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**THESIS**

**INCENTIVIZED BARBARISM: EXPLAINING THE  
INCREASE IN CHILD SOLDIER USAGE IN AFRICA  
POST-INDEPENDENCE**

by

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December 2018

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SOLDIER USAGE IN AFRICA POST-INDEPENDENCE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Child soldiering has become common in Africa. This was not always the case; many African cultures had traditions that prevented children from taking part in combat until physically mature enough to do so. Neither was child soldiering common during colonial occupation of Africa. Starting after independence from colonial powers, however, African children have either chosen to fight in armed forces groups or have been forced to fight by state and by rebel entities. What has led to the rise of child soldier usage in post-independence era rebellions? This research reviews conflicts before and after two critical historical points, independence from colonial powers and the end of the Cold War, to understand the trajectory of child soldier usage. Multiple cases are examined, with pre-independence represented by the Mau Mau Rebellion, the interim period by the Mozambique Civil War, and then post-Cold War by analyzing Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front. Through comparative analysis of these rebellions, this thesis identifies the factors that have led to increased usage of child soldiering. This thesis recommends increased focus on a non-proliferation policy of small arms, as the efficiency and proliferation of these arms encourages child soldier usage.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
CDF	Sierra Leonean Civil Defense Forces
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
Frelimo	Mozambique Liberation Front
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
IRA	Irish Republican Army
NGO	nongovernment organization
NPRC	National Provincial Ruling Council
Renamo	Mozambique National Resistance
RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SLA	Sierra Leonean Army
UN	United Nations

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION**

Child soldiering has become common in Africa. This has not always been the case; it was not common during the colonial occupation of Africa. Many African cultures had traditions that prevented children from taking part in combat until their bodies were physically mature enough to do so. Before independence, children were mostly excluded from any kind of participation in combat. In the rare cases in which they were part of the fighting, children typically played support roles, such as intelligence gathering, message running, and logistical support. After independence, children began to fight as primary combatants, and the use of child soldiers spiked after the Cold War ended. The primary question addressed in this thesis is: What led to the rise of child soldier usage in post-independence-era African rebellions?

This thesis examines which factors contribute to the increasing use of child soldiers in Africa, and especially their use by rebel groups. This thesis focuses on the differences between conflicts before and after two critical historical points, independence from colonial powers, and the end of the Cold War. Three cases are examined: by the Mau Mau Rebellion in the colonial period, the Mozambican Civil War in the post-independence period, and Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front in the post-Cold War period. In these three cases, it was found that the increasing efficiency and proliferation of small arms led to the increased use of child soldiers.

### **B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

As of 2005, according to Eben Kaplan, child combatants numbered approximately 300,000 worldwide.<sup>1</sup> Child soldiers have received significant attention in the past three decades. This attention began with the United Nations Human Rights 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, an international treaty that sought to provide standards for how a

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<sup>1</sup> Eben Kaplan, "Child Soldiers around the World," Council on Foreign Relations, December 2, 2005, <https://www.cfr.org/background/child-soldiers-around-world>.

nation is to interact with its children. The treaty includes recognizing children's right to practice their chosen religion, to participate in cultural life, and to receive an education. In Article 38, the treaty specifically identifies that children under the age of 15 should not be recruited into the armed forces.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the United Nations (UN) conducted a campaign that sought to take action against using child soldiers, especially in Afghanistan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Yemen.<sup>3</sup> While such campaigns are important, it is critical to understand the root causes of the use of child soldier to stop it effectively.

Child soldiering is a significant question in the academic realm as well. Multiple books and articles have been written on the topic, each of which identifies factors that may lead to using child soldiers both globally and in Africa. Few of these works, however, consider the longer-term historical context and the fact that child soldier usage in Africa is a "largely a post-colonial phenomenon."<sup>4</sup> The causes of child soldiering cannot be fully assessed without understanding this broader historical context. Identification of the prime factors leading to the increased usage of child soldiers can help shape policy decisions to combat it more effectively.

Child soldiers present a difficult predicament for U.S. and partner forces in missions in Africa. Children can surely be exploited for their military capabilities, but they also serve as psychological operations against foreign forces. Coalition partners may be more hesitant to kill a child, but the child will have no such compunction in attacking the coalition partner. This hesitation provides a slight tactical advantage against foreign forces, and can also lead to psychological trauma for the coalition partner.

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<sup>2</sup> Office of the High Commissioner, *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Human Rights), <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> "Children, Not Soldiers," United Nations, 2014, <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/children-not-soldiers/>.

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Herbst, "Economic Incentives, Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa," *Journal of African Economics* 9, no. 3 (January 1, 2000): 270, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jae/9.3.270>.



## C. LITERATURE REVIEW

Child soldiers have been used throughout history by various armies in multiple roles. Legitimate government armies in the past used them in support roles, including as message runners, squires, and musical instrument players. Individuals were typically not allowed to take up arms, however, until they reached adulthood. This situation has changed over the course of the last century, as both insurgent groups and fragile government armies began using child soldiers in both support and combat roles. In particular, Sub-Saharan Africa saw an uptick in the use of child soldiers after independence from colonial rule. This section first describes the rise of child soldiering after colonialism and then discusses the four main theories frequently used to explain the use child soldiers.

### 1. A Post-Colonial Problem

Child soldiering in Africa is, according to Jeffrey Herbst, “largely a post-colonial problem.”<sup>5</sup> Prior to colonization, traditions preventing children from taking part in warfare were almost universally common. The Zulu prevented the formal registration for fighting units until the age of approximately 20. West African tradition saw only married men conscripted.<sup>6</sup> A Ugandan tradition called “Lapir” forced clan elders to pick and choose the individuals who would become warriors; women and children were excluded.<sup>7</sup>

Since independence, the practice has become more common in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, child soldiers played prominent roles in the rebellions beginning in the 1990s. In Rwanda, a significant number of children under the age of 14 participated in the 1994 genocide.<sup>8</sup> In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Laurent Kabila led an army of approximately 10,000 child soldiers in 1996.<sup>9</sup> This number has only increased over time, with estimates of approximately 30,000–50,000 children acting as

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<sup>5</sup> Herbst, “Economic Incentives, Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa,” 286.

<sup>6</sup> Peter W. Singer, *Children at War* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 9–10.

<sup>7</sup> Rory Carroll, “Sham Demobilisation Hides Rise in Congo’s Child Armies,” *Guardian*, September 9, 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/sep/09/congo.rorycarroll>.

<sup>8</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 15–19.

<sup>9</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 21.

fighters today.<sup>10</sup> The state of Sudan, and the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army, used a combined total of 100,000 child soldiers to fight their civil war.<sup>11</sup> The most infamous example of child soldier exploitation lies with Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda and South Sudan. Kony's rebel group abducted between 60,000 and 80,000 children to fight in its army within a two-week period in 1996. While most of these children escaped, a large number were coerced and manipulated into remaining with the group.<sup>12</sup> The number of child soldiers seems to have suddenly sprung up out of nowhere after the colonial powers left the continent, and then their use surged further after the Cold War ended.

## 2. Theories of Child Soldiering

Four main approaches have been used to explain the prevalence of child soldiering: the conflict environment, technology, rational choice by belligerent groups, and child agency. Each of these theories presents fairly convincing arguments for why children are being used as soldiers, but they do not tend to focus on temporal dynamics, especially those trends that lead to an increased use of child soldiers over time. As explained in the following sections, this topic is a significant academic blind spot because it does not take into account the ways that child soldiering is likely to change over time.

### a. *War Environment*

Perhaps the strongest theory explaining the use of child soldiers identifies that the structure and environment of affected areas leading to an increased use of child soldiers. Brett and Specht note that "the environmental conditions [previously] identified ... set the context without which young people rarely become involved in armed conflict," after listing a series of factors that encourage children to volunteer to fight in armed groups.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Emily Wax, "Boy Soldiers Toting AK-47s Put at Front of Congo's War," *Washington Post*, June 14, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 24.

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Blattman and Jeannie Annan, "The Consequences of Child Soldiering," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 92, no. 4 (2010): 883, [https://doi.org/10.1162/rest\\_a\\_00036](https://doi.org/10.1162/rest_a_00036).

<sup>13</sup> Rachel Brett and Irma Specht, *Young Soldiers: Why They Choose to Fight* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 39.

Children in areas where child soldier recruitment occurs survive a series of unfortunate factors that drive them into the arms of armed forces. This recruitment may be voluntary, an effort to mitigate negative environmental factors as Brett and Specht note, or it may be involuntary recruitment in which children are targeted because the environment drives the armed group to believe that children are the cost effective choice. In either situation, the child serves as primary combatant because the environment has driven them to do so.

One of the primary environmental factors is perhaps the most obvious, war itself. Putting aside the simplicity of the analysis that children cannot fight in a war unless one exists, war creates an environment that drives young people to fight actively. One way is by creating a culture of instability, helplessness, and insecurity.<sup>14</sup> This culture leads individuals to seek methods to increase their own security, even if that means through the protection of an armed group. Protracted conflicts exacerbate this effect, as culture becomes slowly more militarized. Soldiers become a common sight in public, and “classes are interrupted for ‘popular assemblies’” where students are recruited.<sup>15</sup> An environment of war and instability breaks up a country’s social fabric by tearing apart families and stirring up ethnic tensions.<sup>16</sup> Finally, war ends up also having an effect on demographics. Protracted conflicts can lead to a lowering of a population’s median age and emigration that results in a very large number of children, which Singer, Beber, and Blattman each separately argue makes armed groups view children as a “cheap, limitless, and renewable resource.”<sup>17</sup> Singer further identifies these large numbers of children as homeless and discontent, who further describes child soldiers as “a roving orphanage of blood and flame.”<sup>18</sup> The environment incentivizes the exploitation of these children for combat. Additionally, the onset of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune

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<sup>14</sup> Ilene Cohn and Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers: The Role of Children in Armed Conflict* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 27.

<sup>15</sup> Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers: The Role of Children in Armed Conflict*, 32.

<sup>16</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 10–13.

<sup>17</sup> Bernd Beber and Christopher Blattman, “The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion,” *International Organization* 67, no. 01 (2013): 67–68, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818312000409>; Singer, *Children at War*, 42.

<sup>18</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 44.

Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic led to environmental shifts, as states struggled to combat the disease, even with the aid of outside governments. A population experiencing an uptick in these diseases will find its population curve moving to the left, toward the younger end of the spectrum, as these lethal diseases primarily target the normal military aged man. This shift has a destabilizing effect on society, as children are not only disenfranchised, but also numerous.

Another major factor is that of the weak state. Singer first identifies that small arms pervasiveness has shifted authority from the hands of traditional elders into the hands of youth, who are typically far more unstable. The fact that this trend even occurs is because state governments have become generally weaker. These weak states are unable to combat even rebel groups that primarily lead child soldiers effectively.<sup>19</sup> Herbst points out that weak states themselves are a factor in favor of the use of child soldiers, by pointing out that strong “settler states could not have been defeated by children.”<sup>20</sup> These weak states are not only unable to control their entire territories effectively, but they are unable to educate their youth properly. This is an issue unto itself, as it tends to leave children with no perceived option but to join extra-legal groups, be they armed groups or generally criminal ones. Armed groups easily and commonly exploit children in gangs and organized crime groups.<sup>21</sup> Finally, weak states may find themselves unable to recruit adequate numbers of adult soldiers. Weak governments’ inability to combat these trends effectively lead to a breeding ground in which child soldiers may be recruited and exploited.

The final structural factor is one that coalesces from the negative effects of conflict, weak states, and poverty. Widespread poverty leads to food and water scarcity. According to a 2001 article, an estimated half of African children survive in a state of “severe hunger.”<sup>22</sup> An interview of demobilized Congo-Kinshasa child soldiers identified that 61%

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<sup>19</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 49.

<sup>20</sup> Herbst, “Economic Incentives, Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa,” 286.

<sup>21</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 40–41.

<sup>22</sup> Karl Vick, “Big Rise in Hunger Projected for Africa,” *Washington Post*, September 4, 2001.

of their families were attempting to support more than nine people on “no income.”<sup>23</sup> This poverty leads children to seek out armed groups to survive, as such groups are paid consistently. They seek out these opportunities because they perceive that they have no other options, as all the legitimate jobs are filled.<sup>24</sup> Singer identifies that this problem is bad enough now, but it will continue to get worse as Africa faces ever-increasing overpopulation.<sup>25</sup> Beber and Blattman identify that unless poverty is effectively fought, and the education system strengthened, child soldiering will continue and even get worse.<sup>26</sup>

**b. Technology**

One of the primary factors enhancing the ability of and incentivizing groups to use child soldiers is the available of technology. Singer identifies that weapons easily carried by a single individual, such as “light machine guns, light mortars, land mines, and other weapons,” are those that are the most deadly to society.<sup>27</sup> According to Michael Klare, small arms in West Africa killed more than two million people in the last decade.<sup>28</sup> These weapons are especially destabilizing because they can be used against civilians as easily as against combat forces, which has led to mistrust between the army and civilian populations.<sup>29</sup> Weapons have become significantly lighter, easier to operate, and more efficiently lethal.<sup>30</sup> Singer specifically notes the most significant single weapon, the AK-47, which has “only nine moving parts,” “weighs 10½ pounds,” and is so resilient that it can be stored underground in loose dirt and still function effectively once recovered.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 21–23.

<sup>25</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 38–40.

<sup>26</sup> Beber and Blattman, “The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion,” 101.

<sup>27</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 46.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Klare, “The Kalashnikov Age,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 55, no. 1 (September 1, 1999): 18–22, <https://doi.org/10.2968/055001009>.

<sup>29</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 46.

<sup>30</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 46–48.

<sup>31</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 46–47.

Advancements in lethal technology, combined with increased global trade have, made it significantly easier to have a small group become a devastating fighting force.

The advancements in technology have also allowed combat forces to employ children as primary combatants. AK-47s are light enough that children can use them effectively. Additionally, they are simple enough that “it generally takes children around thirty minutes to learn how to use one.”<sup>32</sup> Historically, individuals who had not physically matured were not effective fighters because they were not strong enough to handle the heavy weapons. However, children can now be lethal at a distance with minimal exertion. In fact, a child with a rocket-propelled grenade launcher can take down buildings or wound tens of opponents at the same time. Singer identifies that a “handful of children now can have the equivalent firepower of an entire regiment of Napoleonic infantry.”<sup>33</sup>

Finally, small arms have become so well produced that in 2001, it was estimated that approximately one personal weapon was available for every twelve people in the world.<sup>34</sup> This proliferation led to a steep drop in prices of “man-portable” and even “child-portable” weapons.<sup>35</sup> The most notable event leading to the proliferation and cost decrease of small arms was the “peace dividend” after the Berlin Wall fell. This dividend led to a huge number of weapons being marked as surplus, which led to a sharp decline in prices. Afterwards, light weapons became significantly more affordable, with pistols being sold for \$8, anti-personnel land mines for \$9, and light machine guns for \$60.<sup>36</sup> While the original intention was for weapons not to be sold on the market, arms brokers and gunrunners obtained the weapons, and many had no qualms selling to the highest bidders, whoever they were. This trend did not stop, however, as weapons industries continued producing weapons to stay in business.<sup>37</sup> Klare identifies the particular example of the AK-

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<sup>32</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 46.

<sup>33</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 47.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Cobb, “Arms and Africa on UN Agenda This Week,” AllAfrica, July 9, 2001.

<sup>35</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 46–48.

<sup>36</sup> Singer, 48; Bonn International Center for Conversion, *An Army Surplus—The NVA’s Heritage*, BICC Brief No. 3 (Bonn, Germany: Bonn International Center for Conversion, 1997).

<sup>37</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 47–48.

47 as extraordinary, going so far as to call the post-Cold War era as the “Kalashnikov Age.”<sup>38</sup> A continued flow of light arms resulted, which naturally became focused in the most unstable areas. Post-conflict Mozambique boasted approximately six million AK-47’s, or almost one for every other citizen of the nation.<sup>39</sup> Abysmally low prices for these weapons were seen throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, with AK-47’s being sold for as low as \$5 in some areas.<sup>40</sup> The availability and efficiency of these weapons made it significantly easier to arm children who found themselves in the role of primary armed combatant.

*c. Rational Choice of Belligerent Groups*

A particularly effective explanation for using child soldiers lies in the argument that armed groups use children because it is cost effective to do so. Blattman and Beber argue, “too many armed groups recruit adolescents for long periods of time for irrationality to be a full or satisfactory explanation.”<sup>41</sup> Assuming that rebel leaders are self-interested, capable of careful analysis, and maintain a desire to become more influential, their decision to coerce and recruit adolescents must stem from a calculated effectiveness of using children to fight. This effectiveness does not lie in a mere physical effectiveness, as argued in Singer’s technology argument, but instead in an ease of maintenance.<sup>42</sup> Children are easier to keep interested with non-material motivations, such as revenge, honor, or purpose. Additionally, armed groups are able to indoctrinate and adapt children more easily, which has led to higher retention rates.<sup>43</sup> Failing that, children are easier to manipulate, deceive, and coerce than are adults.<sup>44</sup> Beber and Blattman’s research into the Ugandan rebel group,

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<sup>38</sup> Klare, “The Kalashnikov Age.”

<sup>39</sup> Sarah Aird, Bola Efraime, and Antoinette Errante, *Mozambique: The Battle Continues for Former Child Soldiers* (Washington, DC: Youth Advocate Program International, 2001), <http://yapi.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/report-mozambique.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> United Nations, *Report of the Expert of the Secretary General, Graca Machel, Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, Document A/51/306 & Add. 1 (New York: United Nations, 1996).

<sup>41</sup> Beber and Blattman, “The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion,” 68.

<sup>42</sup> Beber and Blattman, “The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion,” 68.

<sup>43</sup> Beber and Blattman, “The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion,” 69.

<sup>44</sup> Beber and Blattman, “The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion,” 68–69.

the Lord's Resistance Army, identified that children are, in fact, coerced more often than adults. Additionally, punishing children in combination with a small degree of indoctrination is enough to incentivize rebel leaders to use child soldiers, as long as the child is proficient enough in combat.<sup>45</sup> Finally, children make rapidly dependable fighters. It takes only approximately three months from the time children are abducted until they are issued firearms, at which point, approximately a 35% chance exists the children will be able to maintain these weapons at all times. Commanders often view these children as dependable or trustworthy as well.<sup>46</sup> Children are, therefore, primarily used because it is easy to convert them from prisoner to soldier, albeit a less effective soldier, at a rapid pace.

*d. Child Agency*

A final approach suggests that children fight because they choose to do so. This perspective holds that children may have significant motivations to choose to fight in armed groups. One of the most basic motivations is simple survival. Child soldiers are often motivated by the fact that they will be provided food. In other words, children are able to ensure their own continued survival in addition to decreasing the burden on their own families.<sup>47</sup> Cohn and Goodwin-Will note an anecdote that a major non-governmental organization leader saw seven-year-olds in Liberia with guns because "those with guns could eat."<sup>48</sup> Security is also a basic need that is ironically provided by joining an armed force, even if said armed group causes the instability in the first place.<sup>49</sup> Fighting is an excellent alternative if the other option is to starve or be killed. In addition to survival, children may feel a special pull to armed services if their family members or friends have ties to any armed force. While some children may be forced to go enlist by their families,

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<sup>45</sup> Beber and Blattman, "The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion," 76–79.

<sup>46</sup> Beber and Blattman, "The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion," 90–95.

<sup>47</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 41–42.

<sup>48</sup> Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers*, 33.

<sup>49</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 40.



others will volunteer out of a sense of pride, honor, and loyalty to their loved ones, if not to their country.<sup>50</sup> Armed groups provide noble causes an avenue for pursuit.

Children also join armed groups for less noble purposes. Some merely pursue rebel groups because they provide opportunities to enrich themselves personally, especially via looting.<sup>51</sup> Others join a rebel group out of a need for revenge against the official military if the military stole the individual's means of survival or the military killed family members.<sup>52</sup> Finally, the children may volunteer because they simply think it would be heroic and epic to be a warrior like those in movies or old stories.<sup>53</sup> Regardless of the reason, children's agency in becoming a warrior must be considered.

### **3. Assessing the Theories**

Each of the theories previously discussed provides a potential, but incomplete, explanation for why child soldiering occurs. For example, advances in technology surely make it easier or even more desirable to use child soldiers, as even children are able to carry around weapons capable of significant destruction. Additionally, after the Soviet Union's collapse, these weapons have become easy to access, as former stockpiles were sold to the highest bidders. However, at best, technology's ease of access and use by rebel groups merely exacerbates the existing issue of using child soldiers. Technology in itself cannot explain the use of child soldiers since other areas with easy access to the same technology do not use the same tactics. Thus, the problem of technology is not enough, in and of itself, to explain using child soldiers, even if it does contribute to their increased use.

The rational choice approach posits that armed groups intentionally target children because they are easy to manipulate, train, and control. This argument is effective because it considers a variety of other factors. Technology makes it easier to train and equip large

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<sup>50</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 48–53.

<sup>51</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 43.

<sup>52</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 56–58; Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers*, 32.

<sup>53</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 32–34.

groups of children, and once equipped, even untrained, the children can become a lethal and destructive fighting force. Children are also targeted because they are fiercely loyal and easy to brainwash, and need only a short time between abduction and being handed a weapon. These groups effectively manipulate and coerce children because the costs and risks are lower than the perceived benefits of using them as a fighting force. This argument, the author believes, is the second strongest argument in explaining the use of child soldiers. The issue with this hypothesis is the increase in using child soldiers after independence. If such an increase did occur, the hypothesis must explain how the cost-benefit analysis changed after Europeans left the continent.

The approach emphasizing child agency is not without merit. In fact, according to Beber and Blattman, twice as many organizations use volunteers as organizations that involuntarily recruit fighters.<sup>54</sup> Children's agency is an important factor to consider, but again, this factor is not a primary cause. The reason this agency exists must first be considered. Each of the remaining arguments provides a reason why children are choosing to engage in warfare. The structural argument proposes that children are choosing to fight because they have been raised in an overly militarized environment with little potential futures besides conflict. The cost-benefit analysis hypothesis argues that children volunteer because exploitive armed groups intentionally target children through coercive and manipulative recruiting techniques. In either scenario, the child's volunteering is merely a facet of the existing argument. Additionally, the structural argument combats the agency-purist argument, because developed countries actively prevent minors from joining military forces.

This structural environment surrounding the conflict offers a number of promising avenues to explain child soldier usage, with the basic structural foundation being the existence of violent conflict at all. This foundation is strengthened with the duration of the conflict, since as the conflict drags on, resources and education opportunities become less available, and the society becomes more militarized. Additionally, children growing up in the conflict begin to know no other life, so they get used to fighting since it is the only way

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<sup>54</sup> Beber and Blattman, "The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion," 67.

to survive and earn honor. The conflict drives the average age of a population down, and as a result, child fighters become more readily available than adult fighters. Separate from the effects of the conflict itself, the structural argument also considers the how weakened states mired in conflict further contribute to child soldiering.

The most prominent commonality among these explanations is that they are incomplete in explaining why the use of child soldiers has increased over time. It is critical to analyze which of these factors led to an increase in the numbers of child soldiers, as the literature fails to address adequately how cost-benefit calculations changed. A structural explanation provides the implication that environmental factors do change over time, but identifying which structural factor is more important in regards to the increase has not occurred. The identification of such a factor may guide the policy that attempts to address the use of child soldiers. If nothing else, it adds to the body of literature seeking to end this phenomenon.

#### **D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES**

To understand what factors led to the increase of using child soldiers in Sub-Saharan Africa after independence and the end of the Cold War, three specific hypotheses are examined.

The first hypothesis is that the change in the nature of conflicts surrounding each of these turning points led to the increase in the use of child soldiers. Before independence, relatively strong colonial administrations were able to enforce laws, suppress rebellions, and maintain security, which shifted during the rapid transition of control from European powers to local administrations. Conflicts became more protracted both after independence and after the end of the Cold War, as relative power between the belligerent parties became more balanced. Since local administrations were increasingly unable to end conflicts quickly within their countries, the protracted nature of conflicts led those involved to experiment with new tactics. The protraction of the conflicts led to demographic shifts toward younger and more impoverished populations, which then led to an increase in the supply of children. HIV and AIDS casualties, coupled with protracted conflicts killing military age males, leads to an increasingly young and aggressive youth population. When

these youth are disenfranchised by poverty and a lack of opportunities, they feel more pressed to fight. This increased supply of children leads to an increased use of child soldiers.

The second hypothesis is that the use of child soldiers increased because small arms became more efficient, portable, and available. After independence, Cold War allegiances made it easier to obtain weapons. Likewise, after the Cold War, an upsurge in global trade further facilitated the expansion of weapons on the continent. These changes, combined with the increasing portability and lethality of the weapons, resulted in rebel groups becoming more difficult to combat and children becoming more effective fighters.

The third hypothesis is that after colonial powers left Sub-Saharan Africa, family-level values shifted toward permissiveness of their children fighting. Increasing instability as groups attempted to fill the power vacuum left behind by the colonial administration would lead to increasing desperation. Families supported their children joining militant groups so that these children would be fed and paid. The author does not expect this hypothesis to have any effect after the Cold War's end. While the removal of great power influence might have had an effect on the strategies of belligerents, it would not have had nearly as much effect on the family as the instability caused after the colonial powers' withdrawals.

## **E. RESEARCH DESIGN**

This thesis is comprised of two most-similar comparative case studies conducted in two distinct time periods to analyze the factors identified as potentially causing the increase in the use of child soldiers since the colonial period. For both comparisons, the goal was to compare cases that occurred just before and just after the key historical changes of independence from colonial rule and the end of the Cold War. This research design makes it possible to meaningfully examine the spikes in child soldier usage in each period.

The first comparison uses the cases of the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya from 1952 to 1964 and the Mozambican Civil War, which lasted from 1977 to 1992. Each features rebel forces formed from dissident political stances who fought a style of guerrilla war against the government in power. The difference is that the Mau Mau did not use child

soldiers as primary combatants in their struggles, while both sides of the Mozambican Civil War used child soldiers throughout the conflict. For each case, the author determines which of his hypothesized changes has the most salience in increasing the use of child soldiers. Comparing and contrasting these two cases provides some useful analysis of which factors are the most important in causing the use of child soldiers, although any African conflict featuring a rebel guerrilla force using child soldiers could replace the Mozambican Civil War.

The second comparison uses the Mozambican Civil War as a baseline for comparison to a post-Cold War case: the civil conflict in Sierra Leone from 1991 to 2002. During this conflict, thousands of children were exploited as soldiers. The foreign-supported rebel group actually preferred to use children as primary combatants. Additionally, an examination of a recent example shows how these factors continue to play out, with an emphasis in this portion of the analysis on how contributing factors to using child soldiers evolve over time. The Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone provides a notorious example of using child soldiers after the Cold War ended.

In all cases, the author sought data tracking demographic shifts or all kinds, especially relating to the populations or poverty. Likewise, he sought data regarding increased weapon trade, as well as observing attitudes regarding child soldiers to include primary and secondary source materials. Secondary sources include non-governmental organization (NGO) reports, journal articles, government reports, and books. Primary sources include news reports mostly from Western media.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE**

This thesis is comprised of four chapters. Chapter I contains the introduction, while Chapters II and III contain case studies of the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya, the Mozambican Civil War, and the Sierra Leonean Civil War. Each case study contains historical context and discussions of the use of child soldiers. These chapters are then divided into general overviews of the conflicts and the use of child soldiers and an analysis of each individual hypothesis. Chapter IV contains a comparison of each case, as well as an analysis of the hypotheses. This chapter also contains findings, implications, and

recommendations for future study. The following paragraphs present a brief summary of the author's findings in Chapters II and III.

Chapter II explores the time frame immediately before and after independence. In the Mau Mau Rebellion, children were primarily used for logistical purposes, instead of as primary combatants, and even then, they were used sparingly. Meanwhile, the Mozambican Civil War saw children being used on both sides of the conflict, with the rebel Renamo, or Mozambique National Resistance, preferring to use children. This increase seemed to be a result of increasing proliferation and efficiency of small arms in conjunction with a demographic shift towards a younger and poorer population caused by balanced opposing fighting forces.

Chapter III analyzes the Sierra Leonean Civil War, which began immediately after the end of the Cold War. Children were used heavily by the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF), as well as by the government's various forms of military. Children were used in higher quantity than during the Mozambican Civil War. This use, again, seemed to result primarily from an increase in the availability and lethality of small weaponry.

## **G. CONCLUSION**

This chapter offered a research question, presented some of the literature surrounding the academic discussion of using child soldiers, and raised three potential hypotheses to address the question of why child soldiering in Africa became more common after independence and again after the end of the Cold War. A review of the literature on the use of child soldiers presented four common approaches to studying why children fight in conflicts: war environment, technology, rational choice of the belligerent group, and child agency. From these approaches, I developed three specific hypotheses that may be useful for explaining changes over time: relative military power imbalances leading to demographic shifts, proliferation and increasing efficiency of small arms, and shifts in family values. In the chapters that follow, I investigate these hypotheses in two sets of case comparisons.

## **II. INCREASE IN CHILD SOLDIERING AFTER INDEPENDENCE: THE MAU MAU REBELLION AND THE MOZAMBIKAN CIVIL WAR**

This chapter seeks to understand the evolution of child soldiering in Africa before and after independence from colonial powers in the middle of the 20th century by comparing child soldiering in conflicts that occurred after colonialism. The chapter examines three potential hypotheses that may explain the increased usage of child soldiers during the post-independence period. The first hypothesis is that the nature of the conflict, whether it be between balanced or imbalanced military powers, leads to protracted conflict and an increasing relative supply of poor children who then increase the relative supply of potential child fighters over adult fighters. The second hypothesis suggests that the increased use of child soldiers is due to changes in weaponry, and more specifically, an increased availability of efficient small arms, including rifles, mines, and rocket launchers. The third hypothesis posits that family-level norms shifted to become more permissive of the use of child soldiers following instability caused by groups trying to fill the newly created power vacuum after colonial powers left Sub-Saharan Africa.

To examine these hypotheses, the author compares the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya, which took place from 1952–1964, to the Mozambican Civil War that occurred from 1977–1982. The two cases, with contrasting levels of using child soldiers, provide an opportunity to gauge the plausibility of each of the three hypotheses.<sup>55</sup> The former Rebellion is one of the latest conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa before independence. During the Rebellion, the Mau Mau, an insurgent group composed of the Kikuyu people, fought against both the British Administration in Kenya and the Kikuyu who remained loyal to the British. This conflict did not see children being used as primary combatants, although they were used in support roles. In contrast, the Mozambican Civil War began soon after independence from Portugal. The conflict pitted an insurgent group, Renamo, against the

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<sup>55</sup> The analysis is limited because the cases are in different countries and constitute different types of conflict (liberation vs. civil war). For this reason, the author views the analysis in this chapter as more exploratory as he establishes the plausibility or non-plausibility of certain hypotheses.

ruling party, the Mozambican Liberation Front (Frelimo), in a brutal, protracted civil war. Both sides of the conflict used children as primary combatants, although Frelimo's use of the children was slightly less prolific than Renamo's. These two cases are useful for attempting to identify factors that led to the greater use of child soldiers post-independence.

#### **A. CHILD SOLDIER USAGE BEFORE AND AFTER INDEPENDENCE**

Before exploring the Mau Mau Rebellion or the Mozambican Civil War, it is important to examine the overall trajectory of child soldier usage in Sub-Saharan Africa after independence from colonial powers. In conflicts during colonial rule, there is little evidence of children being used as primary combatants. After independence from colonial powers, however, fighting groups used child soldiers fairly regularly. One of the first examples during this time frame is the Eritrean War of Independence from Ethiopia from 1961 to 1991. This war, not fought against colonial powers, saw the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) use hundreds of children against the Ethiopian government. However, most of these children were post-pubescent, usually between 15–18 years of age.<sup>56</sup> The Angolan Civil War, which stretched from 1975 to 2002, saw the fairly prolific use of child soldiers. Until the 2002 ceasefire, child soldiers were used in the thousands by government security forces, with estimates of 10,000 children out of a total of 100,000 troops, although accurate counts may be higher. Approximately 30,000 young girls were abducted by security forces during the war.<sup>57</sup> Of course, reports do not divide estimates during the time frame this research is analyzing, so many of these children may have been used during the post-Cold War time frame. However, many other conflicts apparently did not use child soldiers. The Rhodesian Bush War and Namibian War of Independence appear to have seen no child primary combatants.<sup>58</sup> Thus, it appears that using child soldiers became considerably more prevalent in the post-independence period.

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<sup>56</sup> United Nations, "Child Soldiers Global Report 2001—Eritrea," Refworld, January 1, 2001, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/498805fd5.html>.

<sup>57</sup> United Nations, "Child Soldiers Global Report 2004—Angola," Refworld, January 1, 2004, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4988067bc.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Reviews of key accounts revealed a lack of references to any use of child soldiers in these wars.



In both the Mau Mau Rebellion and the Mozambican Civil War, the government in control faced an insurgent threat. In the case of the Mau Mau, the British administration in Kenya faced the insurgent threat of a disenfranchised section of the country's dominant ethnic group, the Kikuyu. A faction had broken off because of exploitive policies put in place by the British administration. These Kikuyu attempted to address their grievances by legal means, but were snubbed with every ruling. Soon, an insurgency known as the Mau Mau was formed in secret; an insurgency that quickly spread throughout the entire country that radiated from Nairobi.

According to Elkins and Anderson, the Mau Mau were mostly comprised of adults who fought for the continuity of their culture for their children.<sup>59</sup> They believed that the British were trying to eliminate their culture, so the Mau Mau were self-perceived martyrs for their own children.<sup>60</sup> With this belief in mind, it makes sense that they would only allow their children to be put in harm's way in extenuating circumstances. That said, children were used to assist the Mau Mau efforts, even if they were not used as primary combatants. Elkins documents that the children were used in peripheral roles. In most cases, they were used to collect and relay information. They would play and act as children, while observing opposition activities. Once they had an opportunity, they would relay all information to hidden Mau Mau forces.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, children were used to transport sensitive materials and supplies, including guns and ammunition, because the British did not believe that children would be carrying any such objects.<sup>62</sup> Jezequel also adds that children had been recruited as early as age eight. These children were forced to take the

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<sup>59</sup> Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), 114; David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London: Phoenix, 2006), 19.

<sup>60</sup> Daniel Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War, and Decolonization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 17–18.

<sup>61</sup> Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 74.

<sup>62</sup> Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 74.

Mau Mau oath all other members had. She notes that children were used for domestic work in the camps, scouting, information gathering, and on rare occasion, direct combat.<sup>63</sup>

The Mozambican Civil War presents a much different image. Mozambique achieved independence in 1975, and it only saw two years of peace before beginning its protracted armed conflict. Renamo was born from opposition leaders' imprisonment soon after Frelimo, itself a legitimized insurgent movement, took power from Portugal. Due to their political opposition to Frelimo, André Matadi Matsangaíssa and Afonso Marceta Dhlakama were sent to re-education camps. They quickly escaped to Rhodesia, where they obtained Rhodesian support to attack Frelimo. Renamo and Rhodesia were more than happy to attack the Frelimo socialist-communist government. The Civil War lasted just longer than 15 years, from May 1977 to October 1992.<sup>64</sup> One especially egregious mark of this particular conflict is that both sides of the conflict used child soldiers, albeit to varying degrees. This use is in stark contrast to the Mozambican War of Independence, in which it seems that no child soldiers were used.<sup>65</sup>

Renamo was the more ubiquitous user of child soldiers. The organization was notorious for its forceful recruitment of child soldiers. Estimates from 1988 by Frelimo put Renamo's child soldier contingent in the thousands, based on recaptured villages, which contained children trained to fight in "a war older than they are."<sup>66</sup> A 1994 Assessment

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<sup>63</sup> Jean-Herve Jezequel, "Child Soldiers in Africa: A Singular Phenomenon?" MSF-Crash, January 1, 2006, <https://www.msf-crash.org/en/publications/war-and-humanitarianism/child-soldiers-africa-singular-phenomenon>. In an extensive review of sources on the Mau Mau rebellion, this reference was the only one the author found of children being used as primary combatants.

<sup>64</sup> Francis Kakhuta-Banda, "The Use of Child Soldiers in African Armed Conflicts: A Comparative Study of Angola and Mozambique" (master's thesis, University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg, 2014), 31–32.

<sup>65</sup> Extensive research failed to provide any evidence that child soldiers were used as primary combatants in the Mozambican War for Independence. Comparisons between the Mozambican War of Independence and the Mozambican Civil War was not conducted due to a lack of information on the former conflict.

<sup>66</sup> Margaret Knox, "Rebels Reportedly Using Children as Soldiers," *Washington Post*, January 5, 1988, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/01/05/rebels-reportedly-using-children-as-soldiers/070409aa-9f25-4673-9b86-5e59c843d193/?utm\\_term=.23e90680fa88](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/01/05/rebels-reportedly-using-children-as-soldiers/070409aa-9f25-4673-9b86-5e59c843d193/?utm_term=.23e90680fa88).

argues that Renamo maintained at least 2,300 children who were trained as combatants.<sup>67</sup> Renamo forcefully recruited children from ages 8–14, and they used boys as fighters and girls as “wives, servants, and cargo carriers.”<sup>68</sup> Especially early in the conflict, Renamo would capture children separated from family during attacks or abducted as part of an entire community capture.<sup>69</sup> Wray notes that children would be offered voluntary recruitment, and if denied, they would simply capture the child. They would immediately start conditioning the children for war with loud noises, killings of livestock, and progressing to killing prisoners to get children used to violence. The children would, however “never [stop] thinking of themselves as captives or victims.”<sup>70</sup> Kakhuta-Banda points out that Renamo would recruit children under the guise of providing them scholarships or employment in South Africa.<sup>71</sup> Regardless of the methods used, Renamo acquired a significant portion of its fighters from child recruitment.

Frelimo may appear to be less egregious in comparison to Renamo, but they were also prominent recruiters and users of child soldiers. Children were recruited through the guises of scholarships or special national programs into military training. They also were expected to join local militia if they were not recruited directly for Frelimo, because they “were supposed to defend and secure their communities and villages against attack.”<sup>72</sup> Frelimo’s forceful conscription and clear indication that children were responsible for protecting their own villages marks a mindset that the government expected children to

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<sup>67</sup> “Renamo’s 2,300 Child Soldiers,” *Guardian (London)*, May 19, 1994, <https://www-lexisnexis-com.libproxy.nps.edu/lnacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=3TDH-OSM0-006X-B46S&csi=138620&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true>.

<sup>68</sup> Neil Boothby, “Mozambique Life Outcome Study: How Did Child Soldiers Turn Out as Adults,” in *Child Soldiers: From Recruitment to Reintegration*, eds. Alpaslan Özerdem and Sukanya Podder (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 231–245, [https://link-springer-com.libproxy.nps.edu/content/pdf/10.1057%2F9780230342927\\_13.pdf](https://link-springer-com.libproxy.nps.edu/content/pdf/10.1057%2F9780230342927_13.pdf).

<sup>69</sup> Boothby, “Mozambique Life Outcome Study: How Did Child Soldiers Turn Out as Adults,” 232.

<sup>70</sup> Herbert Wray, “The Children of War,” *U.S. News & World Report* 137, no. 22 (December 20, 2004): 44–51, <http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=15324177&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

<sup>71</sup> Kakhuta-Banda, “The Use of Child Soldiers in African Armed Conflict,” 37.

<sup>72</sup> Kakhuta-Banda, “The Use of Child Soldiers in African Armed Conflict,” 37.

fight just as much as any adult. This actuality is reaffirmed by the fact that at the end of the conflict, nearly one out of every four demobilized fighters were children.<sup>73</sup>

This chapter seeks to shed light on this puzzle of why using child soldiers spiked after independence. Using these cases, the author assesses the relevance of three factors, as well as the relative explanatory strength of each during this historical period, and not why one group used child soldiers and the other did not.

## **B. RELATIVE POWER AND DURATION OF THE MILITARY CONFLICT**

One common difference between pre-independence liberation wars and post-independence civil conflicts is the balance of power between warring groups. In the Mau Mau Rebellion, a militarily weak insurgency attempts to take down the ruling British colonial administration backed by one of the most powerful militaries in the world. The Mozambican Civil War saw a militarily powerful insurgency wage war against a standing government power. Despite their vastly different political strength, both Frelimo and Renamo were very close in fighting power. The relative power balance between insurgents and state forces is potentially relevant to child soldier usage because a close balance between the two sides is more likely to lead to a more intense, drawn-out conflict. Such a conflict leads to secondhand effects, such as increased refugee counts and poverty, along with a decreasing supply of military-aged males. These factors coalesce into an increased supply of potential child fighters as instability rises and available adult fighter numbers decrease. Therefore, conflicts that have multiple parties of roughly equivalent power may lead to increased use of child soldiers over time, which can be observed in each of the case studies. In the Mau Mau Rebellion, the actual military conflict was short-lived, and did not cause any secondary shifts in demographics or values, nor did it disincentivize any use of child soldiers. In the protracted Mozambique Civil War, forces ground against each other for fifteen years immediately after a 10-year conflict. The secondary demographic shifts towards a younger population led to an increased incentive to use child soldiers over the course of the war.

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<sup>73</sup> Aird, Efraime, and Errante, *Mozambique*, 3.

## 1. The Mau Mau Rebellion

The Mau Mau Rebellion was a conflict rooted in the repression of the Kikuyu people by the British. The Mau Mau knew that they were militarily outmatched from the beginning of their fight. The best evidence to support this fact lies within the secrecy by which the Mau Mau oath was administered. The Mau Mau swore each individual member to secrecy about the Mau Mau, any fellow members of the group, and the existence of an oath at all.<sup>74</sup> The Mau Mau oath was organized and administered in secret for three years, from 1947 to 1950, before it became too big to hide, with hundreds of thousands taking the oath.<sup>75</sup> They were able to hide for this long despite tricking Kikuyu into coming to ceremonies and forcing them to take the oath, because the oath was perceived as binding regardless of whether it was coerced, even on threat of torture and death.<sup>76</sup> Even after the movement was discovered, the Mau Mau did not take their first violent action until another two years from then, in 1952, when they assassinated the Paramount Chief, Waruhiu.<sup>77</sup> The Mau Mau clearly knew that they had to build up their forces well before they became hostile, because the British were clearly set to destroy them if they militarized too early.

These fears proved to be well-placed, because the British came down hard on the Mau Mau forces. Less than a week after Emergency was declared by the British administration in 1952, the British forces executed Operation Jock Scott, which resulted in 106 moderate political leaders, including Jomo Kenyatta, being arrested. Granted, the British were unable to keep the operation a secret, so the militant leaders who learned about the raid were able to flee in advance of it.<sup>78</sup> In addition to a large ground force, the British were able to use close air support to fight against the Mau Mau forces, although only very targeted uses were allowed by the British government. The British used 20 lb. bombs to

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<sup>74</sup> Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 26.

<sup>75</sup> Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 25–28.

<sup>76</sup> Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 27.

<sup>77</sup> Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 55–57.

<sup>78</sup> Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 64–65.

attack Mau Mau forces, especially those clustered in large gangs.<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile, the Mau Mau were attacking with machetes, improvised firearms, and whatever weapons they captured during their raids.<sup>80</sup> A tremendous imbalance existed in the military power of the Mau Mau and the British Forces. The British military's tremendous relative strength in comparison to the Mau Mau would hinder any incentive for the Mau Mau to use child soldiers, as they needed any soldiers to be as strong as possible so they could survive the conflict with the enemy. Additionally, the quick and powerful force with which the British attacked and dismantled the Mau Mau removed any incentive for children to be used as primary combatants. The asymmetry of military power was so in favor of the British Forces that it was not in the Mau Mau's interest to use the inferior fighting capabilities of children. It would do no good to continue defending their culture against the British if the children were dead because they were pitted against the British war machine.

If it was not enough that the British significantly outmatched the Mau Mau, the insurgent group had to fight against co-ethnics who violently opposed the Mau Mau's methods of attempting to force change. Kikuyus loyal to the colonial government began to coalesce around the British sponsored Home Guard, with whom they conducted military operations, both offensive and defensive, alongside the British.<sup>81</sup> They would round up suspected Mau Mau forces and brutally interrogate them in a process known as "screening."<sup>82</sup> After major Mau Mau attacks, the Loyalists brutally retaliated; the most prominent example of this retaliation was after the attack on Lari village on 26 March 1953. Six hundred Mau Mau forces attacked the unguarded village with weapons, barred doors, and burning houses, and slaughtered primarily women and children before fleeing into the forests. Each of the targeted homes belonged to prominent Loyalists; the casualties of the attack included 120 people and 15 homes.<sup>83</sup> The Loyalists responded with an echo

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<sup>79</sup> Stephen Chappell, "Airpower in the Mau Mau Conflict: The Government's Chief Weapon," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22, no. 3 (July 11, 2011): 495–525, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2011.581499>.

<sup>80</sup> Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 73.

<sup>81</sup> Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau*, 75, 82.

<sup>82</sup> Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 67.

<sup>83</sup> Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 120–126.

massacre and attacked anyone who was even suspected of assisting the Mau Mau. Their definition of this massacre was unfortunately loose, and anyone without strong loyalist ties was suspect. This echo massacre ended with 300 killed.<sup>84</sup> The Mau Mau fought not only a rebellion against the British, but they also fought a civil war against their own co-ethnics. Between the British military dominance and a lack of participation from a large section of the Mau Mau's primary recruiting grounds, the Mau Mau did not stand a chance, militarily. They were, in fact, militarily crushed fairly quickly by the combined British and Loyalist powers. The British declared Emergency on 14 October 1952.<sup>85</sup> In April 1954, the British conducted Operation Anvil, which was a mass roundup of 20,000 Kikuyu to be taken to detention camps for screenings.<sup>86</sup> The Mau Mau's military effectiveness was significantly diminished from this point forward. On 21 October 1956, however, a group of Mau Mau defectors led British forces to capture the Mau Mau's general and symbolic leader, Dedan Kimathi.<sup>87</sup> With his capture, trial, and unceremonious execution, the Mau Mau military campaign came to a screeching halt, almost exactly four years from the start of the war.<sup>88</sup>

The Mau Mau Rebellion had a prolonged political build up and a relatively brief military conflict. The duration of the deadly conflict and the massive imbalance of power between the Mau Mau and their opponents provided no opportunity or incentive for the Mau Mau actually to use children as their primary combatants. As noted, they were used to support the fighters in supply movement and intelligence, but they were not put directly at risk.

The Mau Mau Rebellion was intimate and horrific, but the demographics shift was not enough to shift the population to the point where using child soldiers would be prominent and expected. At the official end of the Mau Mau Rebellion, the British released statistics of the insurgent casualties. According to them, 11,503 Mau Mau were killed,

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<sup>84</sup> Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 129–130.

<sup>85</sup> Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 62.

<sup>86</sup> Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 200–204.

<sup>87</sup> Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 288; Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 54.

<sup>88</sup> Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau*, 117–118.

5,299 were either captured or surrendered, and 26,625 Mau Mau were arrested.<sup>89</sup> These numbers were no doubt significant, but they did not put much more than a dent in the population of approximately six million Kenyans.<sup>90</sup> Thus, it would not be expected that the Mau Mau would have needed to resort to using child soldiers to meet their military goals.

## 2. Mozambique Civil War

Mozambique's Civil War was an unfortunate, almost immediate, follow up to a decade-long struggle for independence from Portugal. Frelimo began as an insurgent force, and then managed to expel Portugal from Mozambique. It quickly took control of the government.<sup>91</sup> It managed to govern for two years before Renamo took advantage of civil unrest and interfering neighbors to present a military threat to Frelimo. Frelimo was able to leverage a degree of its own experience in managing an insurgency to fight Renamo, but it was not effective enough to fight off the opposing force completely.

Frelimo maintained, at least on paper, significant power relative to Renamo throughout most of the war. Berman reports that Frelimo started the Civil War with a fighting force of 10,000, which quickly doubled by the end of 1977 to 20,000.<sup>92</sup> Frelimo instituted conscription, and by 1990, Frelimo's fighting force had grown to 72,000, broken out into 60,000 regulars, 1,000 navy, 6,000 air force, and 5,000 border guards. However, some estimates assess over double that number, at 145,000 for the total number of fighters.<sup>93</sup> These numbers did not include the local militias that Frelimo armed and told to protect themselves.<sup>94</sup> In addition, Frelimo was provided heavy weaponry by Soviet and

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<sup>89</sup> F. D. Corfield, *Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of Mau Mau: Pres. to Parliament ... May 1960* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1960), 96.

<sup>90</sup> "Kenya Population Pyramid," World Life Expectancy, accessed September 3, 2018, <http://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/kenya-population-pyramid>.

<sup>91</sup> William G. Thom, *African Wars: A Defense Intelligence Perspective* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011), 106.

<sup>92</sup> Eric Berman, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Mozambique* (New York: United Nations, 1996), 44.

<sup>93</sup> Berman, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Mozambique*, 46.

<sup>94</sup> Berman, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Mozambique*, 51.



Chinese allies, including artillery, armored vehicles, surface- to-air missiles, anti-aircraft guns, attack helicopters, MiG-17 and -21 jets, and a variety of other aircraft. This weaponry was, however, in poor condition, and maintenance was non-existent, so this advanced weaponry was of limited usefulness.<sup>95</sup> Renamo, on the other hand, had a minimal force. They had no more than a couple dozen fighters ready immediately before the war began, but with Rhodesian and South African sponsorship, that force quickly grew from 900 fighters in 1977 to 4,500 trained fighters in 1979.<sup>96</sup> By 1990, Renamo maintained a force of 20,000 fighters.<sup>97</sup> Renamo had no navy, air force, or any vehicles of military relevance. Most of its heavy weaponry was captured, but due to a lack of roads and no access to oil, petroleum, and lubricants, they made for excellent propaganda and little else.<sup>98</sup> Additionally, each side had access to significant amounts small arms and weaponry, to be discussed in later sections.

Renamo used children from the very beginning of the conflict, but they shifted to using more and more children over the course of the war. Some would still voluntarily join Renamo, especially after offenses by Frelimo, but most were forcibly conscripted.<sup>99</sup> Both Renamo and Frelimo faced mass desertions by their troops, so they constantly had to refresh their ranks.<sup>100</sup> Renamo was, at first, able to provide economic incentives for adult troops, but over time, external financial support for these incentives waned, so Renamo began to rely ever more on forcible recruitment, especially that of children.<sup>101</sup> Frelimo had the advantage of the law on their side. Anyone over the age of 20 was eligible for

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<sup>95</sup> Berman, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Mozambique*, 49–50.

<sup>96</sup> Berman, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Mozambique*, 46–47.

<sup>97</sup> Berman, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Mozambique*, 48.

<sup>98</sup> Berman, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Mozambique*, 52.

<sup>99</sup> Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers*, 27.

<sup>100</sup> Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers*, 26.

<sup>101</sup> Scott Gates, “Why Do Children Fight? Motivations and the Mode of Recruitment,” in *Child Soldiers: From Recruitment to Reintegration*, by Alpaslan Özerdem and Sukanya Podder (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 37.

conscription into the Mozambican Armed Forces, so Frelimo was able to pull people into their forces without forcibly conscripting children over time.<sup>102</sup>

In this sense, the balanced nature of the Mozambique conflict, as was more frequently the case in post-independence conflicts than in liberation movements, laid the groundwork for groups involved in protracted conflict to see child soldiers as a necessary addition to their fighting forces. The two case studies illustrate this distinction in the nature of the conflicts before and after independence. The Mau Mau conflict had a lengthy political build up, but military activity only lasted for four years. Meanwhile, the Mozambican Civil War began soon after a 10-year war for independence, which means that the country already had internalized many of the effects of a protracted conflict. Additionally, the belligerents in the Mozambican Civil War were much closer in relative power than were the Mau Mau and the British and Loyalist forces in Kenya's Rebellion. This nearness in relative power and the resulting protracted nature of the conflict help explain the need for the increased use of child soldiers in Mozambique.

Mozambique's population was shaped by 10 years of conflict at the start of the civil war, in addition to other extraneous factors that only became more pronounced over the duration of the conflict. The instability of the country had led to significant portions of the population being displaced, as either security or economic migrants. Adult men, especially those in the south, would migrate to South Africa in search of job opportunities and leave behind villages with gaps in the typical military-aged male demographic.<sup>103</sup> HIV and AIDS also hit this same age group particularly hard, which had approximately one million HIV positive people between the ages of 15–49.<sup>104</sup> Aird, Efraime, and Errante also explain that the brutality of the war left 1.5 million people as refugees and an additional three million people as internally displaced.<sup>105</sup> Finally, the civil war claimed the lives of

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<sup>102</sup> Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers*, 26.

<sup>103</sup> Karl Maier, *Conspicuous Destruction: War, Famine and the Reform Process in Mozambique: An Africa Watch Report* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1992), 96; "Children in Combat," *Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Project* 8, no. 1 (G) (January 1996): 1–26, <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/general961.pdf>,

<sup>104</sup> Aird, Efraime, and Errante, *Mozambique*, 4.

<sup>105</sup> Aird, Efraime, and Errante, *Mozambique*, 3.

approximately one million civilians, just over 7% of the country's population of approximately 13 million in 1990.<sup>106</sup> Of the million killed, approximately 600,000 were children.<sup>107</sup> The civil war effectively distorted and displaced Mozambique's population.

Both Renamo and Frelimo seemed to take advantage of these unfortunate demographics to benefit their own means. Both parties exploited provinces with the highest concentration of HIV and AIDS for recruitment and base placement, which led to a larger concentration of troops in these areas.<sup>108</sup> In regards to children, the areas in which Renamo placed the highest focus on recruiting children were in the same places where labor migration had depleted the adult male population. Thus, they used the supply of children as a decision factor in their recruitment of children.<sup>109</sup> Additionally, as the conflict continued, Renamo began recruiting higher numbers of even younger children, often 10-years-old or younger.<sup>110</sup> Both Frelimo and Renamo exploited and exacerbated existing demographic issues in their pursuit of ultimate victory.

The demographic argument cannot be simply reduced to a simple argument of poverty leading to desperation. As stated previously, the lack of job opportunities led to migration, which left an exploitable gap for belligerents, as well as increased refugees, which are also easily exploitable. However, a multi-country study, which included Mozambique noted, "substantial poverty rates say little about whether a country is likely to have child soldier participants in armed conflicts."<sup>111</sup> A simple shift toward a poorer population may exacerbate the use of child soldiers in situations where it already exists, but the evidence does not indicate that it will cause the use of child soldiers. Nonetheless,

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<sup>106</sup> "Mozambique Population Pyramid," World Life Expectancy, accessed September 7, 2018, <http://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/mozambique-population-pyramid>.

<sup>107</sup> Aird, Efraime, and Errante, *Mozambique*, 2.

<sup>108</sup> Aird, Efraime, and Errante, *Mozambique*, 4; Singer, *Children at War*, 112.

<sup>109</sup> Maier, *Conspicuous Destruction*, 13–14.

<sup>110</sup> Maier, *Conspicuous Destruction*, 96–97.

<sup>111</sup> Anne-Lynn Dudenhoffer, "Understanding the Recruitment of Child Soldiers in Africa," ACCORD, August 16, 2016, <http://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/understanding-recruitment-child-soldiers-africa/>.

it is critical to remember second-tier effects of extreme poverty that can lead to using child soldiers.

The shift towards a relative balance of military power led to a protracted conflict, which led to a younger, poorer population. In the Mau Mau Rebellion, the military fighting was brief, while in the more militarily balanced Mozambican Civil War, fighting dragged on for years. This protracted conflict led to large order demographic shifts. Both Renamo and Frelimo exploited these shifts caused by both the Mozambican war for independence and civil wars to fill their ranks with child soldiers. Kenya did not face these same demographic pressures. It did not have a significantly depleted population of military age males, significant refugee populations, or epidemics of lethal illness. Therefore, it seems likely that demographic shifts toward younger and poorer populations play a large role in the use of child soldiers.

### **C. SMALL ARMS AVAILABILITY AND EFFICIENCY**

The small arms available to insurgent forces in Sub-Saharan Africa increased over time, especially after Cold War superpowers became involved in local politics. The efficiency of the weapons increased over time as well. If this hypothesis were correct, an increase in the availability and efficiency of small arms tied to a rapid increase in using child soldiers would be expected. Contrariwise, a conflict with a smaller amount of available weaponry would be expected to have fewer child soldiers. According to the research presented in this section, this hypothesis seems to hold true, as the mostly machete and improvised weapon-wielding Mau Mau used few child soldiers, while the advanced weaponry-wielding Mozambican belligerents used significant numbers of child soldiers.

Small arms make children more capable fighters. It is difficult for children to fight with traditional weaponry, such as machetes, slings, or melee weapons, because they lack the physical strength required to use them effectively. However, weapons, such as the AK-47 are so simple to use that a child can learn how to use one in approximately half an hour.<sup>112</sup> They also are small, light, durable, and allow children to be lethal from a distance.

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<sup>112</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 46.

While the AK-47 is the most common firearm, other weapons, such as an rocket propelled grenade (RPG) launcher, can give children the capability of leveling small villages almost singlehandedly.<sup>113</sup> Children with more efficient light weaponry are capable of being devastating fighting forces.

Few records definitively describe the weapons with which the Mau Mau fought. Anderson reports that the Mau Mau primarily used either machetes or the victim's own firearms.<sup>114</sup> The Imperial Wars Museum notes that the Mau Mau "possessed few modern weapons, but manufactured many of their own."<sup>115</sup> It indicates the Mau Mau did not have access to the same level of firearms as other insurgencies, perhaps because of strict British control. Additionally, the museum indicates that the Mau Mau's homemade weapons were dangerous to the user if used in combat at worst, and ineffective, at best. The weapons were primarily used to bolster the morale of the carriers and intimidate the population.<sup>116</sup> Chappell also notes the Mau Mau's lack of arming capability, especially noting that they primarily used homemade weapons.<sup>117</sup> He does note, however, that the Mau Mau attempted to raid British supply dumps and exploit the Nairobi supply networks to obtain arms and ammunition, but he is non-specific as to their success levels or types of acquisitions.<sup>118</sup> It is clear that the Mau Mau did not have access to the same level of small arms as the British, or even as much as a comparative insurgency would have. This lack of access would disincentivize the use of child soldiers in the Kenyan Rebellion, because such soldiers would not have been able to fight effectively.

The Mozambican Civil War saw a very different picture in the realm of arms because it took place at a time during which foreign powers including the Soviet Union, United States, South Africa, Israel, and Cuba, etc., were actively supplying weapons to

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<sup>113</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 47.

<sup>114</sup> Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 73.

<sup>115</sup> "Mau Mau Improvised Firearm," Imperial War Museums, accessed September 3, 2018, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30032522>.

<sup>116</sup> Imperial War Museums, "Mau Mau Improvised Firearm."

<sup>117</sup> Chappell, "Airpower in the Mau Mau Conflict," 501.

<sup>118</sup> Chappell, "Airpower in the Mau Mau Conflict," 500.

African governments and insurgents. Both Renamo and Frelimo had access to massive caches of weapons that, as noted previously, were more conducive to child soldiering. Both the Soviet Union and China provided weapons to Frelimo.<sup>119</sup> The Rhodesian and South African governments provided weapons and training to Renamo.<sup>120</sup> Both sides of the conflict had a tremendous proportion of weaponry to their population. Singer notes that immediately at the end of the Mozambican Civil War, approximately six million AK-47s, were used by the 16 million Mozambican citizens.<sup>121</sup> This availability of weapons for Renamo was facilitated by the cheap costs of AK-47s, which could be purchased in South Africa for approximately \$12 apiece.<sup>122</sup> Frelimo's Soviet and Chinese patrons were also free-handed in their distribution of weapons. Aird, Efraime, and Errante estimate an even higher number of small arms were distributed among the population. They indicate that in fact 10 million small arms were dispersed throughout the population seven years after the conflict ended in 1999.<sup>123</sup> A United Nations Report also notes that that landmines, explosives, and hand grenades were common sights in the Frelimo and Renamo armories. The same United Nations report indicates that while heavy weaponry was only provided sparingly by Soviet allies, "[Frelimo's] requests for small arms were largely met."<sup>124</sup> Bulgaria, North Korea, and East Germany provided small arms to Frelimo in smaller numbers. The United Nations report estimates that the Mozambican government itself "distributed 1.5 million assault rifles to the civilian population for protection during the civil war."<sup>125</sup> Renamo managed to capture weapons from their opponents, but largely their weapon caches came from captured Soviet equipment from South African activities in

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<sup>119</sup> Aird, Efraime, and Errante, *Mozambique*, 5.

<sup>120</sup> Thom, *African Wars: A Defense Intelligence Perspective*, 105.

<sup>121</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 48.

<sup>122</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 48.

<sup>123</sup> Aird, Efraime, and Errante, *Mozambique*, 5.

<sup>124</sup> Berman, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Mozambique*, 88, 50.

<sup>125</sup> Berman, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Mozambique*, 51.

Angola and Namibia.<sup>126</sup> In summary, both Renamo and Frelimo were fully equipped to conduct war for long durations of time due to their sponsorship by outside parties.

The ease of weapon accessibility that each belligerent in the Mozambican Civil War enjoyed likely made it significantly easier to equip children to be effective fighters. These weapons were light, efficient, safe for the user, and easily available. This availability stands in stark contrast to the Mau Mau Rebellion, during which the Mau Mau only had access to traditional-bladed weapons, homemade firearms, and captured enemy firearms. Logically, the Mau Mau would not have wanted to equip children with the rare weapons that the children could use effectively, which thus limited the prevalence of children as primary combatants. The Mozambican belligerents, however, would have been incentivized to put weapons in the hands of children, because the small arms were so freely available that if the children were hurt, the effort would not have been wasteful. Thus, it seems likely that the availability of efficient weaponry, as well as the easy proliferation of that weaponry, would lead to an increased use of child soldiers. It is possible that Mozambican fighters, especially Renamo, sought weapons because they wanted to use child soldiers, but it seems unlikely because Frelimo also pursued these weapons, despite a proclaimed distaste for the use of child soldiers.

#### **D. CHANGING VALUES IN CHILD SOLDIER USAGE**

As discussed in Chapter I, family norms are likely to shift towards the permissiveness of child soldier usage after colonial powers left Sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically, increasing desperation and instability would lead families to become more permissive of children fighting. As shown in this section, family norms appear of little importance in understanding changes in child soldier usage during the independence era, because militant groups coerced children into fighting, which left no room for moral choice to play any role.

In Kenya, the strong belief among the Kikuyu rebels that they were fighting for their future generations is telling of the prevailing norms of child soldiering at the time.

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<sup>126</sup> Berman, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Mozambique*, 52.

The British administration had suppressed the Kikuyu people and forced them to either work on undesirable land or be in the service of a British settler on the fertile land they had traditionally owned.<sup>127</sup> When the Kikuyu people tried to pursue legal means to seek the return of their land, the land commission provided the insulting response of only returning the least fertile and most inaccessible land to the Kikuyu.<sup>128</sup> The Christian missionaries encouraged local councils to end clitoridectomy, a practice they considered horrific.<sup>129</sup> The Kikuyu were equally horrified that the British were trying to end their way of life.<sup>130</sup> In fact, the Kikuyu were doubly threatened because each of these issues were seen as attempting to end family building. Men were not allowed to marry unless they had land, since land production was used to pay a dowry. Additionally, a Kikuyu was not considered an adult until he owned land.<sup>131</sup> Similarly, women who were not “circumcised” were not allowed to marry.<sup>132</sup> Branch notes that the rebels viewed themselves as martyrs for their children.<sup>133</sup> Family values drove the Mau Mau to fight for their children and their way of life. This martyrdom for their own children would lead to an understandable hesitation to put their children in harm’s way. From the eyes of an intended martyr, what good is a sacrifice if the intended beneficiary is dead or wounded?

While the Mau Mau were fighting for the continued existence of their culture, they were not a militarized society. Mozambique, coming out of a successful 10-year war with Portugal for its own independence, was a different story. Mozambicans were already used to conflict by the time the civil war started. Frelimo had conducted war against Portugal, and quickly inherited a broken infrastructure with unfriendly surrounding neighbors, including Rhodesia and South Africa. White settlers committed economic sabotage on the

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<sup>127</sup> Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 21.

<sup>128</sup> Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 22.

<sup>129</sup> Clitoridectomy is also referred to as “female genital mutilation” and “female circumcision.” Political discourse has charged each of these terms with implied meaning. To remain apolitical, the author has used the medical terminology in this thesis and only uses the word, “circumcision” as a direct quote.

<sup>130</sup> Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 19.

<sup>131</sup> Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 14.

<sup>132</sup> Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 19.

<sup>133</sup> Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau*, 17–18.



way out of the country. Additionally, social trust was harmed by Frelimo's use of brutal re-education camps.<sup>134</sup> These combined factors would likely have led to militarization, distrust, and widespread poverty induced desperation, which would have likely lead to child soldier usage.

Children's personal values were also of importance in the Civil War. Children did not seem to volunteer much to participate in the Mozambican conflict. Exceptions are given, of course, as noted by Singer in one of his interviews with a former child soldier. The fighter notes that he fought because it was the only skill set he had. He started fighting for Frelimo, defected to Renamo, and then returned to Frelimo, indicating that he did not care on which side of the war he fought. He said that he simply wanted to be able to survive and make money.<sup>135</sup> Aird, Efraime, and Errante note that socio-economic forces were the primary reasons children volunteered. Children joined Renamo after becoming discouraged about their potential opportunities for work.<sup>136</sup> Cohn and Goodwin-Gil note that child soldiers were able to eat; fighting was simply a means of survival.<sup>137</sup> This fighting increased toward the end of the war, as about 50% of Mozambique's schools were destroyed and the children were thus deprived of education opportunities.<sup>138</sup> Additionally, some children fought because they felt wronged by Frelimo or Renamo.<sup>139</sup> Finally, some children fought for Renamo because South African intelligence agents offered them "substantial payments."<sup>140</sup> Obviously, some children were willing to fight. This willingness provides mixed support for the hypothesis that family values being overwhelmed by desperation can lead to an increase in the use of child soldiers. On the one hand, children's willingness to fight can explain the increase in the supply of volunteer fighters, but if a determining factor, an approximately equal representation of children in

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<sup>134</sup> Maier, *Conspicuous Destruction*, 18–19.

<sup>135</sup> Aird, Efraime, and Errante, *Mozambique*, 5–6.

<sup>136</sup> Aird, Efraime, and Errante, *Mozambique*, 3.

<sup>137</sup> Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers*, 33.

<sup>138</sup> Aird, Efraime, and Errante, *Mozambique*, 3.

<sup>139</sup> Aird, Efraime, and Errante, *Mozambique*, 3–4.

<sup>140</sup> Maier, *Conspicuous Destruction*, 98.

both Frelimo and Renamo is then to be expected. If anything, a tendency to favor of Frelimo would be expected, as they would likely be the faction that could provide the most stability.

Overwhelming evidence, however, seems to indicate that choices were not a factor in children's participation in conflicts. For example, the captured children fighting for Renamo did not feel allegiance to the insurgent group, and children would simply flee during battles because Renamo had questionable tactics for indoctrinating the children. Renamo were excellent at getting the child used to violence, but they had no method for fully indoctrinating their newly acquired fighters, because, in large part, Renamo had no other ideology beyond ousting Frelimo.<sup>141</sup> Knox reports that Renamo attempted to mitigate this lack of ideological currency by instilling fear in the children, in one case killing five children, and then mutilating seven other children's ears with knives.<sup>142</sup> Other reports indicate that Renamo would maintain a drug-induced haze in the children to keep them dependent on the insurgent group. Between drug dependency and brutal indoctrination, children would eventually come to depend on their captors.<sup>143</sup> All this indoctrination serves as reminder, however, that most children were viewed as prisoners and not as willing participants.

The expected effects of the end of colonialism seem to have occurred. During colonialism, the Mau Mau fought against the British administration because they were, among other things, a threat to their family values. After independence, instability rose in Mozambique, which led to increased desperation and incentives for the children to fight and for families to allow these children to fight. However, in Mozambique, Renamo forced children to fight. Children were prisoners to be held, indoctrinated, and then trained. Even Frelimo forced children to fight, although they did so in smaller numbers. Family values had no opportunity to take a role in the children's fighting. Thus, it seems reasonable to state that family values being outweighed by desperation is a poor explanation for the increased use of child soldiers.

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<sup>141</sup> Herbert, "The Children of War."

<sup>142</sup> Knox, "Rebels Reportedly Using Children as Soldiers."

<sup>143</sup> Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers*, 26–27.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Analysis of the Mau Mau Rebellion and the Mozambican Civil War presents some telling information concerning the use of child soldiers. First, the difference in the protraction of each conflict seems to have played a significant role in the increased use of child soldiers, especially when balanced by the relative power of each belligerent. Kenya's rebellion saw a lengthy political build-up, followed by a relatively brief military conflict, during which the insurgents were handily beaten by an overwhelmingly more powerful force. In contrast, the Mozambican Civil War was fought by two organizations of more equivalent military power (although Frelimo constantly maintained the upper hand) over the drawn out period of 15 years. During the former conflict, child soldiers were not used outside of logistical support, while the latter saw child soldiers being used significantly on each side of the conflict. However, it does not seem likely that the simple protraction of the conflict led to the use of child soldiers. Children were being exploited from the very beginning of the war, and they were exploited more as the war continued. It seems likely, then, that the protraction of the war is an enabling factor, rather than a direct causal factor. As the war draws on, it continues to shift the population toward the younger end of the spectrum, which leads to an increasing supply of children and a diminishing young- to middle-aged population that thus leads to an increased incentive to use children to fight on the front lines. This shift toward a generally younger population seems to have also played a major role in the use of child soldiers in Mozambique. Typical military-aged males were depleted by conflict, labor migration, and HIV and AIDS. Both Renamo and Frelimo exploited these areas of dwindling young adult population. Renamo in particular seemed to recruit ever more and ever younger children from areas in which the children were in greater supply than the adults. Kenya, on the other hand, did not face much of a demographic shift during the time of its conflict at all, and consequently, children were not used as primary combatants. Thus, demographics seems to play a moderate role in the use of child soldiers, as a great supply of children does lead to an increased incentive to use them in conflict.

While there is some evidence that exists that family values being overshadowed by desperation could explain the increased use of child soldiers, the evidence is not

particularly strong. The desperation of the post-Independence era led to the expected effect of having some children join the fight to have a degree of stability and continued survival. However, it seems to be more the exception than the rule in Mozambique. The huge majority of children did not choose to fight, nor did their families send them off to fight. Instead, militant groups captured the children treated them as prisoners, and then indoctrinated them into fighting for their captors. In other words, choice did not play a role in the case of most children, which consequently lends this hypothesis little credence.

The most prominent factor seems to be the increased efficiency and availability of small arms and weaponry. The Mau Mau fought with machetes, homemade (mostly prop) weapons, and whatever they could steal from their victims. The Mozambican forces fought with AK-47s, mines, and explosives. Man-portable, efficient weaponry poured into the South African country, as outside forces provided continual shipments of the arms as sponsorship of their favorite fighters. The availability of these weapons enabled Renamo's preferential use of child soldiers, because with these weapons, they could be more effective fighters than even the adults could. Frelimo was able to distribute the weaponry freely to the local militias (including children) so that they could fight their own battles. The increased availability and usefulness of these arms significantly contributed to the increased use of child soldiers in Mozambique.

### **III. INCREASE IN CHILD SOLDIERING AFTER THE COLD WAR: SIERRA LEONE'S CIVIL WAR**

This chapter tests two hypotheses that seek to explain the increased prevalence of child soldiers during the post-Cold War period. The first posits that the relative balance in power between the belligerent forces shifted without Cold War superpowers guiding their actions and supporting their causes. This shift led to a protracted conflict, which in turn, led to an increasing relative supply of potential child fighters, as opposed to adult fighters, as the population shifted to being younger and poorer. The second hypothesis questions the effect of increased availability and efficiency of small arms, such as mortars, rifles, and mines. As stated in Chapter I, value shifts are not discussed in this chapter. Unlike the end of colonial rule, there is little reason to expect that the end of the Cold War, as well as the subsequent withdrawal of support from superpowers, would have any effect on family values that had not already occurred after independence. The analysis considers which hypotheses help to explain the increased use of child soldiers after the end of the Cold War, and whether one hypothesis is more important than the others are.

In examining these hypotheses, the author compares the Cold War-era case of Mozambique to the post-Cold War case of the Sierra Leonean Civil War, which occurred from 1991–2002. The Sierra Leone case is a notorious example of a post-Cold War use of child soldiers. The RUF rebelled against the Sierra Leonean government with the patronage of neighboring Liberia's dominant warlord (and future president) Charles Taylor. Both sides of the conflict used child soldiers, although the RUF's use was far more prevalent than the government's. This comparison is useful for attempting to identify which factors are more important in explaining the increase use of children as primary combatants after the end of the Cold War.

#### **A. CHILD SOLDIER USAGE AFTER THE COLD WAR**

After the end of the Cold War, the use of child soldiers in Africa increased dramatically. While the Mozambican Civil War saw child soldiers being used, the Mozambicans did not use them nearly as prolifically as was seen in the post-Cold War era.

Mozambique saw approximately 2,300 total child soldiers being used, according to a 1994 assessment.<sup>144</sup> In the 1994 Rwandan genocide, children played a large role, with approximately 5,000 children taking part in the genocide and then joining the Rwandan Patriotic Army.<sup>145</sup> In 1986, approximately 3,000 children were serving in the Ugandan National Army.<sup>146</sup> Starting just after the end of the Cold War, Uganda's Joseph Kony quickly abducted approximately 14,000 children to fight in his revolutionist Lord's Resistance Army.<sup>147</sup> Over the course of the Sierra Leonean Civil War, approximately 5,000 children were serving as soldiers at any given point of the war, with a total estimate of at least 10,000 children participating over the course of the war.<sup>148</sup> This demonstrates a clear shift in scale from conflict during the Cold War.

Sierra Leone festered in instability for approximately 30 years before the Civil War began. The economy was already slipping before the Sierra Leonean Civil War began. In the lead up to the war, the country "faced rising debt, unemployment, and cost of living, as well as decreasing exports of its main staple, rice."<sup>149</sup> The country was, in name, a democratic republic rich in natural resources, including diamonds. However, corruption was rampant. Policies almost explicitly detrimental to surrounding provinces were put in place to support the Freetown elite. These policies were also disruptive to any good economic management. Eventually, the policies led to the revolt by the RUF.<sup>150</sup>

A former army corporal named Foday Sankoh founded the RUF. It was quickly backed by "dominant warlord [of the] Liberian Civil War (Charles Taylor)" who felt

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<sup>144</sup> "Renamo's 2,300 Child Soldiers."

<sup>145</sup> United Nations, "Child Soldiers Global Report 2001—Rwanda," Refworld, April 1, 2001, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/498805d326.html>.

<sup>146</sup> Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers*, 138–139.

<sup>147</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 95.

<sup>148</sup> David M. Rosen, *Armies of the Young: Child Soldiers in War and Terrorism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 61–62; Mustapha Dumbuya, "Sierra Leone Still Suffers Legacy of Child Soldiers," Inter Press Service, April 25, 2012, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/04/sierra-leone-still-suffers-legacy-of-child-soldiers/>.

<sup>149</sup> Jennifer M. Hazen, *What Rebels Want: Resources and Supply Networks in Wartime* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 73.

<sup>150</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 173.

wronged by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).<sup>151</sup> The ECOMOG had hindered Taylor's capture of Liberia's capital of Monrovia. Taylor saw his opportunity to wreak havoc on the ECOMOG by destabilizing Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone allowed the ECOMOG to use its airport to bomb territories controlled by Taylor.<sup>152</sup> Taylor started the RUF, an organization full of revolutionaries inspired and trained by Qaddafi in Benghazi that was determined to "do a Renamo" in Sierra Leone.<sup>153</sup> In this instance, Taylor refers to Renamo from the Mozambican Civil War, an organization stirred up and supported by South Africa and Rhodesia. Taylor planned to replicate this instigation in Sierra Leone. The RUF drew many who were discontent with the post-colonial patrimonialism and corruption. They specifically sought out a coalition of disenfranchised individuals, including "workers, intellectuals, members of the armed forces, students, traders, farmers, chiefs and elders" and anyone who might fight against the corrupt Sierra Leonean government.<sup>154</sup> In 1991, after gaining enough support, the RUF invaded Sierra Leone.

The Sierra Leonean government went through multiple transitions because of the unsatisfactory dealing with the RUF. President Joseph Momoh was already unpopular due to his failure to handle the economy well, but when the RUF invaded, dissatisfaction erupted in conjunction with the invasion in the form of a coup conducted by junior officers in 1992.<sup>155</sup> The senior officers in the army had become entangled within the corrupt Momoh regime, and they excluded junior officers, who ended up running the tactical aspects of the army.<sup>156</sup> Captain Valentine Strasser was placed in charge of the National Provincial Ruling Council (NPRC) until early 1996, at which point he was overthrown and replaced by Captain Jullius Maada Bio. Bio forced a multiparty election in February

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<sup>151</sup> Alfred B. Zack-Williams, "Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991–98," *Third World Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (January 1, 1999): 147, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436599913965>.

<sup>152</sup> Zack-Williams, "Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991–98," 147.

<sup>153</sup> Zack-Williams, "Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991–98," 147.

<sup>154</sup> Zack-Williams, "Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991–98," 147–148.

<sup>155</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 173.

<sup>156</sup> Zack-Williams, "Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991–98," 148–149.

1996, which led to the victory and presidency of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.<sup>157</sup> He ruled for just over a year until he was overthrown in yet another coup on 25 May 1997, at which point Major Johnny Paul Koroma took control of the country and formed the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). In February 1998, he was “removed” by the ECOMOG and the Sierra Leone Civil Defense Forces (CDF).<sup>158</sup> This unruly series of transitions was reflective of an impressive instability and lack of legitimacy for any ruling power, which led to the continued strength of the RUF.

Once the ECOMOG took more direct control of the situation in Sierra Leone, it faced multiple factions of new rebels, including former Sierra Leonean Army (SLA) and AFRC, as well as the RUF. In January 1999, these rebel groups led a coordinated attack against Freetown, during which it reoccupied Freetown, killed 5,000 people, and destroyed most of the eastern suburbs.<sup>159</sup> Despite the devastation, the ECOMOG pushed the rebels out of town and negotiated a ceasefire soon after, in May 1999, which led to the Lomé Peace Accord, which was signed on 7 July 1999. The Accord held for 10 months, with peace and stability. However, in May 2000, peacekeeping forces, sent by the UN to enforce the disarmament and the Accord, came under fire in Eastern Sierra Leone from RUF rebels. Foday Sankoh was captured during a counter attack and the Sierra Leonean government and the RUF signed a ceasefire on 10 November 2000.<sup>160</sup> The war was officially declared over, UN forces were able to “deploy peacefully in rebel-held areas,” and disarmament was completed.<sup>161</sup>

Both sides of the war used significant numbers of child soldiers in their forces. Rosen writes, “no reliable data exist on the numbers and ages of the child soldiers who fought in the civil war.”<sup>162</sup> However, he estimates that at any given moment,

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<sup>157</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 173.

<sup>158</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 173–174.

<sup>159</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 174.

<sup>160</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 174.

<sup>161</sup> “Sierra Leone Profile—Timeline,” BBC News, April 5, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14094419>.

<sup>162</sup> Rosen, *Armies of the Young*, 61–62.



approximately 5,000 child soldiers were used on both sides of the conflict, with RUF combatants typically ranging between the ages of eight and fourteen.<sup>163</sup> This number is nearly double that of children used over the course of the Mozambican Civil War. Some of these children were volunteers, but a majority was coerced into joining fighting forces. Zack-Williams writes that the RUF conducted raids on villages, while the NPRC government forced “street children” into the national army on a constant basis.<sup>164</sup> Children were additionally forced at gunpoint to join the fighting forces on both sides, and they were shot if they refused to take up arms.<sup>165</sup> The RUF also took significant numbers of female children into its ranks. These girls unfortunately were used primarily as sexual commodities, were subject to “rape, sexual abuse, and attack” and were often encouraged to trade sexual favors for security from these attacks.<sup>166</sup> Additionally, female captives were responsible for cooking, transporting equipment, and other forms of general labor when in the camps.<sup>167</sup> These female children constituted a large proportion of the fighters, and some estimates state “a majority” of rebel contingents. In the Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Resettlement Unit established before the 1997 coup, 1,000 fighters were screened. Approximately 600 of these fighters were women.<sup>168</sup> It is unclear how many of these girls and women were primary combatants.

A contingent of children wanted revenge against the RUF, and volunteered to fight in the Sierra Leonean Army or the various state sponsored militias.<sup>169</sup> Brett and Specht question how much of the revenge was actually personal, although assuredly many fell victim to the RUF’s antagonism. They identify that the revenge may be a “construct of society or of adults using the young person’s anger, despair, frustration, and abandonment

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<sup>163</sup> Rosen, *Armies of the Young*, 61–62.

<sup>164</sup> Zack-Williams, “Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991–98,” 154.

<sup>165</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 111.

<sup>166</sup> Zack-Williams, “Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991–98,” 154–155.

<sup>167</sup> Zack-Williams, “Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991–98,” 154.

<sup>168</sup> Zack-Williams, “Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991–98,” 154.

<sup>169</sup> Zack-Williams, “Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991–98,” 147–152.

to fuel a commitment to ‘revenge’ or ‘avenge’ in the name of the group or cause.”<sup>170</sup> Recruiters admitted they would lie to the youth by saying that a relative was killed, or that the rebels caused the relative’s death to motivate the children to fight for revenge.<sup>171</sup> In other situations, they would forcefully conscript people and then kill the youth if they refused to join the fighting forces.<sup>172</sup> While the RUF was more infamous and prolific in its use of child soldiers, the official government was no less exploitative.

Singer notes that the Sierra Leonean Civil War is usually the center of discourse regarding child soldiers because children played a prominent role in actively fighting. Children made up as much as 80% of all fighters. Many of these children were abducted, and their ages ranged from seven to fourteen.<sup>173</sup> The Sierra Leonean government, in all its forms, as well as associated militias, used child soldiers as well, which brought the total number of child soldiers to nearly 10,000, with children constituting more than half of the fighters in the conflict.<sup>174</sup> Most of these children were abducted, although some were volunteers.<sup>175</sup> This conflict’s focus on the use of children as primary combatants was distinctive and vicious.

While some children inevitably chose to fight, most of the child soldiers in Sierra Leone were considered victims. David Crane, an American lawyer who served as chief prosecutor during the trial of Liberia’s Charles Taylor, stated that he “chose not to prosecute child soldiers, as it is [his] opinion that no child under the age of 15 can commit a war crime... the child soldier and the victims of child soldiers all are victims, because they are usually placed in these situations in armed conflict... they cannot control.”<sup>176</sup> Dallaire writes that child soldiers were forced to use drugs, specifically heroin or cocaine,

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<sup>170</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 73.

<sup>171</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 73.

<sup>172</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 73.

<sup>173</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 15.

<sup>174</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 15–16.

<sup>175</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 73.

<sup>176</sup> Romeo Dallaire, *They Fight like Soldiers, They Die Like Children*, 1st ed. (New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2010), 126.

over the course of their captivity. Children were forced to consume heroin, cocaine, and marijuana mixed with gunpowder, a combination that dulled pain and sped children up for fighting. In post-conflict rehabilitation programs, it was found that “more than 80 per cent of the RUF fighters had used either heroin or cocaine.”<sup>177</sup> Singer likewise notes that children were forced to consume both amphetamines and tranquilizers, to “blunt fear and pain.”<sup>178</sup> Children were captured and then drugged to force them to fight. In separate interviews with two Sierra Leonean child soldiers conducted by Brett and Specht, the children talked about how trapped they were, with the first saying that anyone who tried to run away was killed outright. The second identified that even if any of the children managed to escape, opposing forces (specifically the ECOMOG) would quickly shoot the escapee because they feared it was a ploy by the RUF.<sup>179</sup> Thus, the majority of the children was coerced into joining the fighting forces and became prisoners who were indoctrinated to become fighters.

## **B. RELATIVE POWER AND DURATION OF THE MILITARY CONFLICT**

As previously explained, this hypothesis posits that the relative power between rebel forces and the government would become more imbalanced without superpower guidance and interference. The state should be able to suppress any rebellion more easily within its borders if the United States or Soviet Union is not supporting the rebel forces. Thus, it would be expected that the conflict would be shorter and less deadly. Without time and shifts toward a younger, poorer population to motivate the use of child soldiers, such use would decrease. This decrease, unfortunately, was not observed in Sierra Leone’s Civil War. Despite no great power interference, and a significantly stronger state than the rebel force, the use of child soldiers remained constant throughout the conflict. Large demographic shifts had no notable effect on using child soldiers. Therefore, it seems that the use of child soldiers was not tied to relative military power.

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<sup>177</sup> Dallaire, *They Fight like Soldiers, They Die Like Children*, 178.

<sup>178</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 107.

<sup>179</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 111.

As a reminder of how this hypothesis affected African conflicts in the post-independence era, a comparison between the Mau Mau Rebellion and the Mozambican Civil War seemed to indicate support. The Mau Mau Rebellion was wildly imbalanced in relative military power, which led to a long political build up to the conflict, a rapid military defeat, and minimal demographic shifts.<sup>180</sup> The belligerents in the Mozambican Civil War were relatively balanced in military power, compared to the Mau Mau Rebellion, which led to a protracted conflict, and tremendous demographic shifts.<sup>181</sup> The use of child soldiers was minimal in the former conflict, while increasingly prominent over the course of the latter. The increasing power balance seemed to lead to a protracted conflict, which led to an increasing supply of children relative to adults that incentivized increasing the use of child soldiers.

In terms of military strength, the Sierra Leonean army had a much stronger standing force than the RUF maintained. In addition to the official fighting forces, the Sierra Leonean government had local tribal militias fighting for them. Additionally, they maintained fighting forces from outside groups, such as Executive Outcomes, a South African private military firm. From 1995 to 1997, Sierra Leone paid Executive Outcomes \$1.8 million per month.<sup>182</sup> In return for that payment, they provided a propaganda program, efforts to identify the RUF headquarters, and return mines to the government, 500 advisors, and 3,000 mercenary soldiers.<sup>183</sup> Executive Outcomes also provided a single helicopter gunship, which, according to Singer, was more effective than most of the UN Peacekeeping Forces and the SLA combined.<sup>184</sup> Apparently, the RUF fighters would simply “break and run at the first sight of a helicopter gunship.”<sup>185</sup> In the two years that

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<sup>180</sup> Corfield, *Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of Mau Mau*, 96.

<sup>181</sup> Berman, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Mozambique*, 44–52.

<sup>182</sup> Alfred B. Zack-Williams, *When the State Fails Studies on Intervention in the Sierra Leone Civil War* (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 24.

<sup>183</sup> Gberie Lansana, *A Dirty War in West Africa the RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone* (London: C. Hurst, 2004), 93; Ibrahim Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror: The Sierra Leone Civil War* (Dakar: Codesria, 2004).

<sup>184</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 173.

<sup>185</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 176.

Executive Outcomes was in Sierra Leone, the RUF was significantly outmatched, and the mercenaries routed the rebel group in 1995.<sup>186</sup> The Sierra Leonean government maintained a relatively strong military presence, but the tumultuous political environment hindered it.

The RUF was a remarkably durable group, if not a powerful one. The RUF received significant support from outside forces. First and foremost, this support included Liberia's President, Charles Taylor, who acted as a patron to the RUF throughout its entire lifespan. Taylor even gave Foday Sankoh, the leader of the RUF, the go-ahead to start the war.<sup>187</sup> Taylor would acquire supplies and distribute them among the RUF.<sup>188</sup> The RUF managed to earn negotiation initiatives with other governments, but not political support, from other countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and the United States. Ultimately, however, they were unable to muster significant political resources. Hazen's assessment stated, "the RUF possessed a weak support network."<sup>189</sup> That said, the RUF proved its resilience in 1994, after Taylor withdrew all military and financial support to handle his own problems at home. The RUF seized control of Sierra Leone's diamond mines, and used them to finance their war, which led to a large number of the infamous blood diamonds.<sup>190</sup> Ultimately, however, the RUF was not a significant match for the Sierra Leonean government despite all its dysfunction.

The RUF's smaller contingent was intentional, however, and not entirely consequential. Without being able to rely on support from powerful external actors, the RUF was forced to use irregular tactics to survive and remain relevant from the outset of the conflict. The RUF knew that it could not stand up directly to the Sierra Leonean Army and other government forces, so it maintained a small core group of adult fighters and then used children for missions that did not require much training.<sup>191</sup> By maintaining this

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<sup>186</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 98.

<sup>187</sup> Hazen, *What Rebels Want: Resources and Supply Networks in Wartime*, 78.

<sup>188</sup> Hazen, *What Rebels Want: Resources and Supply Networks in Wartime*, 78.

<sup>189</sup> Hazen, *What Rebels Want: Resources and Supply Networks in Wartime*, 78–79.

<sup>190</sup> Hazen, *What Rebels Want: Resources and Supply Networks in Wartime*, 79–80.

<sup>191</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 98.

strategy, the RUF was able to maintain a consistent fighting force that could, after taking a massive hit, quickly regenerate and fight anew.<sup>192</sup> This strategy made the RUF more resilient, as well as making it more difficult to predict, as it is then possible to get away with risky tactics. Singer presented an example of the effectiveness of this strategy by pointing out that the RUF was completely routed on two different occasions, once in 1995 by Executive Outcomes, and once in 1997 by ECOMOG forces. In both of these incidents, the RUF withdrew and then used children to bring their effective fighting force back to full strength.<sup>193</sup> Thus, the rebel group was able to survive against great military opposition.

The RUF's irregular tactics led to a protracted civil war, as the government was unable to wipe them out. The effects of this protraction can be seen in the demographics in Sierra Leone. Life expectancy at birth decreased for men (41 to 40) and women (47 to 45) between 1989 and 2003.<sup>194</sup> Literacy rates actually went up between these two years, from 15% to 31% between 1989 and 2003. Migration rates went up from nonexistent to six migrants per a 1,000 population between the same years. In 1993, immediately after the beginning of the war, the population growth rate was negative (-0.20). At the end of the war (assessed in 2003), the median age was 17.5 years old. Additionally, nearly half the population was under age of 14 years old (44.8%).<sup>195</sup> The Civil War led to increased poverty as it drug on. Families struggled to feed their children, as food and water became so scarce that children volunteered to fight with the rebels just to ensure they would have

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<sup>192</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 98.

<sup>193</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 98.

<sup>194</sup> The following demographics are from archived CIA World Factbook data found on Theodora.com and Photius.com, as cited at the end of this section of the assessment. All relevant years are cited once in the interest of brevity, due the rapidly alternating references.

<sup>195</sup> "Sierra Leone People 1989—Flags, Maps, Economy, Geography, Climate, Natural Resources, Current Issues, International Agreements, Population, Social Statistics, Political System," Theodora, January 1, 1990, [https://theodora.com/wfb1989/sierra\\_leone/sierra\\_leone\\_people.html](https://theodora.com/wfb1989/sierra_leone/sierra_leone_people.html); "Sierra Leone People 1993—Flags, Maps, Economy, Geography, Climate, Natural Resources, Current Issues, International Agreements, Population, Social Statistics, Political System," Theodora, January 1, 1994, [https://theodora.com/wfb/1993/sierra\\_leone/sierra\\_leone\\_people.htm](https://theodora.com/wfb/1993/sierra_leone/sierra_leone_people.htm); "Sierra Leone 2003—Flags, Maps, Economy, Geography, Climate, Natural Resources, Current Issues, International Agreements, Population, Social Statistics, Political System," Theodora, January 1, 2004, [https://theodora.com/wfb2003/sierra\\_leone/sierra\\_leone\\_people.html](https://theodora.com/wfb2003/sierra_leone/sierra_leone_people.html).

enough to eat.<sup>196</sup> Families abandoned children they could no longer feed.<sup>197</sup> The destruction wrought by all the fighting also led to a significant increase in the number of refugees in the country. One study identified that 1.8 million people were displaced because of the war, which composes approximately 34% of the entire country's population, according to a 1999 estimate.<sup>198</sup> Zack-Williams further identifies that 700,000 of those refugees were children.<sup>199</sup>

With the dramatic shifts in demographics over the duration of the conflict, a significant increase in the use of child soldiers is expected. While Mozambique saw the use of child soldiers increase as time continued and the relative supply of children increased compared to the dwindling adult supply, the RUF used child soldiers from the beginning of the Civil War. Approximately 80% of the RUF's fighters were children aged seven to eighteen at the onset of the war, and many of these children were captured.<sup>200</sup> Similarly, the many regimes of the Sierra Leonean government used child soldiers with no hesitation, with the AFRC forcibly conscripting children and killing those who would not join.<sup>201</sup> Additionally, Gberie noted that at the end of the Civil War, between 50,000 and 300,000 had been killed, with 2.5 million ultimately displaced, both within Sierra Leone and abroad.<sup>202</sup> Given this massive disruption in the demographics, it would be expected that more children would be used over the course of the war, but this situation did not happen. Instead, the use of child soldiers stayed fairly consistent, with 5,000 children fighting on both sides at any given point.<sup>203</sup> This scenario seems to indicate that the protraction of the

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<sup>196</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 40–41.

<sup>197</sup> Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, 107.

<sup>198</sup> Zack-Williams, "Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991–98," 155; "Sierra Leone People—Flags, Maps, Economy, Geography, Climate, Natural Resources, Current Issues, International Agreements, Population, Social Statistics, Political System," Photius, March 1, 1999, [https://photius.com/wfb/wfb1999/sierra\\_leone/sierra\\_leone\\_people.html](https://photius.com/wfb/wfb1999/sierra_leone/sierra_leone_people.html).

<sup>199</sup> Zack-Williams, "Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991–98," 155.

<sup>200</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 15.

<sup>201</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 15.

<sup>202</sup> Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa the RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone*.

<sup>203</sup> Rosen, *Armies of the Young*, 61–62.

conflict did, in fact, lead to shifts toward a younger population with less financial stability, but these shifts did not lead to an increased use of child soldiers.

The evidence diverges from the hypothesized expectations. Instead of having a rapid military campaign resulting in the RUF's defeat, as would be expected, Sierra Leone's Civil War was dragged out as the RUF sought irregular means of waging its war, namely by recruiting primarily children. This recruitment allowed the RUF to save its core group of adult fighters, wreak havoc by using children, and regenerate forces quickly after military defeat. This use of child soldiers seems to be entirely disconnected from the power imbalance, the prolonged conflict and the dramatic demographic shifts. If the hypothesis was correct, we would likely see the use of child soldiers would have increased more over time. A lack of super power support did not, as expected, lead to powerful state forces being able to quickly defeat a relatively weak rebel force. Instead, it led to the weaker power being incentivized to use children to fight its cause. Thus, this hypothesis seems to have little effect on the increase use of child soldiers in the post-Cold War era.

### **C. SMALL ARMS AVAILABILITY AND EFFICIENCY**

After the Cold War ended, significant numbers of former Soviet small arms were sold during disarmament. Many of these weapons ended up in the hands of third-party arms dealers, who then sold them to the highest bidder. Naturally, many of these small arms ended up in the hands of insurgent and potentially insurgent parties. These small arms were effective, small, and efficient; so simple, a child could use them. With the small-arms hypothesis, we would expect the increasing supply of efficient, man-portable weapons to lead to an increase in the numbers of child soldiers in factions with access to such weaponry. In actuality, small arms availability seems to have spiked just before the Civil War and stayed rather consistent over its duration. Child soldiers were used from the beginning of the war, and their numbers also seem fairly consistent. Therefore, it appears that the availability and efficiency of small arms plays an important role in the increase in the number of child soldiers.



A key event to understand about the increase in the number of child soldiers in Africa after the Cold War is, ironically, the post-war “peace dividend.”<sup>204</sup> The dividend, a term coined by U.S. President George H. W. Bush and UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, refers to the economic benefits of shifting an infrastructure and economy from a wartime stance to a peacetime stance. These benefits involve shifting factories from constructing military products to civilian products, as well as slowing the purchase of military equipment. While it is questionable whether any such benefits actually result, Western political ideology pursued this goal. In the attempt to obtain this peace dividend, the military significantly slowed the purchase of weaponry, which led to millions of small arms being declared surplus. As a result, weapons were being auctioned off at relatively cheap prices.<sup>205</sup> Singer specifically notes the example of former East German weapon supplies, which were largely auctioned off after the reunification of that state that led to “literally tons of light weapons available at cut-rate prices. Light machine guns went for just \$60, land mines for \$19, and pistols for \$8.”<sup>206</sup> These weapons largely ended up in the control of weapons dealers and brokers who were not at all concerned about where they would end up. Additionally, former Soviet weapons manufacturers, especially those that craft the AK-47, continued production to stay in business that resulted in small arms being “startlingly cheap and easily accessible” around the world.<sup>207</sup> This proliferation meant that it was easy for rebel groups to obtain large caches of small arms, which were light enough for children to use.

Sierra Leone was also a prime example of this abundance of weapons. Sierra Leonean mothers reportedly would rejoice when they saw their 10-year-old child wearing military gear while carrying an AK-47.<sup>208</sup> The RUF was able to obtain most of its weaponry through Charles Taylor, who would sell arms provided to him through third-

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<sup>204</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 47.

<sup>205</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 47–48.

<sup>206</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 48.

<sup>207</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 48.

<sup>208</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 63.

party dealers to the RUF.<sup>209</sup> The UN attempted to track flows of weapons to Sierra Leone, and “found evidence of supply routes from Niger, Burkina Faso, and Liberia, with the vast majority of the weapons transiting through Liberia before arriving in Sierra Leone.”<sup>210</sup> Other arms came from Guinea or were captured from opposition forces, but these sources were not nearly prolific enough to allow dependence on these alternative flows.<sup>211</sup> Hazen also indicates that the RUF had ties to the SLA, because Sankoh and other high-ranking members had maintained their SLA contacts. After the NPRC took over the government, the SLA became willing “to supply ammunition, uniforms, and other military resources in exchange for food or money.”<sup>212</sup> Due to the lack of political support for its cause, the RUF’s ability to obtain weaponry was directly tied to its economic resource availability, a situation it remedied by seizing control of Sierra Leone’s diamond fields and mines.<sup>213</sup> The governments of Sierra Leone also maintained large quantities of weapons, in addition to redistributing any weapons captured from the RUF to the army or to pro-government militias.<sup>214</sup> Finally, third-party arms dealers, such as Viktor Bout, the purported “Merchant of Death,” consistently did business in Sierra Leone, with both sides of the conflict.<sup>215</sup>

One method of tracking the sheer numbers of weapons used in the Sierra Leonean Civil War is to track the number provided under disarmament. Before assessing these numbers, however, it is important to note that this type of tracking is not a complete disarmament of weapons. The population still kept weapons under disarmament. The incompleteness of the disarmament was due to a lack of trust that the war was truly over. Both sides of the war distrusted the other immensely, and thus, weapons were often buried rather than turned in “just in case,” which is understandable, considering that the Lomé

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<sup>209</sup> Hazen, *What Rebels Want: Resources and Supply Networks in Wartime*, 80.

<sup>210</sup> Hazen, *What Rebels Want: Resources and Supply Networks in Wartime*, 80.

<sup>211</sup> Hazen, *What Rebels Want: Resources and Supply Networks in Wartime*, 81.

<sup>212</sup> Hazen, *What Rebels Want: Resources and Supply Networks in Wartime*, 81.

<sup>213</sup> Hazen, *What Rebels Want: Resources and Supply Networks in Wartime*, 82.

<sup>214</sup> Berman, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Mozambique*, 7.

<sup>215</sup> Douglas Farah and Stephen Braun, “The Merchant of Death,” *Foreign Policy* 157 (November 1, 2006).

Agreement disarmament attempts were disrupted well before they could be completed.<sup>216</sup> In fact, Dallaire comments that only “junk” weapons were turned in, which meant these numbers may be significantly deflated.<sup>217</sup> If so, a distressing number of weapons were present in the war. Berman reports that as of 9 May 2000, the effective end of the disarmament process, 7,330 rifles, 217 RPG-7s, 45 mortars, 496 pistols, 1,855 grenades, and 2,752 “other” weapons were registered, along with just over a quarter million rounds of ammunition.<sup>218</sup> These weapons included weapons of German, Chinese, Belgian, British, and most of all, Soviet makes. This process was only the first part of UN disarmament, however, as the RUF attacked peacekeepers before it could be completed.<sup>219</sup> UN disarmament began again after Sankoh’s capture, and as of 7 January 2002, the UN had collected approximately “1.5 million rounds of ammunition and thousands of weapons, including rifles, mortars, and antiaircraft guns.”<sup>220</sup> Again, it is unlikely that this number represents a complete accounting of the weaponry present in the Sierra Leonean Civil War, but these numbers represent a significant amount of weapons proliferation within the country.

Some researchers are unconvinced that the proliferation of weapons played a significant role in the increase of child soldiers. Susan Shepler writes that the majority of violence committed in Sierra Leone was “carried out not with guns, but with everyday tools like machetes and fire.”<sup>221</sup> Rosen breaks this violence out, noting that the RUF primarily used sexual violence, fire, and machetes to wreak terror.<sup>222</sup> In fact, one of the calling cards of the RUF was weaponized amputation, which was conducted with some form of bladed

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<sup>216</sup> Dallaire, *They Fight like Soldiers*, 122; Eric G. Berman, “Arming the Revolutionary United Front,” *African Security Review* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2001): 5–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2001.9628095>.

<sup>217</sup> Dallaire, *They Fight like Soldiers*, 122.

<sup>218</sup> Berman, “Arming the Revolutionary United Front,” 11.

<sup>219</sup> Berman, “Arming the Revolutionary United Front,” 11.

<sup>220</sup> Associated Press, “Sierra Leone Fighters Turning in Weapons,” *New York Times*, January 7, 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/07/world/sierra-leone-fighters-turning-in-weapons.html>.

<sup>221</sup> Susan Shepler, *Childhood Deployed: Remaking Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 23–24.

<sup>222</sup> Rosen, *Armies of the Young*, 83–88.

weapon.<sup>223</sup> However, despite this fact, the RUF would not have been able to execute this level of violence if it had not established its position by maintaining strength in firepower. Thus, the amount of small arms that proliferated the country still played a significant role in the ability of the rebel forces to use child soldiers.

As Cold War disarmament began and former Soviet weapons manufacturers sought to stay in business, Sierra Leone was flooded with small arms and weaponry. The RUF had a generous patron who wanted to stir up as much chaos as possible to disrupt the country. Weapons captured from the rebels were fed back into the conflict on the government's side, and early disarmament attempts failed or were significantly postponed. The role of small arms in the Sierra Leonean conflict was significant. These weapons also started flowing into the country before child soldiers were used, which led to the increased capability of more militant facets of the RUF, which was conceived by scholars and more moderate individuals, to gain power. Children were able to become powerful fighting forces, and the RUF capitalized on its newfound capability. The use of child soldiers stayed roughly consistent over the course of the war, as did the constant cycle of and inflow of small arms and subsequent destruction. Thus, it seems that the proliferation of small arms played a significant role in the widespread use of child soldiers in the Sierra Leonean Civil War.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Sierra Leone's Civil War provides an interesting counterpoint to the thus far plausible first hypothesis. While the balance of power between fighting forces during the Cold War did lead to an increased supply of children relative to adults, incentivizing the use of child soldiers, the Sierra Leonean conflict diverges from this chain of events. The lack of U.S. or Soviet Union support did in fact lead to an imbalance of relative military power in Sierra Leone between belligerents, but this did not affect the use of child soldiers. The RUF used children to reinforce its ranks and provide shielding for the small core of adult rebels throughout the duration of the conflict. Children were quickly captured and

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<sup>223</sup> Norimitsu Onishi, "Sierra Leone Measures Terror in Severed Limbs," *New York Times*, August 22, 1999, National ed., <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/08/22/world/sierra-leone-measures-terror-in-severed-limbs.html>.

indoctrinated. The RUF saw them as expendable, and it continuously used the children to regenerate its forces quickly after a military defeat. This durability led to the protraction of the conflict and dramatic demographic shifts toward a younger, unstable, and poor population. These demographic shifts did not have much effect on the increased use of child soldiers, as using them remained roughly consistent over the course of the war. Therefore, the relative military power and environmental demographics do not appear to play a large role in the increased exploitation of children.

As with the previous chapter, it seems that the increased efficiency and proliferation of man-portable weaponry was the most significant factor explaining the upsurge in using child soldiers after the end of the Cold War. In Sierra Leone, the effects of the Cold War disarmament were distinctly felt, as small arms surpluses ended up in the hands of the insurgent group. The RUF began to acquire small arms and weaponry before it attacked, and it quickly began using child soldiers. Charles Taylor's influence in arming the RUF played a significant role in this venture, as did the role of third-party vendors who sought to profit from the conflict. They allowed the RUF to continue using child soldiers to fight its war. The Sierra Leonean government also saw the benefit of this inflow of weaponry, both indirectly through captured RUF weapons and directly through the same third-party arms dealers who armed the RUF. The government was able to equip children to fight for its country due to this influx of weaponry. Also, the government, unlike the RUF, began using child soldiers later in the war, as it began to receive the influx of weaponry. Therefore, it seems likely that the proliferation of efficient small arms played a significant role in the increase of the use of child soldiers over the course of the Sierra Leonean Civil War, and likely in other post-Cold War conflicts as well.

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## IV. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has sought to answer the following question: what factors led to the rise in the use of child soldiers in post-independence African conflicts? It has addressed this question by comparing child soldier usage across conflicts in two pivotal time periods: independence from colonial rule and the end of the cold war. The comparisons suggest that changes in weapons technologies were probably the most important factor leading to the rise of child soldiering in Africa since independence. Changes in the balance of power among fighting forces and norms among families of child soldiers have also contributed in some ways, particularly in the period surrounding independence. This chapter summarizes the research presented in this thesis, compares and contrasts selected cases, evaluates the cases against the three hypotheses, and then presents a final assessment.

### A. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

Chapter I presented the research question of the thesis and explored a subset of the literature surrounding the use of child soldiers. It was established that using child soldiers was a primarily post-independence phenomenon, with such use increasing slightly after European powers left the continent, and then spiking with the end of the Cold War. The literature also was focused on four existing approaches to understand the use of child soldiers. The first sees child soldier usage as a result of the war environment that has been prevalent in many Africa countries since independence. The second emphasizes the role of technology and its proliferation led to children being used to fight. The third adopts a rational choice lens from the perspective of militant groups who choose to use children because they were easily indoctrinated and sufficiently useful fighters. The fourth emphasizes child agency. These approaches include useful insights about why child soldiers are more common in some conflicts than others, but they are not necessarily capable of explaining why the use of child soldiers has increased so dramatically since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From these foundational approaches, I developed three specific hypotheses that can help answer the question: “What led to the increase in child soldier usage in post-independence era African conflicts?” The hypotheses include imbalanced

relative military power leading to demographic shifts, increased efficiency and proliferation of small arms, and families becoming more permissive of allowing or encouraging children to fight.

Chapter II examined the cases of the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya between 1952 and 1964, as well as the Mozambican Civil War between 1977 and 1992. The first provided a case of conflict immediately before colonialism ended. Children were used in support roles only during the Mau Mau Rebellion, during which the actual fighting was much shorter than the decade-long timestamp would indicate. The Mau Mau made use of whatever weaponry they had available, which was usually simple, with machetes and the victims' own weapons being used primarily. The Mau Mau believed they were fighting for the continuity of their culture for their children. This viewpoint is in stark contrast to the Mozambican Civil War, which was conducted over the course of 15 years of intense fighting instigated by the Rhodesia-backed Renamo. It seemed to fight for no cause beyond toppling the Frelimo government. Due to death and outmigration, this protracted conflict led to significant demographic shifts toward a younger and poorer population. Additionally, Mozambique was flooded with small arms over the course of the war. Children were used as fighters increasingly by both sides over the course of the conflict, although Renamo was the more prolific user. Renamo even believed that children were superior to adults in fighting. This analysis provided a good, but imperfect analysis of changes during this time frame.

Chapter III focused on the changes that occurred from the period of the Mozambican Civil War to that of the Sierra Leonean Civil War between 1991 and 2002. This conflict was a notorious example of post-Cold War conflict involving child soldiers, with thousands of children being exploited as primary combatants at any given point. The conflict, instigated by the Liberia-backed RUF, lasted for a brutal decade before ending with peaceful negotiations. Over the course of this decade, Sierra Leone experienced massive instability, with a third to half the population ultimately being displaced. Significant volumes of weaponry were poured into Sierra Leone, much of which ended up in the hands of the rebels. The RUF, like Renamo, preferred to use children, because they were sufficiently effective fighters, were easily indoctrinated, and expendable. By regularly



replenishing their ranks with children, the RUF was able to survive two massive military defeats. The conflict provided a case against which to test the provided hypotheses.

## **B. FINDINGS**

This thesis offers an explanation for the increase in the use of child soldiers in Sub-Saharan Africa. The first hypothesis contends that a shift in the relative power balance between belligerents during each of these historical junctures leads to protracted conflicts and demographic shifts. These shifts toward a younger, poorer population increased the supply of potential child fighters relative to adults, which incentivized militant groups to use child soldiers for their activities. As previously demonstrated, this phenomenon is observable over the course of the Cold War, but does not seem to have much bearing after that. After the Cold War ended, it would be expected that the state would be able to crush any rebel activities with a distinctly superior military force. This expectation was not observed. If anything, the very imbalance of military forces incentivized the use of child soldiers as a strategy for the RUF, as it knew it was the easiest way to achieve resilience with a relatively small military force. Therefore, it seems that this hypothesis does not fully explain why child soldiers were increasingly used after independence.

The third hypothesis proposed that as groups vied to fill the power vacuum left behind by the evacuation of colonial administrations, instability grew in Sub-Saharan Africa. This void led to increasing desperation, which would incentivize children to choose to fight and for families to allow the children to fight. This shift was actually observed in an examination of pre- and post-independence. The Mau Mau fought against the British administration because, among other things, the administration represented a threat to Kikuyu family values. The rebels viewed themselves as martyrs for their children that left intact the desire to prevent their children from taking part in the fighting. In Mozambique, children chose to fight instead of starving, to make money, or to stay out of the hands of the opposing force. However, these children represented a small fraction of the actual child soldiers. Instead, a militant group captured most of the children who were then treated as prisoners, and were slowly indoctrinated. Once the children were seemingly loyal to the group, they would be trained as fighters, often with no other place to go. Choice on the part

of the child or of the family had no opportunity to play a role in the children's actual fighting. This hypothesis does not, then, adequately explain why the use of child soldiers increased.

The previous two hypotheses largely fall short of explaining the reasons why the use of child soldiers increased during both historical periods observed. However, the hypothesis with the most explanatory power is the second hypothesis. This hypothesis states that over the course of these time frames, small arms, including rifles, pistols, mines, and RPGs, became more efficient and available, which incentivized using child soldiers. During the Cold War, powerful governments supported their patrons with weaponry, as well as other resources that led to an increase in the number of weapons available to Sub-Saharan African countries. After the end of the Cold War, disarmament efforts involved selling excess weapons caches in auctions, as well as former Soviet weapons producers making their weaponry available at extremely discounted prices to stay in business. These small arms ended up in the hands of third-party dealers, who often sold them to rebels. This pattern is observable over the course of the examined time frames. The Mau Mau in Kenya primarily used machetes, prop weapons, and whatever firearms they could steal from their victims. The Mozambican and Sierra Leonean Civil Wars were each fought with increasing amounts of lethal, man-portable weaponry, with the most noteworthy weapon being the AK-47. These increases in available small, light, efficient, and simple weapons incentivized the militant groups to obtain whatever fighters they could to use these weapons against their enemy. The easiest source of such fighters was the supply of children. Therefore, this hypothesis is the one that best explains why the use of child soldiers increased after independence in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### **C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This thesis recommends further application of these hypotheses against different case studies. In Sub-Saharan Africa, comparing the Mozambican War of Independence with its subsequent civil war would provide a more controlled analysis of a pre- and post-independence conflict. The lack of available evidence was the only reason this topic was not addressed in this thesis. Other excellent comparisons within a time period can be found

in comparing the Angolan Civil War with the Mozambican Civil War for an analysis within the Cold War, and the Eritrean War of Independence for a modern war of independence against a non-European force in which child soldiers were used. Of course, Joseph Kony's Separatist Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda provides a notorious case study in using child soldiers. Finally, a comparison with non-African cases of child soldiers should be conducted. Naturally, each region will have its own relevant time frames to analyze, although the Cold War played a role in many conflicts worldwide. Analysis of these hypotheses against cases, such as the Mujahidin in the Soviet-Afghan War, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) during the Troubles could provide useful support or critique of this thesis's hypotheses. Also of important is the fact that this is a continuing problem. Examinations into modern usage of child soldiers should be conducted. The United States has identified Burma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Iran, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Somalia, Syria, South Sudan, and Yemen as countries which are using child soldiers in 2018. These cases should be examined as soon as is feasible in order to identify whether the hypotheses continue to explain increasing child soldier usage.

Finally, the second hypothesis presents a challenge to disentangle. The research contained in this thesis seems to indicate that small arms proliferation explains increases in the use of child soldiers. However, it is difficult to identify the causal direction definitively. Does the existence of child soldiers cause militant groups to seek out small arms for them to use? Or, does the proliferation and efficiency of small arms lead to groups seeking child soldiers? The research in this thesis seems to state that the latter is true, but other cases in which children are used without small arms proliferation should be sought. Further research into this specific question would be beneficial to the continuing discussion of using child soldiers, as it would provide better input for further policy implications.

#### **D. IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

This thesis lends support to the small arms theory presented by existing research by Peter Singer and Michael Klare. It seems that using child soldiers is indeed exacerbated by small arms efficiency and proliferation. Following the logical progression of events, it

seems likely that as technology continues to improve, it will become lighter and more lethal that thus leads to increasing incentives for militant groups to exploit children as primary combatants. Also implied is the credibility of the theory of cost-benefit analysis presented in Chapter I. If man-portable, lethal weaponry is easily available, the potential costs associated with using children as fighters decrease, as the weapons become less expensive and children can quickly be trained as effective fighters with them. Additionally, a trend observed in this research that indicates that rebels prefer to use children instead of adults as fighters. The likelihood of children being used on both sides of the cost-benefit equation then increases. Thus, these two factors tie together quite effectively to explain the use of child soldiers, as small arms proliferation provides increasing benefit and decreasing cost in the use of child soldiers.

Practically, the findings of this thesis emphasize the need for a non-proliferation policy, not only in the realm of existing foci, such as nuclear, chemical, and biological, but also in the realm of small weaponry. Existing efforts must be redoubled not only to prevent a further proliferation of these weapons, but also to remove them from any conflict prone countries and then destroy them. They must not be simply auctioned off again, as was done during Cold War disarmament in former East Germany. These weapons end up in the hands of third-party arms dealers, and then often in the hands of rebel groups. It is, of course, unsurprising that small arms proliferation exacerbates tensions in countries, but this evidence suggests that it exacerbates human rights violations, namely child exploitation.

Exploitation of children as primary combatants seems to be a result of cost-benefit analysis by militant groups. These groups see that children can be quickly captured, indoctrinated, and trained to fight. Gone are the days when children were considered ineffective fighters. With advances in military technology shifting towards smaller, more lethal arms, children increasingly become lethal forces, worthy of the time invested in them by militant groups. This cost-benefit analysis will lead to an increasing use of child soldiers over time. To stop this increase, the equation will need to be changed. Militant groups must be disincentivized from using children as primary combatants. It must be shown that the use of children for any cause will lead to repercussions from the international community. The cost of using child soldiers must increase, as it seems unlikely that the benefit of using

child soldiers will decrease. Lethal, man-portable weaponry is a factor that is not going to go away. Technology will continue to evolve, and it will continue decreasing the cost and increasing the benefit of using child soldiers as rebels continue getting their hands on more efficient weaponry. Policy must shift to address this issue by increasing the cost of using these children by being penalized by the international community, whether those penalties be sanctions, support for the group's opposition, or direct military aggression against the exploiting group.

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