BOOK REVIEW: YOUNG SOLDIERS: WHY THEY CHOOSE TO FIGHT, RACHEL BRETT AND IRMA SPECHT (BOULDER: LYNNE RIENNER PUBLISHERS, 2004, 192 PP. $17.95 (U.S.), PAPERBACK)

JUANDA LOWDER DANIEL*

"In peace sons bury fathers, but war violates the order of nature, and fathers bury sons."

Herodotus

The fact that armed conflicts often reach children in the battle zones is not subject to serious debate. However, the various ways in which this occurs and the long-term effects thereof on the lives of these young victims is something that seldom receives wide-spread attention. In the book Young Soldiers: Why They Choose to Fight, Rachel Brett and Irma Specht attempt to focus on the reasons adolescents join armed conflicts by talking directly with a group of fifty-three children who had engaged in such conflicts before reaching the age of eighteen.¹ For this book, the authors compiled a series of interviews with young people who had participated in armed conflicts within Afghanistan, Columbia, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Sri Lanka. By taking a primary-source approach to gathering such information, the authors promise an in-depth exploration into the driving forces behind the minors’ decision to take up arms in the midst of mayhem.² Unfortunately, the authors fall short of delivering on their promises in an uninspiring and repetitive narrative, interspersed with anecdotal interview responses. In the end, the reader is left with more questions than answers about why minors volunteer for armed combat.

Chapter one begins with the following statement, “[t]rying to analyze human behavior and identify the specific factors or incidents

¹. RACHEL BRETT & IRMA SPECHT, YOUNG SOLDIERS: WHY THEY CHOOSE TO FIGHT 2 (Lynne Rienner Publishers 2004).
². Id. at 1.
that lead to one course of action rather than another is inevitably a complex and somewhat unsatisfactory process. Few things in life are so clear-cut that there is one single explanation for them . . . .³ Nevertheless, the authors proceed with the admittedly difficult task of searching for answers.

Brett and Specht identify several key factors in the decision of adolescents to join armed forces, to wit: war, family and friends, poverty, education and employment, politics and ideology, culture and tradition, and adolescence itself.⁴ From here, the authors attempt to examine each factor from a variety of angles. For example, the first chapter attempts to examine the question in the "Broad Context" by looking at each of the key factors identified; the next chapter purports to capture the "Life of the Prospective Volunteer" by focusing on the same factors; and so forth for a total of seven chapters. However, instead of exploring new ideas in every chapter, the authors simply repeat the same findings under different labels.

From the beginning, the reader is informed that the existence of a war itself is a significant factor in an adolescent's decision to fight, so obvious and yet so often repeated. According to the authors, the very condition of war evokes every emotion from the feeling of insecurity to the desire to participate. Moreover, the effects of war on a community seem to contribute to the existence of the other key factors identified.⁵ What is not clear is whether the other factors standing alone can be credited for the decisions of these young people, or whether they are all byproducts of the war itself.

As titled, chapter two appears to examine the life of these adolescent volunteers, whereas chapter three is poised to explore the pivotal moment in which these adolescents were called upon to make their decisions to fight. However, a review of each of these chapters reveals a mere repeat of the discussion of key factors already identified and discussed. Although the discussion is interspersed with different excerpts of interviews, they seem to tell the same story without any discernable difference between the purposes of such accounts.

In chapter four, titled, "A Complex of Risk Factors," the authors again pique the curiosity of readers by promising to link the identified factors together.⁶ To illustrate the interplay among the factors, the authors use an extended excerpt from an interview while pointing out the presence of most, if not all, of the key factors attributed to the

³ Id. at 9.
⁴ Id. at 9, 123.
⁵ Id. at 39.
⁶ Id. at 77.
interviewee's decision to join.\textsuperscript{7} In the discussion that follows, the authors observe, "[i]t is clear from Javad’s experience and from all those presented in the foregoing chapters that there are many different factors that result in adolescents joining armed forces or armed groups, and that the relationship between them is neither direct, simple, nor static."\textsuperscript{8} This observation is neither novel nor enlightening. It neither attempts to link the factors nor explains why they cannot be linked.

In chapter five, the authors return the readers to yet another discussion of the same key factors identified earlier, but this time attempting to explore differences between the reasons given by girls and those of boys.\textsuperscript{9} Unfortunately, those reasons have already been discussed \textit{ad nauseam} in the earlier chapters. Thus, the significance of a particular reason coming from a girl versus a boy is lost in the repetition. Ultimately, the authors acknowledge that there are no significant differences between the factors spurring either group to join armed conflicts.\textsuperscript{10}

For a legal reader, the most interesting discussion in the book takes place in chapter six, in which the authors attempt to ascertain whether the decision of adolescents to take up arms is, in fact, voluntary.\textsuperscript{11} Here, the interview excerpts help illustrate why it is difficult to characterize as voluntary an adolescent joining an armed group as his or her only real chance of survival. As the authors point out, this raises legal issues relating to the propriety of recruitment practices. Unfortunately, the book does not develop this idea of quasi-volunteerism to the degree necessary to allow readers to make informed judgments on the matter. In any event, the fact that these adolescents self-identify as volunteers is interesting, if not maddening.

By the time the reader reaches the "Conclusion," yet another rehashing of the same factors, he or she has long since realized that the artificial grouping of material in seven distinct chapters serves no useful purpose for understanding the real reasons adolescents choose to fight. The factors identified as significantly contributing to an adolescent's decision to join armed forces seem to run the gamut of potential reasons that anyone would posit for joining, not just minors. Thus, even in the conclusion, there is no insight in sight. What is actually confirmed by this book is that an adolescent probably has many different reasons for joining an armed conflict, depending on his or her par-

\begin{flushleft}
\hspace{1em} \textsuperscript{7.} Id. at 77-79. \\
\textsuperscript{8.} Id. at 79. \\
\textsuperscript{9.} Id. at 85-104. \\
\textsuperscript{10.} Id. at 100. \\
\textsuperscript{11.} Id. at 105-119.
\end{flushleft}
ticular situation in life. It is also somewhat comforting to know that these young people from many walks of life seem to have more in common than most would imagine, and that these common experiences generally regarded as intolerable are spurring young people to action. By the same token, this book should demonstrate that we cannot fit all adolescents in the same box for the purpose of advancing a particular sociological or ideological agenda. Unfortunately, these confirmations do little, if anything, to assist in understanding how to go about addressing the underlying problem of children being drawn into armed conflicts.

CHARLES S. DOSKOW*

Sierra Leone is the definition of a failed African state. The United Nations ranks it dead last in the UN Human Development Index (HDI), placing it 177th among the 177 countries rated in such categories as life expectancy, literacy and per capita earning power.1

Many of its problems derive from the 1991-2002 civil war, but their roots lie deep in the past. The years prior to 1991 saw a succession of coups and revolutions, political plunder of the country's resources, and oppression of its people.

This despite its birth, which is the most interesting aspect of Sierra Leone. Freetown, its capital, was populated early in the nineteenth century in large part with freed slaves, including many whose American Tory masters, loyal to the crown, had taken them to Nova Scotia at the end of the American Revolution. Sierra Leone's early English sponsors include some of the most famous names in English anti-slavery history, including Wilberforce, Clarkson and Granville Clark.

Granted independence from Great Britain in 1961, after years of preparation for self-rule by the English, Sierra Leone soon became what the author of this volume calls "the poster child for all that is wrong with post-colonial Africa, the embodiment of the continent's dysfunctional politics, environmental exploitation, economic misery and fratricidal conflicts."2 (But how does he really feel?)

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2. PHAM, supra note 1, at 29.
And the child soldiers in the book’s title? Dr. Pham devotes about a page and a half to the subject. Both sides in the civil war made widespread use of children. The tradition among the tribes of the country was that children started work for the benefit of the family at an early age, in some cases as early as three.

The author tells us that although reliable statistics do not exist, the estimate is that about half the combatants in the civil war on the rebel side were in the age range of eight to fourteen years old, and on the other side many were under eighteen. Most were forcibly recruited (kidnapped) and tattooed as military identification and to prevent escape. And once recruited (or abducted), the children soon adopted the violent means of their brothers-in-arms, and “were often the most violent actors in the civil conflict.”

But however badly children were treated by both sides in the civil war, the adults did not fare much better. Sierra Leoneans of all areas, tribes and politics were subjected to a dictatorial government resisting invasion, the brutal aftermath to the coups that represented transfers of power, and an economy that was looted for the sole benefit of the country’s rulers. Sierra Leone is the source of much of the world’s diamonds, which figure prominently in the contests for power, but with little benefit to the general population.

J. Peter Pham is the Director of the Nelson Institute for International and Public Affairs at James Madison University. He is widely published, and the author of a standard resource on the Liberian civil war. He has served as a diplomatic representative of the United States in Africa. Dr. Pham has written a highly readable and comprehensive history of Sierra Leone, well documented and footnoted, but one which adds little to ethical or historical consideration of the exploitation of children in war.

The volume includes the texts of documents deriving from the end of the civil war. The Lome Peace Agreement of 1999, which ended the civil war for a few minutes, includes Article XXX, which provides:

Child Combatants: The Government shall accord particular attention to the issue of child soldiers. It shall, accordingly, mobilize resources, both within the country and from the International Community, and especially through the Office of the UN Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, UNICEF and other

3. Id. at 108-09.
4. Id. at 109.
5. Id. at 66.
6. Id. at 249-81.
agencies, to address the special needs of these children in the existing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.\(^7\)

The Statute for the Special Court for Sierra Leone (2002), established to try war crimes arising out of the civil war, provides in Article 4: “Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law,”

The Special Court shall have the power to prosecute persons who committed the following serious violations of international humanitarian law: . . . c) Conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into armed forces or groups or using them to participate actively in hostilities.\(^8\)

After publication of Dr. Pham’s book, two participants in the Sierra Leone civil war were found guilty of war crimes by the Special Court. Their convictions included “conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into armed services, or groups” and “the use of child soldiers.”\(^9\) This was the first time an international court found a defendant guilty “of recruitment of child soldiers into an armed force.”\(^10\)

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BOOK REVIEW:
CHILDREN AT WAR, P. W. SINGER
(NEW YORK, ETC: R.S. HEDERMAN, ETC.,
2006, 278 PP. $16.95 (U.S.), PAPERBACK)

JANE H. EGLY*

Mr. Singer is a Senior Fellow and Director of the Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. Mr. Singer skillfully uses his considerable ability as a self-described political science analyst to describe children at war in a way that is even more compelling than the picture used on the cover of his book—a very young, innocent-looking child carrying a very large weapon. It is also far more enlightening than a picture.

He describes without added drama the practice, the causes, the treatment and the training of children into killers. He describes the impact on the children (both boys and girls), their societies, and on the soldiers who fight these effective killers. He concludes with a chapter with the hopeful title “Turning a Soldier Back Into a Child.” But beware, for there is little hope. After the psychological trauma to the child, the damage to his physical health, the lost time as a child, lack of education, the lost of her place in her own society because it no longer exists or they will not take her back, it is difficult to imagine any “cure.”

You are reminded that children have been used in armies since the beginning of time but the role of the child has changed from baggage carrier to killer and torturer. They are also younger—age ten is not unusual for girls as well as boys.

The basic cause is that since the beginning of “humanity” there has been our inability to live at peace. Children are brought into these conflicts for the same reasons that countries of wealth continue

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2. Id. at 37-93.
3. Id. at 94-115.
4. Id. at 183-207.
to build bigger and more horrific weapons—they either want to protect themselves or take from their neighbors. But, the practice of using children as soldiers is also a product of failing governments, instability and poverty. It reflects the unwinding of a society.

The description of how the children are taken into soldiering and trained is horrifying. They are taken from their families and communities, beaten, forced to see family members killed or forced to kill their families as well as see their fellow young soldiers starved, sexually abused, and addicted to drugs. There is reference to the desire to take the younger children because, the younger they are, the more likely the adults can convert them to "the cause." With no hope of escape, or in many cases nowhere to go, this forces them to do as they are commanded.

The training can lead to a brutality that surpasses their adult superiors. The brutality is also caused by the fact they are children, they have not had a chance to develop judgment and are not in an environment that teaches anything but violence. They fear if they are not brutal they will die. The battles they must face reinforce the need to be fierce so they will remain alive.

Their treatment and the horrors they participate in and see has such an impact it is difficult for them "to imagine exactly what peace is and how they should function in it." And all of this "weaves violence into the fabric of life." So as the sorrow grows we are advised and can see they will not be a lost generation, they will be a dangerous generation.

Mr. Singer advises that the armies around the world must understand that children are a part of the modern battlefield. Armies that face these children must develop better ways to deal with them. First they can try to stop the practice, and he has several suggestions including limiting the ability to recruit or take children. He includes a list of "Suggested Guidelines When Engaging Child Soldiers" which advises going after the adult leaders first, as well as changing the weaponry and moving toward less lethal but still effective tools such as calming agents that induce sleep.

He warns that some practices actually hurt efforts to curtail bringing children into armies. One such practice was the United States placing child soldiers at Abu Ghraib in Iraq and torturing them. This does not stop the making of child soldiers, rather, it further brutalizes the children and harms the United States.

5. Id. at 109.
6. Id.
7. Id. at 178.
The most hopeful part of this book is the discussion of ways to turn these soldiers back into children or how to rehabilitate and reintegrate these children into society. Some communities take their children and try to give them a life. In traditional communities they involve them in appropriate healing and cleansing ceremonies or send them to school with special programs so they can catch up. But even if the community accepts them, it needs enormous support to be able to restore the children to mental and physical health.

But many communities will not take them back and help with the enormous needs of these children. Mr. Singer discusses a number of avenues to help, but it hard to read and not ask: Who will pay for this? Who will continue to aid the struggle to a return to "normal" life? Who is going to stop this horrible practice? One cannot read this book and not be profoundly moved by Mr. Singer's descriptions that are so compelling and never over-dramatized. This analysis leads to an awful sense that we have let societies unravel to such a point that they must steal children to fight their cause.
BOOK REVIEW: A WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN: SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO CHILDREN IN WAR ZONES, NEIL BOOTHBY, ALISON STRANG & MICHAEL WESSELLS, EDS. (KUMARIAN PRESS, INC., 2006, 260PP. $26.95(US); PAPERBACK)

KATHY LUTTRELL GARCIA*

"If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children."

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

Considering the spate of literature on the subject, as well as simple common sense, there can be no doubt that war profoundly affects the lives of child soldiers who participate in armed conflicts. The extent to which child soldiers are negatively affected by their experiences depends on a number of factors, including the voluntary or involuntary nature of their participation, the length of their service, their specific role in the conflict, the nature and extent of their exposure to violence, and the nature and extent of their participation in violence against others.¹

The editors and authors of this book have taken a broader view, however, both of the children who are affected by war, and of the factors that enhance or reduce resilience in these children. The editors and authors are "psychologists who have spent over two decades working with children in war zones."² Each chapter in the collection is written by a different author and focuses on a different social or ecological factor that influences the resilience in children affected by war, or on a particular subset of these children. Based on the particular factor or subset, interventions are suggested to enhance resilience

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2. A WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN, supra note 1, at 2.
while avoiding causing unintended harm by failing to recognize cultural or other realities.

Although the book's organization is based primarily on the several different social and ecological factors that affect resilience, some common themes emerge. First, no one external factor seems to dominate in determining resilience. Rather, each factor is simply one aspect of a multi-faceted confluence of events and attributes that together help determine resilience. Second, according to the authors, several of the factors seem to be a double-edged sword, at least to some degree. That is, the factor may have the potential to enhance resilience but also the potential to reduce resilience or even contribute to conflict and its effects. Third, resilience seems to be positively correlated with the extent to which children themselves participate in the decisions that affect their recovery.

The book's introduction identifies three domains that are "most pertinent to defining psychosocial well-being," and that can affect the "coping response of a community" in times of war: human capacity, social ecology, and culture and values. Effective interventions in each of these domains can increase the resilience of the community, and in turn, increase the resilience of children affected by war. The editors suggest the need for "interventions that enhance resources within all three domains," as well as the need "for transformation to address the challenges of the future," rather than simple restoration.

The complexity of the issue can be seen in the topics of the various chapters. The topics address the impact on resilience of culture, family, separation from the family, education, peer relationships, livelihood, and religion, as well as issues particular to child soldiers and girl soldiers. As one author suggests, children are subject to a "plurality of socializing forces" that include "several intersecting socializing units, including the family, school, and neighborhood [that] . . . diffuse the impact of any single socializing unit." The authors suggest that each of these socializing units must be taken into account when designing interventions, to avoid inadvertently causing additional harm and thereby reducing the potential for resilience. For example, the "structure of aid disbursement, including access to educational and health services," may encourage the separa-

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3. Id. at 11.
4. Id.
5. Id.
6. Id.
tion of children from their families "if they only provide opportunities for separated children and are not open to the participation of all children in the community." 8 Similarly, providing "livelihood support for former child soldiers," to the exclusion of other children affected by war, "privileges child soldiers and creates divisive jealousies at the village level just when social unity is needed most." 9 Livelihood support might also be extorted from the children by former commanders and used to recruit additional child soldiers.10

In addition, some of the authors explain that the aftermath of war may actually have a greater impact on children than the immediate effects of the war. 11 For example, the economic opportunities that are lost to children and youth while engaged in combat may cause difficulty in accomplishing life milestones such as the "key life cycle tasks of choosing a wife and building a family." 12 Girls, in particular, are unlikely to have the opportunity to make up for lost educational experiences, and those who have been sexually abused may be considered by their communities "to be morally compromised and not marriageable." 13

Several of the authors, therefore, point out the need to "learn about and support local resources, avoiding the imposition of outside approaches that tacitly marginalize local people and convert humanitarian action into a form of imperialism." 14 Others remind us that cultural and other biases may affect the analysis of the needs of war-affected children from the outset, and should be critically examined when constructing interventions. 15

Several of the authors also described a dichotomy between the resilience-building and resilience-reducing potential of particular ecologies. The family, for example, "can serve as a buffer for children in the context of war," but may also "pose some of the greatest risks to

10. Id.
11. Boothby, supra note 1, at 175.
12. Id.
13. Susan McKay, Girlhoods Stolen: The Plight of Girl Soldiers During and After Armed Conflict, in A WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN, supra note 1, at 96 (internal citation omitted).
children” in war zones. Some sacrifice children into forced marriages at an early age, for example. Others “marginalize particular children, such as disabled children, . . . or [ ] exploit children by sending them to the streets to sell rather than sending them to school.”

Likewise, religion provides “valuable sources of coping with adversity and of protection in difficult circumstances,” but may also be “a source of hatred and violence” or “encourage paralysis or ineffective action in dealing with adversity.” Children and youth themselves, as well as their peer groups, may influence individual and community resilience both positively and negatively, as well.

[Youth] roles in militaries, rebel groups, militias, and gangs influence armed conflict and post-conflict reconstruction. At the same time, many young people work against war norms and values and create alternative communities out of both contingency and conviction. The contours of postwar society are influenced by the roles of these youth in social and economic life . . . . As social, political, and economic agents, then, youth are a multidimensional force.

In short, “[s]ocial ecologies can be both protective and, more often than we would like to admit, harmful.” Therefore, the authors of the final chapter conclude, “[t]o maximize their ability to protect children, humanitarian organizations should apply a social ecology model to identify programmatic entry points as well as areas to influence, strengthen, and protect.”

In addition to explaining the resilience-promoting character of the ecologies, several authors explained the importance of involving children in building resilience. Children’s involvement might take the form of actively participating in coping devices, such as rituals. Rituals might include cleansing rituals for former child combatants “to purge angry spirits and impurities associated with death and killing,” funeral rites for loved ones lost in the war, rites of passage that are culturally prescribed, or other spiritual rituals.

17. Id. at 50.
18. Id.
20. Id. at 200.
21. Id. at 214.
23. Id.
25. Id. at 225.
27. Wessells & Strang, supra note 14, at 210-11.
Involving war-affected children in cognitive strategies also seems to help build resilience. One author described a longitudinal study he conducted with former child soldiers. The participants were followed for sixteen years, and those who actively employed cognitive strategies to manage their stress exhibited fewer and less severe symptoms of stress, both at the outset of rehabilitation and into adulthood.\textsuperscript{28}

Additionally, inclusion of children and youth in the political process may be needed to empower them and promote resilience, at least at the macro level.\textsuperscript{29} "The breadth of youth involvement in the many overlapping spaces of war and peace argues for an intentional and genuine inclusion of youth in any peace process or peace-building project. The actions of youth have important impacts at every stage of the armed-conflict and peace-building continuum."\textsuperscript{30}

The final chapter of the book identifies "the most critical types of protection that children require in disaster and war-affected areas,"\textsuperscript{31} summarizes the supportive ecologies, briefly describes the organizations devoted to assisting children affected by war, and briefly explains the relevant legal authority that provides protection for children. The chapter also identifies strategies for improving assistance to children affected by war.

As one might expect, no simple solutions emerge. Moreover, because the book covers such a broad range of issues, it seems to lack the depth some might prefer. Similarly, because each chapter is written by a different author, and covers related issues with similar attributes, the book suffers at times from a sense of repetitiveness. Still, throughout the book suggestions are provided for potentially helpful interventions, as well as for further study. This book would, therefore, be helpful to those who are interested in working to ameliorate the factors that contribute to the participation of children in armed conflict or to assist children who have been affected by war, and especially, to policy makers.

\textsuperscript{28} Boothby, \textit{supra} note 1, at 164-68.
\textsuperscript{29} McAvoy-Levy, \textit{supra} note 22, at 150.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Id.} at 149.
\textsuperscript{31} Triplehorn & Chen, \textit{supra} note 24, at 223.
BOOK REVIEW: AFRICAN KIDS: BETWEEN WARLORDS, CHILD SOLDIERS AND LIVING ON THE STREET, MELHA ROUT BIEL (FRANKFURT AM MAIN; NEW YORK: PETER LANG, 2004, 95 PP. $26.95 (U.S.), PAPERBACK)

DIANE J. KLEIN*

In this brief monograph (seventy-eight pages of text plus sixteen pages of photographs), published in 2004, Melha Rout Biel, a Sudanese scholar, provides helpful background on the conflict in Sudan and a useful non-European perspective on the role of the UN and NGOs in alleviating the deeper-seated causes of the use of child soldiers in Africa. The author’s goal is to link the recruitment of child soldiers in Africa to the domestic political and economic forces, together with HIV/AIDS, that have produced a vulnerable population of street children, particularly in Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, and Kenya. An unfortunate shortcoming of the book is an awkward and unskillful translation into English (from what appears to be the original German).

Sudan receives the most extensive treatment. Section 7 of the book consists of a detailed account of the Sudanese political situation, through to the 2004 publication date, as it relates to both street children and child soldiers. Biel indicates that both the government and the rebel Sudan People’s Liberation Army employ underage soldiers, and that the Muslim-controlled government also has sold children from the southern (non-Muslim) areas into slavery. His description of Sudanese street children usefully includes statistics and qualitative information about girls. He also provides useful information about what might otherwise be puzzling inter-African conflicts—such as why the Muslim government of Sudan would support the Christian LRA in Uganda, while making war on Sudanese Chris-

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2. Id. at 26-27.
3. Id. at 25-26, 27-29.
tians—which is explained by the Ugandan government's support for the Sudan People's Liberation Army, who are fighting for a democratic and secular Sudan.  

Countries other than Sudan are addressed more briefly. The coverage of Uganda (section 8), Zambia (section 9), and Kenya (section 10) is concise, and focused on street children, AIDS, and sex work, rather than child soldiers, because those countries are at peace. The first part of section 11 addresses African child soldiers specifically, and provides some useful statistics. However, because of infelicities of translation, as well as Biel's reliance on secondary sources rather than undertaking primary research himself, this work is not of special value for scholars. However, section 14 is a useful bibliography on issues relating to African children in general, including AIDS, street children, and child soldiers. In addition, the footnotes contain references to important English-language (and foreign) scholarship on street children, AIDS, and related issues.

4. Id. at 33-34.
5. Id. at 32-35.
6. Id. at 36-41.
7. Id. at 42-44.
8. Id. at 45-48.
9. Id. at 56-59.
BOOK REVIEW: CHILD SOLDIERS: FROM VIOLENCE TO PROTECTION, MICHAEL WESSELLS (HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2006 308PP. $45.00 (U.S.) PAPERBACK)

JOHN LINARELLI*

One of my early reflective moments about the tragedies of child soldiering was while watching a movie in my first year of law school about the devastation of war in my father's country. The movie, Night of Shooting Stars, is an obscure Italian film that played briefly in "art" theaters in 1982. The movie is set in Tuscany in 1944. The U.S. Army was moving north up Italy's boot. The Germans, retreating, left in their stead Italian fascists, brutal in their confrontations with refugees and resistance fighters. The narrator, a woman, recalls her plight as a refugee at six years of age. In a scene towards the end of the movie, the refugees and resistance fighters hide from the fascists in a wheat field but are discovered, and the shooting begins. Italians from the same families and villages call out each other's names as they shoot each other at close range. No one is spared, from grandmothers to children. The fascists include a brute of a man and his fifteen-year old thoroughly indoctrinated son. The father has trained his son to kill. He uses the boy to confuse, ambush, and kill. In the end, the resistance fighters capture the father and the son, and in cruel vindication, they shoot the boy in the presence of the father. The father, hysterical, is permitted to shoot himself dead. The movie leaves one with the sentiment that World War II was a different kind of war for Italians than for Americans.

The wrenching violence and despair in these scenes share an eerie similarity to situations in Sierra Leone, the Congo, Afghanistan and the so many other armed conflicts that the BBC, but not CNN or Fox, seems to report in detail. Child soldiering is on the fringes of American sensibilities, seen as something that happens only in distant poor countries. War and children, however, claim a basic connection in

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Western civilization. We see in yet another movie, Master and Commander, young boys, serving as midshipmen in the Royal Navy, losing limbs and dying bloody deaths in battle.2 Go further back, to 700 B.C. The opening scene of Homer’s Odyssey begins with Telemachus, hardly a child in the Ithaca of Ancient Greece at the age of twenty, but clearly in the role of son in a household full of suitors of his mother Penelope, while his father, Odysseus, is on a twenty year trek back from the Trojan War.3 Athena manipulates the pliable Telemachus to search for Odysseus. A key theme in the Odyssey is the relationship of family to war.

How should we place Michael Wessells’ book, Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection,4 in these social and historical contexts? Wessells provides a richly textured account of child soldiering in Afghanistan, Angola, Kosovo, northern Uganda, Sierra Leone, and South Africa in the latter twentieth century.5 The book is written mainly around the interviews of more than 400 children that Wessells took between 1995 and 2005, in his field research and child protection work with the Christian Children’s Fund.6

Chapter one sets the stage for the entire book. In chapter one, Wessells frames his inquiry around three themes: peace, meaning, and hope. I will place his chapters within these themes.

Let’s start with meaning, because it seems to motivate the early chapters two through five. Wessells sees children as “makers of meaning” and influential in the political conflicts of their societies.7 Chapter two deals with entry into armed groups, chapter three with the experiences of child soldiers inside armed groups, and chapter four with the special problems of girl soldiers. Meaning comes out in the narratives identified in these chapters. The standard narrative is one of force: children enter armed groups because they are abducted and compelled to participate. The force narrative certainly has explanatory power, but other “unforced” narratives come out of Wessell’s work, and it is in these narratives that children who enter into soldiering make meaning in their lives. Children, left with difficult choices, enter armed groups because of the extremely poor opportunities they have in their chaotic societies, lack of education, poverty, negative

2. The movie is based on Patrick O’Brian, Master and Commander (W.W. Norton & Co. 1970).
5. Id.
6. Id.
7. Id. at 3.
family situations, the desire for revenge for the killing of family members, social mobility, and so on. Of course, children's motives are often mixed, causes are often multiple, and the difference between choice and coercion often blurred. The "choices" are of Hobson's variety; a child who opts to become a soldier because it is her best choice for a life has no real choice. Children are pliable, manipulated, exploited. Commanders seek out children as soldiers for reasons of "convenience, low cost, and impunity." They deal in subjugation, "baptism by fire," isolation, and violence. The bottom-line for these chapters is what is perhaps standard argument for social psychologists: circumstances matter, and they matter a great deal.

The first and third themes set in chapter one, peace and hope, aid in understanding chapters six through ten. The peace theme connects to the proposition that no society can survive with large groups of militarized youngsters. As for the third theme, hope, Wessells advises that children are more resilient than we might expect, and that reintegration and prevention are realistic.

Chapter six, "The Invisible Wounds of War," supports the hope theme. It takes issue with "medical models" and "psychological labels" of child soldiers, asking us to refocus on adaptability and functionality. Wessells cautions of the "perils of labels" and is critical of PTSD diagnoses. He worries about the moral development of these children, but, continuing the hope theme, reminds us that they have had a tremendous diversity of experiences and are resilient.

Chapter seven, "Putting Down the Gun," connects to Wessells' peace theme in a detailed discussion of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs. Chapter eight, supporting the peace and hope themes, deals primarily with reintegration into post-conflict civilian life. Chapter nine deals with the problems of reintegration from community points of view. How is reconciliation with former child soldiers achieved in communities torn apart by conflict?

8. Id. at 32-33.
9. Id. at 35-37
10. Id. at 33-34.
11. A baptism by fire is a situation in which commanders try to cut off children from their former lives by forcing them to kill or injure people they are close to, such as family members. Id. at 59-60.
13. Wessells, supra note 4, at 3.
14. Id. at 134, 138.
15. Id. at 134-41.
16. Id. at 141-46.
17. Id. at 154-80.
Some see former child soldiers as deserving of punishment.\textsuperscript{18} Wessells finds problems with retributive justice approaches, since adult exploitation is the problem.\textsuperscript{19} Wessells favors restorative justice approaches.\textsuperscript{20}

Completing the peace and hope themes, chapter ten deals with prevention. The methods include, but are not limited to, the “legal strategy” with which lawyers are perhaps most familiar.\textsuperscript{21} Wessells advocates a systemic approach to prevention, ranging from the family to the level of the global.\textsuperscript{22}

Lawyers should read this excellent book. It is full of rich qualitative empirics of what has happened on the ground. If we are to regulate an area as socially complex as child soldiering, then we should have our facts right. But the book is much more than descriptive. Beyond getting the international human rights regimes right, lawyers need to be involved in dealing with what Wessells calls “structural injustice.”\textsuperscript{23} Lawyers are needed to work on what legal scholars sometimes refer to as “law and development” work. In addition to promulgating and enforcing legal prohibitions against child soldiering, and punishing adults who exploit children in horrendous ways, lawyers need to think about ways of helping societies repair and reconstruct based on principles of justice. We need to go back to that Italian wheat field and understand why we find it so utterly implausible today as a battlefield.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Id. at 219.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Id. at 219.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Id. at 221-24.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Id. at 233-40.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Id., at 248-57.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Id. at 241-44.
\end{itemize}
BOOK REVIEW: ARMIES OF THE YOUNG: CHILD SOLDIERS IN WAR AND TERRORISM, DAVID M. ROSEN (NEW BRUNSWICK: RUTGERS UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2005, 216 PP. $22.95 (U.S.), PAPERBACK)

KEVIN S. MARSHALL*

"The deepest definition of youth is life as yet untouched by tragedy."
Alfred North Whitehead

By examining several assumptions underlying the modern humanitarian argument vilifying the deployment of child soldiers, Professor Rosen illustrates that the child-solder problem is a complex anthropological issue that cannot be explained as a simple but direct consequence of adult manipulation and exploitation. Not all child soldiers are the product of manipulating, unscrupulous adults; they are many times the invention of a child's individual, rational response to tragic circumstances. And while children are often perceived as vessels of innocence in need of protection, such innocence is often shattered by the ravages of war leaving the young abandoned and unprotected. It is under these circumstances that Rosen dismisses the simplistic notion that the modern child soldier is a contemporary, social phenomenon primarily caused by adult manipulation and exploitation.\(^1\) Rather, child soldiers have always been present in times of war; and more importantly, their presence is often the consequence of a utility-maximizing rational choice driven by an environment of death and despair.\(^2\)

As Professor Rosen notes, the compound term "child soldier" refers to what at first glance may seem to consist of two incompatible ideas: a child, whose essence connotes immaturity, simplicity and an absence of physical, mental and emotional development; and a soldier, typically exemplified by men and women who are skilled in the

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2. Id.
While Rosen observes the contemporary, humanitarian principle that childhood lasts eighteen years, for much of the world "it is by no means clear that all persons under the age of eighteen are or even should be deemed children." In this regard, Rosen inquires, "where do childhood, youth, adolescence and adulthood begin and end?" According to Rosen, the question of childhood is important to the analysis because history demonstrates that "young people have always been on or near the field of battle." For example, anthropologists have frequently observed children at war. Armies of Western Europe and the United States have routinely been filled with "boy soldiers." Among the earliest recruits in Great Britain's Royal Military during the Revolutionary War were twelve and thirteen-year-olds. The Civil War in the United States was characterized as a "war of boy soldiers." And yet, the present humanitarian view naively vili- fies the modern boy soldier as some contemporary anthropological phenomenon.

Much of the emphasis in the recent humanitarian narrative regarding the modern boy soldier is centered on the assumptions of "forced recruitment and abusive exploitation." Although Rosen guardedly concedes the validity of such assumptions with respect to certain geopolitical battlefields, he nonetheless maintains that "the vast majority of child soldiers are not forcibly recruited or abducted into armed forces and groups." In fact, much of the available anthropological evidence is to the contrary, and as such, Rosen argues that there is a strong need to analyze the situation of child soldiers in context, giving due regard to both history and circumstance. To illustrate his point, Rosen examines three conflicts involving the participation of child soldiers: Jewish partisan resistance in Eastern Europe during World War II; the civil war in Sierra Leone; and the Palestinian uprising.

The title of chapter two captures the essence of Rosen's thesis: "Fighting for Their Lives, Jewish Child Soldiers of World War II." As Rosen summarizes:

3. Id. at 3.
4. Id.
5. Id.
6. Id.
7. Id. at 4-5.
8. Id. at 5.
9. Id. at 16.
10. Id. at 17.
11. Id. 18.
When a people or community is at the edge of an abyss, the choices are hard and few. There are no places of safety for children. Some hide, while others take up arms in self-defense. For Jewish children and youth, joining the armed resistance against genocide was a matter of life and death. To be left outside the protective umbrella of self-defense was a death sentence. Under such conditions, the conventional thinking that child soldiers are victims of their recruiters is turned on its head. The recruiters may be their only saviors. Indeed, during the Holocaust, the survival of many Jewish children depended on whether they could join the armed resistance against the Germans and their allies.\footnote{12}

Given that most of the children in the partisan armies were running for their lives, Rosen argues that one is hard pressed to conjure up visions of manipulation and exploitation as dominant causative factors driving the participation of child combatants. Rather, such participation was “driven by a combination of necessity, honor and moral duty.”\footnote{13}

While Rosen is willing to admit to the exploitation of children with respect to the bloody and notorious role of child soldiers in Sierra Leone, he qualifies such exploitation as being part of the widespread abuse and destruction of the population as a whole.\footnote{14} According to Rosen, the manner in which children were drawn into war grew directly from Sierra Leone’s history of oppression and slavery, where for centuries children were exploited in the slave trade. Rosen suggests that the Sierra Leone civil war paradoxically afforded Sierra Leone children a kind of “terrifying freedom of action . . . devastating the country and its people with little restraint.”\footnote{15} And once war broke out, the factors that lured children into war became even more complex:

Some children and youth were bored and attracted to violence. Others felt safer as fighters and armed soldiers than as defenseless civilians. Some came for economic reasons, others because they wanted to defend their homes and villages against rebel actions or to exact revenge for killing of family members. Many joined local militias as volunteers and fought with the support of their kin and community. Some found freedom in anarchy of war and the suspension of rules of civilian life, while others were simply abducted and forced into armed service.\footnote{16}

Throughout his discussion of war-torn Sierra Leone, Rosen remains steadfast in his belief that there is “no single, common social
The history of the Palestinian child soldier further corroborates Rosen's thesis rejecting the contemporary view that child soldiers are simply the consequence of adult manipulation and abuse. According to Rosen, "the involvement of children and youth in the Palestinian national caused emerged out of the sense of cataclysm and catastrophe that permeated Palestinian nationalism." With Palestine under attack by an invading Zionist movement, visions of the apocalypse rallied a people, young and old to the defense of a homeland. Yasir Arafat himself was a child soldier, who by the time he was sixteen had organized some three hundred boys who were designated the "storm troopers of Arab liberation." Rosen observes in summary:

From the beginning children and youth were expected to play a leading part in the struggle against the Jewish presence in Palestine. The death of children and youth (as well as adults) was inevitable. The celebration of the martyrdom and sacrifices of the young has become an essential cultural idiom by which death is interpreted and understood in the Palestinian community.

Utilizing the above case studies, Rosen challenges the "dominant humanitarian concept that child soldiers are simply vulnerable individuals exploited by adults who use them as cheap, expendable, and malleable weapons of war." Anthropologically, Rosen argues that it is irrational to generalize the child soldier problem and ill-advised to adopt a simple, explanatory model grounded on manipulation and abuse. Rather, the analysis of the child soldier problem requires that one acknowledge that "the specifics of history and culture shape the lives of children and youth during peace and war, creating many different kinds of childhood and many different kinds of child soldiers."

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17. Id. at 61.
18. Id. at 93.
19. Id. at 110.
20. Id. at 131.
21. Id. at 132.
22. Id.
BOOK REVIEW: CALLOW BRAVE & TRUE: A GOSPEL OF CIVIL WAR YOUTH, JAY S. HOAR (THOMAS PUBLICATIONS, 1999, 267PP. $20.00 (U.S.) PAPERBACK)

Ed Perez*

Callow Brave & True is an investigative report on military youth during the Civil War.¹ It is the third of a trilogy of Civil War biographies regarding this subject, although neither “The South’s Last Boys in Grey” nor “The North’s Last Boys in Blue” were published.² According to the author, there is very little chronicling of young soldiers in the American military, and he acknowledges the dearth of information on the subject. The bibliography seems extensive for the subject matter.³ Hoar acknowledges that much of the book consists of anecdotal reports obtained through personal interviews with descendents of Civil War veterans, family genealogists, local historians, family letters, information on gravestones, and summaries of newspaper articles.⁴

The issue regarding youth in the military has intensified recently because of armed conflicts in Africa and elsewhere. Of course, there is a huge difference between youth in the American Civil War and youth forced into combat in Africa, and one must read accounts of both to understand the stark disparity.

Hoar analyzes young men in the military between the ages of seven and eighteen. He reports that such soldiers were relatively rare during the Civil War.⁵ Most were volunteers and they were not regularly sent to the front line for combat duty.⁶ They served both the North and South in unarmed noncombatant roles such as musicians (drummers and buglers), flag bearers, administrative assistants (necessary for paperwork associated with the army), valets for officers, ser-

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2. Id. at 221.
3. Id. at 260-64.
4. Id. at 221-23.
5. Id. at xvii.
6. Id.
vants and cooks. Many Civil War youth made careers of the military after they attained the age of eighteen. War casualties were few because of their noncombatant role, although the drummers, buglers and flag bearers were sometimes killed during the charge into combat. Most death was caused by accident or disease. These duties are very unlike those of the boy soldiers conscripted into the military in Africa today, forced to fight, kill, and commit other atrocities.

The book is an interesting attempt to report on the one aspect of youth in American military. In the appendices, the book presents some detailed demographic data on categories of young soldiers, including “The Youngest To Serve” (Appendix A), “Soldier Boy Casualties” (Appendix C), and “Those Youngest Who Served Longest” (Appendix D). The lion’s share of the book consists of forty-eight “Biographical Essays,” each on average two to four pages long, describing individual young soldiers in the Civil War. Unfortunately, once you read a handful, the intrigue is gone and they all appear to be much of the same, although there are several exceptions, such as the account of diminutive charismatic General John L. Clem. His biographical essay is longer and quite interesting. In all, the book is a useful compendium of information on its subject.

7. Id. at xvii-xvix.
8. Id. at 227.
9. Id. at 229.
10. Id. at 232.
11. Id. at 115-28.
BOOK REVIEW: A LONG WAY GONE: MEMOIRS OF A BOY SOLDIER, ISHMAEL BEAH (NEW YORK: FARRAR, STRAUSS AND GIROUX, 2007, 240 PP. $22.00 (U.S.), HARDCOVER)

DIANE UCHIMIYA*

“When I was very little, my father used to say, ‘If you are alive, there is hope for a better day and something good to happen. If there is nothing good left in the destiny of a person, he or she will die.’ I thought about these words during my journey, and they kept me moving even when I didn’t know where I was going. Those words became the vehicle that drove my spirit forward and made it stay alive.”

Ishmael Beah, A long way gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier

A long way gone is wonderfully written, has vivid imagery and great detail. Ishmael Beah, a twenty-six year old graduate of Oberlin College, survived the civil war in Sierra Leone first by fleeing from rebel attacks, later by becoming a child soldier for the government army. His story is heartbreaking, especially because it represents the story of thousands more. Most child soldiers do not share Ishmael’s happy ending. While he does not preach or lecture in the book, he presents the difficulties of the country, as well as the incredible challenges involved in rehabilitating former child soldiers and reintroducing them to civilian life.

Through Beah’s compelling story, the reader learns that the rebel attack caused fear, loss, desperation, and isolation that drove him from being a happy go-lucky kid to a drug-addicted, blood-thirsty child soldier fighting for the government against the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels. Reading about Beah’s experience helps explain how and why children are recruited to fight and the damage they suffer.

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1. ISHMAEL BEAH, A LONG WAY GONE: MEMOIRS OF A BOY SOLDIER 54 (Farrar, Straus & Giroux 2007).
I. DESTROYING VILLAGES

One factor contributing to the creation of child soldiers must be the separation of children from their families, whether it is a deliberate tactic to raise an army or not. From Beah’s descriptions, both the RUF and the military took territory by ravaging villages. Sometimes they burned and destroyed entire villages, killing those who were not fast enough to escape. Other times, they took over villages to use as their own encampments as sources of food and shelter. In their chaotic flight from attacks by either warring faction, families split up with some injured and the dead left behind. Once the children were separated from their parents, they became vulnerable to recruitment by either side.

Beah was only twelve years old when the civil strife in Sierra Leone reached his home town of Mogbwemo. The book details his journey through Sierra Leone, at first traveling with his brother and friends to a neighboring village to participate in a talent show, lip synching rap and dancing when all seemed fine in the country through his youthful eyes. But while they were away, the RUF attacked Mogbwemo and sent people fleeing. He, his brother, and his friends could not return home. They could only hope that their parents had safely escaped. Thus began Beah’s journey, filled with fear of being killed and the worry over the uncertainty of his family’s fate.

II. ONCE SEPARATED, THE GOAL WAS SURVIVAL

The struggle to find safe haven became a struggle to endure gnawing hunger and weakness in addition to the rebel attacks and the emotional tolls of the journey. Those who escaped the rebel attacks had to wonder where the next attack would happen in order to determine where to hide. Beah scoured abandoned villages for food that had been left behind. At times, he benefited from kind strangers, but when that fell short, sometimes he and his companions resorted to stealing food. Beah noted at one point:

One of the unsettling things about my journey, mentally, physically, and emotionally, was that I wasn’t sure when or where it was going to end. I didn’t know what I was going to do with my life. I felt that I was starting over and over again. I was always on the move, always going somewhere. . . . To survive each passing day was my goal in life.²

The attack on Beah’s village left him with his basic needs unmet—food, clothing and shelter. After escaping rebels, narrowly escaping

². Id. at 69.
death by villagers who feared that Beah and the other youths he traveled with were rebel spies, as well as other sobering events, one of Beah’s friends, Saidu said,

Every time people come at us with the intention of killing us, I close my eyes and wait for death. Even though I am still alive, I feel like each time I accept death, part of me dies. Very soon I will completely die and all that will be left is my empty body walking with you.3

Saidu did not survive the journey.

III. Fear of Children—a Sign of the War

The prevalence of child soldiers among both the rebel fighters and the military and the terrible atrocities committed by both sides, people rightfully but sadly became afraid of children, especially groups of boys. Beah wrote that he was “disappointed that the war had destroyed the enjoyment of the very experience of meeting people. Even a twelve-year-old couldn’t be trusted anymore.”4

IV. The Making of a Child Soldier

In his memoir, Beah told his story without judgment, recounting events and surroundings in great detail. The facts demonstrate that Beah and others decided to become child soldiers under duress—not at gunpoint, but by circumstances. A village protected by government soldiers gave Beah and his companions a brief reprieve from their struggles. Finally they had food and shelter along with the company of an entire village. But when rebels finally surrounded the village, the army sergeant gave the boys the choice of staying to help fight for the government or leaving without any provisions to face the rebels.5 The latter seemed like certain death, so they chose to stay.

The military transformed the children into soldiers through physical and tactical training, as well as by exploiting their greatest weakness—the loss of their families. “Over and over [Corporal Gadafi] would say . . . , ‘[v]isualize the enemy, the rebels who killed your parents, your family, and those who are responsible for everything that has happened to you.’”6 A steady diet of rhetoric and Rambo movies made violence and revenge the norm; the steady flow of drugs blocked any mental anguish or remorse, and replaced it with ferocity.

3. Id. at 70.
4. Id. at 48. Entire villages emptied upon hearing rumors that a band of boys approached. Id. at 57.
5. Id. at 110.
6. Id. at 112.
Comrades in war became family. New values replaced old. Instead of feeling pain, loss, and uncertainty, they found that they could take drugs and exact revenge onto the enemy. With that, they gained their comrades’ respect.

V. Rehabilitation and Repatriation

Despite Beah’s successful rehabilitation through UNICEF and many dedicated people, his descriptions of the rehabilitation process made me wonder about the overall success of such programs. Once children are transformed into soldiers, can they ever become children again? What happens to those who cannot shed their anger or overcome the drug addiction? And who volunteers their own lives to work directly with child soldiers in their rehabilitation? In Beah’s account, more than a few people suffered violent, armed attacks by the children.

UNICEF plucked Beah and other boys from the military. It happened suddenly. None of the boys expected it. If they had, they would have fought it. They did not want to be “rehabilitated.” Initially, they were all puzzled because they had been good soldiers. Initially children from opposing sides of the war were housed together, but they fought each other with weapons they had smuggled in. They showed spite and disregard for civilians, respecting only those who had fought in the war on their own side.

Rehabilitation required gradual reeducation. It required them to face each day without drugs, in effect making them face what they each had done for the first time. Each day, no matter what terrible things they did, the ever-patient rehabilitation workers told them over and over again, “[i]t’s not your fault.” After suffering for months through nightmares, migraines, and withdrawal, eventually Beah became transformed again. No longer a child soldier, he is our window into that dark life.

CONCLUSION

Ishmael Beah’s firsthand account, _a long way gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier_ is mesmerizing and important. In the end, I wanted more. Rather than a sign of the author’s failure, it is a sign of his success. Now I want answers to the difficult questions that his life experience posed: What can be done to prevent the recruitment of children to become soldiers? When children have already fought as soldiers, whose responsibility is it to provide rehabilitation? How successful have rehabilitation efforts been? How successful have efforts been to
reintroduce former child soldiers back into society? After all, people already feared children suspected of being child soldiers. How would they treat confirmed former child soldiers?

These are not the questions for Beah to answer. He is a living example of the great success those efforts can accomplish, and he is raising awareness of the tragedy of child soldiers by sharing his story and continuing to work on this issue through Human Rights Watch and other organizations. Even if the answers to those questions are disheartening, rehabilitation efforts and prevention of the future use of child soldiers must be made. We all must remember that it's not their fault.