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Magyar Afrika-kutatás, a jelenség meghatározásának nehézségei, gyermekkatonaság napjainkban, a gyermekkatonaság biztonsági problémái – gyökerek és igazolások, nemzetközi erőfeszítések a megelőzésre – és amikor

a megelőzés kudarcot vall, gyermekkatonák a Kongói Demokratikus Köztársaságban, konklúziók

African studies in Hungary, difficulties of defining the phenomenon, child soldiery in our days, the security causes of child soldiery – roots and justifications, international efforts for prevention – and when prevention fails, child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, conclusions

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CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICTS –
A GENERAL REVIEW OF CHILD SOLDIERY,
ESPECIALLY IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
OF THE CONGO

SZIJJ, Dóra*

(*AARMS*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2010), pp 343–359.)

The paper deals with the phenomenon of child soldiery which can be considered as a new proceed of modern warfare. We examine those security aspects of child soldiery which are able to justify the hypothesis that the deployment of child combatants during the “new” wars is much cheaper and more effective than the adults’ service. The case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) demonstrates that the alarming problems of a collapsed state with constant interstate low-level conflicts or civil wars, the lack of democracy and constitutionality, local tribal traditions, poverty, orphanage etc. generate emergency situations for children. Their defencelessness to survive often urge them to find alternative ways for living, for example child work, child prostitution or even child soldiery. The paper points out the necessity of uniting the international community’s efforts in order to moderate the phenomenon.

Introduction

The hardly-known phenomenon of child soldiery can be considered as a new threat to the security of humanity in our days. According to the statistics, about 250.000–300.000 people under the age of 18 take part in hostilities around the world. The issue does not only emerge on moral aspects of the international public opinion, but it is related to the nature and roots of contemporary wars, especially in the

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decolonized territories. The most important aim of this study is to find the political, social, economic, military, environmental, religious – ethnic and psychological causes which account for the hypothesis that the deployment of child soldiers can be cheaper and more effective in the “Kalashnikov-age”¹ than the adults’ service.

The essay also analyses the relevant documents of international law, emphasizing that despite the strong normative frameworks, there are frequent breaches against the best interests of children just like the essential rule of warfare (the *ius in bello*). We also examine the legal acts of those judicial forums which are dealing with the problem of warlords who used to recruit children for military purposes.

The case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) demonstrates that the alarming problems of a collapsed state with constant intrastate low-level conflicts or civil war, the lack of democracy and constitutionality, local tribal traditions, poverty, orphanage etc. generate emergency situations for children. Their defencelessness to survive often urge them to find alternative ways for living, for example child work, child prostitution or even child soldiery. The paper points out the necessity of uniting the international community’s efforts in order to moderate the phenomenon. Firstly, we have to see that the complex problem of child soldiery cannot be solved in a fast and simple way, but a long-term approach is necessary; the long-lasting remedial programs by ensuring durable financial and professional support from welfare states can be a key issue. We should not talk about successful reintegration of former child soldiers without an efficient social system, suitable workplaces and normal family background and support. Secondly, states which are affected by armed conflicts ought to prevent the escalation of low-level conflicts into civil- or even supranational wars, because “*an unstable neighbourhood, and armed forces acting beyond the borders often re-recruit former child combatants.*”²

Underpinning the practical importance of understanding this phenomenon, I draw a conclusion on the challenges faced and the

¹ KLARE, M.: The Kalashnikov Age. In.: *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 1999, Vol. 1–2, pp. 18–22.

² NYULÁSZ, Viktória: How effective are the international community’s efforts in dealing with children associated with armed conflict in terms of prevention, disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration? Geneva Centre for Security Studies (research paper), 2009, p. 2.

efforts needed to be taken by Central European countries' militaries when facing child soldiers on the field, since the issue is clearly going to become important when the Hungarian Defense Forces or other Central European troops are expected to further extend their peacekeeping missions to African states as well within UN or EU missions.

Difficulties of defining the phenomenon

"Child" and "soldier". Two simple words, but if you piece them together, you will get a hazardous and problematic term of modern warfare.

We need to be aware of the fact that deploying children in armed conflicts is an ancient practice in human history (e.g. Spartan rules of bringing up children, the Childrens' Crusade in the early 13th century, or Hitlerjugend in the 20th century), but the present form of child soldiery is in connection with the *new wars* described by several thought-provoking essays and monographs.³ The presence of child soldiery has been unidentified since 1993 when Graça Machel,⁴ an African politician was asked by Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the then Secretary General of the UN, to write her famous study about the *Impact of armed conflict on children*. This was the first paper – published in 1996 – focusing primarily on the child victims of wars in former colonial territories.⁵ Machel pins down that the escalation of

³ Some of the most significant patterns of new wars are famous for limitless violence (*rise in crime*) which is often hardly distinguished from criminal or political violence. Indirect effects of warfare have been rising while the rules of classical warfare and the role of civilian population have also changed. Systematic breaches of human rights, the long-term nature of *slowing down of wars* are further characteristics. During my study I was applying the theories of Mary Kaldor and Herfried Münkler. (Source: KALDOR, MARY: *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (2nd edition). Polity Press, Cambridge, 2006; MÜNKLER, HERFRIED: *Die neuen Kriege*. Rowohlt Taschenburg Verlag, Hamburg, 2002.)

⁴ GRAÇA MACHEL (born: Graça Simbine) also served as Mozambique's first post-independence Minister for Education. She is the widow of the country's first President, Samora Machel, killed in an airplane crash in 1986.

⁵ 33. http://www.unicef.org/graca/a51-306_en.pdf; pp. 5–73, Retrieved on 3 April 2010.

local conflicts cannot be prevented due to lack of democratic principles and state control, and people forget taboos like maltreatment of women and children during such unstable periods. Machel called this phenomenon *moral vacuum* when children are directly affected by war.

The definition of child soldiery raises serious problems. First of all, the interpretation of childhood in the affected nations differs from the European-American patterns. It is problematic to define the age limit of childhood in *young states*; being 18 years old in Europe is a totally different from reaching that age in Africa. Furthermore, there are contradictions in the extent of the category, too. These dilemmas are not solved yet, we know more approaches to the theme via the relevant documents.

Child soldiery was first defined by the Cape Town Principles in 1997. This milestone document declares that “any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members. The definition includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriage.”⁶ Therefore, it does not only refer to children who carry arms. On the other hand, the latest definition of child soldiery, was written in 2007, the Paris Principles and Guidelines distinguishes three groups among children: (1) child combatants – who are carrying arms; (2) children associated with armed forces or armed groups – this group was defined by the Cape Town Principles; (3) children affected by armed conflicts – war affected children like refugees, IDPs, orphans, street children etc.⁷ This paper deals with the second group with the acceptance of that the age limit for recruiting is 18 years. Therefore, we ignore examination those documents which allocated a fifteen year minimum age for permissible recruitment (Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1977; Convention on the Rights of the Child /1989/; Optional Protocol to the Convention

⁶ 44. [http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/Cape_Town_Principles\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/Cape_Town_Principles(1).pdf); p. 8, Retrieved on 3 April 2010.

⁷ 55. <http://www.un.org/children/conflict/english/parisprinciples.html>; Retrieved on 3 April 2010.

on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts /2000/).⁸

Child soldiery in our days

The estimated number of child soldiers approximates 250.000–300.000. However, most of the documents, reviews and expert papers admit that this data is an estimation only, but there is no opportunity to announce correct facts. The difficulties for counting child soldiers come from the elusive nature of the phenomenon, because child combatants and their fellows live apart from the fields of civil society: they often camp in jungles or strictly-guarded military territories. Therefore, it is often life-threatening to access them. Furthermore, a lot of former combatants reintegrated to society do not uncover their earlier life experiences because they are afraid of stigmatization of the society. To sum up, we cannot present accurate and genuine surveys in order to count all child soldiers.

According to the most relevant summary on the topic, *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008*⁹ approximately 21 countries and other non-recognized territories (e.g. Palestinian Authority) are guilty of deploying children in hostilities. The most important regions are the following:

Table 1. The deployment of child soldiers in modern conflicts

Source: Child Soldiers Global Report 2008, pp. 2–3

Available at: <http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org>. Retrieved on 3 April 2010

Country	Child soldiers on governmental forces	Child soldiers on paramilitary groups
Burundi	X	
Chad	X	X

⁸ 66. <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/full/470?opendocument>; <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>; <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc-conflict.htm>; Retrieved on 3 April 2010.

⁹ 77. <http://www.child-soldiers.org/library/global-reports>; Retrieved on 3 April 2010.

Cote d'Ivoire		X
India	X	X
Indonesia	X	
Iran		X
Israel	X	
Columbia	X	X
Congo (DRC)	X	X
Lybia		X
Myanmar	X	X
Nepal	X	
Peru		X
Philippines		X
Somalia	X	
Sudan	X	X
Uganda	X	X
Yemen	X	
Zimbabwe		X



Figure 1. States deploying child soldiers
Edited by: Dóra Sziij

At the same time, the review does not examine and include those countries where military values often form an integral part of educational programs and recreational settings, where children's physical and intellectual development takes place.¹⁰ For example, school children in Argentina, Bolivia, China, North-Korea, the Russian Federation or in the United Arab Emirates can take part in special military routemarches and trainings which are often part of

¹⁰ 88. <http://www.child-soldiers.org/library/global-reports>; Retrieved on 3 April 2010.

their normal schoolwork. In addition, youngsters over the age of 17 in the USA, the UK or Canada can join the military with parental admission – but for non-hostile missions only.

Giving a comprehensive and also objective description of child soldiers' life is not an easy mission. Authentic narratives are provided by on-the-spot reports, documentaries, personal interviews with (former) child soldiers only or films shot during the special rehabilitation process, the DDR.¹¹ Due to the apprehension of bias and guilty conscience, child soldiers do not like talking about their experience and memories, so their interrogation happens in indirect ways such as song- or drawing therapies. Autobiographic novels like the best-seller book of former child combatant Ishmael Beah, or poems by Ahmadou Kourouma give us an additional source for understanding the life of these children.¹²

It is very important to know that children on the one hand can take part in hostilities voluntarily or on the other hand as a result of forced recruitment, so there are different methods of enlistment – from demagoguery to mutilation – to persuade children for joining the military. After conscription children have to live in military camps with adults which demands imitation from children. 'Older' boys (from the age 10–11) receive their first uniform and rifle to learn fighting while younger boys are charged with secondary tasks, e.g. cooking, washing. Girls are often chosen for sexual abuses and practically function as slaves of commanders; or they also can become combatants. Children often use drugs to distort their personality and watch action films to maintain fighting spirit. They must become totally inhuman while learning the basic rule: 'you kill or you get killed'.

¹¹ DDR= disarmament, demobilization, reintegration.

¹² 99. BEAH, Ishmael: *Gyerekkatona voltam Afrikában, amíg ti játszottatok* (A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier). Nyitott Könyvm hely, Budapest, 2008; KOURAMA, Ahmadou: *Allah nem köteles méltányosnak lenni az evilági dolgokban* (Allah is not obliged to be fair about all the things he does here on earth). Ulpius-ház Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 2002.

The security causes of child soldiery – roots and justifications

Child soldiery of course is not only a military issue, but has deep roots and far reaching consequences. Therefore, we should have to analyze the political, social, economic, environmental, military and psychological relations of child soldiery with the method of *securitisation* of Barry Buzan and Richard Little.

A. Political causes: If we focus on the third world's characteristics and its alarming problems we should see that political causes of child soldiery are closely related to the democratic and also economic backwardness. According to the famous neoliberalist journalist, Robert D. Kaplan, those developing countries which the western enlightenment did not reach and residents are suffering from extreme poverty often find relief in violence.¹³ And we have seen some examples to justify this idea in connection with Africa... Furthermore, these unstable states are not able to offer fully comprehensive insurance for their citizens due to their overall policy (weak political parties/lack of parties, widespread corruption, faulty bureaucracy, lack of the law's respect etc.). Therefore, governments cannot protect their people from the supranational wars and the incursion of external stock that are getting more and more common. But if the existence of statism is in danger, children will not receive protection which will lead to promoting exploitation of children.

B. Social causes: Child soldiery is a familiar phenomenon in young societies where the proportion of 14-year-old or younger children is near to 50%.¹⁴ Raising children has insecure financial and social background due to the huge number of unemployed adults. In addition, *extended families* can be considered as another root of child soldiery in many

African countries. Nuclear family patterns are not known in many places, so a lot of children are brought up in extended families with more generations living together, but with less individual care. It is

¹³ 1010. KAPLAN, ROBERT DAVID: The coming Anarchy. In.: *The Atlantic Monthly*, 1994 February, <<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1994/02/the-coming-anarchy/4670/>; Retrieved on 4 April 2010>

¹⁴ E.g.: Burundi: 46%; Chad: 48%; DRC: 47%; Sierra Leone: 45%; Somalia: 44%; Sudan: 43%. Source: The Military Balance 2009. IISS, Routledge, Taylor&Francis Group, London, 2009; p. 291, 294, 297, 317, 318, 320.

easy to see that stronger emotional cohesion in a smaller family can give a better shelter for children against depriving social influences. For instance, most African colonies had to face unknown principles and customs adopted from the former colonizer after becoming independent. These new ideas overshadowed tribal traditions resulting in huge social stress. The methods for dissolving this stress were ethnic/religious conflicts, military coups, dictatorships, civil wars or even genocides. The long-lasting nature of recited problems do not allow regulating social issues in the short term: state building is still in its infancy while the number of war-affected children are continually rising. In short, weak social and family frameworks coupling persistent political–ethnic problems do not serve the interests of children.

C. Economic causes: We can find an obvious relationship between the economic causes of using child combatants and the economic causes of new wars. The most representative case of the hidden economic interests of power politics' is the civil war in Sierra Leone (1991–2002), but we can also mention that the complex problem of child soldiery is also fed by the proliferation of SALWs¹⁵ via the numerous illegal transactions from Europe to developing countries. On the other hand, child soldiery has been defined by economists as an accompanied symptom with comparative advantages in contemporary armed conflicts. Certain experts (like Jens Andvig and Scott Gates) declare transparently that the advantages of a child soldier are exactly measurable by the Marshall-cross model. Other researchers (like Alcinda Honwana) say that children became 'commercial goods' and the source of supply (S) in many cases (they call the process *commodification of children*).¹⁶ If we consider the opportunity of using the demand (D) – supply (S) model, we will enumerate the following advantages of deploying children in hostilities:¹⁷

- Causes in terms of demand (D):
 - o Fast proliferation of SALWs,

¹⁵ Small arms and lights weapons.

¹⁶ 1111. These theories are summarized by the Hungarian expert of the topic, Beáta Paragi. PARAGI, Beáta: Gyerekkatonák Afrikában. In.: *Külügyi Szemle*, 2008/4; pp. 57–80.

¹⁷ 1212. According to Paragi's research, also adding my own opinion.

- o Advantages of children's age (they learn fast, they are loyal, they have no criminal responsibility etc.),
- o It is unnecessary to provide payment for them,
- o Structure of armed group (children-adults rate),
- o Adequacy for the aims and military qualifications of the armed group.

- Causes in terms of supply (S):

- o Bad social, family background,
- o Losing family members, friends resulting in loneliness,
- o Feeling of becoming adults,
- o Impact of warlike environment and experience,
- o Following family members (often siblings) or friends,
- o Individual belief (religious, ideological),
- o Shrinking opportunities to gain soil (by marriage or inheritance),
- o Poverty.

D. Environmental causes: In accordance with the examples mentioned above, child soldiery is much common in unfertile rural and underdeveloped industrial areas. Environmental causes make impacts felt indirectly, with multiple transcriptions. Thomas Fraser Homer-Dixon drafted the connection between environmental factors and violence; pointing out that the fewer environmental sources the more aggressive struggle for them. Such '*casus belli*' often coincides with religious or ethnic aspects leading to often fanatic, immoral wars.¹⁸ But until there are enough resources and suitable conditions for living, people do not launch attacks for environmental aims. Therefore, until children have normal chances for feeding and working, they will not look for other alternatives of making a living.

E. Military-psychological causes: If we consider the fact that armed forces/armed groups deploying child soldiers follow the rules of *guerilla warfare*, we should see the advantages of young recruits. For instance, their tiny figure can be very useful by hit raid or hiding, they are fast, brave, easily motivated. They are tough and learn fast how to use AK-47 rifles; while their most important advantage is

¹⁸ 1313. HOMER-DIXON, THOMAS FRASER: On The Threshold: Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict. In.: *International Security*. Trudeau Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Toronto; 1991/2; pp. 76–116. <<http://www.library.utoronto.ca/pes/thresh/thresh1.htm>; Retrieved on 4 April 2010>

their narrow consciousness. The absolute loyalty to their commander reside in different customs. First of all, children have to obey in order to survive. Second, commanders take up father's/headmen's role among children and this can result in a strong will for being eligible. Children follow all patterns they saw – without any payment. Furthermore, they are often driven by vindictiveness for killed family members or friends whereby they become much more bloodthirsty.

International efforts for prevention – and when prevention fails

There is no doubt that the total liquidation or at least the mitigation of child soldiery often seems to be hopeless. The international community has achieved just minor success' in prevention. The most significant problem resides in deficiency of the relevant documents of international law: these "soft-law" documents are not able to cover all cases of prevention or take sanctions. The chart below shows milestone documents in terms of child soldiery.

Table 2. Milestone documents in the field of child soldiery
Edited by: Dóra Sziij according to Nyulász, Viktória: How effective are the international community's efforts in dealing with children associated with armed conflict in terms of prevention, disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration? Geneva Centre for Security Studies (research paper), 2009, p. 13.

Document	Year	Who adopted? Who signed?	Age	Definitions	Yes/No	Legally binding? Sanctionable?
Geneva Conventions – Additional Protocol (Protocol I and Protocol II)	1977	Adopted by the Diplomatic Conference: 1974–1977. Protocol I: Signatories: 5; Parties: 168. Protocol II: Signatories: 4; Parties: 164.	15	Combatants	Yes	Yes Yes
				Members of armed groups in other capacity (cooks, porters, messengers, spies, sexual slaves)	No	
				Girl soldiers	No	
				Girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage	No	
Convention of the Rights of the Child	1989	Adopted by UN General Assembly resolution: A/RES/44/25 of 2 September 1989 Signatories: 140; Parties: 193	15	Combatants	Yes	No No
				Members of armed groups in other capacity (cooks, porters, messengers, spies, sexual slaves)	No	
				Girl soldiers	No	
				Girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage	No	
Cape Town Principles	1997	Defined by an UNICEF-led symposium. No ratification process.	18	Combatants	Yes	No No
				Members of armed groups in other capacity (cooks, porters, messengers, spies, sexual slaves)	Yes	
				Girl soldiers	No	
				Girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage	No	
Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court	1998	Adopted by UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/53/105 of 8 December 1998 Signatories: 139; Parties: 108	15	Combatants	Yes	Yes Yes
				Members of armed groups in other capacity (cooks, porters, messengers, spies, sexual slaves)	No	
				Girl soldiers	No	
				Girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage	No	

International Labour Organization Convention Nr. 182. on the Worst Forms of Child Labour	1999	Adopted by the International Labour Organisation. 191 states ratified.	18	Combatants	Yes	Yes Yes
				Members of armed groups in other capacity (cooks, porters, messengers, spies, sexual slaves)	No	
				Girl soldiers	No	
				Girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage	No	
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child	2000	Adopted by UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/54/263 of 25 May 2000 Signatories: 124, Parties: 127	18	Combatants	Yes	No No
				Members of armed groups in other capacity (cooks, porters, messengers, spies, sexual slaves)	No	
				Girl soldiers	No	
				Girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage	No	
UN Security Council Resolutions on Children in armed conflicts 1261 (1999) 1296 (2000) 1314 (2000) 1379 (2001) 1460 (2003) 1539 (2004) 1612 (2005)	1999–2005	Adopted by the UN Security Council. No ratification process.	18	Combatants	Yes	No Yes
				Members of armed groups in other capacity (cooks, porters, messengers, spies, sexual slaves)	No	
				Girl soldiers	Yes	
				Girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage	Yes	
Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups	2007	Developed by the UNICEF's Child Protection Section, adopted by the Global Ministerial Meeting Paris (participants: 59 countries, several international organizations and NGOs). No ratification process.	18	Combatants	Yes	No No
				Members of armed groups in other capacity (cooks, porters, messengers, spies, sexual slaves)	Yes	
				Girl soldiers	Yes	
				Girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage	Yes	

Although the number of documents do not necessarily indicate different loopholes, but significant problems can be discovered by thoroughly examining them. This relatively new issue in legal aspects has not allowed a comprehensive international practice to develop so far. There is a wide variety of definitions of age limit, the content of 'what constitutes a child soldier', and inconsistency of legally binding sanctions. Most of the documents strictly prohibit the recruitment of children, but their enforceability in armed conflicts face uneliminated obstacles. Thus, law enforcement would be vital, but fails to prevent recruiting children, so other efforts have to be expected from the

international community. At the same time, the work of some special judicial forums, especially the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague can hopefully provide deterrent precedents through the heavy penalties of warlords in the near future. ICC, which defines child recruitment as a war crime in the Rome Statute,¹⁹ is examining the case of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, former commander of the Congolese militia (UPC) and SCSL is investigating former Liberian prime minister, Charles Taylor's case in connection with recruiting children to participate in hostilities. Talks are going on now.²⁰

When the direct aims of legal acts fail, children fall into the trap of (forced) recruitment. Systematic demoralization begins which naturally result in never-lasting difficulties for them. It is obvious that the return to normal life is very problematic after such inhuman treatment and shocking experience. Therefore, DDR-programs are very beneficial for these children. The acronym 'DDR' stands for *disarmament, demobilization and reintegration*. This 3-step-method means:

- Disarmament means the physical removal of weapons from troops, which means collecting and destroying weapons.
- Demobilization entails the disbanding of armed groups and sending ex-soldiers to DDR-camps.
- Reintegration is a special rehabilitation process to help former child soldiers adapting to civil society.

In some African states DDR is an integral part of the Security Sector Reform (SSR),²¹ which programs operate not only for child soldiers, but for adult soldiers, too. In the case of child soldiers, the third step is the hardest, sometimes it is the turning point. Children have to re-learn the norms and customs of 'normal' life during the

¹⁹ "For the purpose of this Statute, <war crimes> mean: [...] Conscripting or enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into armed forces or groups or using them to participate actively in hostilities [...]" Rome Statute, Article 8/e (vii)

²⁰ 1414. <http://www.charlestaylortrial.org/> and <http://www.lubangatrial.org/>; Retrieved on 5 April 2010.

²¹ 1515. SPECHT, Irma: Children and DDR. In.: Nosworthy: *Seen, but not Heard: Placing Children and Youth on the Security Governance Agenda*. Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Geneva, 2009, p. 192.

reintegration process: they have to go to school, they have their own psychologist, they try to process their war experience with song- and drawing-therapy or they learn professions (e.g. car mechanic, tailor). But the hardest point for them is the lack of drugs which results in clear consciousness and a serious sense of guilt.²² Furthermore, DDR-specialists have to prevent the re-recruiting of these children, what still remains a danger.

Thus DDR is a complex mechanism from the point of view of social policy, humanitarian affairs and economy as well. If reintegration of former combatants proves to be successful and there are suitable work opportunities for making a living, they will be able to avoid further armed tasks. However, long-lasting peace and secure, stable living conditions have to be created via regional or international cooperation.²³ The mission of the international community, especially of welfare states can materialize even in the durable support of DDR-programs, because DDR can be a new chance for a new life.

Child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Though I do not have the opportunity to elaborate on the country's contemporary history, we still have to keep in mind that there have been constant conflicts going on with approximately 5.5–6 million victims since the first Congo War in 1996. The French historian, Gérard Prunier argued in his latest book²⁴ that the first (1996–1997) and second (1998–2003) Congo Wars can be described as 'Africa's World War' because of the numerous victims, violations of humanitarian law and also the number of belligerent countries (at least

²² 1616. According to the presentation of a volunteer of the African-Hungarian Union, Ildikó SZILASI, under the title 'Children of war', on 25 March 2009, in Budapest, at the Zrínyi Miklós National Defense University.

²³ 1717. BESENYŐ, János: Az ENSZ leszerelési, demobilizációs és reintegrációs programjai Afrikában. In: *Honvédségi Szemle*, 2009/1; p. 24.

²⁴ 1818. PRUNIER, Gérard: From Genocide to Continental War: The 'Congolese' Conflict and the Crisis of Contemporary Africa. C. Hurst & Co, London, 2009.

12 African states were involved in the fights). Congo²⁵ is an already collapsed state with weak state neighbors (Central African Republic, Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Zambia, Republic of the Congo) populated by almost 200 tribes and ethnic groups. Its geopolitical position and the significant resources of oil, diamond and water make Congo a superior power in the region. But neighboring countries (and we can add China and France, too) aspire for these resources and also take sides in the Congolese minorities' fights. For instance, when the Rwandan tutsi–hutu conflict escalated in 1994, Congolese tutsis were killed by the escaping Rwandan hutu militia, by the Interahamwe in the provinces of Kivu and Orientale, bordering Rwanda. This started a chain reaction of events in regional level and resulted in mutual ethnic cleansing and continuous flow of refugees thanks to the different armed groups supported by bargaining states.²⁶ Further countries like Angola, Namibia, Chad, Zimbabwe, Lybia and Burundi interfered for economic reasons. The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in 1999 and the Pretoria Accord in 2002 suspended fights for a while and UN started its MONUC-mission in Congo.²⁷ix In spite of the ongoing UN mission the conflict renewed in 2004 when Laurent Nkunda, tutsi commander of CNDP (National Congress for the Defense of the People), launched attacks against area of North Kivu in order to annex the town of Goma. The crisis culminated in the summer of 2008 when UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon admitted: the situation in Congo is considered as a humanitarian crisis.²⁸ However, though Nkunda was captured in January 2009,²⁹ the situation has not improved since; OCHA now estimates that there are

²⁵ Congo (DRC), which became independent from Belgium in 1960, should not to be mistaken for the Republic of the Congo.

²⁶ For example the Rwandan tutsi administration supported Congolese tutsis to found AFDL (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo) which were fighting against the Congolese State Army (FARDC= Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo) and Interahamwe.

²⁷ According to UN Security Council resolution 1279 United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo started its peacekeeping mission in 1999. Its mandate has been prolonged until 31 May 2010 by the Security Council resolution 1906. Source: <http://monuc.unmissions.org/>; Retrieved on 5 April 2010.

²⁸ 1919. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200903021779.html>; Retrieved on 5 April 2010.

²⁹ 20. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7850086.stm>; Retrieved on 5 April 2010.

a total of over 1.000.000 internally displaced people in North Kivu only – one-fifth of the province's total population.³⁰²¹

The phenomenon of child soldiery appeared in Congo in 1998 when Laurent Désire Kabila, then prime minister of the country ordered the Congolese army to recruit children to take part in hostilities. National factories produced thousands of military boots and uniforms for these children, the so called 'kadogo'-s. Approximately 30.000 children were fighting between 2003 and 2006 in the civil war, not just in the Congolese Army but in smaller rebellious groups (UPC, CNDP) as well.³¹ One third of these children were girls recruited for both military and sexual purposes.³² In 2003, prime minister Joseph Kabila (son of the assassinated Laurent Désire Kabila) prohibited using children for any actions, but this practice was maintained by the CNDP and other rural militias.

The DDR program in Congo was initiated by the World Bank. The World Bank and some other donors established the Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDPR) in 2002 which started the child DDR-process in 2006 with the volunteers of UNICEF, MONUC and other NGOs. The DDR in Congo is supervised by a state commission called CONADER (Commission Nationale de Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réinsertion). Due to the inadequate infrastructure there were serious problems in the initial phase of this work, but approximately 23.000 children have been reintegrated by now. In spite of this, 7000 child soldiers are still fighting in Congo alone.³³

³⁰ 2121. http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/drcongo_31379.html; Retrieved on 5 April 2010.

³¹ 2222. HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH: *Renewed Crisis in North Kivu*, p. 48. <<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2007/10/22/renewed-crisis-north-kivu>; Retrieved on 5 April 2010>

³² UNICEF: Child Alert Democratic Republic of Congo: Martin Bell Reports on Children Caught in War, 2006, p. 4. <http://www.unicef.org/childalert/-drc/content/Child_Alert_DRC_en.pdf; Retrieved on 5 April 2010>

³³ AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL: *DRC, Children at War: Creating Hope for their Future*. <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR62/017/2006>; Retrieved on 5 April 2010>

Conclusions

The case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo exemplifies well that effective changes will not be achieved without stable political, social and economic basis. Short- term goals must be transplanted into long-term strategies in order to deepen successful methods. But first of all, there is a need for drastic transformation in the way of thinking about child soldiery. States that deploy child soldiers must recognize *independently* that their practice is a war crime. However, it will be a very problematic and long process because of the aforementioned cultural causes.

This transformation can be a ground for further intentions to develop. The international community ought to ensure constant economic, medical and educational assistance, though without intervention. Nowadays we often hear about neocolonialism and the bargaining process of 'minerals for infrastructure' in connection with DRC and some welfare (France) and developing states (China). But increasing the country's dependence does not help any preferable processes. It is like a new idea, but some kind of altruism and remaining engaged ought to be required from cooperating states. We should emphasize such initiations like the Belgian Red Cross (Croix Rouge Belgium) which arranges DDR-programs free for Congo in order to compensate former colonial territories. The international community has to guarantee opportunities for learning, working, cooperating with local authorities and NGOs to reach more efficient practice on the ground.

But the key element is prevention – beyond a normative framework. Durable peace is needed to prevent children being easily affected by armed conflicts. Therefore states have to prevent the escalation of local conflicts into civil wars, while the international community should moderate the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). In addition, DDR-programs should preclude re-recruiting of former child soldiers not letting them to join troops again.

Moderating the number of child soldiers is such an important mission for the international community in the third world as handling problems of food- and water security, refugees, piracy, illegal drug- or human trafficking, proliferation of SALWs, illiteracy, AIDS etc. If we consider that child soldiers are deployed in approximately 75% of

contemporary wars and we are examining the relationship with new security challenges, we must draw some conclusions. Taking into account the EU-run peacekeeping missions (e.g. EU NAVFOR Somalia, EUTM Somalia, EUSEC RD Congo), we should see that child soldiery is a common phenomenon on these fields of operation. Therefore, it is possible that more and more Central European soldiers will meet the phenomenon of child soldiery.

It will be practical for national armies to use the *lessons learned* and the *best practices* of peacekeepers who are already experienced in this issue. These (future) peacekeepers have to learn that this phenomenon is not a deviant and isolated characteristic of the third world, but it is a result of decolonization and new wars. Hungarian and other peacekeepers have to be trained, educated and prepared to handle cases when they meet child soldiers. On the other hand, child soldiers still cannot be categorized in martial law (*'Are they soldiers or just children with weapons?'*), therefore they need to get a different treatment during a peacekeeping mission. To sum up, familiarization of this theme will be useful in the long run.

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