R., and Specht, I., 2004. p 44. Trawick, M., 2007. p 64.

⁶²⁸ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 39. Charu Lata Hogg, 2006. p 9.

⁶²⁹ Trawick, M., 2007. p 130.

⁶³⁰ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 29. Keairns, Y., 2003. p 8.

extent of their injuries. One child interviewed by Human Rights Watch stated that after being injured in battle she was retrained for administrative duties.⁶³¹ Thus many children may have seen the future offered by the LTTE as more secure than one outside the group where the government that should have worked to ensure the children's physical security through state agencies and the provision of health care instead was acting in ways detrimental to their safety.

As discussed, support for the LTTE reached its height in the 1980s due to oppression and human rights abuses perpetrated by the government, the security forces and the wider Sinhalese community.⁶³² The introduction of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (1979) allowed the armed forces to detain persons without trial (including children) for up to 18 months, bury those shot without identification or an inquest, admit confessions taken by the police, often under torture, in court and prevent access to a lawyer. Asia Watch also documented the execution of 12-14 year old boys by government forces in 1987.⁶³³ In addition Tamil youth were often used as forced unpaid labour by government forces.⁶³⁴ The provisions of the act were disproportionate to the scale of terrorism at this time and it was counterproductive, as it increased support for militant Tamil groups. Many

⁶³¹ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 27. Trawick, M., 2007. p 204.

⁶³² Bjorgo, T., Ed. 2005. p 135. Keairns, Y., 2003. p 11.

⁶³³ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 41.

⁶³⁴ Brett, R., and Specht, I., 2004. p 40.

children cite the principle factor in their decision to join as having experienced or witnessed abuses by government troops.⁶³⁵ As one boy attested,

‘In 1991, the Army burnt my house and raped women in my neighbourhood. They tortured us’.
(Child combatant, LTTE)⁶³⁶

Despite children’s anger at government abuses this did not necessarily translate into unqualified involvement with armed groups. Trawick writes that as of 1997, 10,000 LTTE members had died in combat; because of this from the mid-1990s children became more aware that LTTE membership may lead to premature death, which created greater resistance to recruitment.⁶³⁷ Children in the Paduvankarai area in the late 1990s said that if the army came they would join the LTTE and die; if the army didn’t come then they would not join and live.⁶³⁸ This shows the child’s capacity to weigh up the benefits and negatives of joining an armed group. Children were deciding in advance the conditions under which they would feel that not joining the armed group was no longer viable.

Children, with their family’s assistance, sought ways to avoid recruitment. This was particularly the case after the 2002 ceasefire when parents became very unhappy about their children’s continuing recruitment by the LTTE, and some

⁶³⁵ Human Rights Watch, 2007a. p 74. Brett, R., and Specht, I., 2004. p 56.

⁶³⁶ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 22.

⁶³⁷ Trawick, M., 2007. p 102, p 110-111.

⁶³⁸ Trawick, M., 2007. p 129-230.

children were sent out of the LTTE areas.⁶³⁹ In response, after the breakdown of the ceasefire in 2006 the LTTE increased its control over the population in its areas by withholding visas or compelling those issued with visas to leave behind a family member as a guarantee the visa holder would return. If the visa holder did not return then the family member would be arrested and was at times compelled to undergo forced labour.⁶⁴⁰ In addition it was rare for the LTTE to issue visas to persons between 15-45 years, those of military age. If the families or individuals did escape they faced being imprisoned by the Sri Lankan government.⁶⁴¹

A further risk for individuals was that once a potential recruit escaped the LTTE areas or went into hiding, the group was known to recruit or hold hostage other family members, including younger siblings.⁶⁴² Some children would be pressured to join to protect family members.⁶⁴³ In September 2008 the LTTE announced a more punitive policy for those trying to avoid recruitment, up to 10 family members would be arrested and used for forced labour.⁶⁴⁴

In addition to making rational choices about the benefits and negatives of joining the LTTE prior to membership, some individuals also attempted to assert agency

⁶³⁹ Shanmugaratnam, N., Ed. 2008. p 126.

⁶⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch, December 2008a. p 4.

⁶⁴¹ Human Rights Watch, 2008b. *Besieged, Displaced and Detained: The Plight of Civilians in the Sri Lanka Vanni Region*. USA: Human Rights Watch. p 11. Sri Lankan Special Task Force known to use torture as an interrogation technique. Machel, G., 2001. p 10.

⁶⁴² Human Rights Watch, December 2008a. p 2.

⁶⁴³ Interview with an Anonymous Source, by phone, 26th October 2007.

⁶⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch, December 2008a. p 9. Trawick, M., 2007. p 184.

once conscripted by leaving the group. Partially because of harsh punishments found within the group and partially because of the dangers of belonging to an armed group, children at times tried to escape from the LTTE. However it was nearly impossible to leave the LTTE (and the LTTE controlled areas) and children that did make it to the south of Sri Lanka faced detention by government forces and the harassment of any family members remaining in the LTTE areas by the armed group. If they expressed the desire to leave publicly whilst still in the group they risked corporal punishment which was often carried out in front of other LTTE troops followed by a transfer to areas of high risk or assignment of heavy and dangerous work.⁶⁴⁵ One child acknowledged that,

‘Lots of people try to escape. But if you get caught, they take you back and beat you. Some children die. If you do it twice, they shoot you’

(Child Combatant, LTTE)⁶⁴⁶

As a hard-line ethno-nationalist group the LTTE viewed absconding as a national betrayal deserving of the harshest punishment. Although some women were reported to have been allowed to leave active combat on the condition that they still aided the movement in support roles, others who spoke out against the LTTE were detained and possibly killed.⁶⁴⁷ Despite this there were limited reports that children did try to leave the LTTE, despite many of them having joined as

⁶⁴⁵ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 96. Human Rights Watch, 2007a. p 75.

⁶⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch, 2004. p 28.

⁶⁴⁷ In 2002 Prabhakaran declared that ‘he should be considered a traitor’ if he gave up the fight for Tamil Eelam. Swamy M.R., 2008. p xvi. Giles, W et al., 2003. p 69-70.

volunteers, often because of poor treatment.⁶⁴⁸ It could be that during the ceasefire, a time of relative peace, the benefits of belonging to a group such as the LTTE were outweighed by the negative experiences that children suffered.

Conclusion.

The ethno-nationalist agenda of the LTTE and the adoption of a total war strategy to achieve its objectives had several implications for the use of children by the group. Firstly only Tamil children were recruited. Secondly all Tamil civilians were seen as potential recruits. Thirdly, because political legitimacy and the conservation of a demographic majority in Tamil claimed areas were necessary for claims of statehood, the organisation made some efforts to protect children from harm.

The LTTE struggled to maintain a balance between military and political concerns throughout the conflict. On the one hand its military defeat, in the eyes of the organisation at least, equalled the ending of Tamil ambitions for a separate sovereign state. To the LTTE the emancipation and thus survival of the nation was intricately linked to the survival of the organisation. As a result all possible actions necessary to keep the organisation functioning effectively were possible

⁶⁴⁸ Interview with an Anonymous Source, USA, 27th September 2006.

including the recruitment and deployment of children. On the other hand the LTTE needed domestic and international legitimacy if it ever wished to force a permanent two state solution to the conflict.

One of the key claims of the LTTE was that it was seeking self-determination. As a result the LTTE needed to ensure the continuation of a Tamil majority within the boundaries of the proposed state it was attempting to create. This had the effect of making the LTTE ruthless in its attempts to prevent Tamils from leaving the areas that it controlled but stopped it from acting out extreme abuses upon the population. Even in the final days of the conflict when the LTTE shot civilians attempting to leave for areas of safety it is alleged that they aimed to prevent movement rather than to kill. This is perhaps not a great point of distinction for the victims, many of whom died regardless, but it shows that the LTTE never sanctioned the extreme brutality towards civilians found in the Sierra Leone conflict. This is because the need for political legitimacy acted in some ways as a restraint on the organisation.

Children, prevented from leaving LTTE areas by the organisation and by the fear of what they might be subjected to by the government if their escape was successful, were trapped and extremely vulnerable to recruitment. In the beginning, this mainly took the form of voluntary recruitment. Under direct attack from the IPKF in the mid 1980s many children sought to join the LTTE for

protection and to fight for the cause of Tamil Eelam, which was seen as the only hope for long-term collective security. However recruitment levels fluctuated. In times of relative peace where imminent threats were not so acute individuals were not so keen to volunteer. These were the times at which the LTTE resorted to forced recruitment. Children were increasingly targeted as a vital source of recruits. By the end of the conflict the LTTE relied heavily on forced recruitment practices and support for the organisation was based more on a lack of alternatives than zealous adherence to the group.

Once children were in the organisation they were given relatively high levels of training for most of the conflict and, according to aptitude, could also undergo advanced training in more difficult skills. They were organised and deployed according to the LTTE's notions of how professional forces should be. The desire to be seen as a de facto government fed into the evolution of the LTTE's military apparatus along the lines of a conventional state armed force. This resulted in child recruits facing similar conditions and being deployed in ways similar to those found within many conventional armed groups.

The LTTE's ability to move between expediency and protection can be seen clearly in its policies towards girls. As a group using a total war approach girls were an important source of recruits. They were recruited, trained and deployed in similar ways to boys. Yet the LTTE also sought, as an ethno-nationalist group, to

protect Tamil culture and customs; girls were kept separate from boys wherever possible, girls outside the group were subjected to strict policies imposing traditional notions of dress and behaviour, and licentious behaviour within the group was not tolerated. As a result the sexual abuse of girls was not reported. Indeed in its efforts to ensure that recruits had only allegiance to the organisation, the LTTE made it difficult even for consensual relationships to flourish although this stance relaxed to some degree as the conflict became increasingly protracted.

As soldiers children faced injury and death. Punishments for infractions were harsh and yet the organisation, where possible, sought to conserve its strength. Children were not randomly abused at the whim of commanders, routinely sent into battle with little care for their survival or executed for even minor transgressions as found within the RUF. In its desire to retain legitimacy, act as a professional force and ensure the continuation of the Tamil nation, it was not in the best interests of the LTTE to brutalise and abuse its child recruits. Abuse did occur but it was deployed in a military capacity and was not extreme or capricious in its violence. The one exception to this claim is the use of cyanide death to which child recruits were expected to subject themselves to if faced by capture or certain defeat. As an extreme ethno-nationalist group the LTTE saw capture by the enemy as tantamount to being a traitor, especially given that recruits, even children, were tortured for information by state security forces.

Despite the hardships faced within the LTTE many children, particularly when child recruitment was first introduced, did make the decision to volunteer to join the LTTE. For some the group offered opportunity in an environment where education and employment did not. For others the ability to protect themselves was seen as a greater part of the armed organisation. Certain members believed in the cause of Tamil Eelam as the solution for long-term collective security, which drew them into the movement. Caught within a situation that they could not escape however, the notion of being a volunteer has less resonance than it finds in the El Salvadoran conflict. Children had few ways to escape the conflict entirely. As part of an authoritarian and hierarchical organisation which sought to tightly control all aspects of deployment and discipline, children had little ability to act with agency once within the group. As a member of an ethno-nationalist movement in which desertion was tantamount to national betrayal, children had little opportunity to successfully leave the organisation.

The recruitment and deployment of children in Sri Lanka can be seen in many ways to reflect aspects also evident in the other two cases although in some respects it was unique. As in El Salvador, concerns over political legitimacy acted as a restraint on children's recruitment, deployment and particularly on their abuse. In neither case was sexual abuse evident. The desire to offer a political vision of an alternative state led both to act as though the military wings of the organisations were professional armed forces. The financial independence of the LTTE enabled it, as in Sierra Leone, to override the local population and subject it

to the organisation's notions of what the alternative state would be like. Forced recruitment could be resorted to without damaging the logistical capacity of the LTTE. However, the LTTE had an inbuilt need to temper its actions so that its involvement in the conflict did not adversely impact on the survival of the nation. This gave recruits protection from the worst of the excesses found within the RUF. However it also meant that children, as a valuable resource caught up in an all-encompassing total war strategy, within a protracted conflict, were highly vulnerable to recruitment, which, as the sense of crisis grew within the LTTE, increasingly meant forcible conscription. This did not translate into increasing abuse however, as the need to preserve the Tamil nation continued to act as a protective factor in mitigating the levels of abuse that children faced.

Chapter Five: Conflict and Child Soldiers in El Salvador.

Section One: Overview of the Conflict.

Prior to and during the civil war, El Salvador was a country driven by considerable social and political divisions. The belief that such schisms could only be resolved through armed conflict developed out of the state's refusal to allow any meaningful political engagement and negotiation. Repression of civil society, electoral fraud by the governing elites and an economic system detrimental to most citizens fuelled radicalisation and dissent.

According to the FMLN it was as political and civil channels were closed to them that they took up armed violence and the five armed groups were founded.⁶⁴⁹

Seeking greater success, which had, up to this point, eluded them, in 1980 the five groups created a coalition, the Farabundo Marti Nacional Liberation Front (FMLN).⁶⁵⁰ Initially the emphasis was placed on more conventional tactics and direct engagements with the enemy. Such tactics did not, however, suit the opposition's lesser capacity and the leadership moved toward less conventional

⁶⁴⁹ CENSA, 1983. *Listen Companero: Conversations with Central American Revolutionary Leaders*. San Francisco: Solidarity Publications. p 17.

⁶⁵⁰ Faribundo Marti was a social activist in El Salvador in the 1920's and 1930's. He was involved in the La Matanza, the social uprising in 1932 that resulted in 30,000 peasants being killed. He was arrested and executed in the same year.

guerrilla tactics.⁶⁵¹ Initially this resulted in lower levels of support for the FMLN and the desertion of existing recruits.

Over time, as the switch to guerrilla tactics proved militarily successful, recruitment levels once again began to increase. The continuing repression and the assassination of Archbishop Romero in 1982 by government agents acted to fuel recruitment as people were further radicalised and driven underground. Government repression left few options for those who wished to oppose the government except for joining the guerrillas.

By the mid 1980s the FMLN controlled a third of El Salvadoran territory and had set up alternative systems of administration in their areas of control.⁶⁵²

Democratic structures were introduced at a local level and the FMLN attempted to showcase their vision for the future. Engagements with the armed forces continued and military stalemate appeared infinite.

In 1989 the FMLN undertook a second 'final offensive'. Although they again failed to overthrow the government, they did highlight that they were capable of continuing the war indefinitely. This, alongside other developments, which

⁶⁵¹ Maclean, J., 1987. *Prolonging the Agony: The Human Cost of Low Intensity Warfare in El Salvador*. Nottingham: Russell Press Ltd. p 28.

⁶⁵² Alegria, C., 1983. *They Won't Take Me Alive*. London: The Women's Press. p 21. Maclean, J., 1987. p 21. Fish, J., and Sganga, C., 1988. *El Salvador: Testament of Terror*. London: Zed Books Ltd. p 50. CENSA, 1983. p 26.

included reducing external support for both parties to the conflict and increasing democratisation, increased pressure on both parties to the conflict to agree to pursue peace. The Peace Accords were eventually signed in 1992.

Overall the El Salvador conflict lasted for 12 years (1979-92) and resulted in 1.5 million refugees and 70,000 dead.⁶⁵³ 20% of all FMLN recruits were younger than 18 years old and 80% of total recruits in the Armed Forces of El Salvador (FAES) were younger than 18 years.⁶⁵⁴ Within the FMLN approximately 30% of Salvadoran guerrillas were female and 60% of logistical support was provided by females, including children.⁶⁵⁵ The conflict was most extensive in the west and north of the country. In the eastern regions, where the military had a greater presence and the population was further away from FMLN strongholds, the effects of the conflict were less and the FMLN exerted less effort to politicise or recruit members.

⁶⁵³ Luciak, I., 1999. Gender Equality in the Salvadoran Transition. *Latin American Perspectives*. 26(2). pp43-67. p 43.

⁶⁵⁴ See also Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001. *Child Soldiers Global Report: A global report to stop the use of child soldiers*. London: Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. p159. Approximately 2000 underage children served with the FMLN. Farzaneh, N., 2008. *Children at High-Risk: A Comparative Analysis of the Case of Child Soldiers in Iran and in El Salvador USA*: VDM Verlag. p 6.

⁶⁵⁵ Vazquez, N., 1997. Motherhood and Sexuality in Times of War: The Case of Women Militants of the FMLN in El Salvador. *Reproductive Health Matters*. 5(9). pp 139-146. p 139. Preston, T., 2009. *American Foreign Policy and the Civil War in El Salvador, 1980-1983. A Case Study in Proxy War*. MA. Virginia Commonwealth University, USA (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [13/09/2010] p 78.

Age at time of joining	10 years or less	10-14 years	15 years or more	Median age
FMLN	18.1%	75.3%	6.6%	12 years
FAES	0%	20%	80%	15.8 years

Table 2: Verhey, B 'The Demobilisation and Reintegration of Child Soldiers: El Salvador Case Study', (World Bank, www.worldbank.org, accessed on 19/08/07), p 9.

Child recruitment does not appear to have been a policy from the inception of the armed groups beginning in 1970. Nor were women recruited in vast numbers in the beginning, although some women did seek involvement and were accepted, these women were aged 16-20 years.⁶⁵⁶ Large scale female and child recruitment was a response to manpower pressures after the failure of the 1981 'final offensive' when desertion became an issue (see below). The switch to a prolonged war strategy with its emphasis on the politicisation and mobilisation of the masses (which included women and children), signalled the adoption of a calculated strategy by the FMLN to maximise all resources available to them.

During the war both the FMLN and the FAES recruited children.⁶⁵⁷ However the differences in recruitment numbers and the age at recruitment between the two

⁶⁵⁶ Alegria, C., 1983. p 68.

⁶⁵⁷ At this time it was not against international law for the government to recruit children as the CRC had not yet been passed (it would be ratified in 1989).

groups were marked. According to Verhey (see table), approximately 93.4 % of FMLN child recruits were under 15 years compared to only 9% in the FAES. The FAES forcibly conscripted children from the age of 15 years and didn't need to rely on younger voluntary recruits. Reports state that some children voluntarily joined the FMLN to avoid being forcibly conscripted by the FAES. As one ex-child recruit described it:

'Once the army recruits you, you are kept in by force, you need permission to visit your family and permission is rarely given. It's better to join a voluntary organisation, where permission to visit your family is at least possible'
(ex-child combatant, FMLN) ⁶⁵⁸

Despite the age of recruits being much lower within the FMLN, they did recruit considerable fewer children - 20% compared to the FAES figure of 80%.⁶⁵⁹ That the FMLN recruited such low numbers of children in comparison to the state is interesting. Most non-state armed groups fighting a stronger opponent could reasonably be expected to recruit children on a similar scale. What does this tell us about the FMLN. That the FMLN did not follow the government's example and introduce forced recruitment on a larger scale seems to be linked with the movement's desire for legitimacy, an issue that will be explored in more depth during this chapter.

⁶⁵⁸ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 35.

⁶⁵⁹ Although data is unreliable and all figures are estimates and therefore are not accurate. Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 5.

The government's primary motivation for child recruitment during the civil war appears to have been a shortage of manpower, and conscription of those aged 15 years and above by state forces was not illegal under international law or customs at this time. States at this time had the legal right to recruit those aged 15 years and above and to use conscription to compel enlistment. The reliance on conscription appears to have been caused by poor wages and high casualty rates, which reduced voluntary recruitment, although some recruits were coerced to join after being arrested by government forces and some did collaborate willingly, often against the wishes of their parents/guardians.⁶⁶⁰ Government recruitment seems to have occurred primarily during mass conscription drives which targeted poorer urban and rural areas; officials hoped that recruiting in rural areas where guerrilla support was stronger would ensure a measure of population control.⁶⁶¹

Despite the recruitment of children by the FAES, which was significantly higher than that found within the insurgent organisations, this thesis is only concerned with child recruitment by the FMLN. There are three reasons for this. Firstly this is in part a legal issue. Conscription of children from 15 years of age was allowed by government forces, even where force was involved, at this time. However conscription of children, even where voluntary, by non-state armed groups was already prohibited under international law. Therefore the government of El

⁶⁶⁰ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 25, p 95.

⁶⁶¹ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldier, 2001. p 159. Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 24-25.

Salvador was acting within the law despite the greater presence of children within the ranks of its armed forces. In addition, the evidence of child recruitment within the FMLN is greater, despite the smaller numbers involved, perhaps because the children were younger and more obviously children in appearance. As the government were not breaking any international laws it was also not so much a focus for research by organisations at the time. Finally the objective of this research is to provide a greater understanding of how the type of conflict and the dynamics of the conflict influence the recruitment, deployment and abuse of child soldiers by non-state armed groups.

Revolution in El Salvador.

Conflict in El Salvador has traditionally centred on the inequitable distribution of resources (mainly land) and the monopoly on power by the elites, which resulted in political exclusion, social cleavages and class conflict.⁶⁶² Historically there have been sporadic peasant uprisings which have been brutally repressed by the state.⁶⁶³ This was due in part to rising expectations as a result of the opening of political space during periods of liberalisation, followed by the rapid closure of such openings as reactionary elements of the ruling elite and military moved

⁶⁶² Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 106. Chavez, J., 2010. *The Pedagogy of Revolution: Popular Intellectuals and the Origins of the El Salvador Insurgency, 1960-1980* PhD. New York University. (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [13/09/2010]. p 77. El Salvador had the most 'grossly disproportionate distribution of wealth and income of all the Latin American nations'. Preston, T., 2009. p 17.

⁶⁶³ Brocket, C., 2005. *Political Movements and Violence in Central America*. New York: Cambridge University Press. p 230.

swiftly to protect the status quo. The cycle of liberalisation and repression was caused by divides within the ruling elite regarding how exclusionary the political system should be (sections of the military hierarchy have at times in Salvadoran history not been unsympathetic to calls for moderate reform) resulting in unstable military rule after 1931, with coups experienced regularly as reformist and hard-line elements within the armed forces fought for supremacy.

By the 1960s Campesinos (the term given to peasants working the land in El Salvador) were increasingly beginning to express resentment at social injustices; low wages, poor working conditions, humiliation at the hands of the elites, and arbitrary treatment by landlords and government agents - a combination of factors which had combined to create social resentment and feelings of marginalisation.⁶⁶⁴ These tensions were amplified as the 1960s drew to a close and population pressures increased, placing greater demands on arable land. Prior to 1969 many Salvadorans had migrated to land over the Honduras border which they farmed as smallholdings. During the 1969 'Soccer war' with Honduras many Salvadorans were evicted from Honduran national territory. With the traditional safety valve no longer an option and the increased influx of recent returnees, discontent amplified as land pressures dramatically intensified.

⁶⁶⁴ Wood, E., 2003. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p 24. CENSA, 1983. p 9-11.

Some progressives within the governing class attempted to limit increasing agitation by overseeing a limited reformation of the electoral system, allowing the contesting of local elections by approved opposition parties. However tolerance of mass organisations and discussions over a greater transformation of the system alarmed the oligarchy and military hardliners, resulting in another backlash of repression and electoral fraud. Manipulation of the 1972 presidential election by hard-line elements was undertaken to prevent further changes from occurring.

By the late 1970s social agitation was reaching new heights. In response, in 1979 moderate sections of the armed forces took power in a coup in an attempt to prevent civil unrest. Land reforms were proposed, in part pushed for by the US under the Carter administration, which were intended to increase the legitimacy of the state and provide a material stake in the existing system to those who may be attracted by the opposition movement.⁶⁶⁵ However the government had little real control over the military hardliners who continued to increase violence against members of mass organisations. At the same time the left wing armed groups undertook actions to provoke reactionary responses from the right in an effort to increase polarisation and create the conditions for a widespread insurgency.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁵ Pastor, R., 2001. *Exiting the Whirlpool: US Foreign Policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean*. 2nd Ed. USA: Westview Press. p 50.

⁶⁶⁶ Brocket, C., 2005. p 236.

Whilst some degree of effort to prevent a further reduction in the legitimacy of the state did occur, from the FMLN's perspective it was limited in both scope and effect. As a consequence inequality and social injustice continued, and in some instances worsened. According to Villalobos, a FMLN Commander, in the 1980s the government took a pseudo-reformist approach under which they advocated reforms but rarely implemented them. As a result the government's efforts to undermine the FMLN's political project inevitably failed.⁶⁶⁷

A failure to offer significant and genuine concessions to disgruntled sectors of the population was exacerbated by the continuation of large scale human rights abuses, often in an attempt to quieten detractors of the state.⁶⁶⁸ The assassination of Archbishop Romero by state forces in 1982, an individual who had become increasingly vocal in requesting the cessation of human rights abuses, was considered an outrage by many in El Salvador and the influx of recruits to the armed left increased dramatically at this time.

During the war, internationally publicised human rights violations occurred which led to successive governments being compelled to implement counterinsurgency techniques, advanced by US military advisors, which would target the guerrillas

⁶⁶⁷ Villalobos, 1989. Popular Insurrection. Desire or Reality? *Latin American Perspectives*. 16(3). pp5-37. p 7

⁶⁶⁸ Maclean, J., 1987. p 26-28. Brown, C., 1982. Supplement to the Report on Human Rights in El Salvador. Washington DC: Americas Watch Committee. p 8.

without alienating the general population.⁶⁶⁹ This eventually resulted in a reduction of human rights abuses by government forces towards the end of the 1980s, although abuses were not completely eradicated.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s several other factors emerged which led to the development of an environment in which a negotiated settlement could finally occur. The failure of the 1989 'final offensive' undertaken by the FMLN proved to the insurgents that they could not defeat the government militarily, whilst the ability of the insurgents to cause such large scale disruption and take over (for a period of time), parts of San Salvador highlighted to the government that counterinsurgency was not working and the guerrillas still had the potential to continue a prolonged war strategy.⁶⁷⁰ The realisation by both parties to the conflict that military stalemate could continue indefinitely made a political resolution of the conflict seem more desirable.

The changing economic, political and social climate during the late 1980s also helped to ease the transition towards peace. Popular mobilisation and the success of the FMLN had helped the elites to understand that for peace to return, previously marginalised sectors of society had to be involved in the political process. Industrialisation during the 1980s and the resulting diversification of the

⁶⁶⁹ Wood, E., 2003. p 131-132. .Pastor, R., 2001. p 55.

⁶⁷⁰ Montgomery, T. S., 1995. Getting to Peace in El Salvador: The Roles of the UN Secretariat and ONUSAL. *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*. 37(4). pp139-172. p 141.

financial interests held by the oligarchy made opposition to agrarian reform (which was a key demand of the FMLN), less strident as the oligarchy now had alternative revenue streams they could utilise.⁶⁷¹ The oligarchy also saw the military increasingly as an economic threat due to the involvement of forces personnel in economic activities, and was keen to end the conflict and curtail their influence.⁶⁷² In return, the armed left accepted in principle the abandonment of armed struggle and the creation of a revolutionary state in return for participation in the electoral process. A rapidly increasing middle class (from 8% of the population in 1980 to 27% in 1998) also provided a realistic goal for aspiring Salvadorans and acted as a buffer between the elites and the masses helping to moderate demands by both sides.⁶⁷³

Events elsewhere in the region and the wider world also impacted on the projection of the conflict. The end of the Cold War and change in the US administration meant that the Salvadoran government could no longer rely on continuing US military aid and support.⁶⁷⁴ The electoral defeat of the socialist Sandinista regime in Nicaragua which had supported the FMLN simultaneously weakened their position. In addition, the Central American governments under the guidance of President Arias of Costa Rica and with the support of the UN were

⁶⁷¹ Boyland, R., 2001. *Culture and Customs of El Salvador*. USA: Greenwood Press. p 41.

⁶⁷² Walter, K., and Williams, P. J., 1993. *The Military and Democratisation in El Salvador*. *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*. 35(1) pp39-88. p 59.

⁶⁷³ Boyland, R., 2001. p 46-47.

⁶⁷⁴ The US administration also realised that the military stalemate made a military solution unviable and with the decline of the Cold War the Bush Administration were not prepared to give such high levels of aid. Stahler-Scholck, R., 1994. *El Salvador's Negotiated Transition: From Low-intensity Conflict to Low-intensity democracy*. *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*. 36(4). pp1-59. p 3. Brocket, C., 2005. p 243.

attempting to resolve conflict in the region. This placed additional pressures on both sides to seek a resolution to the conflict which they successfully did under the auspices of the UN.

Multiple actors.

The armed left in El Salvador were part of a wider opposition movement mobilised in response to perceived social, political and economic injustices. Why such a movement gained momentum at this time can be attributed to several factors. A slight opening of the political system in the 1970s had, as occurred in the 1920s, created an expectation of change. The swift volte face by the governing elites in the face of increasing demands for reform, demands which could be vocalised due to the temporary liberalisation, brought many to conclude that seeking reform via the political system was not a viable option. Simultaneously within the wider population, particularly in the rural areas, the emergence of the 'people's church' and the spreading of the principles of liberation theology, which urged people to seek social justice, opened the consciousness of the population to concepts of good governance and human rights.⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷⁵ Binford, L., and Lauria-Santiago, A., Eds. 2004. *Landscapes of Struggle: Politics, Society and Community in El Salvador USA*: University of Pittsburgh Press. p 112.

Both of these factors fed into the ability of the armed left to resonate with the disaffected. The actions of the government, which persecuted the popular organisations and their members, left those wishing to continue the reformation struggle few alternatives to joining the armed groups.⁶⁷⁶ The teachings of the popular church complemented the statements of the armed left which was advocating greater political participation, reductions in human rights abuse by the state and greater economic and social equality in order to achieve social justice.⁶⁷⁷

The legitimising of the struggle by the popular organisations – including the teaching unions which were to have an impact on child recruitment - and the church made the FMLN task of fostering armed rebellion much easier. It promoted an atmosphere in which adults and children were already questioning the status quo and their roles in maintaining the current system through their acquiescence to it. Abuses by the government, which included abuses against whole families, often led adults to take their families with them when they fled, which placed children within the guerrillas jurisdiction and made them more vulnerable to recruitment.

⁶⁷⁶ Chavez, J., 2010. p 270. Binford, L., and Lauria-Santiago, A., 2004. p 122.

⁶⁷⁷ During the 1960s splits became apparent between the conservative and progressive elements within the church in Central America (and El Salvador). Progressive Catholics had started to question social conditions in Central American countries and to look for solutions within the context of Catholic doctrine. This resulted in the emergence of liberation theology in Central America, the catalyst for which was the issuing of two encyclicals (1961/1963) by the Vatican recognising the need for all people to have individual rights to a decent standard of living, access to education and political participation. In 1968 at the 2nd Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) institutional violence was denounced and the basis for liberation theology (theory of social and political action based on a Marxist interpretation of the scriptures) was formulated. For more detail see Boyland, R., 2001. p 58-71. Chavez, J., 2010. p 98-100, p 176.

External linkages.

In addition to multiple groups involved in the conflict within El Salvador, there were also important external actors. The FMLN, like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, had extensive international linkages which they used to strengthen their military position and obtain international legitimacy.⁶⁷⁸ Unlike the LTTE however, the FMLN restricted itself to primarily military support from non-Salvadoran groups with similar ideological backgrounds to itself. Nicaragua was a source of arms, refuge and the host of an external communications system; Cuba assisted with training and medical treatment for injured cadre, Mexico was a base for exiled leaders and Vietnam also assisted with the training of some cadre.⁶⁷⁹ However the FMLN was keen to keep the conflict as indigenous as possible and disliked the assumption that their victories were due to external assistance.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁸ The FMLN sent political representatives to 33 counties and aggressively lobbied government ministers and the international media. Borda, S., 2009. *The Internationalization of Domestic Conflicts: A Comparative Study of Columbia, El Salvador and Guatemala*. PhD. University of Minnesota. (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [13/09/2010]. p 194-195. Finn, D., 2009. *Transformation of Rebel Movements into Political Parties in Transitions from Civil Conflict: A Study of Rebel's Decision-making amid Violence in El Salvador and Zimbabwe*. PhD University of Denver. (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [13/09/2010]. p 72

⁶⁷⁹ Woods, E., 2003. p 122-123. Bracamonte, J., and Spencer, D., 1995. *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas: Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts*. USA: Praeger Publishers. p 6-7.

⁶⁸⁰ Clements, C., 1985. *Witness to War: An American Doctor in El Salvador*. UK: Fontana Paperbacks. p 39.

The holding of international support was important for the FMLN in different ways at different times. At the start of the conflict the FMLN required international sponsorship. During the conflict the FMLN hoped to place pressure on the government by highlighting government abuses which it could do more effectively via its international connections. Towards the end of the conflict, when the FMLN had realised it could continue the conflict indefinitely but not militarily overthrow the government, it hoped to use its international networks to ensure the best possible outcome during negotiations.

The government also drew upon external support, from the United States (US). However in order to continue receiving aid the military had to comply with the expectations of the US, thus maintaining throughout the conflict the impression that the rebellion was a Marxist insurgency and marginalising the existence of other sectors in the opposition.⁶⁸¹ Although this may have assisted the government to understate opposition to its regime and placate the Americans, it also meant that, by effectively denying the existence of the non-armed opposition the government left itself no alternative avenues to circumvent the rise in influence of the FMLN.

Whilst there appears to have been no direct influence from external actors on the decision to recruit children by both the FAES and the FMLN, it cannot be argued

Borda. S., 2009. p 186. Fish, J., and Sganga, C., 1988. p 10.

that outside actors are blameless. No public statements appear to exist suggesting that external actors publicly lobbied either party with the aim of reducing or ending child recruitment. In addition as external involvement, particularly that of the US, undoubtedly prolonged the duration of the conflict it is possible to argue that at the very least external actors enabled an unnecessary protraction of the conflict, which resulted in a greater number of deaths and the continuation of child recruitment by both parties to the conflict.

Section Two: The Nature of the FMLN.

The El Salvadoran civil war did have some 'new war' features in common with the other two cases such as the use of modern technology, external linkages and in the early days of the groups a propensity to use criminality (in the case of the FMLN kidnapping for ransom) as a way to fund the group. However in goals, methods of warfare and the ways in which the group was financed after the start of the conflict it is best described as what Kaldor terms an 'old war'.⁶⁸² It was political in nature but of the type of politics linked to a forward looking project. The FMLN used guerrilla tactics but eschewed counterinsurgency warfare in which civilians would be directly targeted. It relied on donations and taxation for support rather than stripping assets through force or becoming involved in criminal enterprises (see below). It was primarily an ideological conflict in which

⁶⁸² Kaldor, M., 2001. p 6-8.

opposing groups fought over contrasting visions of how society should be governed. The insurgents hoped that by engaging in armed conflict they would enable a transformation of the existing society which was marked by social injustice, poverty and repression. The state fought to preserve the status quo, seemingly unwilling to offer any but the most limited concessions. Both sides portrayed the conflict as ideological in nature; the state depicting the opposition and thus the conflict as one in which communist elements were dominant and the armed left portraying themselves as the protectors of the people against a corrupt, abusive and de-legitimised state.

There can be little doubt that the conflict in El Salvador was influenced by Marxist-Leninist political ideology, which was the founding ideology for all the FMLN groups due to their links to the Communist Party. However it must be remembered that in actuality, whilst Marxism was an important part of the FMLN, particularly amongst some elements of the leadership, the bulk of FMLN recruits consisted of campesino influenced by liberation theology and radicalised students, some of whom had Marxist leanings but others who had religious backgrounds.⁶⁸³ The Marxist component of the organisation was heavily publicised by the government who sought to maintain US assistance by couching the conflict in such a way that the US administration would view the conflict as a threat to US interests. However the reality was that, although the overall

⁶⁸³ Preston, T., 2009. p 30. Chavez, J., 2010. p 175. Armstrong, R., and Shenk, J., 1982. *El Salvador: The Face of Revolution*. London: Pluto Press. p 205.

orientation of the movement was to the left of the political spectrum, the FMLN was not a communist organisation. There existed a range of left-wing political views and perhaps because of theoretical differences between sectors of the leadership, the FMLN were pragmatic in regards the propagating of ideology.

The moderation imposed on communist inclinations amongst the leadership can be seen in the stated aims of the opposition, which included the devolution of political power to municipalities, the nationalisation of banking, energy and large scale commerce, tax reform, an improvement in judicial standards, a neutral foreign policy, the implementation of the Declaration of Human Rights, improved systems for public services such as health, education and social welfare, wider and more equitable systems of credit, and the incorporation of the army and FMLN into a new armed force.⁶⁸⁴ Medium and small businesses were to be left untouched and private property was to be respected, with that to be distributed compulsorily purchased rather than taken by force. Most importantly the stated aim of fighting for greater democratisation holds the FMLN apart from other purely communist groups.⁶⁸⁵

⁶⁸⁴ Preston, T., 2009. p 77. Byrne, G., 1994. *The Problem of Revolution: A Study of Strategies of Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in El Salvador's Civil War, 1981-1991*. PhD. University of California, (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [13/09/2010]. p 173.

⁶⁸⁵ CENSA, 1983. p 33. McClintock, C., 1998. *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America El Salvador's FMLN and Peru's Shining Path*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press. p 58.

As proponents of an inclusive popular revolution which sought greater democratisation and political inclusiveness, the armed left were open to developing ties with diverse civic organisations and rural communities through which they sought recruits, resources and legitimacy.

As Farzaneh argues,

‘The FMNL’s guerrilla warfare relied, above all, on the support of peasant communities in terms of logistics and fighters to compensate for its fewer numbers and lack of sufficient weaponry relative to the Salvadorian military....the recruitment of children for participation in war was but a “pragmatic” solution to the unequal balance in weaponry and number of adult available or willing to participate’⁶⁸⁶

Conscious of their international standing, the FMLN walked a tight line between the desire to maintain legitimacy, which was at times negatively affected by recruitment practices, and the need to maintain recruitment – including that of children – in order to effectively oppose the government.

⁶⁸⁶ Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 7.

The Coalition Effect.

In 1980 the Cubans pushed for greater unity amongst the El Salvadoran armed groups. In spite of the external pressure which had made it difficult for the five groups to remain completely autonomous, they were quick to realise the benefits of working together. Unlike many revolutionary groups who see themselves as the only true vanguard of the people and who seek to eliminate rivals (often even those with a similar ideological stance), the five revolutionary armed groups of the FMLN continued to co-operate within the coalition throughout the course of the conflict. This is not to say that the coalition always worked as effectively as it might have. At times there were tensions between and within the armed groups, some of which may have affected operational capacities. For the most part however the five armed groups appear to have recognised the benefits of unity.

The unity of the coalition had several positive impacts including on child recruitment. Gaining international legitimacy as the official opposition was a priority of the groups that made up the FMLN. As a coalition they could highlight their ability to co-operate with each other and civil society - contrasting with the state, which preferred co-option to co-operation. The co-operation between the groups validated their claims to desire greater democratisation, gaining them support, especially in Europe and amongst international solidarity groups. In addition the armed left could unify its international support rather than placing

external patrons in opposition to one another, thus maximising the impact of the assistance received. As the five groups worked together, they could also concentrate all of their resources on their common enemy instead of wasting resources fighting each other for control of the opposition movement.

The reduction of competition between the groups that made up the FMLN appeared to have a positive impact on child recruitment in that, by removing the competition between the groups, the coalition experienced lower levels of child recruitment than in conflicts where competition was greater. In the FMLN for example 20% of the total recruits were children compared to 50-80% in Sierra Leone, and 40-60% in Sri Lanka where competition was more of an issue.⁶⁸⁷

Control and Command.

The five groups that made up the FMLN were the Popular Liberation Forces (FPL), People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN), Central American Revolutionary Worker's Party (PRTC) and the Armed Forces of Liberation (FA). Although the five organisations worked together within the FMLN coalition, they never formally merged during the

⁶⁸⁷ Hertvik. N., 2002. El Salvador: Effecting Change from Within. UN Chronicle: Online Edition. Accessed through www.un.org [23/05/2009]. Charu Lata Hogg, 2006. Child Recruitment in South Asia: A Comparative Analysis of Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. An Asia Program Report, Chatham House. UK: The Royal Institute of International Affairs. Accessed through www.chathamhouse.org.uk, [28/01/09] p 9.

conflict due to differences in strategy, leadership rivalries and internal strife within each of the organisations, and they each maintained links to different base groups (trade unions, peasant organisations).⁶⁸⁸ However, the success of the coalition cannot be understated as it held for 10 years of conflict. Each group had a large degree of independence; each was responsible for its own discipline and group cohesion, and except for a few areas of territorial overlap; each group also held its own territories and had its own recruitment politics.⁶⁸⁹ The holding of separate territory reduced competition and increased co-operation.

Despite the independence of each group however there were remarkable consistencies regarding major policies. This consistency derived from the stability of the coalition which stemmed from its leadership structure. The general command consisted of the top leader of each group and each individual had an equal share of the vote regardless of the size/capacity of the group.⁶⁹⁰ This no doubt encouraged the smaller groups that belonged to the FMLN to remain within the coalition, and the strength of the coalition would have in turn deterred the larger groups from leaving and competing with the FMLN.

Cohesion and discipline within the movement meant that relationships between commanders and recruits, between recruits themselves, and between recruits and

⁶⁸⁸ Byrne, G., 1994. p 107. Chavez, J., 2010. p 266.

⁶⁸⁹ Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 164. Bracemonte, J., and Spencer, D., 1995. p 5. Allison, M., 2006. p 92.

⁶⁹⁰ Bracemonte, J., and Spencer, D., 1995. p 5. Allison, M., 2006. p 92-94.

civilians were not abusive in nature. Humpreys and Weinstein argue that groups that contain individuals with many similarities are less abusive than groups that do not share common goals.⁶⁹¹ In El Salvador it was the joint commitment to a shared political vision that mitigated abusive behaviour as co-operation in the name of the cause was emphasised.

Once decisions were made at the leadership level, they were enforced by the officers of each group so that there was a high level of consistency in operations and policy. Although children were often incorporated through existing members who had prior connections to the child (see below), given the importance of command structures in the functioning of the FMLN it seems highly unlikely that child recruitment - alongside all policies relating to strategic decisions - was not centrally controlled.⁶⁹² One ramification of this control over those lower in the hierarchy appears to have been that individual commanders within each group appear to have had little leeway in implementing their own recruitment policies. Once forced recruitment was prohibited, this was adopted as a coalition-wide practice.

FMLN military structures included full time troops who were split into several factions; guerrilla units who worked where they lived, regular troops who moved

⁶⁹¹ Humpreys, M., and Weinstein, J., 2006. p 430.

⁶⁹² Although Bracamonte and Spencer's book on the strategy and tactics of the FMLN does not look specifically at child recruitment it shows how hierarchical and structured the group was and consistently refers to the guerrillas command structures. Bracamonte, J., and Spencer, D., 1995.

around the country and who took part in offensive operations against government forces and economic and military targets, special forces units, and a political section who worked to encourage the political awakening of the masses. Part time troops augmented the FMLN's capacity in the form of local militias which were primarily charged with the defence of civilians during government operations and active supporters who were not part of any official military unit but who supplied information, food and logistical support when necessary.⁶⁹³

The composition of the FMLN and its flexibility regarding deployment options enabled a variety of levels of involvement and meant that it could utilise recruits and supporters who otherwise would have been prevented from assisting the movement such as women and children.⁶⁹⁴ This increased its base of support and consequently its legitimacy. The variety in levels of involvement and the lack of separation between the FMLN and the communities that it moved within meant that child recruits were not as isolated from their communities as is often found in other conflicts such as Sierra Leone. Indeed some children joined the FMLN to be closer to their families (see below).

⁶⁹³ Preston, T., 2009. p 74. Barry, T., 1991. *El Salvador: A Country Study*. 2nd Ed. New Mexico: The Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center. p 60-61.

⁶⁹⁴ Wood, E., 2003. p 124. Bracemonte, J., and Spencer, D., 1995. p 53-71.

Military Strategy and Tactics.

The armed left, until their semi-unification in 1980, were a collection of disparate militant groups, none of whom had enjoyed any substantial success and each of whom followed its own separate strategy.⁶⁹⁵ The FPL were heavily influenced by Vietnamese tactics and sought to fight a prolonged popular war on the basis of a combined politico- military platform with an emphasis on military action.⁶⁹⁶ The ERP placed an emphasis on insurrection and the use of terrorist acts to create an environment in which the population could rebel against the state.⁶⁹⁷ The emphasis of the FARN was political mobilisation and it worked diligently to create links with popular mass organisations.⁶⁹⁸ The leadership of the FARN believed that in order to have a successful revolution the population had first to be politicised. The raising of political consciences among the masses was a crucial part of the FARN campaign. The necessity to maintain the unity of the five groups within the coalition resulted in the use of each group's strategy and tactics where applicable, which gave the FMLN a military pragmatism lacking in many

⁶⁹⁵ See Bracemonte, J., and Spencer, D., 1995. p 2, p 13-15, for a discussion of the various strategies employed by FMLN groups.

⁶⁹⁶ Chavez, J., 2010. p 176. Allison, M., 2006. p 87.

⁶⁹⁷ However there were tensions between two opposing factions in the party, one emphasised the use of military methods to bring about revolution whilst the other faction believed more emphasis on political action was needed. This internal strife which led to the assassination of Roque Dalton - a leading ERP member - by fellow ERP insurgents resulted in a further split in 1975 which resulted in the creation of the Resistencia Nacional (RN).

⁶⁹⁸ Allison, M., 2006. p 86.

ideological groups and which also gave them an advantage over the military who at times struggled to keep abreast of tactical and strategic changes.⁶⁹⁹

One pertinent feature of the FMLN was that throughout the conflict ‘political considerations generally guided its military strategy, not the other way round.’⁷⁰⁰

Jose Eduardo Sancho Castaneda (military commander, FMLN) wrote that ‘the guerrilla movement in El Salvador.....consciously put diplomacy first and used military actions primarily to bring pressure to find a political solution to the conflict.’⁷⁰¹ This belief in political pressure accounts for why the FMLN encouraged and tolerated both aligned and non-aligned political and social activists, some of whom became members of the group and some of whom never moved beyond non-violent methods of protest.⁷⁰² This tolerance acted over time to attract activists disillusioned by the government’s continuing refusal to negotiate a new political, economic and social system in El Salvador.

Over the course of the conflict, the FMLN’s strategic and tactical focus shifted from its original plan. In the beginning conventional tactics were preferred and the importance of military engagement with the state was stressed. After the failure of the 1981 ‘final offensive’, the emphasis shifted to the political. The

⁶⁹⁹ Bracemonte, J., and Spencer, D., 1995. p 7.

⁷⁰⁰ Barry, T., 1991. p 59. Prisk, C., 1991. Ed. *The Commandant Speaks: Memoirs of an El Salvadoran Guerrilla Leader*. Boulder: Westview Press. p 16.

⁷⁰¹ Castaneda. J.E.S., *The Best Military Strategy of All is to Avoid War*. p 117-137 in Brown, T., Ed. 2000. *When the AK-47’s Fall Silent: Revolutionaries, Guerillas and the Dangers of Peace*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press. p 124.

⁷⁰² Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 122.

adoption of a prolonged war strategy with the politicisation and incorporation of all sectors of the population, including children, had the consequence of increasing child recruitment. Alongside this was a greater reliance on guerrilla warfare for which, as we saw in chapter one, children were considered particularly suitable.

Resources.

The question of resources in El Salvador is less tangible than in the other two cases. The conflict in El Salvador offered the opportunity to take collective action to acquire collective benefits such as a more equitable distribution of land. Collective benefits meant however that one did not necessarily have to participate in the conflict in order to gain.⁷⁰³ Campesino could live in FMLN controlled areas without actively supporting the insurgents and as few selective incentives were offered to individuals who had contributed, it is not surprising that according to Wood two thirds of the population in these areas remained politically neutral. Yet one third of the population did support the FMLN, maintaining the movement primarily through the contributions of the population both in terms of material donations such as food and in terms of labour through the supply of recruits.

⁷⁰³ Wood, E., 2003. p 12.

The primary resource for the FMLN was the consciousness of the people and the practical support that they gave as a consequence.⁷⁰⁴ For some recruits politicisation was Marxist based and developed through involvement with the insurgents but for most it was based within the principles of liberation theology as communicated to the masses through the work of the 'peoples church'.⁷⁰⁵

Anderson argues that 'by urging the poor to fight their way out of misery and injustice, this breed of clerics has served as the guerrillas' recruiting officers'.⁷⁰⁶

Woods too argues that 'both emphasised structural injustice and the need for a new social order, and both drew on a central faith and demanded passionate commitment to a shared creed'.⁷⁰⁷ Structural injustice was key to all actors in the Salvadoran struggle and enabled those with ideologies that at face value seemed incompatible to find common ground in the name of a shared purpose. Insurgents, members of popular organisations and religious revolutionaries all played an important role in mobilising the masses, including children who were also politically active, to protest against the status quo.

By focusing on the expected rewards that victory would gain them rather than offering immediate material benefits the FMLN was able to attract high calibre recruits. Beardsley, K and McQuinn, B argue that armed groups who rely on low

⁷⁰⁴ Montgomery, T., 1982. *Revolution in El Salvador: Origins and Evolution*. Boulder: Westview Press. p 143.

⁷⁰⁵ Chavez, J., 2010. p 107

⁷⁰⁶ Anderson, J. L., 2006. *Guerrillas: Journeys in the Insurgent World*. Great Britain: Abacus. p 277.

⁷⁰⁷ Wood, E., 2003. p 92. Brocket also discusses how the conviction of many members of the FMLN came from their religion and beliefs which acted as a 'powerful motivational force' Brocket, C., 2005. p 321.

return, high investment resources, such as the FMLN, are looking for recruits with a high level of ideological commitment.⁷⁰⁸

As one ex-combatant attested,

‘From the beginning and throughout, we acted on the concept that we would grow militarily as we went forward politically.....Political formation took place in the political organisations. Later you might join [the guerrilla army] – but not by forced recruitment, no one could be obliged to participate.’

(Ex -combatant, FMLN).⁷⁰⁹

The Use of Violence.

In conflicts such as Sierra Leone, and to a lesser extent Sri Lanka, resources had an impact on how violence was used by the armed group. The same can be seen to some extent in El Salvador but at the opposite end of the spectrum. In El Salvador the main resource, the people, led to the armed group using restraint as opposed to greater violence as the FMLN could not afford to alienate its base of support and resources. According to Stanton the use of restraint in conflict is as much a tactic

⁷⁰⁸ Beardsley, K., and McQuinn, B., 2009. Rebel Groups as Predatory Organisations: The Political Effects of the 2004 Tsunami in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 53(4) Sage Publications.

⁷⁰⁹ Wood, E., 2003. p 174.

as the use of violence.⁷¹⁰ Which method an organisation adopts is dependent on many factors, such as the degree to which a movement seeks diplomatic support and influence, and how much public criticism a movement can absorb. In the case of El Salvador, where the survival of the movement was intimately tied to the support that it received, such considerations had great influence over strategy. The political leadership tempered the use of violence because the legitimacy of the group was linked to its position of opposing state sanctioned abuses.⁷¹¹ The FMLN reportedly killed less than 10% of the number of civilians killed by the Army.⁷¹²

Much of the opposition in El Salvador was centred on the notion of the government as ‘abuser’, denying the population dignity and justice. Many peasants were driven to support the FMLN not necessarily because of support for its ideology in the strictest sense but because the violence of the regime simultaneously decreased the legitimacy of the government whilst increasing that of the FMLN. As ‘protectors’ the FMLN often escorted civilians away from government military operations, sometimes returning to fight after the civilians were safe.⁷¹³ To protect its position vis-a-vis the state, the FMLN worked hard to

⁷¹⁰ Stanton, J., 2009. *Strategies of Violence and Restraint in Civil War*. PhD. Columbia University. (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [13/09/2010]. p 5. Silber, I., 2004. *Mothers/Fighters/Citizens: Violence and Disillusionment in Post-War El Salvador*. 16(3). pp 561-587. p 385.

⁷¹¹ Interview with Sarah Spencer, US Women’s Commission, New York, 19th September 2006. Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 8.

⁷¹² McClintock, C., 1998. p 58-60.

⁷¹³ Armstrong, R., and Shenk, J., 1982. p 208. CENSA, 1983. p 22.

establish networks of trust and promoted 'a give and take structure of relations' which made the FMLN and the peasantry interdependent upon one another.⁷¹⁴

The FMLN used restrained violence such as limiting attacks to economic, political and military targets instead of engaging in widespread attacks against civilians. Economic sabotage was a principal part of the FMLN strategy for undermining the government. The FMLN aimed to cause maximum damage to the government, forcing them to divert funds intended for the war effort to repair damage to infrastructure and to redirect funds from social programmes, thus reducing political support for the government.⁷¹⁵ Attacks on those involved with the country's political infrastructure were also aimed at undermining the government, especially in areas where the FMLN were building a political presence. Government officials, mayors, administrators and others in government jobs, particularly in FMLN held territory where the FMLN had created its own governing apparatus, were often violently targeted; suspected informers were also targeted by the FMLN, and sometimes killed in front of their families, in an attempt to restrict collaboration with government forces.⁷¹⁶ Although these violent actions undertaken deliberately by the FMLN against civilians can and should be described as human rights abuses, they clearly had political and military motivations. They were not random or ad hoc; they were considered actions, aimed at individuals, and were, at times, accompanied by extra-judicial trials, and

⁷¹⁴ Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 135.

⁷¹⁵ Maclean, J., 1987. p 28. Byrne, H., 1996 *El Salvador's Civil War: A Study of Revolution*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers. p 83.

⁷¹⁶ Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 144. Anderson, J. L., 2006. p 142.

given the control of troops by the central command, must have been sanctioned at the highest levels of the organisation. However these actions were a clear contravention of the FMLN's duty of care towards civilians despite not reaching the levels of abuse seen in other conflicts.

The FMLN sought to control territory and the populations, including children, within those territories and to resist the expansion of government control into these areas.⁷¹⁷ As part of their strategy to successfully hold the regions it took, the FMLN neutralised potential subversives inside their zones of control. Yet to avoid pushing potential supporters and their children in the direction of the government the FMLN had to control the use of violence targeting only those whose punishments it could justify.⁷¹⁸ This restricted both the scale and scope of the violence.

Children in El Salvador faced different experiences of combat depending on which side they fought, which was due in large part to strategic concerns. The level of restraint shown by the FMLN can be seen in the attribution of blame by the UN Truth Committee which apportioned 5% of human rights abuse to the FMLN whilst apportioning 85% to the government.⁷¹⁹ This clearly shows that

⁷¹⁷ Byrne, G., 1994. p 257. Fish, J., and Sganga, C., 1988. p 47-48.

⁷¹⁸ Stanton, J., 2009. p 35. McClintock, C., 1998. p 60.

⁷¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, 10th August, 1993. El Salvador: Accountability and Human Rights. The Report of the UN's Commission on the Truth for El Salvador 5(7). Brocket, C., 2005. p 261.

child recruits within the FMLN were not expected to carry out attacks on civilians or commit human rights abuses as a matter of policy.

Section Three: Children and Conflict in El Salvador.

Profile factor	FAES Officers	FAES Mid-level	FAES Soldiers	Other Forces (State)	FMLN Leaders	FMLN Soldiers
Age						
Under 15			9%			20%
15-20			60%		25%	44%
21-24	33%	37%	20%	22%	32%	29%
25 and older	67%	63%	11%	88%	40%	7%
Gender						
Male	99%	97%	90%	86%	85%	72%
Female	1%	3%	10%	14%	15%	28%
Literacy Skills						
Literate	100%	98%	30%	98%	85%	38%
Illiterate		2%	70%	2%	15%	62%
Education Level						
Completed	100%	45%	20%	91%	53%	18%
Completed Secondary	100%	10%		57%	35%	7.5%
University	93%			29%	15%	
Origin						
Urban	69%	36%	29%	65%	44%	41%
Rural	31%	64%	71%	35%	56%	59%

Marital Status						
Married	75%	61%	37%	65%	70%	37%
Single	25%	39%	63%	35%	30%	63%

1991 CREA profile of combatants.

Table 2: Verhey, B., *The Demobilisation and Reintegration of Child Soldiers: El Salvador Case Study*. World Bank. Accessed through www.worldbank.org. [19/08/07]. p 15

As can be seen in the table above, the FMLN relied predominantly on young foot soldiers under the age of 24 years. Even more striking is that in the FMLN 57% of officers were less than 24 years old making the organisation very young in terms of age. However, in a country where 50.2% of the population are less than 19 years of age and where childhood ends early - in the rural areas girls were often married at puberty and according to Barry, the 1971 census reports that one-third of 14 year old girls had already had at least one pregnancy - this is not wholly surprising.⁷²⁰ In keeping with local notions of childhood, youth and responsibility, in the FMLN held areas of the country children from the age of 14 years were deployed in combat but they could also vote.

‘All who live in the zone can vote, from the age of 14 up, it is like this because young people are such a large part of the community- since with the repression the average age is now about 30 – and we can’t leave these people out of decisions when they have lost their parents and families and have suffered

⁷²⁰ Barry, T., 1991. p 122. One girl reported she was already living with her boyfriend at 13 years of age when she decided to join the FMLN. Gorkin, M et al., 2000. *From Grandmother to Granddaughter: Salvadoran Women’s Stories* Berkeley: University of California Press. p 102. Boyland, R., 2001. p 40.

so much. They are adults already, and also they work and produce like all of us'

(Clara, Medical Auxiliary in rebel-held territory)⁷²¹

It is worth remembering that youth in El Salvador were no strangers to contentious politics. The Association of Secondary School Students (AES) and the National Revolutionary Movement of Secondary Students (MERS) which represented students between 12-16 years of age were already, by the mid 1970s, well integrated into the popular movement. According to Farzaneh (2008), 'after the peasant movement, AES and MERS were the most contentious groups both for their combativeness, as well as the size of their movement'.⁷²²

The literacy rates and numbers of recruits who had finished primary school tell us that children did not have many options in their daily lives. Most children did not complete school and instead were involved either formally or informally in economic activities from a young age.⁷²³ However, despite fewer recruits completing primary school than found within the state armed force, the literacy rate was higher in the FMLN. Hammond argues at length that the FMLN were committed to increasing the educational levels of the masses and so recruits were offered opportunities to take part in popular education programmes. This was partly a military objective, as illiterate recruits were seen as less capable, but was

⁷²¹ Fish, J., and Sganga, C., 1988. p 50.

⁷²² Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 130.

⁷²³ CENSA, 1983. p 14.

also linked to the leadership's belief that education increased the capacity for political understanding.⁷²⁴

The involvement of high numbers of recruits from both rural and urban areas suggests that whilst it is known that children in the urban areas had better access to schools this did not necessarily transfer into better conditions of life. The origins of FMLN recruits suggest that, despite the conflict taking place in the rural areas of El Salvador, it is a mistake to assume the revolution was only a rural issue.

Recruitment.

Following the argument of Wood that violence changes over the course of the conflict in response to changes in dynamics between the protagonists, it can be seen that the violence of recruitment practices followed by the FMLN changed during the war in response to the trajectory of the conflict and the shifting of military objectives.⁷²⁵ These appear to have been more important influences than ideology, which was sacrificed to some extent during times of conflict intensity when maintaining recruitment became more problematic. In the early 1970s when

⁷²⁴ Hammond, J., 1998. *Fighting to Learn: Popular Education and Guerrilla War in El Salvador*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. p 54-63

⁷²⁵ Wood, R., 2010. *Competing for Control: Conflict Power Dynamics, Civilian Loyalties and Violence in Civil War*, PhD. University of North Carolina Accessed through LSE, Proquest, [30/9/11].

the disparate groups that would eventually make up the FMLN coalition were newly created, they predominantly relied on the friends and family of existing members to increase membership, as mentioned earlier in this case study. Recruiting predominantly from amongst networks of people known to have revolutionary tendencies was believed by the leadership to increase the FMLN's internal security as infiltration by the government was less likely.⁷²⁶ It also meant that the FMLN reduced the numbers of opportunistic recruits, instead attracting recruits whose revolutionary credentials had already been proven. This reduced the number of recruits who may have undermined the political cause of the FMLN by focusing on their own personal goals.⁷²⁷ However, an over reliance on interpersonal ties restricted the expansion of the group and impacted on its capacity to engage with the state militarily.

With the outbreak of overt hostilities between the FMLN and the government, and the corresponding need to increase group capacity, the FMLN adjusted its recruitment policy and also began to target potential members via its involvement with the non-militant opposition organisations.⁷²⁸ One important group in regards to child recruitment were teachers, many of whom provided leadership to the multi-sector mass organisations in the 1970s, and became involved with the FMLN in the 1980s. Teacher involvement in the insurgency explains, alongside the political radicalisation of children in the 1970s through the student movement,

⁷²⁶ Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 133.

⁷²⁷ Weinstein, J., 2005. Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 49(598). p 606.

⁷²⁸ Brocket, C., 2005. p 143.

the high numbers of secondary school children involved within the rank and file of insurgent groups. Public school teachers were central to the politics of the radical left in El Salvador; their social status gave them a leadership role within many communities which some used to radicalise students.⁷²⁹

The 'final offensive' of 1981 utilised many so-called conventional tactics and did not play to the guerrillas' strengths. The failure of this action and the resulting change in tactics to those commonly referred to as non-conventional, or guerrilla warfare disillusioned many members and desertion increased.⁷³⁰ Manpower levels were placed under a great deal of stress. The FMLN for a time resorted to forced recruitment which is inherently more violent, even choosing to forcefully conscript children.⁷³¹ Allison argues that the ERP were particularly involved in forced recruitment. As the group with the least strategic emphasis on politics, they had less reason than the other groups to restrain their recruitment practices.⁷³² Forced recruitment, including that of children, markedly increased during this period and resulted in a drop in legitimacy for the FMLN who had built their support by placing themselves in opposition to the state and its human rights

⁷²⁹ Melida Anaya Montes, the secretary-general of ANDES from 1966-77 was also covertly a top FPL leader in the 1970's. Brocket, C., 2005. p 79. Grenier, Y., 1999. *The Emergence of Insurgency in El Salvador: Ideology and Political Will*. USA: University of Pittsburgh Press. p 45. ANDES the teachers union promoted critical thinking amongst students and encouraged the formation of student organisations. Chavez, J., 2010. p 196.

⁷³⁰ Byrne, G., 1994. p 211. Wood, E., 2003. p 135.

⁷³¹ If locals are alienated the group comes under increasing pressure to recruit children. Telephone Interview with Mike Wessells, Child Protection Practitioner, Christian Children's Fund and Professor at both Columbia University and Randolph-Macon College, 28th September 2006.

⁷³² Allison, M., 2006. p 103. Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 156

abuses, one of which was the forced conscription of unwilling youths.⁷³³ It would appear that at this stage of the conflict military considerations were considered paramount and the political ramifications of following purely military dictates were ignored. As one FMLN member put it,

‘focus on achieving a quick military victory had negative consequences; military considerations took precedence over political ramifications as, for example, with the decision to forcible recruit’
(quote from FMLN member)⁷³⁴

A War Resisters International report estimated that in total 18% of FMLN combatants were forcibly conscripted, with the World Bank giving the figure of 8.3% for forced child recruitment.⁷³⁵ Neither of these reports state when these recruits were conscripted so it is difficult to judge if forced recruitment was consistent throughout the conflict or if it occurred only during the early 1980s as

⁷³³ Under Salvadoran emergency law voluntary recruitment was permitted from 16 years of age yet an estimated 60% of government troops were conscripted which suggests that as 80% of government forces were less than 18 years of age forcible recruitment of underage recruits occurred in high numbers. This appears to have been formalised in government legislation passed in 1992 at the end of the conflict. Child Rights Information Network, 2004. Child Soldiers: CRC Country Briefs. El Salvador. Accessed through www.crin.org [15/06/2005]. War Resisters International, 1998. Refusing to Bear Arms: A Worldwide Survey of Conscription and Conscientious Objection to Military Service. Accessed through www.wri-irg.org [15/06/2005]. In 1986/87 Human Rights Watch found evidence that recruits forcibly conscripted included some who stated that they were only 15 years old at the time of conscription, and CODEFAM (a mother’s organisation) have reported that some families were killed when they resisted their sons’ recruitment by the government. Deng Deng, W., 2001. A Survey of Programs on the Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, www.mofa.go.jp. Human Rights Watch, 1996. Children in Combat. Accessed through www.hrw.org.

⁷³⁴ Byrne, G., 1994. p 211.

⁷³⁵ War Resisters International, 1998.

stated in the literature.⁷³⁶ The figures taken together suggest that perhaps half of forced recruits were children, but overall the numbers of forced child recruits as a percentage of total recruitment is low in comparison to Sri Lanka and Sierra Leone. Forced recruitment was stopped quite quickly due to the number of desertions, negative effects on individual units and community resentment which reduced the group's political capital and was also viewed as a security threat to the group as disgruntled civilians and recruits might inform to the state.⁷³⁷ As one commander confessed,

‘the people who were forced would desert or refuse to fight. Our only advantage over regular forces, which were all recruited by force, was political will’
(Commander, FMLN)⁷³⁸

National human rights groups and civil society organisations did protest against forced recruitment and had some success.⁷³⁹ The Catholic Church and NGO took measures to protest generally and some limited individual action to help specific families to gain the release of their sons from the FAES. The FMLN were not targeted as much since recruitment by the FMLN was, for most of the conflict, viewed as more voluntary and the leadership was more difficult to access. Those

⁷³⁶ Verhey, B., *The Demobilisation and Reintegration of Child Soldiers: El Salvador Case Study*. World Bank. Accessed through www.worldbank.org. [19/08/07]. p 9. Ricca, C., June 2006. *El Salvador: Children in the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the Armed Forces of El Salvador (FAES)*. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. Accessed through www.child-soldiers.org. p 7.

⁷³⁷ Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 156. Prisk, C., 1991. p 82.

⁷³⁸ Cohen, D., 2010. *Explaining Sexual Violence during Civil War*. PhD Stanford Accessed at LSE, Proquest, [30/9/11]. p 133.

⁷³⁹ McConnan, I., and Uppard, S. 2001. p 49.

families that wished to avoid their children's recruitment by the FMLN usually moved outside of their areas of control.⁷⁴⁰ It is important to note that it was the forced recruitment of children that was actively protested against rather than participation of children generally.⁷⁴¹ At this time the debate about children's involvement was less advanced both nationally and internationally and few human rights reports referred to child soldiers. For example, the 1997 Oxfam report on peace in El Salvador fails to mention child soldiers as did the America's Watch reports of the early 1980s.⁷⁴² There was some dispute concerning exactly when forced recruitment was abolished. Farzaneh claims it was prohibited in 1984, whilst Verhey cites the later date of 1987.⁷⁴³

Children that had been voluntary recruited were also offered the option of leaving the organisation without reprisals although no data indicates whether any children took advantage of this offer.⁷⁴⁴ Towards the end of the conflict the FMLN also agreed to abide by the 1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) which prohibited all recruitment of those less than 15 years of age. However, although forced recruitment was prohibited no information appears to exist on whether the FMLN did abide by its self imposed obligations. According to the data, the

⁷⁴⁰ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 25.

⁷⁴¹ Verhey, B., *The Demobilisation and Reintegration of Child Soldiers: El Salvador Case Study*. (World Bank, www.worldbank.org, accessed on 19/08/07). p 12.

⁷⁴² Ricca, C., June 2006. p 12. Murray, K., K., 1997. *El Salvador: Peace on Trial*. UK: Oxfam UK and Ireland.

⁷⁴³ Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 156-157. Verhey, B., p 12.

⁷⁴⁴ McConnan, I., and Uppard, S., 2001. p 77. Ryan, J., 1989. *The Dynamics of Latin American Insurgencies: 1956-1986*. Rice University. (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [13/09/2010]. p 195.

average age of child recruits in the FMLN was 12 years, and it seems unlikely that the FMLN met its full obligations under the CRC.

There are many factors involved in pushing children into soldiering and this makes the distinctions between voluntary and forced recruitment difficult to distinguish at times. As one child testified,

‘I felt more obliged to participate rather than wanting to participate...
There was really no choice...but my participation was voluntary
because I was not forced to become incorporated’
(child combatant)⁷⁴⁵

It could be argued that because of the youth of child recruits in El Salvador and the lack of alternatives open to them children were not fully capable of taking a truly voluntary decision to join the FMLN and thus all recruitment of such children should be seen as, at best, coerced. However many children in El Salvador felt strongly that their chances of survival were greater within the FMLN than outside of it. This fits with Richman and Fraser’s argument that, in situations where children realise adults cannot protect them, they seek to protect themselves.⁷⁴⁶ Indeed even many of the adults appear to have felt that child involvement was unavoidable because of the conditions of the country.

⁷⁴⁵ Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 166.

⁷⁴⁶ Richman, J., and Fraser, M., 2001. *The Context of Youth Violence: Resilience, Risk and Protection*. Westport: Praeger Publishers. p 88.

As one adult combatant explained,

‘sometimes I think to myself that on the one hand it is a special feeling to see one of these capotes, these youngsters, grow up into a good man, a guerrilla. You know? But it’s also sad that it has to be this way...’

(Adult Combatant)⁷⁴⁷

FMLN adult comrades reported that they found children’s involvement touching and saw their involvement as the development of a greater understanding of their responsibilities.⁷⁴⁸

Military recruitment by the FMLN took several forms due, in part, to the separation of recruitment practices within the coalition. There are reports of the FMLN forcing groups of youths to go with them after speeches calling for communities to join the insurgency and after taking control of towns during military conflict, although reports exist that at least in some cases children were returned to their homes. Some parents were asked to turn over one child to the movement, which shows some similarities to recruitment practices in Sri Lanka. In Morazán recruitment was an open process with existing members recruiting a set quota of people from their extended families. In the southwest Jiquilisco

⁷⁴⁷ Anderson, J. L., 2006. p 59.

⁷⁴⁸ Alegria, C., 1983. p108. Clements, C., 1985. p 28.

region recruitment was more clandestine due to the greater government presence in the area.⁷⁴⁹

The FMLN recruited directly from villages, internally displaced populations and refugee camps; child recruits also came from schools in guerrilla zones of control.⁷⁵⁰ The ERP (a FMLN member) had a more formal, institutionalised approach to recruiting children, offering primary school instruction which included the history of the struggle in El Salvador, experiences in other Central American countries and the biographies of local opposition heroes, a method common to ideologically motivated groups who often use indoctrination of youth in the community to increase recruitment. At 12 years of age children automatically graduated to military school which consisted of four months training in ERP ideology, how to treat civilians and the importance of obeying orders.⁷⁵¹ Many children at these schools later joined the FMLN, often with their family's knowledge.⁷⁵²

Many men within the FMLN sent their families to refugee camps in Honduras for greater safety and this kept many women and children from participating in active conflict as combatants. However the camps were highly political; most of the

⁷⁴⁹ Verhey, B., p 12. Brown, C., 1982. Supplement to the Report on Human Rights in El Salvador. Washington DC: Americas Watch Committee. p 66. Ricca, C., June 2006. p 7.

⁷⁵⁰ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. P 94. Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 148, p 157.

⁷⁵¹ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 94

⁷⁵² Ricca, C., June 2006. p 9. Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 158

camp population was loyal to the FMLN and women were encouraged to participate in the political sphere. This meant that children were growing up in a highly politicised environment, in which females were key to the politicisation.⁷⁵³ Alongside teachers, who were also often female, many mothers educated their children and integrated them politically with the beliefs of the movement. The inclusion of the family unit within the movement was seen as important, although usually children were kept separate from military actions. As a spokesperson for the FMLN put it,

‘The participation of the family unit is a very important experience’
(Spokesperson for two FMLN/FDR affiliates)⁷⁵⁴

Children who were recruited often had their families approached by the FMLN and permission was sought, but some children whose families said no to the FMLN ran away and joined anyway.⁷⁵⁵ According to Farzaneh (2008) the process of recruiting children by the FMLN was one of ‘normatively legitimising their participation in war and providing them with incentives’.⁷⁵⁶ The benefits of joining the group included protection, as far as it was possible, from the government. Security was a key motivator for recruits and the FMLN sold recruitment as a ‘collective strategy for collective survival conditioned upon the

⁷⁵³ Kumar, K., 2001. Ed. *Women and Civil War: Impact, Organizations, and Action*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers. p 80. Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 158-160.

⁷⁵⁴ Diamond, M.J., 1998. Ed. *Women and Revolution: Global Expressions*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers. p 278.

⁷⁵⁵ Gorkin, M et al., 2000. p 102.

⁷⁵⁶ Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 200.

participation of “all the people”.⁷⁵⁷ Indeed many armed groups use human rights abuses by government agents to justify child recruitment, arguing that they have a duty to protect such children even if that leads to such children joining the movement.⁷⁵⁸

Other reasons cited by the FMLN for the justification of the acceptance of children into the ranks were that many were orphans cared for by the FMLN or relatives of adult members; all had volunteered with parental consent, the children were not used as combatants, and that children in rural areas were accustomed to taking on adult roles at a young age.⁷⁵⁹ Such public accounting of the reasons for recruitment may be accounted for by the FMLN’s desire to legitimise their use of children.⁷⁶⁰

Despite the FMLN encouraging recruitment including that of children, aside for a relatively brief period of forced recruitment, it was possible to live in FMLN controlled zones and avoid conscription. Unlike in many conflicts, in El Salvador the guerrilla movement allowed neutrals to exist in their field of operation and share in community benefits such as popular education, health programmes and agrarian reform, which were all used to gain support from the local population

⁷⁵⁷ Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 196.

⁷⁵⁸ Interview with Manuel Fountain, Child Protection Advisor, UNICEF, USA, 3rd October 2006.

⁷⁵⁹ Human Right Watch, 1996. Children in Combat. Accessed through www.hrw.org. [25/10/09]. p 8.

⁷⁶⁰ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p 95-96. Interview with Manuel Fountain, Child Protection Advisor, UNICEF, USA, 3rd October 2006.

and build trust.⁷⁶¹ Campesino could remain in FMLN zones without persecution or expectations of active involvement as long as they complied with the minimum requirements: to supply food and water to insurgents - the same requirement the military demanded - and to not disclose information on the insurgents to the military.⁷⁶² These minimum requirements and encouraging the population to remain also helped, to a limited extent, to protect active supporters from being detected and harassed by the military and its associated organisations (ORDEN etc).⁷⁶³

Allowing neutrals in their zones of control was part of the FMLN's political strategy of prolonged war and popular revolution. The organisation felt that allowing neutrals to remain gave them the opportunity to educate them in concepts of social justice and to showcase their vision of reform. Children as the future of the nation would have been particularly valuable to the FMLN after its adoption of a prolonged war strategy. Early exposure encouraged later indoctrination and incorporation into the group, sometimes whilst members were still underage. At the same time the FMLN's allowance of neutrals in their zones of control meant that it was also possible for children to choose not to join the armed group in some circumstances. Thus the motivations of children that sought to join the group are important for a full understanding of why children became

⁷⁶¹ Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 142. Preston, T., 2009. p 78. Ryan, J., 1989. p 197.

⁷⁶² Wood, E., 2003. p 12.

⁷⁶³ Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 144.

involved as child soldiers in El Salvador and this will be looked at later in the chapter.

Control and Deployment.

Both the government and the FMLN were reluctant to admit that any children were used on the front line. When asked, the government's military authorities stated that children in military camps were 'mascots' and orphans cared for by the troops.⁷⁶⁴ In 1987 Americas Watch (now Human Rights Watch) were told by the FMLN that children in camps were not combatants, were often living with older family members and undertook duties common for children within the wider society.⁷⁶⁵ In El Salvador children, as in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, took on adult roles at a much younger age than is allowed for in Western concepts of childhood and so many older child soldiers may not have been viewed as children by those recruiting and deploying them at a local level.

The public position of stating that children were not combatants was due to the FMLN's need to balance military and political considerations. On the one hand children were a valuable military resource yet on the other the FMLN understood the importance of maintaining political legitimacy. Yet it does seem as though it

⁷⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch, 1996. Children in Combat. 8(1) Accessed through www.hrw.org [25/10/09].

⁷⁶⁵ Ricca, C., June 2006. p 10.

was predominantly true if local concepts of childhood are taken as a measure of who is a child. All children underwent training but they were not necessarily allowed to keep a weapon afterwards. One combatant who was aged 13 years at recruitment said her weapon was removed after training because she was too young. A doctor who spent time with the FMLN also reported that younger children were not routinely given weapons of their own.⁷⁶⁶

It would seem as though some variations between the groups occurred, as each group had individual policies on the age of recruits, at what age combat was allowed and which functions child recruits could carry out.⁷⁶⁷ The ERP and FPL usually provided 3-6 months of training but some FMLN recruits (specific sub-groups unknown) report as little as one week of training.⁷⁶⁸ After training, children were incorporated into units with adults, with some children over a prolonged period of time earning promotions and eventually becoming commanders.⁷⁶⁹ There is at least one known example of a child only unit known as the Samuelitos (little Samuels) which consisted of 70 children between the ages of 10-15 years. Heavy casualties during the May 6th, 1984 3rd Brigade attack did result in the disbanding of this unit but children continued to be recruited and

⁷⁶⁶ Gorkin, M et al., 2000. p 103. Clements. C., 1985. p 31.

⁷⁶⁷ Ricca, C., June 2006. p 6.

⁷⁶⁸ Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 161-162.

⁷⁶⁹ Spencer, D., 1996. From Vietnam to El Salvador: The Saga of the FMLN Sappers and Other Guerrilla Special Forces in Latin America. USA: Praeger Publishers. Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 161.

dispersed amongst other units where their use and casualties were easier to conceal.⁷⁷⁰

As can be seen in the table below, although all children were trained for and participated in combat when necessary, the daily tasks - as spies, informants, messengers, guides and combatants – that children were allocated varied.⁷⁷¹ Task allocation was often gender based, with female children more likely to be used in support roles such as health, education and communication, which paralleled the use of adult females within the FMLN generally.⁷⁷² Boys were much more likely to be assigned positions relating to security and combat, with some employed in communications. However, El Salvador is the only conflict where it is reported that if a recruit was shown to be poor at combat skills they were switched to non-combat duties such as educating the masses.⁷⁷³

Age also affected task allocation. The statistics in the table below show that overall the youngest children were used primarily as messengers and for logistical purposes, whilst it was mainly the older recruits that were used as combatants, which fits in with FMLN declarations on the deployment of children. Young children were used as messengers and to infiltrate government camps to seek information because they were children and seen as less likely to come under

⁷⁷⁰ Spencer, D., 1996. p 89-90.

⁷⁷¹ Human Rights Watch, 1996.

⁷⁷² Farzaneh, N., 2008. p 161. Montgomery, T., 1982. p 152.

⁷⁷³ Prisk, C., 1991. p 16.

suspicion than adults trying to undertake such tasks. However, using children in these ways placed them at considerable risk from state agents who were known to torture and abuse detainees.⁷⁷⁴

Military	Combatant	Messenger	Logistics	Cook	Communication	Sanitation
Gender						
Male	64.3%	24.5%	9.7%	0%	1.5%	0%
Female	23.7%	10.3%	15.5%	22.7	14.4%	13.4%
Date of Birth						
Before 1976	61.2%	7.1%	8.2%	5.1%	14.3%	4.1%
1976 to 1979	51.8%	21.8%	10%	9.4%	1.8%	5.3%
After 1979	4.0%	56%	36%	4%	0%	0%
Armed Group						
FMLN	48.2%	20.9%	12.2%	7.9%	6.1%	4.7%
FAES	100%	--	--	--	--	--
Demobilizatio						
Released	39.9%	28.4%	15.3%	7.1%	5.5%	3.8%
Formally	69.1%	5.5%	5.5%	8.2%	6.4%	5.5%

Table 1: Functions carried out by child soldiers during the war in El Salvador⁷⁷⁵

Although children could be used as combatants from 10 years of age it was more common for children to gradually be promoted to take on combat duties at 14 or

⁷⁷⁴ Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 162.

⁷⁷⁵ Deng Deng, W., 2001.

15 years of age.⁷⁷⁶ In Farzaneh's study, an ex-commander in the ERP faction stated that children under 14 years of age did not usually go to the Front and children under 16 years were rarely assigned to battle operations as they found it difficult to carry arms for extended periods and were therefore not useful. However Deng's survey suggests that half of 13-16 years classified themselves as combatants.⁷⁷⁷

Of those who were active combatants it appears that children were often used for specific tasks for which they were deemed more suitable than adults. Children were used as snipers, as they were seen as more capable of kneeling for prolonged periods of time and as having more patience and obedience. During high intensity battles, frontline platoons often consisted of younger recruits with older troops and commanders following behind.⁷⁷⁸ This placed the youngest, most inexperienced children at the greatest risk, suggesting that at times (despite political considerations which appeared for the most part to have offered some protection for child recruits within the FMLN) child soldiers because of their inexperience and lesser training were at times considered more expendable.

Whilst military objectives played a greater role in how children were tactically used within their units during deployment, political objectives played a role in how troops were strategically deployed on missions. FMLN leaders believed that

⁷⁷⁶ Verhey, B., p 8.

⁷⁷⁷ Deng Deng, W., 2001. Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 163.

⁷⁷⁸ Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 162.

the political impact of a mission could be as important as its military objectives and would often target economic infrastructure, kidnap and assassinate officials and target government sponsored initiatives (such as government formed co-operatives) as well as military installations. Missions were often carried out in government controlled zones in order to demoralise government forces. As children are particularly good for infiltration, this strategy partially explains their recruitment in El Salvador. Children's use was in keeping with the FMLN's claims to be less abusive than the state. They were not deployed to target civilians. There is some evidence that children may have been taught that they should not behave as the enemy did and that in raping and killing civilians they would be dishonourable.⁷⁷⁹

Recruits appear to have been allowed to reduce their involvement when necessary – for example due to pregnancy, illness, and family issues - and then return if they wished without risking retaliation if the proper permissions were sought. To leave the FMLN controlled zones was more difficult as ex-recruits faced death if government troops caught them.⁷⁸⁰ Allowing recruits the option to reduce involvement seems an odd option for an armed group, However it may be explained by the emphasis placed by the FMLN on a prolonged war strategy under which they may have seen the benefits of flexible recruitment options for maintaining recruitment over an extended period of time. One girl reported that

⁷⁷⁹ Clements, C., 1985. p 30-31. Hammond, J., 1998. p 65.

⁷⁸⁰ Gorkin, M et al., 2000. p 107. Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 163-164. Girls and women were allowed to take 10-12 months off after having a baby but some women declined to do this. Anderson, J. L., 2006. p 231.

her boyfriend left with no mention of repercussions to him or his family and she left herself a number of years later after having two children.⁷⁸¹ Part time members increased the overall capacity of the groups and served as a link between the FMLN and the non-armed popular organisations.⁷⁸² However, although it was possible for child recruits to request demobilisation, it is questionable whether young children, indoctrinated within the movement and surrounded by peers committed to the revolution would have felt able to make such a request if it was permanent in nature. Certainly most recruits remained within the group due to high exit barriers and commitment to the cause.

Girls in the FMLN.

Firstly it must be noted that the age at which girls took on women's duties and responsibilities in El Salvador was much younger than in the developed world. It was not uncommon as previously mentioned, for girls aged 13 and 14 to already be mothers. Within the literature, the focus of research is on women within the FMLN but often included were those girls who would be denoted as children according to international legislation. This makes it very difficult to completely separate what is known of women's and girl's experiences.

⁷⁸¹ Gorkin, M et al., 2000. p 103, p107

⁷⁸² Barry, T., 1991. p 61.

As in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka the inclusion of girls into the FMLN went against the traditions of the society, which dictated that females should not work outside the home. Although these traditions had been eroded to some extent by economic necessities, they were still adhered to by many girls, particularly in rural areas. Thus the inclusion of girls, particularly those who were involved in combat, constituted a break from traditional norms.

In El Salvador girls were openly part of the guerrilla organisations and they played an important role in the struggle despite a machismo culture that kept many girls confined to traditional roles. It might be expected that as a left wing organisation the FMLN's ideological stance would have resulted in women and girls being 'liberated'. However the findings suggest that during and after the war little seems to have been done by the FMLN to achieve women's liberation from traditional roles and expectations, outside of facilitating their involvement with the armed group. This may be because the FMLN did not articulate women's rights as a separate issue but instead believed that the resolution of economic and social discrimination was the way to solving all of society's problems, including issues that more adversely affected women and girls.⁷⁸³

Due to the machismo culture within the FMLN, despite interviewed guerrillas commenting that girls were encouraged to work outside traditional roles, many

⁷⁸³ Kumar, K., Ed. 2001. p 83-84. Diamond, M.J., Ed. 1998. p 278.

female recruits were in reality used in support roles, taking on duties that paralleled traditional societal roles for girls such as preparing food.⁷⁸⁴ As medics working in field clinics and on the front line, they were undertaking care of others. However they were increasingly used as front line combatants towards the end of the war. The FMLN increased recruitment of females after the failure of the 1989 offensive and deployed more women in battle, although some women and older girls who wished to serve as combatants were refused because they had children.⁷⁸⁵ At the end of the conflict 29.1% of total combatants, 36.6% of political cadres and 22.2% of wounded non-combatants were female (according to ONUSAL demobilisation figures, 1994). Overall 55.3% of female recruits were classed as combatants, 32.5% were classified as political cadre and 12.0% of female recruits were wounded non-combatants.⁷⁸⁶

According to Shayne, women and girls were useful in aiding free movement in the contested rural areas, in the transportation of arms and communications. This was again due to gender-based perceptions of females in El Salvador. At the beginning of the conflict female involvement in the armed insurgency was not expected, due to the traditional roles of women and girls in the society as homemakers, wives, mothers and daughters. This meant that they could travel more freely without suspicion making them invaluable in carrying out logistical

⁷⁸⁴ Diamond, M.J. Ed. 1998.p 277. Armstrong, R., and Shenk, J., 1982. p 206.

⁷⁸⁵ Kumar, K., Ed. 2001.p 188.

⁷⁸⁶ Luciak, I., 1999. p 124. Shayne, J., 2004. p 37.

tasks, something that has also led to female involvement in other conflicts. Thus girls were used strategically because of their gender.

In a culture imbued with machismo beliefs, where even the armed left failed to publicly address women's rights, it is perhaps surprising that girls were able to volunteer to join the militants. The FMLN accepted female recruitment due to military and political considerations which were linked to its emphasis on the total mobilisation of the population as part of a prolonged war strategy.⁷⁸⁷ However it can be seen that cultural constraints were not completely overcome. By the war's end only 11% of the female FMLN insurgents stationed at the El Tigre base had been promoted.⁷⁸⁸ Although women and girls could potentially join the FMLN they were still much more likely to have provided logistical support (60% of which was provided by women and girls), rather than been involved as full time soldiers. Providing logistical support was easier to combine with family commitments and enabled girls to remain further within their traditional domestic spheres whilst still supporting the FMLN and their male family members who were involved with the insurgency.

The reasons for female involvement are a contentious issue and disputed by scholars. Shayne cites alternative reasons to economic structural changes for female involvement in the insurgency. Shayne's reasons are comparable to those

⁷⁸⁷ CENSA, 1983. p 27.

⁷⁸⁸ Wood, E., 2003. p 130.

given by men and boys involved in the insurgency and suggest that involvement was less because of structural changes that liberated girls and more because of universal push and pull factors attributable to both sexes. Some girl recruits were from active leftist families and followed family members into the armed organisations, some were initially involved with popular organisations and became more militant often due to experiences of persecution; and some were afraid and sought protection within the armed groups. Protection was also a factor for male child soldiers, although in the case of girls it must be noted that they faced a greater possibility of sexual abuse by the military, something that was not sanctioned by the FMLN leadership and was rarely perpetrated by FMLN members.⁷⁸⁹

Girls themselves when interviewed reported their belief in the movement, and many felt that they had experienced few obstacles to their equal involvement in the FMLN. They did admit that the machismo culture was something to be overcome but many said their male comrades had so much belief in the movement that the needs of the movement always came first, even if this meant that at times the females went on missions whilst males stayed at home.⁷⁹⁰

⁷⁸⁹Wood, E., 2003. p 130.

⁷⁹⁰Alegria, C., 1983. p 93-96.

Abuses.

There is little evidence that the FMLN were a particularly abusive armed movement, yet in wartime abuses are, at times, carried out by all groups involved. The Truth Commission established after the war that the FMLN were accountable for approximately 5% of the human rights abuses reported to them, a remarkably low level in comparison to those committed by non-state armed groups in other conflicts. The low level of abuse against civilians is reflected in the treatment of recruits who reported little in regards poor treatment, even after the conflict was concluded. Given the level of interest in the El Salvadoran conflict by NGO and solidarity movements, one would expect a greater exposure of poor treatment in the literature if it existed on a wide scale.⁷⁹¹ Thus it would appear that poor treatment, whilst undoubtedly experienced by recruits was not as severe as that found in Sierra Leone.

The most severe abuse conducted by the FMLN was the use of extra-judicial executions, which deserve mention because of their extremity and importance to FMLN tactics, but which were not clearly aimed at children, although children including child recruits could be indirectly affected if family members were

⁷⁹¹ MacLean, J., 1987, this text covers government abuses in detail but fails to mention abuses by the FMLN. . Brown, C., 1982. Supplement to the Report on Human Rights in El Salvador. Washington DC: Americas Watch Committee. This text mentions summary executions, kidnappings and destruction of property by the FMLN whilst cataloging extensively human rights abuses perpetrated by government forces which included mutilation, rape, massacres, and torture.

targeted. Summary executions were carried out for three main reasons. Firstly those deemed as agents of the state such as members of the National Assembly, mayors, and police and military personnel who were targeted to undermine the state's authority, particularly in contested zones.⁷⁹² Secondly those deemed as collaborators, seen as passing on information to state agents or as actively supporting them. Again this was particularly the case in the contested zones where the guerrillas saw such actions as a threat against the movement and against civilians in those areas as such information often led to arrests and torture or even massacres.⁷⁹³ The last group of people who faced extra-judicial execution were recruits that deserted from the ranks without permission, although it is not clear if child recruits were amongst these casualties.⁷⁹⁴

Abuses such as looting, rape and murder of civilians appear to have been rare and punishable by FMLN commanders.

‘Rape was considered an unacceptable attack; our most important capital was the trust of the civilian population’
(Commander, FMLN)⁷⁹⁵

According to Anderson at one stage when the guerrillas had many new recruits joining and standards slipped there were a number of incidents involving abuse of

⁷⁹² Brown. C., 1982. p 66.

⁷⁹³ Brown. C., 1982. p 65. Anderson, J. L., 2006. p 187.

⁷⁹⁴ Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 163. It was possible to leave the FMLN if the correct permissions were sought. Dickson-Gomez, J., 2002. p 333.

⁷⁹⁵ Cohen, D., 2010. p 135.

civilians. The FMLN very quickly moved to enforce strict justice, holding trials and punishing those found guilty, even executing recruits found guilty of serious offences although again, there is no evidence to suggest that children were tried.⁷⁹⁶ The lack of abuse was striking and the repercussion for child recruits was that they were less exposed to violence and abuse than in Sri Lanka or Sierra Leone, where civilians were targeted in varying ways at least some of the time.

Rape within FMLN camps was reported on a small scale and given the age at which sexual relations were permissible in El Salvador it is possible, although not reported, that girls may have been victims.⁷⁹⁷ However sexual abuse, whilst possibly under-reported does not appear to have been common, with girls reported in the literature to be able to choose who they wished to have a relationship with. Many girls became involved with male comrades although in some instances they reported afterwards that they felt an element of coercion, particularly where the male was older or in a position of authority superior to that of the girl.⁷⁹⁸

Overall, abuses appear to have been linked to military concerns, over infiltration, desertion and threats to control over territory. The lack of evidence for the abuse

⁷⁹⁶ Anderson, J. L., 2006. p 186-187. Prisk., C. Ed. 1991. p 94.

⁷⁹⁷ Dickson-Gomez, J., 2002. p 344. During 26 months of research in El Salvador, Wood wasn't made aware of any reported instances of rape of civilians by FMLN cadre and no cases of rape were attributed to the FMLN by the UN Truth Commission. Wood, E., 2009. p 152.

⁷⁹⁸ Vigil, J., 1995. *Rebel Radio: The Story of El Salvador's Radio Venceremos*. London: Latin American Bureau. p 204-208. Vazquez, N., 1997. argues that sexual harassment and violence did often occur and went unpunished in most cases but this is contrary to most of reports that sexual violence was not common, p 143. Wood, E., 2003. p 131.

of child recruits in the literature, especially given the widespread interest in El Salvador at this time, shows that abuse of child recruits was not widespread, nor was it considered beyond expected levels of ill-treatment. The FMLN as an organisation were disciplined, for example areas under FMLN control were dry and child recruits were not allowed to drink alcohol in an effort to concentrate all focus onto the movement.⁷⁹⁹ As previously discussed, this appears to have been part of a deliberate policy of restraint linked to the FMLN's desire to maintain support and legitimacy, which would have been eroded if widespread ill treatment of child recruits occurred.⁸⁰⁰

The FMLN's need to maintain credibility was particularly important given the nature of what they could offer recruits. According to Weinstein groups can only hope to successfully attract recruits with the promise of future rewards if the group itself is seen as credible.⁸⁰¹ As the FMLN positioned itself as a 'protector', a bulwark between the abusive state and the population, it would have rapidly lost credibility if it had adopted extremely violent child recruitment practices.

⁷⁹⁹ Anderson, J. L., 2006. p 50.

⁸⁰⁰ Treatment of recruits in armed groups that attract voluntary recruits is usually less heinous than in groups that used forced recruitment methods. Telephone Interview with Mike Wessells, Child Protection Practitioner, Christian Children's Fund and Professor at both Columbia University and Randolph-Macon College, 28th September 2006.

⁸⁰¹ Weinstein, J., 2005. Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 49(598). p 601-603.

The Attraction of the FMLN to Children:

Child recruitment ranges from forced recruitment to voluntary recruitment with many children falling between the two extremes. Throughout the course of a conflict the recruitment practices of an armed group can range along this spectrum. In the case of the FMLN the whole of the scale was experienced. The FMLN briefly underwent a period of forced recruitment but was generally to be found at the opposite end of this spectrum moving between voluntary and coerced recruitment.

Some scholars like Grenier would dispute that voluntary recruitment occurred, arguing that the FMLN lacked a solid base of support in rural areas and relied instead on forced recruitment, self-defence of rural communities against state agents and obedience to the de facto authorities. Grenier argues that the Salvadoran conflict was an elite struggle between the old elite (military and oligarchy) and the new elite (the emerging middle class) in which the campesino and working classes were mobilised and manipulated by both sides to the conflict.⁸⁰²

⁸⁰² Grenier, Y., 1999.

Viterna has argued that recruits she terms as “reluctant guerrillas”, were pushed into the FMLN due to a lack of viable alternatives. This had implications for children. Indeed former child recruits were included as research subjects, although not exclusively, in her research. In rural areas in the 1960s the collapse of the already strained clientelist system generated escalating pressures and left few viable employment options. According to Woods the proportion of the population classified as having land decreased from 28.5 to 14.4%.⁸⁰³ Increased demand for land meant that rents were often higher and plots were smaller and of lower quality.⁸⁰⁴ Children and their families lived in often grinding poverty with little they could do to address their situation. Until the 1970s the authoritarian state survived escalating rural poverty and demands for greater political representation by the use of repression in rural areas. According to Farzaneh, for such child recruits repression and the poor economic situation made the ‘prospect of joining the FMLN and fighting in the war a more desirable option than a ‘purposeless’ death’.⁸⁰⁵

The FMLN provided medical care, clothes and food. Some child recruits came to rely on the FMLN for material things such as food and personal security, whilst some became institutionalised.⁸⁰⁶ The deterioration of the existing rural economic and social order had placed greater pressures on families and thus children,

⁸⁰³ Wood, E., 2003. p 24.

⁸⁰⁴ Mason, T., 1986.

⁸⁰⁵ Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 191. Poverty and a lack of alternative opportunities play a role in children’s recruitment. Interview with an Anonymous Source, USA, 27th September 2006.

⁸⁰⁶ Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 164. Dickson-Gomez, J., 2002. p 335.

especially those considered old enough to contribute to the family. However the FMLN did not promise material benefits as an incentive to join them. Child combatants within units may have been provided uniforms and food but beyond that they had to fend for themselves economically.⁸⁰⁷

Reluctant guerrillas were in some cases choosing to join the FMLN to avoid recruitment by the government.⁸⁰⁸ The military kept children enlisted by force and rarely allowed familial contact. In comparison it was fairly straightforward to temporally leave the FMLN and to maintain family contact. Treatment within the two groups influenced which group children sought to join.⁸⁰⁹ These child recruits often had no alternative safe place where they could flee to, either because of a lack of funds or a lack of contacts. The FMLN frequently escorted civilians to the Honduras border where they could flee to refugee camps. However those considered suitable for recruitment were often encouraged to stay with the group or at times were denied access to the camps, leaving them with little choice but to join the coalition. In the case of reluctant guerrillas, it was usually events of crisis which led to their involvement with the armed group; most joined at the start of the conflict when government repression was at its height and there were few alternatives for seeking protection.

⁸⁰⁷ Alegria, C., 1983. p 124.

⁸⁰⁸ Silber, I., 2004. p 567. Children may chose to join one group in order to avoid being recruited by another group. Interview with Sarah Spencer, US Women's Commission, New York, 19th September 2006.

⁸⁰⁹ Verhey, B., p 32.

The oligarchy worked with paramilitary groups, creating a situation of often indiscriminate violence in which agitators and their supporters were targeted and the rural poor were kept suppressed.⁸¹⁰ Such circumstances made it easier for the armed left to recruit children. According to Chavez (2010) ‘popular intellectuals transformed...acts of state terror into symbols of popular rebellion’.⁸¹¹ They sought to use state terror as a recruitment tool by appealing to those affected by it, including children who faced the same daily existence as the adults around them.⁸¹²

‘I witnessed the death of my mother. My uncle was also killed.

So I entered the war partly to get revenge for my family.’

(FMLN Child combatant)⁸¹³

The high level of abuses had a galvanising effect on the opposition and slowly radicalised many children within the opposition, making them more open to the possibilities of armed resistance.⁸¹⁴ Wood’s study found that one of the most reliable predictors of insurgent support in El Salvador was the death of a family member at the hands of the military.

⁸¹⁰ Mason, T., 1986.

⁸¹¹ Chavez, J., 2010. p 28.

⁸¹² In the late 1970s it was so usual for children to work in the agricultural section that a petition to the government included amongst other requests, a minimum daily wage for children. Chavez, J., 2010. p 323. Where opportunities are limited and poverty exists it is easier for armed groups to recruit. Interview with an Anonymous Source, USA, 27th September 2006.

⁸¹³ Farzaneh, N., 2008. p167.

⁸¹⁴ Mason, T., 1986. Silber, I., 2004. p 391.

As one child ex-combatant explained,

‘At that age I didn’t have a great consciousness. I just knew
that if I didn’t become incorporated in the FMLN, I
would be killed by the army’
(Child combatant)⁸¹⁵

In El Salvador, as Cohn and Goodwin-Gill argue more generally, the main catalyst for enlistment by children generally appears to have been physical or structural violence perpetrated by an armed group that affected the child or its close associates (family, community) and resulted in the child at some point choosing to join the opposing armed group.⁸¹⁶ This certainly appears to have been the case in El Salvador where large numbers of children appear to have experienced violence at the hands of the state and then in response joined the FMLN. At times whole families joined the FMLN to seek protection from government troops and these children grew up within the movement.⁸¹⁷ The FMLN appears to have provided a ‘close-knit social structure’ for children orphaned or who had experienced abuses by government armed forces or government affiliated death squads.⁸¹⁸ The reliance on closely guarded networks rooted in family and community involvement meant that some children grew up expecting to become guerrillas once considered old enough for recruitment by the group.

⁸¹⁵ Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 165.

⁸¹⁶ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 157.

⁸¹⁷ Verhey, B., p 8.

⁸¹⁸ Cohn, I., and Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. p34.

Although there is a large amount of evidence that many children were coerced into joining the FMLN by their circumstances, there were also children that joined because they were attracted by the aims and character of the armed left. Some scholars such as Woods counter the arguments of Grenier arguing instead that involvement in the FMLN was voluntary except for a short period in the 1980s. Wood argues that residents in FMLN zones faced equal danger from government persecution and equal benefits such as access to land from the FMLN authorities regardless of their support for the FMLN. Thus support was not contingent on tangible benefits that children could receive. Woods argues that campesino actually supported the insurgency for three reasons; there was an inherent value in supporting a movement that challenged social injustice; it was an act of defiance against the existing system; and participants found pleasure in their involvement such as a sense of pride, self-respect, and a feeling of independence. Wood estimates that approximately one third of campesino in the areas she studied were actively involved with the FMLN which is a high figure if compared to other rebellions throughout the globe.⁸¹⁹

Viterna identifies a second group of recruits, whom she termed “political guerrillas”. The argument here is that children are predisposed to becoming political recruits as ideology is attractive to them, particularly where there are

⁸¹⁹ In South Africa in 1987 only 11% of non-agricultural workers went on strike and the 1926 British General Strike involved only 14-15% of workers. Wood, E., 2003. p 151.

widespread abuses by the opposition which allows them to clearly separate their actions from the enemies as was the case in El Salvador.⁸²⁰ In the rural areas the spreading of liberation theology by the 'popular church' (and some students) awakened the consciences of children and adults and helped to fuel resistance against government sponsored human rights abuses and repression.⁸²¹

However, as Viterna also argues, the relationship between community sympathy and joining the movement was more complex than simple ties between the two sectors. In her study of guerrillas and non-guerrillas – some of whom were under 18 years at the time of recruitment – 81% of interviewees from both groups had family ties to the FMLN yet this had not resulted in all individuals joining the movement.⁸²² Indeed in one study only 5.5% of child recruits gave the desire to be with siblings already in the group as their main motivation for joining whilst a further 2.7% joined at the direct invitation of friends.⁸²³ Some collaborators of the FMLN even used their links to the organisation to actively prevent their children from joining the movement, even in cases where the children wished to join, and other guerrillas sent their children to the cities or abroad so that they would be

⁸²⁰ Dickson-Gomez, J., 2002. p 342. Children are attracted to groups with a strong ideology especially when that group is perceived to be successful. Interview with an Anonymous Source, USA, 27th September 2006. Interview with Jane Lowiki-Zucca, UNDESA, New York, 21st September 2006. Telephone Interview with Michael Shipler, Director of Programmes, Search for Common Ground, Nepal, 13th October 2006.

⁸²¹ Wood, E., 2003.

⁸²² Viterna, J.S., 2006. p 19.

⁸²³ Verhey, B., p 10.

safe.⁸²⁴ Thus recruitment was more complicated than being solely a matter of support or family ties.

Motivation	FMLN	FAES
Fight for better life	30.6%	0%
Fight for fair society	20.8	0
He/she liked it	16.5	42.9
Defend the country	6.7	0
To help	6.3	0
Loss of family member	5.9	14.3
Following siblings	5.5	0
Didn't have a choice	3.1	14.3
Friends invited to join	2.7	0
Other	2	28.6

Table 2: Verhey, B ‘The Demobilisation and Reintegration of Child Soldiers: El Salvador Case Study’, (World Bank, www.worldbank.org, accessed on 19/08/07), p 10.

⁸²⁴ Viterna, J.S., 2006. p 31. Anderson, J. L., 2006. p 231.

Children themselves give various reasons for their involvement with the FMLN with many citing political motivations. The table above shows the motivations of FMLN recruits.

FMLN recruitment had a strong ideological component to it with approximately 50% of recruits citing the fight for societal improvement as their primary motivation; this compares with a figure of only 10% amongst ex-RUF combatants. Interestingly child recruits cited defence of the country as a motivator despite belonging to a non-state armed group. The majority of child recruits cited motivations linked to community issues. Wood mentions that personal motivations were rarely expressed in interviews and argues that this may be due to the FMLN's channelling of grievances into general motivations, based on the opposition to structural injustice, which could sustain a prolonged conflict.⁸²⁵

The ability to channel children's motivations from personal notions of vengeance and gain to collective motivations sanctioned by the group was possible due in part to youth activism which had started prior to the war through organisations such as the National Revolutionary Movement of Secondary Students and the Association of Secondary School Students. These organisations mainly represented 12-16 year olds and their success is attributed to youths' receptiveness to radical ideas and to the political opportunity structure during the 1970s that

⁸²⁵ Wood, E., 2003. p 204. Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 169. Weinstein, J., 2005. p 617.

gave room for teenagers to organise themselves. They were important to the FMLN in terms of their combativeness and the size of the organisations, which were larger and had a greater national coverage than the university student organisations.⁸²⁶ Student organisations had close ties to the militant teachers unions and teachers were endowed with a social status which led them to being seen as leaders within communities. They played an important role in organising secondary school children.⁸²⁷

Political recruits also often had family members with ties to revolutionary activism. Some children joined in order to stay close to these family members. As one child explained,

‘My principle motivation to join was because of my family. I wanted to be close to my brothers’

(Child combatant, FMLN)⁸²⁸

Most political recruits joined the movement at the start of the conflict and came from stable family backgrounds. The FMLN themselves cite family and organisational ties as important for recruitment, especially at the start of the conflict.⁸²⁹ Recruits with pre-existing ties to the movement were preferred as it

⁸²⁶ Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 129-130.

⁸²⁷ Brocket, C., 2005. p 90.

⁸²⁸ Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 168.

⁸²⁹ Groups relying on political motivations can recruit voluntarily on a larger scale than groups limited by the amount of resources they have available. Gate, S., 2002 Recruitment and Allegiance: The Micro foundations of Rebellion. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 46(1). pp 111–130. p 119. Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 158.

was felt that they were less of a security risk and such children were already imbued with the ethos of the struggle.

As one ex-child combatant noted,

‘My parents were always with the compas...So it was natural for me’
(Ex-Child Combatant, FMLN)⁸³⁰

Many children grew up within revolutionary families and communities. They followed parents, siblings, friends and teachers into the movement. They were raised in the refugee camps or on the run from the army. Their commanding officers, who joined the FMLN at similar ages to their charges, were like older family members whom the children confided in and asked advice of. Although it is easier to indoctrinate children, those involved with the FMLN do appear to have had strong and genuine ideological and community based motivations. These were non-material in nature and grew out of the environment in which the children lived which was characterised both by state repression and violence and exposure from a young age to the guerrillas. As one ex-child combatant confided,

‘I was happy to have been incorporated. I had the option to leave, but I stayed with the FMLN because I felt I was helping to achieve justice’
(Ex-Child combatant, FMLN)⁸³¹

⁸³⁰ Anderson, J. L., 2006. p 59.

⁸³¹ Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 169.

The FMLN clearly attracted children who were committed to the group and the cause. Weinstein's argument that groups that offer non-material benefits to recruits often do so in order to attract those with the highest levels of commitment can be seen to be supported by children's statements about their involvement.⁸³² Self-discipline results in less need to inflict harsh punishments to ensure obedience, as disciplined troops will follow orders and thus more closely adhere to the policies instigated by the leadership.⁸³³ In El Salvador reported abuse of either civilians by FMLN cadre, or of child recruits by commanders were uncommon.

In the later stages of the war, when prolonged conflict had weakened the core political group and reluctant recruits were lessening due to a drop in human rights abuses, the FMLN had to turn to Viterna's final category of recruits, those she terms "recruited guerrillas". Those recruits came from situations of relative safety such as refugee camps and repopulated communities, and were persuaded to join the FMLN by recruiters. Children are particularly vulnerable to recruitment in these situations, and locations, and in El Salvador the average age of the recruits dropped significantly in this final stage of recruitment. According to Viterna's data, the average age of all interviewees at the time of their mobilisation was 19.2 years. When broken down into the three groups she defined, the average age was

⁸³² Weinstein, J., 2005. p 603.

⁸³³ Weinstein, J., 2005. p 622.

as follows; politicised guerrillas 20 years, reluctant guerrillas 25.7 years, recruited guerrillas 13.2 years.⁸³⁴ Although her sample is small the numbers are illuminating. They suggest that child recruitment and lowering ages became more of a problem as the conflict continued and that children often joined despite being in places of safety.

Recruited children were young, from broken homes and conscripted towards the end of the conflict when the FMLN increased recruitment drives. The two motivations for these recruits appear to have been a desire for adventure and to escape the boredom of the refugee camps, and a desire for revenge.⁸³⁵ Indeed, some children stated that they preferred the action of belonging to the group than the inaction and stress of living with traumatised family members in the camps.⁸³⁶ As can be seen, the motivations of the recruits became less important to the FMLN as the conflict progressed and the movement came under pressure due to shortages in manpower.⁸³⁷ It is a sign of the control that the FMLN had over its troops that a reduction in standards for recruitment does not appear to have resulted in an increase in abuses of children or abuses perpetrated by them, in sharp contrast to the Sierra Leone case.

⁸³⁴ Viterna, J.S., 2006. p 22-23.

⁸³⁵ Farzaneh. N., 2008. p 167. Gorkin, M et al., 2000. p 102.

⁸³⁶ Dickson-Gomez, J., 2002. p 336.

⁸³⁷ Viterna, J.S., 2006. p 31.

Conclusion.

The FMLN were a political movement with a left-wing ideology that sought the re-organisation of society and the elimination of social injustice. Although many in the leadership were Marxists, the majority of the rank and file can be best described as having been influenced by notions of social injustice; some through Marxism, a greater number through liberation theology and many through their observed and lived experiences of daily life in El Salvador.

As a political-military organisation the FMLN had to constantly seek to balance the demands with which it was confronted. To retain legitimacy as a political movement the group needed credibility and support. It needed a political constituency to validate its ambitions. As a military organisation it had to be capable of engaging with the state's armed forces and forging for itself space within which to carry out its political work. For this recruitment needed to be maintained at the necessary level for sustaining the military capacity of the group. However, as has been seen, balancing the competing demands of the political and the military was not always easy and at times, the need to maintain military capacity resulting in a weakening of the support that the FMLN relied upon and threatened the long term viability of the political project. Consequently the FMLN took a key decision to reassess the primacy of the political project. Military considerations were still critical but they were clearly subordinate to political

concerns. This affected child recruitment in a number of ways but the most pertinent was that, excepting a brief period after the 1981 final offensive, recruitment was of a voluntary nature. As the conflict lengthened the age of children recruited decreased whilst their numbers increased, but recruitment remained a largely voluntary choice.

As has been highlighted, child recruits in El Salvador faced a numbers of push and pull factors that figured in their recruitment. Some children were faced with circumstances that meant that they could access greater opportunities for survival inside the group than they could out of it, others joined for personal gratification, for revenge and to alleviate boredom. Despite some scholars objecting to the idea that children can be agents in their own right, many did choose to join the FMLN due to shared beliefs and a desire to build a better society. The core members of the FMLN were ideologically motivated, highly organised and goal-orientated. A strong ideological grounding, sense of solidarity and continuing familial contact helped to provide a framework within which children could view their participation positively. Significantly even after the conflict ended most children interviewed cited community based motivations as their primary reason for joining the FMLN.⁸³⁸

⁸³⁸ Verhey, B., p 32.

However children were recruited in different ways throughout the course of the conflict. At the start of the conflict the FMLN preferred politicised recruits with pre-existing links to the movement for security and ideological reasons. As the group faced the need for expansion the FMLN cast a wider net, also recruiting from non-armed civil sector organisations with ties to the movement. As the conflict became prolonged and the FMLN came under stress it increasingly relaxed its recruitment criteria, at one point even briefly condoning forced recruitment. Potential child recruits were increasingly approached to join the movement and actively recruited rather than them approaching the movement of their own accord, because of attraction to the group's political ambitions.

Due to the prevalent machismo culture, apparent even within the FMLN, the majority of girls served in support roles which were essential to the insurgency but did not receive the recognition and plaudits of the armed units.⁸³⁹ It seems apparent, as in many conflicts, that girls involvement was due to political and military necessities whilst the limitations placed on their involvement was due to pre-existing cultural considerations. In contrast limitations placed on boys were related solely to their age with most boy recruits eventually becoming primarily used as front line combatants.

⁸³⁹ Wood, E., 2003.

It would appear that the recruitment and deployment of girls and boys was not in itself condemned in El Salvador, either during the war or after. It was child recruitment of a forced nature that was protested against. Armed opposition to the state was not viewed as off limits to children, and the armed group itself was built out of networks that facilitated child recruitment. Consequently there is little evidence that child recruitment by the FMLN was substantially objected to.

The FMLN's decision to accept child conscription was linked to the military and political considerations of the group. The need to maintain some level of military capacity and the usefulness of children in combat situations, particularly those of a non-conventional nature, made their inclusion desirable. Politically the emphasis on a prolonged war strategy and the mobilisation of the population as part of this strategy opened the way for the militarisation and recruitment of children. However political considerations also mitigated child recruitment and deployment in ways not encountered in the other case studies.

The overriding concern with maintaining legitimacy and support meant that forced child recruitment and the abuse of children was not commonly reported. The emphasis on refraining from undertaking human rights abuses against civilians and the prominence of relationships of co-operation and not exploitation within the group's internal structures meant that children were not exposed to the

same extent to psychological trauma as in other conflicts such as Sierra Leone. It was even possible for child recruits to leave the group.

The situation in El Salvador is clearly significantly different to those found in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. Recruitment was primarily voluntary, forced recruitment having been quickly prohibited. Some agency was clearly demonstrated in the children's explanations of the choices they took to join the FMLN. Strict discipline and a strong central command with hierarchical tendencies did however appear to reduce children's ability to act with some agency on deployment. The abuse of child recruits was linked to military discipline. It was not extreme and child recruits were not expected to participate in structures of abuse and exploitation within the group. Children could opt to leave the FMLN and the overriding concern of the FMLN was to preserve support, credibility and legitimacy in order to realise its political ambitions. This had the effect of moderating the recruitment, deployment and abuse of the children in its care.

Chapter Six: Conclusion.

This thesis set out to address the question of whether conflict impacts significantly on child soldiers' experiences of recruitment, deployment and abuse when conscripted by non-state armed groups. The research looked at the subject through a comparative lens using three distinct cases, chosen because they illustrate three different types of conflict. Sierra Leone experienced a conflict in which a predatory armed group with few, if any, political motivations acted with extreme violence in order to create an environment conducive to illegally extracting resources. The conflict in Sri Lanka was predominantly characterised by an ethno-nationalist logic that originated in state policies that discriminated against and marginalised the country's Tamil community and brought about a profound crisis in state legitimacy among the country's Tamils. The conflict was largely informed by ethnic difference and took the form of two ethnically charged, antagonistic and parallel claims to the same territory. As in Sri Lanka, the El Salvador case manifested itself as a violent struggle which grew out of deeply held grievances and took the form of a rebellion against an oligarchic state. There, however, the two sides did not fight over territory (although land issues were central), but over differing political visions of how society should be organised.

The findings indicate a clear relationship between the way in which child soldiers were regarded and used within the character and specificity of each conflict, but also with how that conflict changed over time. In many ways the thesis findings suggest that distinctions such as that between new and old wars provide a useful comparative framework within which to situate the particular practices related to child recruitment and usage in warfare in each of the case studies. At one end of the spectrum Sierra Leone appears as quite a clear cut case of a new war, while, at the other end, the conflict in El Salvador presented many of the features that are recognizable in old wars. The conflict in Sri Lanka has been more complex, with features that defied a clear cut designation in terms of an 'old' or a 'new' war; it could be rather understood as progressively though not necessarily clearly shifting from one type to the other in some ways. To be sure, findings show that the conflicts under examination have not been static but have run a course marked by change as much as continuity. In each case as the conflicts became protracted, some of the dynamics shifted with major implications for the recruitment, deployment and abuse of child soldiers. However the level to which these changes occurred and in what way, was influenced by the type of conflict, which worked in tandem with shifting conflict dynamics, to influence the outcome for children.

Each of the conflicts took place in the non-Western world; as noted in the introduction to the thesis, child soldiering has largely been eliminated in the West. The international legislation which reflected these developments in the Western hemisphere had an international reach and had some impact on the three groups as

could be seen in the varying degrees to which they felt compelled to pay public attention to the issue. However, in the course of the conflicts under examination, child recruitment remained a key practice despite adjustments in response to public and international opinion and pressure.

The findings show that it was often not children's involvement or their age that was viewed as problematic but who they had been involved with. Parents appeared to develop particular attitudes towards the acceptability of their children's involvement in terms of why they were recruited and who they were recruited by. Children fighting as part of groups perceived to be defensive in nature i.e. those groups who more or less convincingly situated themselves as defenders of the population did so, to some extent, with the support, or at least the tacit consent of their families. Those parents that did not want their children to become involved and were in a position to avoid it, often chose to circumvent recruitment through sending children to areas of safety, hiding them or arranging their marriage rather than publicly opposing recruitment by these groups, which were entrusted with ensuring the safety of the wider community. This is not to say that where forced recruitment occurred, either by the group or by the group's opponents, there was no resistance or public condemnation. Adults protested against, or devised ways of resisting or evading their child's forced recruitment in each conflict in different ways. In turn, reaction to recruitment drives was met by diverse responses, depending on the group and the stage of the conflict.

A controversial point relates to the extent to which culture impacted on group behaviour and practices. Whilst cultural factors were undoubtedly important in providing an opportunity structure as well as constraints to the practice of child recruitment, the findings indicate a more nuanced and complex relationship between culture as a framework and the practices on the ground. Far from being fixed, cultural norms were reinterpreted and, at the end of the day, refracted by the groups' practices on the ground, as the latter modified and invented norms and traditions in ways that enabled them to recruit and deploy children for their own purposes. How they did this, varied over time and within the overall context of the conflict (see below).

Recruitment: Question of Scale and Age.

At first sight, it might seem as though demographics provided a key explanation of child soldiering, but the situation was more complex. Child recruitment differed dramatically in terms of scale and age of recruits in each of the conflicts examined and the reasons were not only a result of the composition of the populations involved. In Sierra Leone approximately 50% of the population were younger than 18 years old, and although the published figures vary widely, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission database showed that 63% of forced recruits were juveniles. In El Salvador, where only 23% of the population were

younger than 18 years old, only 20% of recruits were minors. Sri Lanka highlights how complicated the question of demographics can be, providing an anomaly to the similarities between population composition and child recruitment. Only 15% of the population were less than 18 years old yet 40-60% of recruits were children. The recruitment of children vastly outweighed their numbers within the total population. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam adherence to a strategy of total war, and their organisation along the lines of a de facto state which included gathering data on the population, meant that the LTTE was quite proactive and efficient in implementing its recruitment practices. It was clear that as the conflict continued and the LTTE became increasingly dislocated from the Tamil population, it had to increasingly rely on forced recruitment. The findings show that children were the preferred targets of forced recruitment and, given the information that the LTTE held on the population, it would have been difficult for children to avoid conscription. The findings show that regardless of demographics the groups that used long term coercive recruitment practices had a greater percentage of children within the ranks.

In each case, child recruitment was a default option; an alternative the armed group used when voluntarily recruitment was not enough to maintain its full strength. Thus it would seem that the scale of children's recruitment was affected by a combination of political ambitions (or lack of them), and conflict dynamics which impacted on the military capacity of the groups. The findings show that the groups' desire to avoid defeat accounted for many of the similarities in child

recruitment throughout the three conflicts; children of both sexes were recruited because of these concerns. Children were deployed on the frontlines in active combat for this reason and forced recruitment was introduced in each case because of concerns over military capacity. In each case study, child recruitment was not an initial strategy of the armed group. There was no significant recruitment of child soldiers in the beginning of any of these conflicts. Even in Sierra Leone where children became the lynchpin of the movement and the means to carry out a strategy of terror, child recruitment was reported not to have begun in any meaningful way until a few years into the conflict. So it would appear that in each case it was the group's desire to avoid its own defeat that led to the introduction of child recruitment as a policy of the group. By the same token forced recruitment was also not evident at the start of each of the conflicts, although each group resorted to it in varying degrees during times of crisis. In El Salvador forced recruitment was briefly utilised but was quickly prohibited for political reasons. In Sri Lanka the forced recruitment of children was variable in parallel to the course of the conflict; in times of crisis it peaked but it can also be seen to have steadily increased overall as the conflict progressed. In Sierra Leone the forced recruitment of children was acknowledged from early in the conflict and continued throughout the war, peaking in times of crisis.

The age of children at recruitment was also affected by similar considerations. Although each of the three groups' recruited persons defined under the Convention on the Rights of the Child as 'children', there was a notable

difference in the ages at which each group recruited. In El Salvador 75.3% of child recruits were between 10-14 years of age at the time of recruitment. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone reported that children between 10-14 years old were especially targeted for forced recruitment by the Revolutionary United Front. In Sri Lanka the average age of child recruits was between 14-17 years old.

These variations in children's recruitment ages can again be seen to be due to the interplay of two factors - the ambitions of the group, and the dynamics of the conflict. In Sierra Leone child recruitment was a direct consequence of the group's criminal motivations. With little discernable political motivation (which as we have seen is a contentious topic), the RUF attracted criminal elements, was extremely violent and alienated most adults. To maintain fighting capacity, children had to be abducted and incorporated into the group. As an apolitical group, they did not need to restrain recruitment in any way; any child old enough to be of use within the fighting or support units could be taken. In Sri Lanka, as an armed group fighting to achieve a separate state, the LTTE sought to construct a professional force as part of their strategy to build a de facto state. Whilst human rights organisations condemned the LTTE for recruiting children less than 18 years of age, the LTTE countered such arguments by saying that as a de facto state, their recruitment policies were in line with those that legally allowed states to recruit children over 15 years of age. For much of the conflict the LTTE abided by its own restrictions. However; towards the end of the conflict when the

group came under immense pressure, the controls the group had put in place with regards to recruitment were eroded and increasingly younger recruits were conscripted. Similarly, in El Salvador the armed group sought political legitimacy and recruited fewer child recruits for this purpose. However those recruited were, at times, very young which seem at odds with the FMLN's political aims.

However, as has been discussed, the driving force behind this seems to be the avoidance of recruitment into the state's military forces and the evading of state sponsored abuses by children who actively sought to join the opposition. As the local population did not publicly condemn the FMLN for recruiting these children, it was possible for them to be incorporated without damaging the strength of their political constituency.

Impact of competition.

An important factor regarding the scale of recruitment was the level of competition that the group faced, although this too was not a straightforward issue. In El Salvador, the centralisation of recruitment within each member group of the FMLN meant that child recruitment did not become a matter of competition between individual commanders, and the cohesion of the coalition and a system where each group controlled its own territory safeguarded each group from threats by the other. The actions of the FMLN itself prevented a spiralling of recruitment from occurring and this was largely due to co-operation amongst the insurgents,

which was a cornerstone of the prolonged war strategy. The FMLN also took the decision not to compete with the state on this issue. In fact it was the state's own recruitment of children (which was largely forcible in nature) that was a source of protest and therefore of potential support for the FMLN. The FMLN could not be seen to be copying the state given its position of opposing the government, although it needed to and did recruit children itself. As a result, its recruitment of children could only take place with self-imposed limitations; therefore the scale of child recruitment remained low and primarily voluntary in nature. In contrast, in Sri Lanka the splitting of the group in 2004 did drive an increase in competition. This was interesting because earlier in the conflict when the LTTE had more rivals there was no significant child recruitment. It was the emergence of a rival group at a moment of danger for the LTTE that fuelled an increase in recruitment. The group was under pressure as the ceasefire broke down, and the potential haemorrhaging of support during a time of acute political difficulty galvanised the LTTE as it sought to ensure its own dominance and undermine the position of a splinter group which was threatening its hegemony. The nature of the internal split was clearly seen to be a greater threat to the LTTE at this time than the recruitment of children by rival groups was perceived to be in the early 1980s.

At the far end of the spectrum, in Sierra Leone competition was much more rampant and was an issue almost from the outset. As is common in new wars, there were several groups in existence from early in the conflict. All recruited children and engaged in a mixture of co-operation and confrontation with each

other. As the Civil Defence Forces emerged, in a context where the state failed to protect the population, they also turned to recruiting children. However this defensive response stimulated the RUF's further recruitment of children. With all groups recruiting children it was very difficult to escape conscription from one group or another. Unlike in the other two cases, it was even possible for children to move between groups during the war with many children escaping from one group being conscripted into a rival group.

Political constraints: The importance of support.

The findings confirm the arguments of several writers including both Singer and Richards that it was the strategic benefits of using children that caused groups to recruit them. However it was not only military capacity that influenced their strategic concerns. The findings suggest that questions of support, legitimacy and the aims of the group also acted to constrain or allow recruitment in ways that went beyond strategic necessity.

Political factors were largely related to the support that the group sought or needed. In El Salvador and Sri Lanka, adult support for the groups was quite high. In El Salvador approximately 1/3 of the population supported the FMLN whilst in Sri Lanka many Tamils felt they had little choice but to support the LTTE in the

face of state discrimination and repression. In these two conflicts, voluntary child recruitment was much higher than in Sierra Leone. However despite the large amount of support that each group received from adults, child recruitment still varied significantly. In El Salvador the FMLN was founded on the principle of challenging social injustice. It could only retain its credibility if it could continue to situate itself in opposition to the government and its abuses and so forced recruitment (which occurred briefly but was quickly prohibited) did have negative consequences for the group, which relied heavily on the support of the local population. Support was sustained because the population was protected by the FMLN and recruitment was not perceived to be forced. In El Salvador the population could, even through much of the conflict, remain neutral in contested territory or they could leave the contested zones.

The alternative options available to the population in El Salvador did not exist to same extent in Sri Lanka. Here it was very difficult for the population to remain neutral given the deep divides between the two communities involved in the conflict and the actions of the elites on both sides of it, and it was difficult, at times impossible, for them to leave the conflict zone. It was difficult to establish with any certainty the true extent of support for the LTTE, as much of it was probably conditional and based on a lack of alternatives, even as the LTTE became increasingly abusive towards the Tamil population. The LTTE had a degree of power over the population that the FMLN did not have, due in part to the characteristics it increasingly adopted as the conflict became protracted. A

greater level of psychological and physical coercion could be utilised by the LTTE as, despite its political project which required legitimacy, its adoption of a more criminally based resource extraction process meant that it could to some extent override the concerns of its constituency. This resulted in higher numbers of children being recruited. However in times of relative peace, such as after the signing of the 2002 ceasefire, it became increasingly difficult for the LTTE to justify large scale child recruitment, especially in the light of its greater use of counterinsurgency measures and increasing authoritarianism, which discomfited many in the population. It can be seen that support for the LTTE dropped because they had to turn increasingly to forced child recruitment. This was made easier due to children's inability to leave for places of safety, and the nature of the conflict made it possible for the LTTE to still retain some level of support regardless of their actions, if only because the population were more scared of the state than they were of the LTTE. The situation in Sri Lanka was therefore more complex than merely one of ideological support. The greater the threat from the state was seen to be, the fewer adults objected to the recruitment of their children, whilst in times of reduced conflict the community saw less need for the continuation of child recruitment.

The argument that the RUF had any political motivations was most plausible, if ever, at the start of the conflict, but after that they made little sustained effort to engage with the population on a political level. Any political goals they did have were lost during the descent into criminally motivated violence, which further

eroded their opportunities to attract and maintain support. A lack of support translated into a failure to attract recruits and the RUF rapidly adopted forced recruitment practices, children being the preferred target. Extreme force and violence could be used during the recruitment process because political support was no longer relevant to the group and children were viewed as an expendable resource.

Resources.

For all the groups investigated for this thesis, child soldiers were a valuable resource, as a number of writers such as Brocklehurst, Singer and Rosen have argued. However the findings point to some interesting variations in how children were used at different times. These differences can be accounted for by looking into whether the group viewed children as a long-term or short-term resource. As an ethno-nationalist movement looking to ensure the survival of the 'nation', the LTTE looked to utilise all resources in line with its total war strategy. The LTTE projected a sense of urgency through its great stress on the imminent dangers the Tamil nation faced from the Sinhalese dominated government. Portraying the conflict in this way however posed a dilemma for the LTTE. On the one hand children were the future of the nation, a key long term resource, and without a sufficient population any claim to statehood on the basis of the Tamil identity was lost. On the other, they were a resource that the LTTE had to increasingly turn to

as the conflict progressed and the group came under stress and faced the possibility of defeat. This contrasts significantly with El Salvador, where the prolonged war strategy of the FMLN placed an emphasis on conserving and building resources for a long struggle. Children here were also seen as the future but, as the FMLN expected to be in a situation of conflict over a prolonged period of time, the urgency to throw all resources at the enemy was diminished. Thus, children were seen primarily as a resource for the future and their recruitment was on a much lower scale. In contrast, in Sierra Leone children were not viewed as a resource upon which the group could draw for legitimacy or future support, therefore the group only needed child recruits in order to access material resources directly. As a purely short-term resource, child soldiers in Sierra Leone were almost entirely viewed as expendable.

Another important factor in recruitment processes was what the group could offer recruits in terms of resources. The findings here give further support to Weinstein's argument that groups that offer payouts in the form of material benefits during the conflict are more likely to attract low commitment individuals seeking short term gains. The findings show that this is not only the case for children (not Weinstein's primary focus) but in ways that are both direct and indirect and that help us understand the balance between forced and voluntary recruitment. Where the adults that compose the core membership of the group are attracted by material benefits, the group is likely to struggle to articulate with sufficient persuasion an ideology that will attract an adequate number of new

recruits. As can be seen in the case of the RUF, the group then has to adopt forced recruitment methods in times of crisis when manpower issues come to the fore, or when the leadership decides to expand the size of the group. The RUF was a resource seeking group that initially offered material benefits that attracted criminal elements; the original invasion force included many low commitment individuals such as mercenaries. The extreme violence that these elements introduced to the conflict made it difficult for the RUF to attract further recruits despite the potential for material gains and so the group had to resort to forced recruitment of children. As forced recruits who did not require much training or investment due to the short term goals of the group, children were expendable and thus their treatment was brutal (see below). In contrast, in Sri Lanka and El Salvador both the LTTE and the FMLN attracted high commitment individuals looking to gain future benefits. Investment in recruits was substantial, with both groups offering prolonged and advanced training for much of the conflicts. In these cases children were a valuable resource in their own right.

Mechanisms for recruitment.

Significant variations also occurred in how children were recruited. The findings show that children were recruited in similar places throughout the three conflicts; schools, markets, in the home, or from refugee camps. However, the manner of recruitment varied even when it occurred in the same types of place. In Sierra

Leone children were recruited brutally and opportunistically within a chaotic and violent conflict environment. Their recruitment was usually vicious and violent, ad hoc and random. Any child that the RUF came into contact with was at risk of recruitment largely regardless of age and those not recruited were arguably at even greater risk of danger, often facing mutilation and death. Consistent with the LTTE's ambition to construct their own de facto state, there was what could be described as an institutionalised approach which was structured, orderly and based on records of information that the group held on the population. Recruits were often selected in advance on the basis that they were Tamil and thus a citizen of the future state and because they met age based criteria. The LTTE also held recruitment drives in which individuals were encouraged to volunteer after propaganda meetings and parades. The recruitment process for the most part was quite formal, mimicking in some respects how a sovereign state would operate. However, as has been already demonstrated, in times of crises this more formal approach was abandoned and replaced by more coercive methods. Children were rounded up at festivals, taken from public places and even removed from their homes with threats of violence. The FMLN for its part preferred to recruit ideologically motivated individuals who had proven themselves committed to the wider cause through its own social networks or through the extensive networks that the FMLN had with its revolutionary partners in civil society and who would commit over the longer term to the pursuit of social justice. Recruitment was therefore more informal, although informed by the anxiety that the movement may be infiltrated by government agents. As in Sri Lanka, over the course of the

conflict the FMLN started to actively recruit in more formal ways, but except for a brief period in the mid 1980s the FMLN did not resort to forced recruitment. Given these different environments, children's recruitment in Sri Lanka and El Salvador was much more orderly and usually less violent, although in the pursuit of total war it was not uncommon in Sri Lanka for verbal threats and psychological coercion to be used where families resisted recruitment. In contrast, recruitment in Sierra Leone was brutal and indiscriminate.

Another aspect of the recruitment process was the question of centralisation. The de-centralised structure of the RUF, common to new wars, meant that each commander was responsible for recruiting his own combatants, and the local belief that the more dependants a person had the greater his status, led to commanders seeking to increase their status by increasing the number of recruits under their control. In addition, the more recruits a commander controlled the greater his workforce; which, given that the RUF was a criminal enterprise, was another strong motivator for commanders to maximise recruitment. The RUF offered commanders the opportunity to recruit a workforce and loot in return for the commanders creating, through their recruits, an environment in which the leadership could access resources that would have otherwise been denied to them. This system was an example of encouraged competition and an incentivised use of forced recruitment. Although greater recruitment did occur in times of crisis or prior to major offensives, suggesting that the leadership did at times take recruitment decisions, it appears to have been predominantly local level

commanders that determined the majority of conscription. The system for the employment of children in both Sri Lanka and El Salvador was significantly diverse and differed between the two cases. As would be expected of an old war, in both groups power was centralised, and the leadership of the groups made the majority of recruitment decisions, such as whether and how children would be recruited. An increase in overall employment was tied more closely to changes in the conflict and the group's response to stress. In both cases the groups were tightly controlled and strictly hierarchical; all decisions regarding policies including those regarding child recruitment were made at command level and expected to be adhered to by those lower in the hierarchy. Due to tight controls on all aspects of recruitment and deployment, individual commanders had little opportunity to personally gain through increasing the number of recruits they could enlist. In both these cases it was the strategic requirements of the groups that dictated the scale of recruitment and not individuals. However the recruitment process in Sri Lanka was more formal as already shown, in keeping with its attempts to create a de facto state army. In El Salvador many children were recruited via family members or people known to them due to the FMLN's concerns over infiltration. Even in the refugee camps political officers who sought out potential recruits made a point of getting to know children and their families as part of the recruitment process.

The impact of violence and the coercion of recruits

It was abuse by the governments that fuelled recruitment in Sri Lanka and El Salvador but the groups' response as 'protector' in each case differed. On the one hand the LTTE used reactions of anger and fear over government abuses to channel as many children as possible into the movement (within the self imposed restrictions already discussed). Propaganda highlighted abuses by the state to encourage valour on the battlefield and to promote a fear of abuse if captured that was used to fuel acceptance of death, even by cyanide as we have seen. They often made it difficult for civilians to avoid abuse by refusing to let them leave the North-East and at times deliberately kept them in areas of intense conflict to be used as human shields. For the LTTE's claim to statehood to be credible it needed a Tamil constituency to remain within the boundaries of the proposed state, regardless of the climate of abuse and violence that might be found there. Indeed the LTTE believed so strongly that the protection of the nation was built on maintaining a Tamil presence in the North-East that at the end of the conflict they were known to have shot individual civilians who tried to cross to government held territory. In sharp contrast, the FMLN sought to protect the population more directly from abuse, actively aiding the population by giving warnings and escorting civilians from the conflict zones, creating an environment in which children had an alternative form of protection and reducing the need for children to join the armed group. Although in El Salvador the government was more violently abusive by all accounts than in Sri Lanka, children were not found

within the armed group in such high numbers nor did they often cite revenge or anger as a factor in their involvement with the FMLN which avoided revenge or protection based recruitment. This was not to say that they did not highlight abuses by the government, but they channelled anger over specific government abuses into general grievances that could sustain a prolonged conflict.

The RUF did not situate themselves as a 'protector'. It was the most coercive group and used the highest levels and most extreme practices of forced recruitment. Following Beardsley and McQuin's argument that groups that rely on high return resources such as the RUF in Sierra Leone (and the LTTE in Sri Lanka as the conflict progressed), only require a low level of investment and thus are more prone to forced recruitment, the findings show that this is to some extent true even when applied to child recruitment. However the situation was more complicated than it might seem at first glance, as both political considerations and conflict dynamics interplayed with the influence of resources. It can quite clearly be seen in Sierra Leone, where the sole aim of the group was looting and illegal resource extraction, and the group had no real political agenda to implement, that forced recruitment was the primary type of recruitment. As with the RUF, the LTTE had a substantial external source of income. However they do not appear to have used this on any significant scale for personal gain. Rather they used the funds they acquired to strengthen the military capacity of the organisation and to fund the elements of a proto state. In sharp contrast to the RUF therefore a major constraint on the extraction and utilisation of resources

was the question of legitimacy. The LTTE could not be seen to be profiting publicly, as this would have de-legitimised its claims to be the 'vanguard' of the Tamil nation and reduced support for its cause both domestically and internationally. This had implications also for the recruitment of children as a resource to be exploited. Even though the LTTE could have forcibly recruited from early in the conflict it did not. However over time the LTTE became gradually more threatened by the prospect of defeat. As the LTTE increasingly saw its own survival as intrinsically linked to the survival of the 'nation' it turned increasingly to forced child recruitment. The situation in El Salvador was significantly different. As a group with a low return strategy, the FMLN were firmly rooted within the communities they sought to educate and protect and relied on the local population for supplies, information and support. They had some external connections but these mainly supplied training opportunities rather than financial aid. Above all the FMLN saw themselves as an indigenous Salvadoran movement and sought to retain their autonomy, avoiding greater external assistance from groups who may have sought to influence the movement. As the FMLN were primarily reliant on the local population, they were inherently aware of how to maintain the support they required for their continuing existence and took care not to alienate supporters through their recruitment methods. In El Salvador civilians in the contested zones were not notably abused in extremely violent ways by the FMLN, even when they were in the midst of crisis. The FMLN was quick to reassert control after the failure of the 1981 offensive and to bring policies back in line with their declared political goals in order to prevent

support from eroding.

The findings have shown then that both the scale and age of recruitment and whether the armed groups used voluntary or forced recruitment methods were influenced by the political considerations of the groups and the type of resources that the group had access to. These were in turn affected by conflict dynamics which acted to undermine the controls on recruitment that the groups had imposed on themselves. As controls were weakened, recruitment became more forced and the levels of violence involved increased. This was particularly true of the RUF and to a lesser extent the LTTE, which were involved in conflicts displaying to varying degrees the characteristics of new war in which the survival of the groups became more important than the stated objectives of the movement. In the RUF's case this was due to the group's spiral into criminality. In Sri Lanka, the LTTE began to see its survival as intrinsically linked to that of the Tamil identity and nation. The next section looks at how these same factors relating to the conflict impacted on children's deployment once within the group.

Control and Deployment.

Creating effective soldiers: Indoctrination and Socialisation.

Recruitment of course is only the first stage of the process that takes individuals from being children to being child soldiers and it was not necessarily the most

traumatic, although for many the violence of their enlistment was the harbinger of what was to come when they were indoctrinated, trained, deployed, organised and engaged in combat.

The indoctrination of children could begin prior to children joining an armed group and was often an extension of the question of support. In Sri Lanka and El Salvador, conflicts where support for the armed group was rooted in the local population in different ways, children were exposed to some level of indoctrination prior to their enlistment. Similar methods were used by both groups, such as the manipulative use of radio and video for propaganda purposes and the parading of child recruits in public places to normalise their involvement and attract further children to the group. Not all children experienced indoctrination in the same ways however; for many of the children in these two conflicts what they were exposed to reinforced their pre-existing inclinations. This was in sharp contrast to Sierra Leone, where no political indoctrination occurred prior to recruitment, which was almost entirely forced in nature.

The levels of coercion in recruitment had implications in turn for where children were trained. In Sierra Leone, where support for the group was low amongst civilians and children were forcibly abducted, the RUF made great efforts to deliberately dislocate children from their past lives to prevent attempts to escape. Not only were children held and trained in isolation in areas far from their places

of origin to make it difficult for them to successfully escape, but they were also separated from others who might have aided escape, as we have seen by the deliberate killing of siblings and peers. The isolation of recruits had repercussions for group cohesion which in turn influenced abuse within and by the RUF (see below). In contrast, in the other two conflicts separation from family and community was not so extreme, although again there were some differences. Children were usually separated during training but that occurs in many state military institutions. After training, children moved within the communities that they protected and it was possible for recruits to have contact with family. Due to its emphasis on acting as a state army, the separation between the LTTE and the community it moved among was greater than in El Salvador. The LTTE was a puritanical group which desired fully committed recruits, wholly dedicated to the cause. Child recruits were encouraged to put the movement and its goals above all other things, even family and community ties. Anything felt to distract recruits from their involvement with the cause, such as alcohol and sexual relationships, was prohibited. Public complaints by family members who were angry at the difficulties imposed on maintaining family relations resulted in a softening of this stance over time and it became less difficult for recruits to maintain pre-existing ties, although some restrictions were kept in place to ensure the LTTE was the greatest priority for its members. For example recruits were still prohibited from getting married or creating family units of their own until they had served for a number of years, as this was viewed as something that would distract them from the struggle. Child recruits within the FMLN were significantly more

incorporated into the communities in which they moved. They were highly driven and committed but this did not come at the price of them choosing between the armed cause and a family life. In fact their family and social life was interwoven in many ways with their involvement in the cause. Whole families and communities were incorporated into the 'struggle' in keeping with the FMLN's adoption of a prolonged war strategy. This was not seen in either of the other two cases.

In many ways the relationships that child recruits had with the external world were reflected within the group. Children in the FMLN had often joined through pre-existing connections, to family members already in the group, through peers or through organisational ties. Those bonds eased the process of recruitment as children were being drawn further into a community that they already had some knowledge of. The community functioned, in many ways, as a militarised version of the society that they already knew. Interpersonal relationships occurred in similar ways to which they had outside the group because the FMLN saw itself as part of the community; co-operation was emphasised and social relations were orderly. In sharp contrast children within the RUF were ripped from their communities, and treated as objects to be used by the group. The ways in which the socialisation process occurred was directly related to the function of the individual child within the group and the character of the commander who had control over them. Children were categorised as 'soldiers' or 'civilians' with boys predominantly becoming 'soldiers' with younger children and girls, who had roles

as labourers in the camps or as 'wives', being seen as 'civilians'. Children who were labelled as soldiers were placed within a particularly hierarchical structure, encouraged to internalise the groups *raison d'être* and played an active role in maintaining the groups internal social structures. They were socialised to be brutal and domineering. Violence towards others, particularly 'civilians' and those soldiers lower in the hierarchy and the pursuit of personal gain were encouraged but all children were still at risk of abuse from those higher in the hierarchy. The majority of girl children were recruited as a resource with which to aid the socialisation of soldiers - through enabling them to access girls as a material gain. They were usually isolated from the internal hierarchical structures of the group, abused and tightly controlled. The extremely brutal and abusive relationships found within the RUF are in sharp contrast to those found within the LTTE who based their social interactions within the group on those they imagined to be the case in other professional armies. Children were comrades; social interactions were regulated by what was in the best interest of the movement and whilst not so brutal as those found within the RUF, were more formal than those found within the FMLN.

The approach taken to training was directly related to the motivations of the group but could also be seen to have been affected by the dynamics of the conflict. The FMLN and LTTE, in accordance with their desire to be seen as alternatives to the state, offered training regimes similar to those that might be found in more conventional state armed forces. It was formal and structured; classes in military

skills and political instruction, drills, simulations, and physical exercise were all included. Training was prolonged and the resulting recruits were skilled, disciplined and professional. Brutalisation does not appear to have exceeded that found within many state forces. At times the groups came under pressure due to military crises which resulted in a shortening of the training period but there appear to be no reports that violence in training increased at these times. The situation within the RUF was markedly different. Brutalisation was emphasised, the focus was on training children to use weapons and on desensitising them to violence. Little attention was paid to military drills, political indoctrination or formal classes in military tactics and knowledge. To achieve the aims of the RUF children had only to be capable of inflicting terror, usually on unarmed civilians. As a result training was short.

In each conflict children were at some point used within child only units but the level to which this happened varied. The use of child only units was seen by each of the three groups as militarily useful when they were first created. However unlike in Sierra Leone where child only units were deployed throughout the conflict, in Sri Lanka and El Salvador, following heavy losses in child only units children were dispersed more widely amongst adult recruits. This was because the ideologically based groups had to maintain political legitimacy and this was threatened by the negative publicity that occurred from exposing children so blatantly to injury and death.

Children as weapons: Strategy, tactics and task allocation.

Once trained and allocated to their units' children were then deployed. Here there were two main differences. One was the age at which they were deployed as soldiers and the other was the level of violence to which they were exposed or were expected to carry out. Younger children were more likely to be found in support roles in each of the three groups, although how children were defined varied significantly between the groups. In the FMLN children started in support roles usually around the age of 12 years and over time moved up the hierarchy, becoming combatants at an older age, usually around 14 years, when they were considered physically and mentally ready. This was in keeping with the prolonged war strategy of the group which saw children as a long-term resource. In the RUF children of any age could be combatants; although very young children under the age of 10 years were usually kept in the camps until they were considered physically able to fight. RUF recruits needed fewer military skills as they usually focused on terrorising the population and the short term interests of the group meant that protecting children from harm, by ensuring they were more physically and mentally able to fight before deploying them in active combat, was not a consideration for the leadership. Children were readily available for abduction, quick to train and therefore easily replaceable. In sharp contrast to both these groups, children in Sri Lanka were usually between 15-17 years old at

recruitment, with the average age being increased every year at the height of LTTE's success when it forced the government to a ceasefire. They were deployed immediately after training. This was in keeping with the LTTE's aspiration to be observed to be conducting itself as a professional armed force.

Deployment was not just about political considerations or how children were viewed as a resource. It was also about tactical considerations, with the three concerns being related. In both Sierra Leone and El Salvador guerrilla tactics were favoured and younger children were involved with the groups. For much of the time after the LTTE began to recruit children they fought with a greater emphasis on conventional tactics and used more sophisticated heavy weaponry. The children recruited at this time were older. However towards the end of the conflict when the LTTE reverted to guerrilla tactics the age of recruits dropped. This was not merely a tactical question. Although as we have seen it was easy to use children in guerrilla conflict, the main considerations for the LTTE were manpower and staving off defeat in order to continue to have enough strength to engage with the military and continue to attract support.

Political considerations did not stop the FMLN or the LTTE from, at times, deliberately deploying children as less experienced troops in the most dangerous positions. There were some limited reports that during some mass attacks children were put in the frontlines with more experienced and older combatants behind

them, suggesting that their youth and the group's desire to retain support did not stop children from being used as cannon fodder when it was viewed as tactically necessary. This parallels the adoption of child recruitment and of forced child recruitment in times of crisis.

Developing Stanton's argument that groups seeking support act to restrain themselves, the findings both confirm this supposition and extend the application of the theory to the groups' relationship with child recruits. As would be expected in situations of old war, where armed groups are looking towards future political projects, both the FMLN and the LTTE sought support at the domestic and international levels as legitimacy was the key to achieving their political objectives. Were children used in less violent ways as a result in these conflicts? The answer is both yes and no. In both cases the armed groups showed restraint in some of their behaviour; children were not expected to mutilate or rape as they were in Sierra Leone. In El Salvador children were not used to terrorise or attack people but were, on the contrary, primarily deployed to engage with the government's armed forces or to sabotage targets that caused damage to the government's economy and infrastructure. The FMLN view that civilian support was vital to winning the conflict meant that they chose strategies with the least impact on the local population and they used tactics guaranteed not to alienate supporters. There was always a clear political objective to each deployment. In Sri Lanka there was always a clear political objective but due to the nature of the conflict the tactics used were more violent, although still not gratuitously so. As

in other new wars Sinhalese and even Muslim civilians were targeted in order to homogenise the territories that the LTTE was claiming on behalf of the Tamil nation. Although children were expected to take part in such missions the violence was measured, politically motivated and restricted to the non-Tamil 'other'. There was an important change at the end of the conflict when the LTTE was facing imminent defeat and children were caught up in increasing brutalisation. The RUF in contrast to the other two cases had no political constraints on the tactics it could adopt. The RUF chose a strategy of destabilisation in which it avoided, where possible, confrontations with military units and instead sent children to terrorise populations in order to create a chaos it could financially benefit from. In Sierra Leone the use of violence to coerce recruits and encourage them to carry out strategies of terror was taken to extremes. In some respects there were significant differences in levels of brutalisation which fed into policies of promotion in which brutality, even that wielded by a child, could result in reward and advancement.

As shocking as the reality of child soldiers was, the findings show that in some conflicts the co-option of children went beyond basic recruitment and deployment. In Sierra Leone the lack of skill needed to carry out the RUF's strategy of terror made it possible for children to command combat units without affecting the efficiency of the group. Children were pushed to become more violent by the knowledge that public acts of brutality would result in a promotion and enable them, as child commanders, to access greater benefits which included

greater protection for themselves as they rose through the group's hierarchy. This was not the case in the other conflicts where units had to carry out more sophisticated strategies of engagement. Children for the most part had less experience, less knowledge and a less developed natural authority making them inadequate commanders. This was not to say that youths who had joined the armed groups at a young age and had gained these three qualities over time could not have been promoted to lead older adults but there was little evidence of this happening in any sustained or systematic way.

Gender and the role of girls.

As noted in each of the case studies, there were noteworthy discrepancies in the experiences of girls. Girls were recruited in significant numbers by each of the armed groups, and reportedly made up 30% of the FMLN and 40-50% of the other two groups. They were clearly indispensable in many ways, and the findings show that groups attached different priorities to their recruitment. Girls in Sri Lanka and El Salvador were seen as a solution to solve manpower shortages in times of crisis, and a way to bolster the durability of the group in its quest to realise its political project. They were recruited, trained and deployed in similar ways to boys. Due to their recruitment as a substitute for male recruits, girls in El Salvador and Sri Lanka appear more militarised. Although many girls were given support roles they were also used in combat significantly more often than appears

to be the case in Sierra Leone, where the situation was vastly different. The RUF could abduct as many boys as it needed, and for the RUF the recruitment of girls was not about manpower but about how to incorporate boy recruits more successfully into the group so that they could use them to create a climate in which the group could continue to gain financially. Given the weakness of the group's ideological appeal, the main remuneration was in the form of material benefits which included access to girls. They were abducted and then given to men and boys as a reward for successfully integrating into the group. Because of their value as sexual slaves, girls in Sierra Leone came across as the least militarised, although there were exceptions to this. Fewer girls were full time combatants, they were for the most part used only when absolutely necessary as they were considered too valuable as sexual slaves and labourers to be killed in combat. Girls were often guarded or restricted to RUF camps so that they could not attempt to escape. They were not included in the same socialisation processes as boy recruits such as tattooing and peer mentoring. Girls in the RUF were usually kept isolated and prevented from socialising so as to deter them from attempting to escape. The majority of girls were kept within tightly constrained roles and were subservient to male recruits in a way that was not seen to the same extent in the other two conflicts, where girls were viewed as military assets in their own right rather than a lure to reward males. These clear differences behind the conscription of girls had a direct impact on their treatment once within the group.

In the case of El Salvador and Sri Lanka, the groups had clear political projects. It was the long term promise of what these political visions could offer that was to be the recruits reward once the objectives of the group were realised. Girls were not needed to recompense male recruits; male recruits were involved because of their political conviction in the cause. Indeed in both the FMLN and the LTTE measures were taken to prevent sexual abuses. Both groups had situated themselves in opposition to their governments which did have reputations for allowing sexual abuse by state agents. Both groups reportedly punished, although not consistently, members found guilty of sexual assault in sharp contrast to Sierra Leone where commanders openly raped girls with impunity. In Sri Lanka the LTTE even paid overt respect to traditional norms keeping men and women separated during training and deployment. In some respects this enabled females to retain some autonomy which gave them, within their own sphere, greater freedom as well as additional protection from male instigated harassment and abuse. In contrast, female child recruits in Sierra Leone faced extreme sexual and physical abuse carried out upon them by both adult and boy recruits.

Girls within the three groups faced significantly different scenarios when desiring to leave the armed groups. In Sri Lanka the total war approach and strict prohibition on marriage and having a family meant that girls were locked into the LTTE for a prolonged period of time. This was in sharp contrast to El Salvador, where the adoption of a prolonged war strategy meant that combining family and involvement in the armed group was accepted. Girls in the FMLN could reduce

their involvement or even leave the group with permission, on account of family demands such as having children or an illness in the family. The flexibility of the FMLN resulted in many girls returning to the armed group once they were able to and girls, as we have seen, were relatively highly motivated and committed to the group and its goals. Leaving the RUF, in contrast, was much more problematic for girls in several ways but especially because of the stigma of sexual abuse. Having broken cultural restrictions by having sexual intercourse outside of marriage, female children in Sierra Leone faced rejection from their communities, and the level of sexual abuse meant that many girls also had children who were a public reminder of their abuse. Both factors made it much more difficult for girl children to leave.

Abuse.

Abuse is of course inherent in any use of child soldiers. Children in these armed groups were in unregulated and unprotected environments and by definition were exposed to maltreatment leaving aside the direct exploitation involved in recruitment and deployment in the first place. However the findings have revealed that ill-treatment differed appreciably in the three cases in ways that related to the type and dynamics of the conflict.

A key issue was the cohesion of the group. In Sri Lanka and El Salvador the sharing of common goals created cohesion and focus; it acted as a bridge between the groups and their respective populations, many of whom shared the group's political visions. Extreme abuse of recruits would have been divisive and threatened the legitimacy of the groups and their political projects. The FMLN and the LTTE penalised children, sometimes harshly, for military mistakes but such reprimands were not arbitrary. Punishments were institutionalised and were ordered based on infractions of group regulations or failure to perform duties. They were usually given publicly as a warning to other recruits and allowed recruits to understand the reasoning of the disciplinarian measures that were being taken. The armed groups were careful not to go much beyond that which was sanctioned within their societies. This was the opposite of Sierra Leone where punishment of recruits was much more capricious. However it can be seen in Sri Lanka that as the conflict became more protracted, as the LTTE became more dislocated from the population, and as they increasingly defined the struggle in terms of a total conflict, the LTTE did become more violent towards recruits. Capture by the enemy or desertions were viewed as treasonous offences, and recruits were expected to take cyanide rather than be caught. If recruits deserted or failed to take action to evade capture, they would be shot by their own side. This was not the case with regards to captured combatants in El Salvador.

The lack of ideological control that the RUF had over its recruits meant that they were instead more dependent upon violent and physical forms of coercion which

far exceeded even the maltreatment found at times within Sri Lanka. The RUF lacked collective political goals and so did not need to worry about issues of support. They forcibly recruited children and abused them with impunity. The RUF had no reason to restrain its behaviour towards recruits when it met its objectives whilst allowing abhorrent practices. Indeed, the use of terror played a key role in the group meeting its objectives. Abuse was random, often at the discretion of individual commanders and could be carried out publicly or privately. Children were often forced to assist in inflicting mistreatment and punishments.

A particular feature of exploitation was sexual abuse where again the question of group cohesion played a role. Here the findings support Cohen's more general argument that the level of cohesion in the group can explain rates of sexual violence. Of the three cases sexual violence only occurred in Sierra Leone where recruitment was primarily forced and where group cohesion was poor. Sexual violence by the RUF was extreme, broke societal taboos in multiple ways and was widespread.

However the findings also showed that political considerations played a role in whether sexual abuse was permitted. The FMLN in El Salvador had a general policy of restraint which explained the lack of sexual violence alongside a lack of other forms of abuse. The group was reliant on civilians for support, recruits,

information and political legitimacy, and if the sexual abuse of girls was occurring within the group support would have been quickly eroded. One of the complaints against the state was that state sponsored agents raped and sexually abused with impunity. As in Sri Lanka political legitimacy rested in large part on being seen as 'protector' and both groups took this role seriously. Like the FMLN in El Salvador, the LTTE aspired to be a governing political entity. They sought legitimacy and one way to do this was to position itself in opposition to the delegitimised Sinhalese state that was known for the perpetration of sexual abuse. As was the case with the FMLN, the LTTE was a movement that proclaimed it was fighting for a just society, and could not be seen to be using the same forms of abuse as the state it was seeking to secede from. Although sexual abuse by Sinhalese troops does not appear to have been a systematic state policy, it was widespread enough for the LTTE to use it as a weapon of propaganda. Within the LTTE it appears to have been a top-down decision to introduce a code of conduct that prohibited rape of the 'other', a code enforced by a strong chain of command.

There are several elements to children's experiences of abuse within the armed groups. Firstly, there were the abuses that they experienced themselves and the effects that this abuse had on them emotionally and physically. Secondly, there was the abuse that they inflicted upon civilians which had implications for the whole society. Thirdly, there were the abuses that children carried out against other child recruits. As has been discussed, the levels of abuse with regards to each of these varied significantly between the conflicts, and were primarily

related to the motivations of the group. The issue of children inflicting abuse, however, raised the highly contested question of children's agency.

Children's agency.

In the difficult debate on the question of children's agency perhaps the most provocative or extreme position was that of writers such as Brocklehurst and Rosen, who, as discussed in chapter one, regard children as wielding agency in their own right. If this position has any validity it applies at best to the El Salvador study, was much harder to sustain in the case of Sri Lanka and almost impossible in the case of Sierra Leone, with perhaps one significant exception (see below).

Any discussion of agency has to be framed with an understanding of the environment surrounding the child and the push/pull factors involved. Firstly there were similar types of push factor in each case. In each of the three case studies at least some of the children who volunteered were driven by poverty and a lack of opportunities. The armed group offered them a way to make a living and support themselves in very difficult circumstances, where education was not a viable alternative and where they needed the protection of an organised group. Beyond this, these groups, in their different ways, offered children the promise

that social, political and economic systems that often excluded them could be transformed through violence in which they could play a part. However the groups that recruited them, the systems that excluded them and the future promised to them differed.

The levels of violence inherent within each conflict often drove children to seek membership of armed groups. Where children realised adults could not offer sufficient protection, children would seek to protect themselves, often through acquiring weapons and relationships with networks that they felt offered them protection. In Sierra Leone there was extremely limited voluntary recruitment and children mainly sought protection from the RUF. Incorporation into the RUF was a matter of ensuring survival once captured by the group. In El Salvador most children volunteered. Those that joined the FMLN often had other, if not easy, options and some space existed for children to make their own decisions regarding their involvement with armed groups. In Sri Lanka the reality of the surrounding environment, in which the state was portrayed as an imminent threat and no alternative route to safety existed, children were somewhere in the middle where recruitment was, for much of the conflict, not forced, but neither could it be described as voluntary. The three cases highlighted the difficult positions that children faced within conflict and demonstrated how blurred the distinctions between forced and voluntary recruitment could become.

As we saw in chapter one, globally voluntary recruitment accounts for a greater percentage of involvement with armed groups than does forced recruitment. Of the three case studies, two had significant levels of voluntary recruitment. In El Salvador approximately 92% of child recruits were believed to have volunteered and voluntary recruitment was consistent throughout the conflict, although the FMLN certainly appeared to encourage recruitment more actively as the conflict became protracted. In contrast the shift in recruitment in Sri Lanka was much more extreme. The balance altered dramatically as the conflict became prolonged and as support for the LTTE and fear of the government varied over time. At the height of its popularity in 1994, 19 out of 20 recruits volunteered. In 2004 at the height of the ceasefire, when the government seemed less threatening, only 1 in 19 recruits volunteered. The findings show that children reacted, as adults did, to changes in the conflict. As children and adults choose to stop volunteering the armed group chose to address the subsequent recruitment crisis by forcibly conscripting children, closing children's space to act with any degree of agency even further.

It is an interesting paradox that the groups where children were most likely to have used some degree of agency to join were the same groups that children found the most difficult to wield agency within once they were members. The greater centralisation of the FMLN and the LTTE and the stricter regulation of training, discipline and internal relations meant that children had less space within their roles to manoeuvre. In sharp contrast, children in the RUF, who faced the

greatest abuses and threats of violent punishment, were also more able to assist others, where they could act without observation, due to the de-centralised nature of the RUF and its lack of an institutionalised system of discipline. This gave children in the RUF more space within which to make choices regarding offering or withholding assistance from other children.

As appears most clearly in the case of intra-group rape in Sierra Leone, children caught up in armed groups were often both victims and perpetrators of violence and abuse. Children at times appeared able to use severely constricted agency to decide whether to protect or to abuse those around them once they were members of the armed groups. In the RUF many children conformed and were more likely to be abusive as this was encouraged by the group and subordinating others increased the chance of moving up the hierarchy and gaining protection from abuse. Boys routinely engaged in the sexual abuse of girl recruits, both in gang rapes and by taking girls as forced brides. As has been mentioned, girls were also reported to have committed abuses. Such abuses by children against other children were possible because of the nature of the conflict and the group that children found themselves within. Children in Sierra Leone were not restrained from abusing other children; on the contrary they were usually encouraged because the RUF had a vested interest in tying children - who had been abducted and abused themselves and might otherwise have thought about deserting - to the movement. Abuse was made easier too due to the forced drugging of children, who were then able to carry out violent human rights abuses with little thought to

what actions they were committing. The cutting and applying of drugs and the forced intake of alcohol also served to make children dependent upon commanders as their addiction grew. This was a form of abuse in its own right which did not occur in Sri Lanka or El Salvador.

The voluntary use of violence by children is a problematic subject. For some armed groups such as the RUF children clearly made desirable recruits because they could be easily manipulated into committing the kinds of violent acts that the group's strategy called for. The findings suggest that whilst some children sought to commit as few abuses as possible, other children over time came to enjoy and even to revel in their status as abusers, going beyond the minimum that they needed to in order to ensure survival. That this was encouraged by the RUF was without doubt; we do not see such admissions of the enjoyment of power and violence by children in Sri Lanka or El Salvador. The conflicts in Sri Lanka and El Salvador were fought over communal causes and bought little individual rewards to combatants. Recruits there had little incentive to act in such morally ambiguous ways.

Perhaps most importantly is that at the other end of the spectrum, some children within the RUF also chose to use their agency within very difficult circumstances to protect both themselves and others. Some children sought to combat abuses against their own persons by hiding looted food and goods before handing the

remainder over to commanders. Some hid when commanders were distributing drugs so that they could avoid forced drug abuse. Others chose not to fire at civilians. After the conflict, children who were members of the RUF reported assisting captives to run away and taking other children into their protection to prevent them being abused by others. The ability of children to function in altruistic ways, in an environment that not only sought to discourage such behaviour but acted to punish it harshly, suggests that some children could use agency at times within difficult conflict settings where they saw space and opportunity to do so. Ironically within the FMLN and LTTE, protecting other recruits from abuses was more difficult as the punishment and treatment of recruits was standardised and carefully overseen from above. However with these conflicts being about collective issues, and recruits primarily being volunteers that were with the groups due to shared political beliefs it was not necessary to tie them to the movements through encouraging them to commit widespread and violent abuses. Therefore, children for the most part did not have to make the decision to try and disengage themselves from processes of extreme abuse. As political movements, the FMLN and LTTE were more concerned with wielding legitimate force and as such abuses were restrained in a number of ways already discussed.

Finally the findings show that in all three cases children could use their agency to opt to leave the group, although this was riskiest for children in the RUF who faced almost certain death if caught. The RUF did not allow recruits to leave the

group and usually killed those who tried. This policy was permissible because, as a resource driven group who did not have ties to the community and who forcibly enlisted recruits, the RUF did not need to restrain itself. In addition the fear of punishment and rejection by the wider community for crimes committed within the group, plus the addiction of power for some recruits, meant that children were less likely to attempt to leave the group. As an ethno-nationalist group the LTTE viewed those trying to leave as traitors and leaving was not considered an option. Those caught were not always killed outright but they faced being given harsh punishments and sent to the most dangerous areas to fight and therefore it was extremely difficult for children to leave. In sharp contrast in El Salvador it was possible to leave the group and to reduce involvement both temporarily and permanently. This was due to the group's political ambitions which required long term support.

Implications for Policymakers:

The findings show that the hypothesis is correct, the type of conflict does impact on how children are recruited, deployed and abused. These similarities and differences, although of interest to academics, also have implications for policymakers although this was not the primary focus of this research. The list below is not exhaustive, in part because the study only included three types of conflict, however it may assist in thinking about different approaches that could

be taken to help eliminate child recruitment.

Firstly, it is clear that deterioration in children's experiences occurs in each case study when the group comes under stress. This is regardless of the group's motivation, attitude towards children and methods of recruitment and deployment. Thus, all efforts should be concentrated on preventing long periods of crisis for the armed group as this is when children become most vulnerable. Where governments do decide to put pressure on armed groups over a prolonged period they should take every care to include within their plans measures to protect children from the armed group; this could include temporary relocation of children, safe zones, and government protection of areas where children congregate such as schools and marketplaces.

Governments also need to act to prevent children from joining armed groups in response to state sponsored abuses. The abuse of family and community was a major factor in children choosing to volunteer for armed groups. Rape, theft, grievous bodily harm and murder committed by government troops or their allies should be severely condemned by the international community and measures to reduce such abuses against civilian populations should be undertaken. Where the government has lost control of its security services it should be assisted in retraining and redeployment. Where it has chosen to allow such abuses then stronger measures such as sanctions, arms embargoes and even direct military

interventions should be considered.

Many non-state armed groups use the justification that the government they are engaging with recruit minors in order to explain and legitimize their own recruitment. In some conflicts, it is the government's use of the forced conscription of minors that fuels under-aged voluntary recruitment by the non-state armed group. Any recruitment of minors less than 18 years of age by any party, state or non-state, in times of peace and during active conflict, needs to be prohibited and strictly enforced and punished under international law.

Inclusive political, social and economic systems are also important in preventing grievance and governments should be strongly encouraged to provide equal opportunities and services to all their citizens; internationally sanctioned loans and aid, as well as debt relief should have conditions attached by donor countries/organisations that recognise the importance of protection for children and equality for all citizens and governments that do not comply should not have access to internationally sponsored financial support.

Something that became very clear to me as the research progressed was that different solutions needed to be tailored towards different types of conflicts. In a politically motivated conflict where children were viewed as a long-term resource

and the conflict was in response to government actions, then the government and international community had more options available to them. In addition to placing pressure on the government to reduce state sponsored abuses and increase inclusivity for all citizens, as described above, there were also various options for dealing with the armed group.

Politically motivated groups are usually open to negotiation and are normally keen to conserve their resources, including recruits, and therefore prefer not to engage militarily if possible. Negotiations offer a way to resolve grievances politically and should be prioritised. Groups with political motivations that are militarily defeated will emerge in a different form within the same communities if grievances continue to be ignored. Therefore, the international community must use negotiations and ceasefires to protect children immediately from the harms of active deployment, whilst at the same time addressing the societal grievances that often allows children to be drawn into the conflict.

Societal involvement in the conflict must be addressed in other ways also. In none of the case studies did local communities see children's involvement as wrong as a matter of course. Indeed, where the group was situated as 'protector' little open resistance was offered to child recruitment and in actuality, many parents encouraged or at the least gave tacit support to their children's involvement. Educating the local population that supports the armed group as to the dangers

their children are exposed to as part of an armed group is vital in such conflicts. Politically motivated groups operate on a cost benefit analyse, if the cost of using children becomes prohibitive because support is eroded through their continued recruitment, then the armed group will seek if possible to reduce or end child recruitment. However using local populations to pressurise armed groups into releasing children will only work if certain conditions are met. Firstly, the armed group must have political aims, which require a political constituency; otherwise, it does not need to worry about retaining political support. Where the armed group is being situated as 'protectors', the international community must offer civilians alternative protection from the state. Where the armed group has access to resources that do not depend on the goodwill of its constituency, channels must be blocked. An armed group with political motivations starved of independent resources, reliant on the support of its local population and no longer required for protection would be forced into becoming more receptive to the desires of its constituency and to engaging more fully in negotiations.

It is possible that such actions will drive the armed group to take extreme measures to protect itself and it will continue to forcibly recruit children and engage the state without the support of its constituency. In this case, where it has lost political support, relies on illicit resources and continues to take children by force against the wishes of the local population, more serious measures need to be taken. As with criminally motivated armed groups, the most effective solution is a decisive military defeat. This is not an option to be undertaken lightly as child

soldiers will be engaged in combat and will be highly likely to be injured or killed, possibly in large numbers. It is certainly not an option that should be taken where negotiation and education, and local and international censure can serve to act upon the group to prohibit child recruitment voluntarily. However where the group has shown little concern for the children in its care, is reliant on or indeed exists solely for the purpose of access to illicit resources, where it has no political support and where it increasingly or solely relies upon forced recruitment a swift military victory will prevent continuation as a long-term low intensity conflict into which many more vulnerable children will be drawn and harmed. Such military operations need to be decisive, swift and where possible target the leadership of armed groups to mitigate as far as possible the impact on the child soldiers within the group who will be deployed in action.

Where cultural norms are manipulated and reconfigured by armed groups, local populations need to be supported to challenge the armed groups recounting of beliefs. The use of media such as radio, and where useful television and print media, as well as workshops and street theatre, should be deployed to counter armed groups cultural transgressions. Media can also be used to reassure children, whether abducted or volunteers, those cultural transgressions can be forgiven and that children will be welcomed back into the wider society. Such tools should not only be used to rehabilitate in the post-conflict era but to aid local communities to counter the cultural influence of armed groups during the conflict.

It has been noted that within some conflicts children felt empowered and privileged to have been part of an armed group, particularly where the group was situated as 'protector' and where the child used their own limited agency to make the decision to join the armed group. Mehari (see Methodology) tells her readers that it is only the children who went outside her country that feel ashamed to have been soldiers. Whilst it is important to educate the local population on children's rights and to prevent future child recruitment, care should be taken not to impose negative connotations on the involvement of children where it may result in low self-worth or be detrimental to the child's self-perception and mental health. In some circumstances, as Rosen (Chapter One) has argued, children have actually been more protected through their involvement in armed groups than if they had remained outside the group and whilst their involvement is not to be condoned, neither should children have positive feelings concerning their experiences submerged and replaced by the negative, particularly where this may have a detrimental effect on their mental health.

Which approach is best to take in a specific conflict depends on the characteristics of that conflict. An analysis of the conflict, the armed group and its current and past recruitment, deployment and abuse of children can assist in categorising both the type of conflict and the stage at which the conflict is currently situated. Once all the conflict related factors have been noted, informed decisions can be taken as

to which methods for preventing child recruitment and reducing the impact on serving child recruits will be most effective.

Conclusion.

As discussed in the introduction, despite increasing legislation at domestic, regional and international levels, the reduction in the numbers of child soldiers has been due more to the resolution of individual conflicts than the enforcement of laws. To tackle the issue of child soldiering more effectively, so that children can be awarded the greatest protection possible, it is necessary to look beyond legislation, and to delve more thoroughly into the reasons why children become involved in conflicts in which they are recruited and deployed as soldiers with all of the attendant abuse that this involves.

With the passing of the legislation, itself based on an assumption that notions of childhood could be universally agreed, there was some optimism that the problem would be significantly reduced in scale. Clearly, as international legislation was developed and became more extensive, (see introduction) much more attention was given to the challenging questions that the continued use of child soldiers posed (see chapter one). As discussed in chapter one, the main explanations

explored at this time were the changing nature of warfare, the availability of small arms and the strategic advantages to the group.

These explanations were all important; particularly the changing nature of warfare, but it seemed helpful to think more specifically about all of this in the more detailed context of particular conflicts. This required a comparative approach, which revealed a greater level of complexity than might have originally appeared. Particularly when one takes into account the reality that conflict can change in form and intensity as it becomes protracted.

Beyond the detailed similarities and differences discussed above, there are also some more general final points to be made. Closer examination shows us the need for a broader, more encompassing definition of what is meant by child soldiering. The findings have highlighted that not all children recruited by armed groups were deployed militarily in the classical sense. Many began their involvement in less obvious ways, aiding the group's daily survival but not necessarily recognised as soldiers, even within the organisation itself. Some children remained in this ambiguous position throughout their time with the armed group.

The scale of recruitment and the age of recruits differed significantly between the cases. Why children were recruited, in what ways and to which extent their

recruitment was forced or voluntary was also variable. The composition of the units children were deployed within, the tasks that children were allocated, the ease with which children could be promoted and the ways in which they were exposed to and expected to engage in violence, were not the same in important respects. The exploitation of children, especially their sexual abuse, was markedly different. The ability of children to wield any agency both in joining armed groups and once within them were not identical. Children's ability to leave the groups at a moment of their choosing was not consistent. This was because the individual features of each conflict, and the unique trajectories that each conflict underwent, shaped the experiences of child soldiers in different ways. However, by taking a comparative approach it was also possible to see that certain trends were equally applicable to each group, although even these similarities were subtly different.

Significant variations in the experiences of children appeared over time as conflicts became more protracted. This can be seen especially in the balance between forced and voluntary recruitment. When we think about recruitment, we therefore need a perception that can encompass both types of recruitment practices. It quickly became apparent that once underway conflicts started to develop particular trajectories, and that these could not be separated from the type of conflict that the group, and children within the group, were involved with. It became clear very early in the research that it was not the motivation of the groups alone that caused them to begin recruiting children. In each case, child

recruitment was not significant at the start of the conflicts. Even in Sierra Leone, where the group was essentially criminal in nature the RUF did not initially recruit children in significant numbers. In each case regardless of the type of conflict, child recruitment was adopted as a substitute for adult recruitment where, for a multitude of reasons relating to the dynamics of the conflict and the appeal of the group, adults were not available. The implementation of forced recruitment practices in each case was a substitute for voluntary recruitment. It was a strategy that each group chose when voluntary conscription methods did not provide sufficient recruits to maintain the greatest possible military capacity of the organisation. Where political barriers could be sufficiently overcome by the group, as in Sri Lanka, or had little attraction, as in Sierra Leone, the groups were able increasingly to turn to forced child recruitment.

The experiences of children are determined in complex ways by the historical and cultural setting from which the conflict emerges. Historical dynamics and cultural factors shape the framework within which it is possible for children to become soldiers in the first place. They affect levels of resistance (and support) in a given society to the notion and reality of children becoming soldiers. However, crucially neither history or culture is a given. History and cultural norms are interpreted by groups and manipulated in a variety of ways to justify how they recruit, deploy and abuse children. The findings show that whilst a society's attitude to child labour and beliefs about the ending of childhood can in some ways create a climate in which child soldiering is seen as more acceptable, it is less easy to

determine conclusively how this contributed directly to children's recruitment. However, the findings did highlight that armed groups did at times, for their own purposes, co-opt carefully chosen local norms and believes and manipulated them to suit the ambitions of the group. This can be seen most clearly in the Sierra Leone case but also occurred to a lesser degree in the other conflicts.

The groups also chose when it suited their purposes, to ignore local traditions. This was most obvious in their recruitment of girls, whose involvement in each case study went to different extents against local customs and expectations of female behaviour. The decisions the groups made, as to which customs to deny and which to embrace and manipulate, were intricately linked to their ambitions within the conflict. They were adept at using cultural norms to meet organisational objectives determined by the conflict. As these ambitions shifted over time the [mis]use of local norms also changed.

The area where culture was most significant was in the group's treatment of its child recruits. Groups abused children in ways that could be argued to be culturally acceptable. For example in Sierra Leone, it was the historical use of slave labour, and the taking of female slaves to wife, that the RUF used to inform its own abduction and rape of girls. Historical practices were reshaped by the group to suit its own purposes. To a lesser degree, in the other two cases, abuse also was related to local traditions, but here, by contrast, local traditions served to

mitigate levels of abuse. The armed groups could have gone much further in the abuse of the child recruits in their care. As shown in Sierra Leone, once within the group there was little that recruits, or society more generally, could do to prevent abuse. However, in both cases, to varying degrees, which changed in relation to conflict dynamics, the groups instead chose to adopt policies of restraint, largely it seems in order to retain legitimacy.

The most difficult issue is the question of agency. Some of the literature (see chapter one) has asserted the need to see children as active agents. What we have seen is children reacting to groups in different ways, making decisions in response to pressures and force of different kinds. These are pressures and force, which are part of the conflict with which they are involved. There are also paradoxes to be found in this. At the beginning of the research, it was expected that children would find it less difficult to act in their own right within groups that they had voluntarily joined and where their treatment was less abusive. However, the findings showed that in reality this was not the case. The wielding of agency within the group was not associated in any positive way with the child's use of agency to join the organisation. To have the space necessary to choose to join the group, the child needed to be situated within a conflict where the organisation had taken the decision not to use forced recruitment methods. Therefore, it was actually the armed group itself, which was the arbiter of whether or not the child would have the opportunity to make the decision to volunteer. However being given this choice, and choosing to join the armed group, did not necessarily

translate into greater agency within the organisation. Children's ability to use their agency within the movement was directly linked to the levels of control and command within the group. The more politicised groups, with centralised command structures and strict hierarchies, may have treated children more benevolently due to concerns over political legitimacy, but they did not provide space where children could determine their own actions. In contrast, the de-centralised and non-political environment children found themselves in as members of the RUF, not only created a climate in which abuse of child recruits was more feasible, it conversely also contained more space for children to negotiate on their own terms.

To conclude, the findings show that by looking at each case and its unique features, and by assessing how the dynamics caused by the distinct trajectory of each set of circumstances interplayed with the nature of the conflict, it was possible to develop a greater understanding of child soldiers' experiences. By taking a comparative approach, the degree to which each factor influenced the recruitment, deployment and abuse of children could be more effectively studied. To develop answers to the difficult questions posed by children's involvement in conflict, consideration must be given to which approaches offer significant and useful insights. The comparative approach taken by this study has proven itself an effective method to consider these questions.

Appendix 2.

List of Interviewees:

New York:

Sarah Spencer, US Women's Commission, New York, 19th September 2006.

Simar Singh, Analyst, Women's Commission for Refugees.

Karen Colvard, Program Director, H.F. Guggenheim Foundation. New York, 22nd September 2006.

Matthew Emry, Senior Analyst, Jewish World Service, New York, 20th September 2006. Has field experience.

Alec Wargo, Program Officer, OSRSG/CAAC. Has field experience.

Jane Lowiki-Zucca, UNDESA. Has field experience.

David Rosen, Professor in Anthropology, Farleigh-Dickinson University. Has field experience, predominantly in Israel.

Ambassador Rowe, the Sierra Leone Ambassador to the UN. He helped to broker the Lome Peace Accords. Was formerly a University Professor and now works as one of the Sierra Leone Ambassadors at the UN.

Washington DC:

Susan Shepler, Professor of Anthropology, American University. Has extensive field experience in Sierra Leone.

Sri Lanka contact, Scholar, Washington DC. Has field experience in Sri Lanka.

Rachel Stohl, Senior Analyst, Centre for Defence Information.

Geneva:

Jennifer Philpot-Nissen, World Vision- previously worked at the UN in the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. Has limited field experience, undertook work in Northern Uganda.

Christine Evans, OHCHR- Human Rights Policy Officer. Has experience in the field having worked on child rights issues in Colombia where children are used by armed groups.

Cecile Trochn, World Organisation against Torture, Childrens Rights Program Manager. Little direct knowledge of child soldier issue or case study conflicts.

Defence for Children International- To use archives.

London:

Interview with an Anonymous Source, Researcher, London, 28th September 2007.

Jenny Kuper, Professor of Law, LSE. Has limited field experience using NGO/Academic texts to supported her work which looks at national, regional, and international humanitarian and human rights law concerning children in combat.

Enrique Restoy, Program Manager, Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. He worked for the Spanish Government as an Economic and developmental attaché in Ghana and Togo for 18 months, 3 years as a correspondent in Cote d'Ivoire, Philippines and Algeria and 3 years as a researcher on Human Rights in Nigeria and Cameroon for Amnesty International. In the Coalition he supervised and visited projects for 3 and a half years in all of the following countries: DRC, Uganda, Rwanda, Lebanon, Israel, Sudan, Palestine, Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone.

Interview with Martin Mcpherson, Director, Amnesty International, London,
25th September 2007

Interview with Tania Bernath, Researcher on Sierra Leone, Amnesty
International, London, 28th September 2007.

Other Interviews:

Telephone Interview with Charu Hogg, South Asia Researcher for Human
Rights Watch and Associate Fellow for the Asia Program at Chatham House,
24th October 2007.

Telephone interview with Theresa Betancourt, Assistant Professor of Child
Health and Human Rights, Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, 4th
October 2007.

Telephone interview with a Senior Protection Officer with a Humanitarian
Agency, Sri Lanka, 3rd October 2007.

Telephone Interview with Manuel Fountain, Child Protection Officer,
UNICEF, New York, 3rd October 2006.

Michael Shipler, Director of Programmes, Search for Common Ground- Nepal (telephone interview). He is currently working in the field in Nepal on the child soldier issue.

Telephone interview with an Anonymous Source, 26th October 2007.

Telephone Interview with Mike Wessells, Child Protection Practitioner, Christian Children's Fund and Professor at both Columbia University and Randolph-Macon College, 28th September 2006. Extensive field research on child soldiers in Afghanistan, Angola, Kosovo, Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and South Africa.

Appendix 1.

Bibliography:

Abeyratne, S., 2004. Economic Roots of Political Conflict: The Case of Sri Lanka. *The World Economy*. 27(8).

Alegria, C., 1983. They Won't Take Me Alive. London: The Women's Press.

Alfredson, L., 2002. Child soldiers, displacement and human security. *Children and Society*. Volume 3.

Alison, M., 2004. Women as Agents of Political Violence: Gendering Security. *Security Dialogue*. 35 (4).

Amnesty International., 2006. Sri Lanka: A Climate of Fear in the East. Accessed through www.amnesty.org [29/03/09].

Amnesty International., 2008. Sri Lanka: Karuna's Presence in Parliament a Travesty of Justice. Accessed through www.amnesty.org. [21/01/09].

Andrig, J., 2006. Child Soldiers: Reasons for Variations in Their Rates of Recruitment and Standards of Welfare. Norway: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. Accessed through www.isn.ethz.ch. [04/10/07]

Andrig, J., and Gates, S., 2007. Recruiting Children for Armed Conflict. Ford Institute Working Papers. Accessed through www.fordinstitute.Pitt.edu.
[15/01/2008]

Anderson, J. L., 2006. Guerrillas: Journeys in the Insurgent World. Great Britain: Abacus.

Armstrong, R., and Shenk, J., 1982. El Salvador: The Face of Revolution. London: Pluto Press.

Arnson, C., & Zartman, I.W., Eds. 2005. Rethinking the Economics of War: The Intersection of Need, Creed and Greed. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press.

Ayissi, A., and Poulton, R., 2000. Bound to cooperate: Conflict, peace and people in Sierra Leone. Geneva: UN Institute for Disarmament Research.

Balasingham, A., 2001. The Will to Freedom: An Inside View of Tamil Resistance. England: Fairmax Publishing Ltd.

Balasingham, A., 2004. War and Peace: Armed Struggle and Peace Efforts of Liberation Tigers. Mitcham: Fairmax Publishing.

Baro, D., 1998. The International Criminal Court: Its Implications for Children, *Childright*, 149.

Barry, T., 1991. El Salvador: A Country Study. 2nd Ed. New Mexico: The Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center.

Bartholomeusz, T., and De Silva, C., Ed. 1998. Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Beah, I., 2007. A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier. London: HarperCollins Publishers.

Beardsley, K., and McQuinn, B., 2009. 'Rebel Groups as Predatory Organisations: The Political Effects of the 2004 Tsunami in Indonesia and Sri Lanka', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53(4).

Becker, J., 2003. Child Soldiers and Armed Groups' Notes for a Presentation to the Conference on 'Curbing Human Rights Abuses by Armed Groups. Centre of International Relations. University of British Columbia,. Vancouver, 14-15 November 2003, Accessed through www.armedgroups.org [16/03/2008].

Bigdon, C., May 2003. Decentralisation, Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka. *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics*. 14. Accessed through www.hpsacp.uni-bd. [06/04/2004].

Binford, L., and Lauria-Santiago, A., Eds. 2004. *Landscapes of Struggle: Politics, Society and Community in El Salvador*. USA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Bjorgo, T., 2005. Ed. *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*. Oxford: Routledge.

Bloom, M., 2005. *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*. New York: Colombia University Press.

Borda, S., 2009. *The Internationalization of Domestic Conflicts: A Comparative Study of Columbia, El Salvador and Guatemala*. PhD. University of Minnesota. (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [13/09/2010].

Bouffard, S., and Carment, D., 2006. *The Sri Lankan Peace Process: A Critical Review*. *Journal of South Asian Development*. 1(2) New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Boyden, J., and Berry, J., 2004. *Children and Youth on the Frontline: Ethnography, Armed Conflict and Displacement*. *Studies in Forced Migration*. 14. New York: Berghahn Books.

Boas, M., 2004. Africa's Young Guerrillas: Rebels with a Cause? *Current History*. 103. pp 221-214.

Boyland, R., 2001. Culture and Customs of El Salvador. USA: Greenwood Press.

Butcher, T., 2010. Chasing the Devil: On Foot through Africa's Killing Fields. London: Vintage.

Bracemonte, J., and Spencer, D., 1995. Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas: Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts. USA: Praeger Publishers.

Brett, R., 2002. Girl Soldiers: Challenging the assumptions. Geneva: Quaker UN Office.

Brett, R., December 2003. Adolescents volunteering for armed forces or armed groups. *International Review of the Red Cross*. 85(852).

Brett, R., and Specht, I., 2004. Young Soldiers: Why They Choose to Fight. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Briggs, J., 2005. Innocents Lost: When Child Soldiers Go To War. New York: Basic Books.

Brockett, C., 2005. Political Movements and Violence in Central America, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Brocklehurst, H., 2006. Who's Afraid of Children? Children, Conflict and International Relations. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

Brown, C., 1982. Supplement to the Report on Human Rights in El Salvador. Washington DC: Americas Watch Committee.

Brown, M., Ed. 1996. The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Brown et al., Eds. 2001. Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict, Revised Edition. London: The MIT Press.

Byrne, G., 1994. The Problem of Revolution: A Study of Strategies of Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in El Salvador's Civil War, 1981-1991. PhD. University of California, (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [13/09/2010]

Byrne, H., 1996 El Salvador's Civil War: A Study of Revolution. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Carter Centre., 2005. Observing the 2002 Sierra Leone Elections. Atlanta: The Carter Centre

Castaneda. J.E.S., The Best Military Strategy of All is to Avoid War. p 117-137
in Brown, T., Ed. 2000. When the AK-47's Fall Silent: Revolutionaries,
Guerillas and the Dangers of Peace. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

CENSA., 1983. Listen Companero: Conversations with Central American
Revolutionary Leaders. San Francisco: Solidarity Publications.

Charu Lata Hogg., 2006. Child Recruitment in South Asia: A Comparative
Analysis of Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. An Asia Program Report,
Chatham House UK: The Royal Institute of International Affairs. Accessed
through www.chathamhouse.org.uk. [28/01/09].

Chavez, J., 2010. The Pedagogy of Revolution: Popular Intellectuals and the
Origins of the El Salvador Insurgency, 1960-1980. PhD. New York University.
(Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE,
London [13/09/2010].

Child Rights Information Network., 2004. Child Soldiers: CRC Country Briefs.
El Salvador. Accessed through www.crin.org. [15/06/2005].

Child Soldier Global Report., 2008. Child Soldier Global Report 2008: Sri
Lanka. Accessed through www.childsoldiersgloablreport.org. [21/01/09].

Christian Science Monitor., 2006. Outrage over Child Soldiers in Sri Lanka.
Accessed through www.csmonitor.com. [21/01/09].

Clarance, W., 2007. *Ethnic Warfare in Sri Lanka and the UN Crisis*. London: Pluto Press.

Clements, C., 1985. *Witness to War: An American Doctor in El Salvador*. UK: Fontana Paperbacks.

Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers., 2001. *Child Soldiers Global Report: A global report to stop the use of child soldiers*. London: Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers.

Cohen, D., 2010. *Explaining Sexual Violence during Civil War*. PhD. Stanford University (Proquest Information and Learning. Accessed at LSE, [28/09/2011]).

Cohn, I., & Goodwin-Gill, G., 1997. *Child Soldiers: The role of children in armed conflicts*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Conciliation Resources., *Sierra Leone: Chronology*. Accessed through <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/sierra-leone/chronology.php> [30/07/08].

Conteh-Morgan, E., and Dixon-Foyle, M., 1999. *Sierra Leone at the End of the Twentieth Century: History, Politics and Society*. New York: Lang Publishing.

Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Adopted by the Conference at

its Eighty-Seventh Session. Geneva. 17 June 1999. Accessed through www.ilo.org. [13/06/2011]. Articles 1 and 3.

Coulter, C., 2010. *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers: Women's Lies through War and Peace in Sierra Leone*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Deng Deng, W., 2001. *A Survey of Programs on the Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers*. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan,. Accessed through www.mofa.go.jp [12/07/2009].

Denov, M., 2009. *Child Soldiers: Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

De Silva, K.M., 1998. *Reaping the Whirlwind: Ethnic Conflict and Ethnic Politics in Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

De Silva, K.M., 2005. *A History of Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

DeVotta, N., 2004. *Blowback: Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka*. USA: Stanford University Press.

Diamond, M.J., Ed. 1998. *Women and Revolution: Global Expressions*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Dickson-Gomez, J., 2002. Growing Up in Guerrilla Camps: The Long-Term Impact of Being a Child Soldier in El Salvador's Civil War. *Ethos*, 30(4).

El-Haj. T.A., 1995. The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. *Childright*. 122.

Ellis, S., 1995. Liberia 1989-1994: A Study of Ethnic and Spiritual Violence. *African Affairs*. 94. pp 165-197

Farzaneh, N., 2008. Children at High-Risk: A Comparative Analysis of the Case of Child Soldiers in Iran and in El Salvador USA: VDM Verlag.

Ferme, M., 2001. The Underneath of Things. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Finn, D., 2009. Transformation of Rebel Movements into Political Parties in Transitions from Civil Conflict: A Study of Rebel's Decision-making amid Violence in El Salvador and Zimbabwe. PhD. University of Denver. (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [13/09/2010].

Fish, J., and Sganga, C., 1988. El Salvador: Testament of Terror. London: Zed Books Ltd.

Forced Labour Convention. 1930. Accessed through www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C029. [13/06/2011]. Article 2(1).

Fox, M.J., 2004. Girl Soldiers: Human Security and Gendered Insecurity. *Security Dialogue*. 35(4).

Freeman M., 1996. Children's Rights- A Comparative Perspective. Aldershot: Dartmouth.

Gamage, S., and Watson, I., Ed. 1999. Conflict and Community in Contemporary Sri Lanka. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Gate, S., 2002 Recruitment and Allegiance: The Microfoundations of Rebellion. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 46(1)

Gallagher, M., 2001. Soldier boy bad: Child soldiers, culture and bars to asylum. *International Journal of Refugee Law*. 13(3).

Gberie, L., 2002. War and Peace in Sierra Leone: Diamonds, Corruption and the Lebanese Connection. Occasional Paper 6, Partnership Africa Canada. Accessed through www.pacweb.org. [01/02/2004].

Gberie, L., 2005. A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone. London: Hurst and Company.

Gile, W et al., Ed. 2003. Feminist under Fire: Exchanges across War Zones. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Global Witness., 2003. The Usual Suspects. Accessed through www.globalwitness.org. [20/05/04].

Global Witness., 2004. Broken Vows: Exposing the “Loupe” Holes in the Diamond Industry’s Efforts to Prevent the Trade in Conflict Diamonds. Accessed through www.globalwitness.org. [22/02/2005].

Goodwin-Gill, G., and Cohn, I., 1994. Child Soldiers: the role of children in armed conflict: A Study for the Henry Dunant Institute, Geneva. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Goreux, L., 2001. Conflict Diamonds. Africa Region Working Paper no 13. World Bank. Accessed through www.wds.worldbank.org. [31/08/2008].

Gow, M et al., 2000. The Right to Peace. Children and Armed Conflict. Working Paper no 2. World Vision International: www.wvi.org [20/05/04].

Grenier, Y., 1999. The Emergence of Insurgency in El Salvador: Ideology and Political Will. USA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Harff, B., and Gurr, T.R., 2004. ‘Ethnic Conflict in World Politics .USA: Westview Press.

Hamilton. C., & El-Haj. T.A., 1996. The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. *Childright* 132.

Hamilton. C., & El-Haj. T.A., 1997. Armed Conflict- The Protection of Children under International Law. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*. 5(1).

Hammond, J., 1998. Fighting to Learn: Popular Education and Guerrilla War in El Salvador. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Hart, J., Ed. 2008. Years of Conflict: Adolescence, Political Violence and Displacement. *Studies in Forced Migration*. 25. USA: Berghahn Books.

Harvey, R., May 2000. Child Soldiers- the Beginning of the End. *Childright*. 164.

Harvey, R., 2003. Children and Armed Conflict: A Guide to International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law. International Bureau for Children's Rights.

Hendriks, K., 2012. African Vultures: The New Prevalence of Interstate War in Africa. *Amsterdam Social Science*. 4(1). pp 49-66.

Hertvik. N., 2002. El Salvador: Effecting Change from Within. UN Chronicle: Online Edition. Accessed through www.un.org [23/05/2009].

Hirsch, J., 2001. Sierra Leone: Diamonds and the Struggle for Democracy. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Honwana, A., 2006. Child Soldiers in Africa. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Human Rights Watch., 10th August, 1993. El Salvador: Accountability and Human Rights. The Report of the UN's Commission on the Truth for El Salvador. 5(7).

Human Right Watch., 1996. Children in Combat. Accessed through www.hrw.org [25/10/09]

Human Rights Watch., 1999. World Report 1999: Sierra Leone. Accessed through <http://www.hrw.org/worldreport99/africa/sierraleone.html>. [30/07/08].

Human Rights Watch., 2002. My gun was as tall as me: child soldiers in Burma. New York: Human Rights Watch.

Human Rights Watch., Jan 2003. "We'll kill you if you cry" Sexual violence In the Sierra Leone conflict. 15(1). Accessed through www.hrw.org [30/07/08].

Human Rights Watch., November 2004. Living in Fear. Child soldiers and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. 16(13c). New York: Human Rights Watch.

Human Rights Watch., 13th April 2005. Youth, Poverty and Blood: The lethal legacy of West Africa's Regional Warriors. Accessed through www.hrw.org [30/07/2008].

Human Rights Watch., 2007a. Complicit in Crime: State Collusion in Abductions and Child Recruitment by the Karuna Group. 19(1c). USA: Human Rights Watch.

Human Rights Watch., 2007b. Exported and Exposed: Abuses Against Sri Lankan Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon and the UAE. 19(16c). Accessed through www.hrw.org [30/07/08].

Human Rights Watch., December 2008a. Trapped and Mistreated: LTTE Abuses Against Civilians in the Vanni. New York: Human Rights Watch.

Human Rights Watch., December 2008b. Besieged, Displaced and Detained: The Plight of Civilians in the Sri Lanka Vanni Region. USA: Human Rights Watch.

Human Rights Watch., 2009. War on the Displaced: Sri Lankan Army and LTTE Abuses against Civilians in the Vanni. Accessed through www.hrw.org. [27/10/2010].

Human Security Network., Children and Armed Conflict: International Standards for Action. Accessed through www.reliefweb.int.

Humpreys, M., and Weinstein, J., 2006. Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War. *American Political Science Review*. 100(3)

IISS Armed Conflict Database., Accessed through www.armed-groups.org. [10/03/2010].

Jackson, M., 2011. Life within Limits: Well-being in a World of Want. Durham: Duke University Press.

Kaldor, M., 2001. New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kaldor, M., 2006. New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in the Global Era. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Keairns, Y., 2003. The Voices of Girl Soldiers: Sri Lanka. New York: Quakers UN Office. Accessed through www.quno.org. [21/01/09].

Keen, D., 2005. Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone. Oxford: James Currey Ltd.

Keethaponcalan, S., 1998. Third Party Rule in an Ethnic Conflict: Indian Involvement in Sri Lanka. *Sri Lanka Journal of International Law*. 10.

Keitetsi, C., 2004. Child Soldier. London: Souvenir Press.

Kielland, A., and Tovo, M., 2006. Children at Work; Child Labour Practices in Africa. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers

Krishna, S., 1999. Postcolonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka and the Question of Nationhood. *Borderlines*. 15 Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kuper, J., 2005. Military Training and Children in Armed Conflict: Law, Policy and Practice. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Kumar, K., Ed. 2001. Women and Civil War: Impact, Organizations, and Action. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Linke, U., and Smith, D.T., Eds. 2009. Cultures of Fear: A Critical Reader. London: Pluto Press.

Lord, D., 2000. Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives. 9. Paying the Price: the Sierra Leone Peace Process. London: Conciliation Resources.

Luciak, I., 1999. Gender Equality in the Salvadoran Transition. *Latin American Perspectives*. 26(2).

McClintock, C., 1998. *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America El Salvador's FMLN and Peru's Shining Path*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Machel, G., August 1996. *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*. UN document A/51/306, New York. Accessed through www.un.org [05/11/2003].

Machel, G., 2001, *The impact of war on children*. London: Hurst and Company.

Maclean, J., 1987. *Prolonging the Agony: The Human Cost of Low Intensity Warfare in El Salvador*. Nottingham: Russell Press Ltd.

Mancini, C., Ed. 2010. *Child Soldiers. Global Viewpoints*. Farmington Hills: Greenhaven Press.

McConnan, I., and Uppard. S., 2001. *Children- not soldiers: Guidelines for working with child soldiers and children associated with fighting forces*. London: Save the Children.

Mehari, S., 2007. *Heart of Fire*. London: Profile Books Ltd.

Mjoset, L., and Van Holde, S., Ed. 2002. *The Comparative Study of Conscription in the Armed Forces*. Comparative Social Research. 20. Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd.

Montgomery, T., 1982. Revolution in El Salvador: Origins and Evolution.
Boulder: Westview Press.

Montgomery, T. S, 1995. Getting to Peace in El Salvador: The Roles of the UN Secretariat and ONUSAL. *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*. 37(4)

Mukarji, A., 2000. The War in Sri Lanka: Unending Conflict? New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications.

Mukarji, A., 2005. Sri Lanka: A Dangerous Interlude. USA: New Dawn Press Group.

Murray, K., 1997. El Salvador: Peace on Trial. UK: Oxfam UK and Ireland.

MSN News., 25 January 2009. Sri Lanka Troops Enter Stronghold. Accessed through www.news.uk.msn.com [25/01/09].

Oludipe, O., 2000. Sierra Leone: One Year after Lome. One-Day Analytical Conference on the Peace Process in London. London: Centre for Democracy and Development.

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict., *Volume 2173, A-27531*. Accessed through [www2.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/crc-conflict](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/crc-conflict.pdf). [13/06/2011].

Pastor, R., 2001. *Exiting the Whirlpool: US Foreign Policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean*. 2nd Ed. USA: Westview Press.

Peters, L., 2005. *War is No Child's Play: Child Soldiers from Battlefield to Playground*. Occasional Paper No 8. Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. Accessed through www.isn.ethz.ch [04/10/07].

Pham, J., 2005. *Child Soldiers, Adult Interests: The Global Dimensions of the Sierra Leone Tragedy*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.

Preston, T., 2009. *American Foreign Policy and the Civil War in El Salvador, 1980-1983. A Case Study in Proxy War*. MA. Virginia Commonwealth University, USA (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [13/09/2010]

Prisk, C., Ed. 1991. *The Commandant Speaks: Memoirs of an El Salvadoran Guerrilla Leader*. Boulder: Westview Press.

UNDP. Human Development Human Development Index. Accessed through <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SLE.html>. [10/05/11].

Ung, L., 2007. *First They Killed my Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers*. Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Company.

UNICEF., 2008. Action Plan on Ending Recruitment of Child Soldiers Signed in Sri Lanka. Accessed through www.unicef.org. [21/01/09].

UNICEF., Sri Lanka Country Statistics. Accessed through www.unicef.org/infobycountry. [29/05/2011]

United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime and the Protocols Thereto., New York, 2004. Accessed through www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications.

Rajasingham-Senanayake., 2004. Between Reality and Representation: Women's Agency in War and Post-Conflict Sri Lanka. *Cultural Dynamics*. 16(23).

Reich, S., and Achvarina, V., 2005. Why Do Children Fight? Explaining Child Soldier Ratios in African Intra-State Conflicts. Ford Institute for Human Security, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh.

Restoy, E., June 2006. Sierra Leone: The Revolutionary United Front. Trying to Influence an Army of Children. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. Accessed through www.child-soldiers.org [30/07/2008].

Ricca, C., June 2006. El Salvador: Children in the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the Armed Forces of El Salvador (FAES). Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. Accessed through www.child-soldiers.org [30/07/2008].

Richards, P., 2004. 'Fighting for the Rainforest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone. 5th Ed. Oxford: James Currey.

Richards, P., Bah, K., and Vincent, J., 2004. Social Capital and Survival: Prospects for Community Driven Development in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone. Social Development Paper no 12. World Bank. Accessed through www.worldbank.org [15/06/2005].

Richman, J., and Fraser, M., Ed. 2001. The Context of Youth Violence: Resilience, Risk and Protection. Westport: Praeger Publishers.

Roberts, M., Ed. 1979. Collective Identities, Nationalisms and Protest in Modern Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka: Marga Institute.

Roberts, M., 2007. Blunders in Tigerland: Papes Muddles on "Suicide Bombers" in Sri Lanka. Heidelberg Papers in South Asia and Comparative

Politics. Working Paper 32. Accessed through <http://www.sai.uni-heidelberg.de/SAPOL/HPSACP.html> [20/02/08].

Rosen. D., 2005. *Armies of the Young: Child Soldiers in War and Terrorism*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Rosenblatt, J., 1998. Children in the War Zone, *Family Law*. 28.

Ross, R., and Savada, A., Ed. 1988. A Country Study: Sri Lanka'. US Library of Congress (DS489.568.1990). US State Department, '*Background Note: Sierra Leone*', Accessed through (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5475.htm>). [30/07/08].

RUF., 1995. Footpaths to democracy: Towards a new Sierra Leone. Accessed through www.Sierra-Leone.org [06/11/2003]

RUF., 1995. Lasting peace in Sierra Leone: The RUFSL perspective and vision. Accessed through www.Sierra-Leone.org [06/11/2003].

Ryan, J., 1989. *The Dynamics of Latin American Insurgencies: 1956-1986*. Rice University. (Proquest Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, USA) accessed at LSE, London [13/09/2010].

Sainz-Pardo, P., 2008. Is Child Recruitment As a War Crime Part of Customary International Law. *The International Journal of Human Rights*., 12(4).

Schmidt, A., 2007. Volunteer Child Soldiers as Reality: A Development Issue for Africa. *New School Economic Review*. 2(1). pp 49-76.

Seneviratne, W., 2003. International Legal Standards Applicable to Child Soldiers. *Sri Lanka Journal of International Law*. 15.

Sesay, A., Eds. 2003. Civil Wars, Child Soldiers and Post Conflict Peace Building in West Africa. Nigeria: College Press and Publishers Ltd.

Shanmugaratnam, N., Ed. 2008. Between War and Peace in Sudan and Sri Lanka. Oxford: James Currey Ltd.

Shepler, S., 2005. Conflicted Childhoods: Fighting Over Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone. Unpublished PhD thesis. Given to the author in 2006.

Sheppard, A., 2000. Child Soldiers- is the Optional Protocol Evidence of an Emerging 'Straight 18' Consensus. *International Journal of Children's Rights*. 8(1).

Shin, H., 2001. Remembering Korea 1950: A Boy Soldier's Story. USA: University of Nevada Press.

Silber, I., 2004. Mothers/Fighters/Citizens: Violence and Disillusionment in Post-War El Salvador. *Gender and History*. 16(3)

Silenger, B., 2003. *Sierra Leone: Current Issues and Background*. New York: Nova Science Publishers Inc.

Singer, P., 2006a. *Children at War*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Singer, P., 2006b. *The enablers of war: Casual Factors Behind the Child Soldier Phenomenon*. Ford Institute for Human Security, University of Pittsburgh. accessed through www.fordinstitute.pitt.edu [03/10/07].

Skjonsberg, E., 1982. *A Special Caste: Tamil Women of Sri Lanka*. London: Zed Press.

Slavery Convention. Signed at Geneva on 25 September 1926. Accessed on www2.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/slavery.pdf. [13/06/2011].

Smillie, I., Gberie, L., and Hazleton, R., 2000. *The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone, Diamonds & Human Security*. Ottawa: Partnership Africa Canada.

Somasundaram, D., 1998. *Scarred Minds: The Psychological Impact of War on Sri Lankan Tamils*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Spencer, D., 1996. *From Vietnam to El Salvador: The Saga of the FMLN Sappers and Other Guerrilla Special Forces in Latin America*. USA: Praeger Publishers.

Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission., 2006. Annual Report 2006. section 2. Accessed through http://slmm-history.info/SLMM_Archive/Annual_reports [30/07/2008].

Stahler-Scholck, R., 1994. El Salvador's Negotiated Transition: From Low-intensity Conflict to Low-intensity democracy. *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*. 36(4).

Stanton, J., 2009. Strategies of Violence and Restraint in Civil War. Ph.D. Columbia University. Accessed through Proquest Information and Learning accessed at LSE, [13/09/2010].

Starr, H., Ed. 1999. The Understanding and Management of Global Violence: New Approaches to Theory and Research on Protracted Conflict. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.

Steinhoff, U., 'Why there is no Barbarization but a Lot of Barbarity in Warfare' in Kassimeris, G., Ed. 2006. Warrior's Dishonour: Barbarity, Morality and Torture in Modern Warfare. Aldershot: Ashgate. pp 101-111.

Swamy, M., 1994. Tigers of Lanka: From Boys to Guerrillas. Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications.

Swamy, S., 2007. Sri Lanka in Crisis: India's Options. New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications.

Swamy M.R., 2008. Inside an Elusive Mind: Prabhakaran, The First Profile of the World's Most Ruthless Guerrilla Leader. Colombo: Yapa Publications.

Sweepston, L., 1992. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ILO. *Nordic Journal of International Law*. 61.

Tambiah, S.J., 1991. Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tampoe, M., 2006. From Spices to Suicide Bombers and beyond: A Study of Power, Politics and Terrorism in Modern Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka: Marga Institute.

Tosini. D., 2009. A Sociological Understanding of Suicide Attacks. *Theory, Culture and Society*. 26(4). pp 67-96.

Trawick, M., 2007. Enemy Lines: Warfare, Childhood and Play in Batticaloa. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission., Chapter Four: Children and Conflict in Sierra Leone. The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone. Accessed through www.trcsierraleone.org. [13/07/08].

Vazquez, N., 1997. Motherhood and Sexuality in Times of War: The Case of Women Militants of the FMLN in El Salvador. *Reproductive Health Matters*. 5(9).

Verhey, B., The Demobilisation and Reintegration of Child Soldiers: El Salvador Case Study. World Bank. Accessed through www.worldbank.org. [19/08/07)].

Verma, D.P., 1991. Indo-Sri Lanka Accord: Intervention or Invitation. *Sri Lanka Journal of International Law*. 3.

Vigh, H., 2006. Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau. *Methodology and History in Anthropology*. 13. New York: Berghahn Books.

Vigil, J., 1995. Rebel Radio: The Story of El Salvador's Radio Venceremos. London: Latin American Bureau.

Villalobos, J., 1989. Popular Insurrection. Desire or Reality? *Latin American Perspectives*. 16(3).

Viterna, J.S., 2006. Pulled, Pushed and Persuaded: Explaining Women's mobilisation into the Salvadoran Guerrilla Army. Published by the University of Chicago. Accessed through www.yale.edu. [10/08/07].

Walter. K., and Williams. P. J., 1993. The Military and Democratisation in El Salvador. *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*. 35(1).

War Resisters International., 1998. Refusing to Bear Arms: A Worldwide Survey of Conscription and Conscientious Objection to Military Service. Accessed through www.wri-irg.org [15/06/2005].

Watch list for Children and Armed Conflict., Children and Armed Conflict in Sri Lanka: Recommendations to the Security Council Working Group. 2010. Accessed through www.child-soldiers.org. [11/03/2010].

Weinstein, J., 2005. Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 49(598).

Weissbrook, D., 2002. Abolishing Slavery and its Contemporary Forms. New York: Anti-Slavery International.

Wessells. M., 2006. Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Wickramasinghe, N., 2006. Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History of Contested Identities. London: C Hurst & Co.

Williamson, J., February 2005. Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone. US Agency for International Development. Accessed through http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACH599.PDF [15/06/2005]

Wilson, J., 2000. Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism: Its Origins and Development in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. London: C. Hurst.

Winslow and Woost., 2004. Economy, Culture and Civil War in Sri Lanka. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Wood, E., 2003. Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wood, E., 2009. Armed Groups and Sexual Violence: When is Wartime Rape Rare? *Politics and Society*. 37(1).

Wood, R., 2010. Competing for Control: Conflict Power Dynamics, Civilian Loyalties and Violence in Civil War. Ph.D. University of North Carolina. (Accessed through Proquest Information and Learning. LSE, [28/09/2011]).

Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention., 1999. No. 182. Accessed through [www2.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/childlabour](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/childlabour.pdf), [13/06/2011]]. Article 3a.

Yiftachel, O., and Ghanem, A., 2004. Understanding 'Ethnocratic' Regimes: the Politics of Seizing Contested Territories. *Political Geography*. 23(6).