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The Influence of Colonialism on the Child Soldier Phenomenon: A Comparison of Myanmar and South Sudan

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to establish if colonialism influences the child soldier phenomenon in postcolonial states and to what extent. The hypothesis is that colonialism influences the child soldier phenomenon in postcolonial countries, including the reasons for their usage, and then their recruitment and use. This study is achieved by exploring the case studies of Myanmar and South Sudan, two countries which have experienced colonialism and have used child soldiers in their recent or current civil wars. This study's findings are analysed using a comparative analysis of these two cases and are compared against the impacts of colonialism. The impacts of colonialism are discussed using a five-variable impact model. These impacts of colonialism are also impacts of child soldier usage. Therefore, this study follows a three-step process in which colonialism is the beginning stage, the five-variable impact model is the middle stage, and then these impacts influencing child soldiers is the end stage. Primary and secondary sources are used including questionnaires, reports, newspapers and academic journals for the collection of data. The participants completing the questionnaires are divided into academic and professional backgrounds. The data is analysed using content analysis and deductive analysis of the two comparable case studies. The research indicates that colonialism does generally influence the contextual reasons for child soldier usage. It demonstrates that colonialism influences the recruitment and use of child soldiers to a lesser extent than the contextual reasons for their use. This research is important because it provides a new perspective to the study of child soldiers. By understanding which conditions cause armed groups to recruit children, governments and organisations can prevent these conditions, helping to limit use of child soldiers.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Literature Review.....	9
2.1 The Concept of a Child	9
2.1.1 Social Constructionist View	9
2.1.2 Legal Framework.....	10
2.1.3 Perception of a Child in South Sudan and Myanmar	12
2.2 The Concept of a Child Soldiers	14
2.2.1 Definition of a Child Soldier	14
2.2.2 Roles of Children in Armed Groups.....	15
2.2.3 Reasons for the Use of Child Soldiers	16
2.2.4 Methods of Recruitment	19
2.3 Colonialism and Postcolonialism	20
2.3.1 Definition of Colonialism.....	20
2.3.2 Approaches to Colonial Theory	22
2.3.3 Definition of Postcolonialism	23
2.3.4 Approaches to Postcolonial Theory.....	24
2.3.5 Impacts of Colonialism and Postcolonialism	26
2.4 Gaps and Contributions	28
3. Research Design	29
3.1 Analytical Framework.....	30
3.2 Methodology	33
3.3 Limitations and Challenges of Research	36
4. Framing Colonialism: A Model of its Impacts.....	38
4.1 Poverty.....	38
4.2 Undemocratic Governance	40
4.3 Displacement	41
4.4 Conflict.....	42
4.5 Ethnic Tensions	44
4.6 Conclusion	45
5. Case Study: Myanmar	46
5.1 Myanmar's Colonial History	46
5.2 Civil War in Myanmar.....	48
5.3 Reasons for the Use of Child Soldiers in Myanmar	50
5.4 Recruitment of Child Soldiers in Myanmar.....	55
5.5 Roles and Use of Child Soldiers in Myanmar	57
5.5 Conclusion	60

6. Case Study: South Sudan	61
6.1 South Sudan’s Colonial History	62
6.2 Civil War in South Sudan	64
6.3 Reasons for the Use of Child Soldiers in South Sudan	66
6.4 Recruitment of Child Soldiers in South Sudan.....	72
6.5 Roles and Use of Child Soldiers in South Sudan.....	74
6.6 Conclusion	76
7. Comparative Analysis	78
7.1 Similarities.....	78
7.2 Differences.....	80
7.3 Conclusion	83
8. Future Importance, Recommendations and Conclusion	84
8.1 Future Importance and Recommendations.....	84
8.2 Conclusion	86
Bibliography	89
Appendix 1	107
Appendix 2	109

1. Introduction

The use of child soldiers during conflict has existed for many centuries and is still very much an ongoing human rights issue in contemporary times. The use of child soldiers has occurred by both state and non-state armed groups, including legitimate government armed forces in some countries (UNICEF, 2021). Both state and non-state armed groups have used, and still use, children in conflicts for a variety of roles. These can include combat roles and support roles. Support roles can include domestic roles such as cooks and cleaners, gathering resources such as food or water or intelligence gathering roles (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, n.d.). They can also include looting and destroying enemy territory or other aggressive roles which aren't necessarily combatant roles. This is an important part of understanding child soldiers as it can be a common misconception that they are only used for combat roles. Children in armed groups can also face severe treatment such as beatings and sexual based violence. Furthermore, girls are used by armed groups occasionally for combat roles, but additionally for domestic roles, marriage or sexual slavery. The situation of child soldier use has become more prevalent in the last decades (Child Soldiers International, 2019). Children are recruited in a variety of ways by armed groups including voluntary and forced recruitment. Voluntary recruitment can include those who have been manipulated to believe joining a group will be beneficial to improve their quality of life, or other similar reasons. Forced recruitment can be armed groups abducting children or blackmailing families to hand over their children (Brett, 2003, p.857).

The use of child soldiers is found in many postcolonial countries and the increased use of child soldiers has occurred in the aftermath of colonisation; after a colonial power has left a country in an often-deplorable position. It is therefore clear that there could potentially be a connection between these two occurrences, especially as many countries which have not been colonised do not use child soldiers. There are potential reasons why countries use child soldiers which can be described as background, contextual issues which can result in their use. These can include conflict, poverty, undemocratic governance, displacement and ethnic tensions. All of these potential causes of child soldiers are also impacts of colonialism, showing that there is a possible link between them, or that colonialism can influence a country in the postcolonial stage enough that use of children in conflict is both more likely and more severe.

This study will be examining if it is the case that colonisation does have an influence on the child soldier phenomenon in postcolonial countries. In order to assess this, the case studies of Myanmar and South Sudan will be analysed and compared. These countries were colonised by the same coloniser, have had or are currently undergoing a civil war within the last decade, and are both known for their use of child soldiers by armed groups and government forces.

In order to assess if colonialism influences the child soldier phenomenon, this study will include various sections. Firstly, an exploration of the literature surrounding the topic will be undertaken. This will include literature regarding the concept of a child, including both a social constructionist view and the legal framework. Following from this, the literature regarding the concept of child soldiers will be discussed including the definition, reasons for use, recruitment and

roles. Subsequently, the literature surrounding colonialism and postcolonialism will be examined. This will include the definition and approaches to the theory of both. Following from the literature review will be the research design. This will include the analytical framework of the study, the methodology used and a discussion of the limitations and challenges of the research. After this, the analytical section of the study will commence. This will begin with an explanation of the model used to analyse the influence of colonialism. This model will be using five variables which are both impacts of colonialism and causes of child soldier use, which are poverty, displacement, undemocratic governance, ethnic tensions and conflict. This is needed to explain that this study is arguing that colonialism causes these impacts, then these impacts cause child soldier use, hence why it is only arguing that colonialism influences, not causes, child soldier use. Next, the two case studies will be examined. This will be undertaken by giving an introduction into colonialism in the country followed by an introduction into the civil war there. Next, reasons for child soldier use, recruitment and then roles of children in armed groups will be discussed, including how they are influenced by the five-variable model. Following this, the comparative analysis will take place, examining similarities and differences between the cases. This study will then finish with a conclusion exploring if the hypothesis was correct, a summary of the findings and future importance, implications and recommendations.

This study will be following a hypothesis that colonialism influences the child soldier phenomenon in postcolonial countries, including the reasons for their usage, and then their recruitment and use. Therefore, the expected outcome and findings of this study are that, through the analysis of the representative case studies of Myanmar and South Sudan, colonialism has influenced why and the extent to which child

soldiers are used, how they are recruited and their roles within civil wars. It is expected that the five-variable model will show that colonialism causes the impacts in the model, and then that these impacts influence and worsen the child soldier phenomenon.

The significance and importance of this research is that it will provide a new perspective on the study of child soldiers. Current literature presents an understudied area in the background reasons for the child soldier phenomenon and does not explore how the issue actually is caused. The importance of this study is to provide some background causes of child soldier use, and give a potential explanation of what influences this, colonialism. This will aim to fill a gap in the current literature. The importance of studying a new perspective of the study of child soldiers is that it can aim to provide better understanding of why they are used, and how, aiding future knowledge. Understanding the conditions in which children become soldiers and the reasons why can potentially help with future prevention. Learning of the conditions in postcolonial states can help to improve these conditions and potentially improve the child soldier situation. It is also important to continue postcolonial study and critiques as colonialism is still causing impacts in postcolonial countries and for people from ex-colonies. Colonial study can help understand injustices, promote decolonisation, prevent Eurocentric thought and promote cultural understanding, both in the field of child soldiers and beyond.

2. Literature Review

This section will discuss the theory and current literature surrounding child soldiers, colonialism and postcolonialism. This will include the concept of a child, including the legal framework of the age of a child, the social constructionist viewpoint of the concept being dependent on context, and the meaning of a child in the case study countries, South Sudan and Myanmar. Next, literature surrounding child soldiers will be discussed, including the definition, reasons for use, recruitment and roles. Following this, colonialism and postcolonialism will be discussed, including definitions, changes in literature in recent years and impacts of these. Finally, the gaps and contributions to the literature will be addressed.

2.1 The Concept of a child

2.1.1 Social Constructionist View

It is important to understand various conceptualisations of “what is a child” as stated in literature. This is because there can be discrepancies regarding the age at which someone is no longer a child. Therefore, it can be conflicting as to whether a government or insurgent group is committing a human rights violation by their own definition or by a legal definition. The concept of a child, therefore, can be considered a social construct because in different societies and regions there are different roles and expectations for children, with some placing increased emphasis on the importance of “childhood” and others considering children to be capable of “adult” roles. Academic Heather Montgomery suggests that despite all societies recognising the difference between adults and children, understandings of children and

childhood are not the same everywhere, that expectations of children change according to the society in which they live in (Montgomery, 2022). For example, it can be said that in the “Western” world, places such as Europe or the United States, children are viewed as dependent or even incompetent. Children in these societies are not given roles until they are deemed old enough, usually late teenage years or until they are legally an adult. However, in many other societies, children of young ages work and contribute to the family. For instance, in some African societies, young children under the age of ten are expected to care for younger siblings, fetch supplies such as water or wood, and assist in making and collecting food (Montgomery, 2022). “Western” ideas of childhood are often not compatible with those of other societies where everyday roles may be different, and therefore, children can provide a more important role for families which may need increased assistance. Similarly to Montgomery, Norozi and Moen state that a social constructionist view of childhood means that views of childhood vary depending on culture, society and period in history. They also emphasise the importance of different situations or circumstances that an individual’s childhood is experienced (Norozi & Moen, 2016, p.75).

2.1.2 Legal Framework

Understanding the legal framework surrounding what is legally classed as being a “child” as opposed to the social constructionist view is important to know when violations against children are taking place. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that a child is every person below the age of eighteen years (United Nations, General Assembly resolution 44/25, 1989, p.2). Furthermore, Article 38 of the Convention affirms that in relation to armed conflict, states

must not recruit anyone under the age of fifteen into their armed forces, but out of children between the ages of fifteen to eighteen, they should aim to take the oldest to reduce the number of younger children in armed forces (United Nations, General Assembly resolution 44/25, 1989, p.11).

This study will be comparing the child soldier phenomenon in the cases of South Sudan and Myanmar, therefore, it is also important to detail what the legal framework is regarding what is classed as a “child” in these two countries. In the case of South Sudan, the age of a child is legally classed as below eighteen, as specified by the United Nations and as is the case for much of the world (UNICEF, n.d.). In Myanmar, the legal age of a child, is also below eighteen years old. However, this has only recently been the case and Myanmar has a rather ambiguous history relating to their laws surrounding children. As stated by UNICEF, the age of a child being below eighteen has only been the case since 2019 with the enactment of the Child Rights Law. The law established not only the age of a child but also the minimum age of marriage to eighteen years, and also the minimum age of employment to fourteen years, which allows for recognition of the importance of childhood and prevents children from having to take more “adult” roles. The law also allowed children to be registered from birth which gives a child access to health, education and protection (UNICEF, 2019). Previously to the 2019 Child Law, there was the 1993 Child Law which stated that a child is anyone under the age of sixteen (The State Law and Order Restoration Council, 1993, p.671). Therefore, under recent changes in the law, children in Myanmar now are able to have freedoms before having to partake in adult roles from a young age.

2.1.3 Perception of a Child in South Sudan and Myanmar

Despite the legal framework of a child's age in South Sudan, literature surrounding childhood in South Sudan generally suggests that the perception and roles of children in the country are perhaps different to that of a "western" perception of childhood, being that despite their age, children in South Sudan have a greater role in society or family. As discussed by Valerie Berenger and Audrey Verdier-Chouchane, enrolment in school is low in South Sudan, particularly by girls, with many remaining at home and assisting the family with domestic chores or having paid jobs from a young age (Berenger & Verdier-Chouchane, 2016, p.177). Similarly, Kon Madut states that in South Sudan, emphasis is placed on the child's abilities rather than their age, meaning that if a boy is physically capable, he will provide for his family regardless of his age. Furthermore, girls may be made to get married when they are considered physically ready (Madut, 2020, p.1). As previously stated, literature suggests that the social constructionist view emphasises the importance of contexts and circumstances on a specific individual's or society's differing childhoods. To further support this notion, Maurice Sadlier highlights the importance of context in the childhood of children in South Sudan. He states that the context of civil war and South Sudan being a newly independent state in July 2011 has impacted the childhoods of South Sudanese children (Sadlier, n.d.). Therefore, the concept of a child has been impacted by the country's circumstances, giving children different roles and importance in society such as supporting their family, and limiting access to education or other typically "childhood" activities. Naturally, the role and perception of children can vary within the country of South Sudan depending on an individual's socio-economic background, location and culture.

In Myanmar, the literature surrounding the perception of a child shows that, similarly to South Sudan, the roles of children can be harsh, and children can be perceived as being capable of or used for “adult” responsibilities. As stated by UNICEF, in Myanmar, social and cultural values can influence rights and responsibilities of children, in particular, attitudes towards children in Myanmar result in them having little time for play or typical “childlike” activities. Instead, children are expected to either study or work on domestic chores, and children often face harsh discipline (UNICEF, 2012, p.16). Furthermore, UNICEF discuss that there is a widespread culture of children working from a young age due to poverty and the need for extra income for many families. Many families in Myanmar value work and the financial benefits of this above education. In addition, the study by UNICEF found that Myanmar follows a rather patriarchal society, with men and boys typically being income-earners and women and girls caring for the household and/or for children (UNICEF, 2012, p.16). This idea is also supported by Alyssa Augustus who states that domestic need, poverty, lack of education system, government laws and religious culture can all explain the roles of children in Myanmar, especially in relation to children taking on “adult” roles (Augustus, 2022). Therefore, the literature shows that, similarly to South Sudan, the concept of a child in Myanmar is based on a family’s socio-economic and cultural background. Generally, children can be viewed as tools to aid family life and do not have dependent roles or “childlike” activities seen in families in different global contexts.

2.2 The Concept of Child Soldiers

2.2.1 Definition of a Child Soldier

The definition of a child soldier, and the literature surrounding this, can be varied as the general idea that it is a child fighting in armed conflict is only one aspect. According to the definition stated by UNICEF, a child soldier is not only children who are combatants but can also be used in other indirect ways. They state that a child soldier is ‘any person below eighteen years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes’ (UNICEF, 2007, p.7). This comprehensive definition shows that essentially a child does not have to be holding a weapon to be a child soldier or to be exploited by armed groups. However, in contradiction to the definition by UNICEF, there is literature regarding child soldiers that typically only refers to those who are used as active soldiers, with less focus being on other roles. This is particularly evident in relation to the roles of girls, with literature on this sometimes being separate and less regarded as being on “child soldiers”. In the piece by Volker Druba, this sentiment is reinforced. They discuss child soldiers as having a varying definition in different countries, but suggest that, in general, they are children who are recruited or conscripted into armed forces. This definition does not leave room for understanding all roles of children in conflict and infers use as fighters alone. Furthermore, the article does not detail the roles of girls within armed groups (Druba, 2002, p.271). Therefore, it can be said that the general definition of a child soldier can vary, and consequently, the term can be regarded as being restrictive.

2.2.2 Roles of Children in Armed Groups

The roles of children in armed conflict can be diverse and can vary with gender discrepancies. It is important to understand with greater detail what is meant by this, and to explore the literature surrounding this, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of child soldiers. As stated by Louise Guillaume, children have both direct and indirect roles for armed groups in conflict. Indirect roles can consist of gathering wood, cooking, gathering water, making fires. These indirect roles are undertaken to maintain life in the armed group and can be done alongside being a combatant. She also states that direct roles are children being directly involved in combat, such as committing violence against or killing oppositions (Guillaume, 2013, p.1). According to the United Nations, even support, indirect functions can involve great risks and hardships to children. Among indirect levels, children can be exposed to violence, abuse and can witness extremely unsettling situations which they have to burden for the rest of their lives. Furthermore, children are being used as disposable entities, especially in modern warfare where they are being used as suicide bombers so that armed groups do not risk losing more experienced adult members (United Nations, n.d.). Academic Roos Haer supports the idea that children in conflict can have varying roles than simply a combatant, suggesting that literature surrounding this has only began discussing the more complex roles of children in conflict within recent years (Haer, 2019, p. 74-75).

The role of girls in armed conflict faces shortcomings in literature as it is less studied or it is assumed that girls do not play as important of a role in conflict than boys, or that they are used only for sexual purposes. Roos Haer states that an estimated 30-40% of child

combatants in recent African conflicts were girls, but this is often overlooked due to the assumption that violence and war are undertaken by men and boys (Haer, 2019, p. 80). However, girls in conflict also have the roles that do not include combatants. According to the report by Dyan Mazurana and Khristopher Carlson, girls are often abducted and forced to be sexual slaves, child bearers, or to become a “wife” for one or many males in the armed group. Girls are used to do domestic and agricultural labour (Mazurana & Carlson, 2006, p.1-5). Mazurana and Carlson also state that armed groups force parents to give them their daughters, forcing them to marry members of the group in exchange for security and protection (Mazurana & Carlson, 2006, p.9-10). Furthermore, Jakana Thomas and Reed Wood state, giving a conclusion into the roles of women in armed groups, that whilst sometimes they are recruited for support roles such as cooks, nurses or smugglers, there are examples of armed groups who actively recruit women as combatants and they form a substantial number of their forces (Thomas & Wood, 2018, p.215).

2.2.3 Reasons for the Use of Child Soldiers

Regarding reasons for the use of child soldiers, much of the literature divides the reasons into “push and pull” factors. Academic Daya Somasundaram gives an in-depth analysis of push and pull factors. They firstly discuss the push factors, which are issues that may make a child feel encouraged to join or be recruited to an armed group to escape these situations, push factors, therefore, are usually reasons which a child has not chosen themselves. Somasundaram gives some examples of push factors such as deprivation and poverty, they suggest that these push factors can be effective as some children join an armed group if they are desperate for food, some form of income or

place to live (Somasundaram, 2002, p.1268-1269). Furthermore, they also give the example of institutionalised violence as a push factor, stating that structural violence and/or oppression can have a great impact of younger generation. Violence can be against a specific ethnic minority or group within a civil war, then these types of conditions can create feelings of fear, hopelessness, and discontent. For these children, joining an armed group may be a way to attempt to change their experiences and remove themselves from these conditions. Somasundaram also suggests that sociocultural factors can be a very important push factor, such as class and cultural oppression, and joining an armed group can be an attempt to escape this (Somasundaram, 2002, p.1269). For pull factors, Somasundaram appears to imply that these can be less important or established than push factors, and that pull factors generally include examples such as curiosity, patriotism, or excitement. Such examples may have occurred due to some form of brainwashing or psychological methods of recruitment focused on convincing children that joining an armed group is exciting and helping their people (Somasundaram, 2002, p.1269).

Giving further details regarding push pull factors, charity War Child suggest that it can often be assumed that children in such groups are usually taken by force, and that whilst this can be the case, it is important not to neglect understanding that voluntary joining does occur. War Child states that push factors can be conditions in a child's community which can drive them to join an armed group. They suggest these can include poverty, unemployment, tribalism, need for refuge, mistreatment from other armed groups, or desire for vengeance (War Child UK, 2018). Additionally, they suggest that pull factors are incentives or rewards a child will knowingly receive by joining the armed group. These can be food, money, improved social status,

protection from harm, better day-to-day lives, and ability to protect themselves and family. War Child continue by emphasising that even if a child joins an armed group of their own free will, that this is most often less about actual enthusiasm to do so, but much more about a very difficult choice between limited and desperate options (War Child UK, 2018). They go on to state that these limited choices are complex because social, political, economic and cultural aspects can interact to create different push and pull factors, and that often, the cultural transition from childhood to adulthood is important. Similarly to literature surrounding the concept of childhood, War Child also suggests that joining an armed group can be a way for children to be achieving “adult status” and taking on adult roles, changing the dynamic of their childhood (War Child UK, 2018). In comparison to Somasundaram’s approach to the push/pull factor principle, War Child has some differences, for example, Somasundaram implies that, in particular with pull factors, children may feel excited and patriotic, whether or not encouraged by some form of brainwashing, however, War Child imply that pull factors, as with push factors, are very difficult decisions often based on hardships and that there are more crossovers with push and pull factors than Somasundaram suggests.

Other literature surrounding reasons for use of child soldiers does not follow the push/pull approach despite arguing reasons that are similar to those stated in the push/pull approach. Lindsay Harris suggests that many children may be forced to join armed groups, that they are easier to manipulate, and that recruiters target children from conflict zones who may be used to violence or areas with fewer education or work opportunities. The article then goes on to say that others join groups voluntarily for reasons such as fleeing poverty, gaining protection, or to gain connections which can resemble a family or sense of belonging

(Harris, 2017). Therefore, literature surrounding reasons for use of child soldiers, those which indicate specific approaches such as push/pull factors, and those which do not, all suggest similar reasons. For example, the literature discusses issues such as poverty, violence, various incentives for joining armed groups such as money, food or protection, and sociocultural or ethnic backgrounds. These are all very important reasons for use of child soldiers and are very influential in the recruitment of child soldiers as all of these factors make them vulnerable. However, there is a gap and understudied area of the literature in regard to longer term, background reasons for the use of child soldiers, which this study is aiming to address. The literature currently addresses to a lesser, understudied extent, the historical background issues, such as colonisation, and how this can directly cause, for example, poverty which results in child soldier use.

2.2.4 Methods of Recruitment

Literature regarding recruitment generally gives arguments similar to the literature about reasons for child soldier use. For example, forced or voluntary recruitment can have interchangeable reasons to push/pull factors discussed previously. As stated by the United Nations, those who join armed groups voluntarily may join for reasons such as to escape poverty, defend their community or feelings revenge (United Nations, n.d.). Therefore, it can be said that, for voluntary joining, the reasons are akin to pull factors of why the phenomenon of child soldiers exist. Furthermore, in relation to the push factors, they are similar to reasons of involuntary recruitment or aspects which may make a child more vulnerable. For example, as stated in a report by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), social conditions such as violence, poverty and a lack of support structures can increase

the likelihood of involuntary recruitment. They say that children who are without their parents either from death or displacement are more likely to be recruited into an armed group than those who live with their families (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2012, p.3). However, besides from reasons which make a child more vulnerable, voluntary or involuntary recruitment, there are other recruitment methods undertaken by armed groups. According to the ICRC, forced recruitment can often be done by terrorising or blackmailing civilians. Furthermore, armed groups can easily manipulate children, sometimes arming them with weapons or giving them drugs and alcohol, making them dependent on the group (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2012, p.4). In addition, according to a piece by Vera Achvarina and Simon Reich, abduction is a widely used type of forced recruitment undertaken by armed groups (Achvarina & Reich, 2006, p.129-130). Children can be forcibly taken from villages and towns to boost armed groups numbers or use children for strategic purposes. According to African organisation Accord, forced recruitment can be simplified into the methods of abduction, conscription through coercion or threat, or if a child was born into an armed group (Accord, 2016).

2.3 Colonialism and Postcolonialism

2.3.1 Definition of Colonialism

Literature surrounding colonialism is extensive and offers many different approaches. Academic Robert Longley suggests that colonialism is 'the practice of one country taking full or partial political control of another country and occupying it with settlers for purposes of profiting from its resources and economy' (Longley, 2021). This provides a broad, encompassing definition to the process of

colonialism, however, the concept has many aspects and can be studied from a variety of directions. Furthermore, Lorenzo Veracini gives a different approach to the concept of colonialism, stating that it is an unequal relationship based on displacement. They continue to say that it is an unequal relationship involving both individuals and collectives, and that these unequal differences can occur in the forms of class, gender, race, ability, status, language, ethnicity or religion. Veracini also states that colonialism is postulated on both displacement and violence, suggesting that it is displacement which produces the locations of “metropole” and “colony”, but violence enables depravity and an unequal relationship (Veracini, 2023, p.1). These two approaches to the concept of colonialism offer two differing definitions. The definition by Longley gives a limited overview on the political and economic aspects, whereas the definition by Veracini takes a broad perspective, emphasising power dynamics and social and cultural imbalances. Both definitions, however, infer exploitation and show the unequal power dynamics that arise from colonisation. Moreover, Ronald Horvath gives an approach adding to those of Veracini and Longley, stating that it is universally agreed that colonialism is a form of domination, continuing to say that it is control of individuals or groups, territory and also of behaviour of the people in the colonised areas. Horvath then provides a more in-depth analysis of the definition of colonialism, discussing that by Marxist-Leninist thinkers, it is seen as exploitation of economic variables, and by anthropologists, it is a culture changing process, stating that all of these perspectives can be combined as all describe a process of domination (Horvath, 1972, p.46).

2.3.2 Approaches to Colonial Theory

Literature regarding colonial theory has developed in recent years to include a range of different approaches. For example, the study of colonialism and the literature has evolved to attempt to follow a less “Eurocentric” thinking, critiquing this aspect of colonialism, and to include perspectives such as intersectionality. Academic Juanita Sundberg writes in detail surrounding the topic of eurocentrism and colonisation. She critiques the concept of Eurocentric thinking and how this contributed to the process of colonisation. She states that Eurocentric narratives emphasise the achievement of European power in terms of power, economy, technology, political systems and quality of life (Sundberg, 2009, p.638). She continues to explain that Eurocentric ideology allows for violence, making it justifiable in the eyes of European colonisers to push their ideology onto other countries in the name of civilising missions, and to gain financial benefits and recourses from this. Sundberg states that critiques of eurocentrism began to emerge in post-World War Two as shifts in geopolitical power allowed for the emergence of anti-colonial movements. However, Eurocentric thought does continue to appear in a variety of studies and literature (Sundberg, 2009, p.638).

Another approach to colonial studies is the implementation of the importance of intersectionality. This is an analytical framework with attempts to understand how a person’s social or political identity, such as race, gender or sexuality, combines with a concept or idea such as colonialism. In the literature surrounding intersectionality and colonialism, some academics have recently shifted the study to include critiques regarding how the colonial period impacted those such as minorities and how they were treated by colonial powers. Academic

Alice Conklin provides a piece very critical of the behaviours and methods of colonial powers. She comments on the lack of human rights provisions by colonial powers, stating that, in relation to race, colonial powers inflicted violations on people of the colonies as they saw their race as being inferior to that of the colonisers (Conklin, 1998, p.419-420). Therefore, it shows that the issue of colonialism intersects with themes such as racial prejudice shown in the treatment of minorities. Furthermore, Susan Kilonzo and Jethron Akallah comment on the treatment of women during the colonial period, specifically in East Africa. They suggest that in pre-colonial East African society, women had more freedoms and did not face as much gender exploitation in comparison to the colonial period. They state that during the colonial period, women were repressed, made to do domestic labour, were excluded from education and from politics (Kilonzo & Akallah, 2021, p.1133-1136). Women also faced abuse and sometimes extreme punishments. Therefore, it is evident in the literature that it is important to also discuss the impact of colonisation on minority groups and how they were treated or perceived during the time.

2.3.3 Definition of Postcolonialism

In order to understand the influence of colonialism on the child soldier phenomenon, it is essential to discuss postcolonialism as it is the after-effects of colonialism which cause the concept to have an influence on other aspects. Sheila Nair gives an overview definition of postcolonialism, suggesting that it investigates how societies, governments and people in former colonised areas experience issues, relations or concepts. They continue to state that the impacts of postcolonialism are still occurring, and that colonial thought still impacts

the way in which “Westerns” view or marginalise the “non-Western” world. Furthermore, they suggest that postcolonialism can be seen as concerned in understanding the world as it is but also as it should be (Nair, 2017, p.1). Professor Ato Quayson further discusses postcolonialism and how it is represented in literature. He states that postcolonialism began to be used in critical literature from the 1980s, showing that most literature providing critical assessments of postcolonialism are still relatively contemporary (Quayson, 2020). Providing a slightly different definition to that of Nair, Quayson suggests that postcolonialism theory involves a studied involvement with the experience of colonialism, both the effects in the past and present, and both at the level of ex-colonial societies and at the level of general developments globally. Furthermore, he discusses that postcolonialism and its study often relates to an exploration of experiences such as slavery, migration, suppression, race and gender (Quayson, 2020). Therefore, looking at these two examples of definitions which are representative of most of the literature surrounding postcolonialism, it can be said that, overall, postcolonialism is both a concept and a method of study relating to the period after colonisation. Postcolonialism, according to Stefan Wallaschek, broadly relates to the after-effects of colonisation and involves the study of cultural, political and economic dimensions of such effects (Wallaschek, 2015, p.220).

2.3.4 Approaches to Postcolonial Theory

Similarly to the study of colonialism, postcolonialism and postcolonial theory has developed in recent years to include study from a variety of different, more in-depth, approaches. Differing from colonial theory, studies of postcolonialism discuss and critique the impacts of colonialism, as opposed to issues during the time, and how colonialism

can create long lasting issues. One aspect examined by postcolonial theory is the concept of “othering”. This concept was formulated during the colonial period, however, it still continues and has had a lasting impact during postcolonial times, and has been extensively discussed in postcolonial literature. Academic Jilan Shash states that the concept of “othering” relates to the notion of “us” vs “them”. The “other” is usually regarded as being inferior or excluded from society (Shash, 2022, p.2). In the process of “othering”, differences can be based on religion, race, gender, class or disability, and often results in inequalities and marginalisation (Shash, 2022, p.3). Shash states that in the postcolonial context, the “other” is the colonised subject or the ex-colonised subject. Furthermore, Shash discusses that postcolonial theory examines how “othering” was and is used to categorise people or societies in terms of good or evil, and was used to justify the behaviours of colonisers as the concept of othering created a sense of “civilised” vs “savage” (Shash, 2022, p.7-8). The concept of “othering” still exists today in the postcolonial world with the marginalisation of minority groups.

Another aspect and variation of postcolonial theory widely discussed in the literature is postcolonial feminism. As Dr Ritu Tyagi explains, postcolonial feminist theory is mostly concerned with representation and treatment of women in once colonised countries and women in western countries who are from ex-colonised countries. Furthermore, they state that postcolonial feminism concentrates on differences in gender discourses and representation in both colonial and non-colonial contexts (Tyagi, 2014, p.45). Mairi Lubelska states that postcolonial feminism is also a critique of feminist theory existing previously as it did not focus enough on non-white women from postcolonial countries. They also suggest that postcolonial feminism focuses on how the

legacies of colonialism have impacted human and political consequences of women (Lubelska, 2018). Therefore, as seen by these examples displaying different approaches and critiques of postcolonial theory, it is shown that literature within the last decades now approaches the topic to show how the aftermath of colonisation has both impacts itself, but also on examples such as minority races, class or genders. It is also shown in literature regarding intersectionality and postcolonialism that all of these aspects are interlocking, that postcolonialism, race, gender or class, for example, can all be connected each other to cause an individual or society's experiences (Kerner, 2017, p.848-849).

2.3.5 Impacts of Colonialism and Postcolonialism

Another area extensively discussed in the literature surrounding colonialism and postcolonialism is a discussion of their impacts. Erin Blakemore gives a brief overview of some of the issues resulting from colonisation and post colonisation, stating that colonial rule can be considered to have had beneficial impacts to some extent, such as some rises in nutrition and health, and in some cases increased literacy. However, she goes on to detail the negative impacts which greatly outweigh any positives, including environmental degradation, spread of diseases, economic instability, human rights violations and ethnic tensions, stating that all of these issues can last far into the postcolonial period (Blakemore, 2019). Furthermore, Stephen Ocheni and Basil Nwankwo contribute to the discussion of the impacts of colonisation through the study of impacts in Africa. They state that one of the major impacts of colonisation is that it has brought about under development. They do suggest, similarly to Blakemore, that there have been some positive impacts such as contributions to education,

however, they state that such positive impacts are only surface level, and that in some ways, the superficialness of colonial education can even have increased current underdevelopment. They also state that another impact of colonialism is a deformed economy due to issues in production, trade, markets, transport, provision of supplies, and urbanisation, for example (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012, p.51).

Literature surrounding the impacts of colonisation and post colonisation also detail the link of these to issues such as war and violence.

Matthew Lange, Tay Jeong and Emre Amasyali write on the origins of ethnic warfare in relation to colonisation. They begin by noting that many of the world's ethnic civil wars all share the trait of being ex-colonised countries. They state that one of the major causes of conflict in these countries is that during colonial times, policies instigated by the colonial powers caused divisions among the populations. These policies institutionalised differences in the population, which has contributed drastically to countries' violent conflicts between different ethnicities and groups (Lange et al, 2021). Furthermore, Lorenzo Veracini states that colonisation caused long-lasting unequal relationships and displacement. They continue by stating similarly to Lange, Jeong and Amasyali, that colonialism had an impact on international and national relations, with identities founded during the colonial period by colonial policies remaining a foundation trait in the postcolonial period and beyond (Veracini, 2023, p.178). Veracini then discusses that conflict and violence in many postcolonial countries is a legacy of unresolved issues created from colonisation. For example, conflict can arise due to colonial partition as colonial powers created borders, these borders then resulted in ethnic divisions which create tensions overtime, eventually resulting in conflict (Veracini, 2023, p.180). Another impact of postcolonialism which

results in conflict discussed by Veracini is the implementation of undemocratic, corrupt government and political instability in the aftermath of colonisation after inheriting a country made weak by colonialism. Undemocratic governance can easily result in civil wars as the population, already facing weakness, poverty and many issues as a result of colonisation, will try to better the political situation (Veracini, 2023, p.181). Therefore, the literature surrounding the impacts of colonisation and post colonisation shows that they can cause a wide range of issues, and furthermore, all of the impacts such as poverty, conflict, underdevelopment and undemocratic governance, can all intersect with each other, becoming more severe due to post colonisation.

2.4 Gaps and Contributions

The literature regarding child soldiers and postcolonialism individually is extensive and has been studied from a wide variety of aspects. However, when these two concepts are combined, the literature is considerably understudied, creating a gap. Literature surrounding child soldiers has overwhelmingly been studied from a human security, humanitarian or legal perspective, with much of the literature overlooking the study of background reasons for the phenomenon to exist. Naturally, it is difficult to discuss the topic of child soldiers without including or touching on all of these other areas previously studied due to the nature of the topic. However, this study aims to contribute to these discussions by proposing a new way to examine the phenomenon of child soldiers, by exploring the potential background reasons for their occurrence, use and recruitment, to ensure better understanding of the topic.

The current literature provides reasonably extensive research regarding the impacts of colonialism and how it can cause issues such as poverty, undemocratic governance and displacement. There is also literature explaining how causes of the child soldier phenomenon can be reasons which are the same as the impacts, such as poverty and undemocratic government. However, these two studies are rarely linked together, presenting a gap in the literature. Whilst it is expected that literature focusing on postcolonialism will not give details about child soldiers, child soldier literature, even those examining the background and reasons for their use, rarely attribute postcolonialism to this despite it being known the postcolonialism causes conflict and other issues. The alternative way of understanding the topic by exploring the potential background reasons for occurrence, use and recruitment is useful as it can aid with future knowledge, and as said by Daya Somasundaram “if we are to prevent children fighting we need to understand the conditions under which children become soldiers and work to improve these conditions” (Somasundaram, 2002, p.1268).

3. Research Design

This study is following a comparative case study analysis using qualitative methods. It is comprised of two comparable case studies of Myanmar and South Sudan, and the influence of colonialism will be compared in these two cases. The aim of this study is to explore the influence of colonialism on the phenomenon of child soldiers used in the conflicts in Myanmar and South Sudan, in particular, to investigate if colonialism can provide a background context for the reasons child soldiers are used, their use and recruitment. Furthermore, this study aims to contribute to current knowledge and add to existing literature.

The literature regarding background contexts to child soldiers is understudied, especially in relation to colonialism, which is rarely attributed. Therefore, this study aims to provide a new perspective to the study of child soldiers. This section will detail the analytical framework, including a discussion of why the chosen method is being used, why the case studies have been selected, which definitions are being used, the criteria and variables the case studies will be comparing. Next the methodology will be discussed, examining the approach and methods used in the research, how the data will be collected and then how it is analysed. Finally, the limitations of the research will be explained.

3.1 Analytical Framework

This section will discuss and detail the framework used for the qualitative comparative analysis of the two case studies of Myanmar and South Sudan. This study will be following a comparative analysis of case studies because it is the most effective way to allow for an in-depth method of comparing and contrasting cases. By following a comparative analysis of case studies, it allows for an effective technique to evaluate the influence of colonialism in a representative way. It facilitates the process of comparing how a concept or idea differs in two different indicative examples. Furthermore, a comparative case study analysis allows for the identification of patterns, trends and changes, making it an in-depth and appropriate method (Goodrick, 2014, p.1). A comparative analysis of case studies provides that all of these benefits of the method described can be evaluated in real-life examples showing events, situations or places, allowing for better understanding of how the influence of colonialism can appear in reality and in more contemporary times.

As stated, this study will be using the cases of Myanmar and South Sudan. The reasoning behind the selection of these two case studies is that they both share some similarities which allows for an effective comparison and to facilitate the analysis of the influence of colonialism. Firstly, the initial criteria for the selection of case studies were they both needed to have used child soldiers within the last decade and, therefore, have had or having a civil war within the last decade. The countries of Myanmar and South Sudan fit these criteria, with both being known for child soldier usage by the United Nations and other organisations, and both countries having had a civil war recently (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict & UNICEF, 2016, p.1). The civil war in Myanmar is still ongoing, whereas the civil war in South Sudan ended recently. As both of these countries fit the initial criteria, it allows for a clear comparison as they show reasonably similar features of child soldier usage. The second aspect which facilitates effective comparison of these cases is that they are both reasonably “new” countries, and therefore sharing another similar characteristic and showing contemporary postcolonial issues in new countries. South Sudan was formed after its independence from Sudan in 2011, whereas Myanmar is older but still new in relation to many other countries, as it was formed after its independence from colonial rule in 1948 (Godrej, 2008; United States Institute of Peace, n.d.). Another important criteria that was needed in case selection, which these cases also share, is that they were both colonised by the same country. This was important in case selection because by choosing the same colonising actor, it assists in being able to show parallels, similarities and differences in the two countries. If countries with two different colonisers were selected, it would have negatively impacted the results and been more incomparable. The process of colonisation from two different countries

has a higher likelihood of being different, and therefore, evaluating the influence on the child soldier phenomenon in those countries would be more difficult to make comparisons related to colonisation. Therefore, the cases were chosen to have the same coloniser for an effective comparative analysis, which in these cases was the British. (Godrej, 2008; Searcy, 2019).

Considering the contestability of the concepts of a child soldier and colonialism, this study will be following standard and clear definitions as set out by the literature. As previously stated, the definition of a child soldier is open to interpretation and can be a restrictive term due to different academics or organisations suggesting that the term can mean different ideas about what is involved in being a child soldier. In this study, the definition of a child soldier will be the more encompassing definition as set out by the United Nations previously. This definition states that a child soldier is not simply a combatant, instead that it can be a child involved in any way with an armed group and taking on any role, even support roles, as children even in such roles can be severely impacted by armed groups. Therefore, this study will be using the definition that a child soldier is not just a combatant, but anyone under the age of eighteen in roles such as cooks, porters, sexual slaves and more (UNICEF, 2007, p.7). Furthermore, this study will be assessing the influence of colonialism. The definition of this concept as suggested by the literature is a country taking control and occupying another for economic, cultural and political reasons (Longley, 2021). However, this study is discussing the influence, and therefore, is evaluating the impacts of colonialism in a postcolonial setting.

This study is following a variable model to assess the influence of colonialism on the child soldier phenomenon. These variables are poverty, undemocratic governance, displacement, conflict and ethnic tensions. These variables, which are the main impacts of colonisation, will be compared in both of the case studies as they are also potential causes of child soldier use. In regard to the analytical framework used to evaluate the influence of colonialism on the case studies, this study will be discussing a variety of aspects of the child soldier phenomenon. Firstly, it will discuss the colonial background, then an insight into the civil war in the country. Next, the reasons and drivers for the use of child soldiers, the recruitment of children and their roles. These aspects will be linked to the colonisation impact variables, evaluating if they have influenced the aspects of the child soldier phenomenon. The study will be following this framework as it is assessing only if colonialism has an influence, not that it caused the child soldier phenomenon. Therefore, in this study, it is unnecessary to look into use of child soldiers before and after colonisation, as this would be implying causation, not influence. By studying aspects of child soldiers, an assessment of influence of colonisation on these aspects is possible.

3.2 Methodology

This study will be following a qualitative approach using case studies and based on academic and non-academic literature. The rationale behind choosing a qualitative approach is because the topic does not lend itself to being able to quantify due to its focus being looking into aspects of the phenomenon and evaluating how they are influenced, and not looking at the numerical data surrounding this. Therefore, the qualitative method will involve gathering non-numerical data in order to

identify similarities, differences or trends within the case studies. Regarding how data will be collected, this study will be using both primary and secondary sources. The secondary sources analysed in this study will be comprised of mostly academic literature, reports by both charities and organisations, newspaper articles and online articles. From all of the secondary sources used, reports by charities and organisations will be particularly important in this study because they present accurate, up to date information regarding all aspects of child soldiers in civil wars. This is especially because they have most often worked closely with children impacted by wars, or within the country affected, so more often than other types of secondary sources, have accurate accounts of the reality of the situation. However, other secondary sources do provide vital information about aspects of child soldiers also, and they are particularly useful when looking into the historical background of colonialism in the cases.

The primary source type used in this study is the method of questionnaires. The reasoning behind this method was to be able to have a more diverse study without relying on secondary sources alone and to gain the opinions of experts in the field. Furthermore, the questionnaire method gave the ability to be able to ask relevant questions that are needed for the research, facilitating the gathering of data and therefore the ability to answer the research question. The format of the questionnaire also allowed for participants to give any further information or personal recollections, giving the research an additional in-depth account that would be more difficult to access through secondary sources. The method of conducting the questionnaire involved having two different variations, an academic version given to academics who have researched the field of child soldiers, and a professional version given to those such as charity

workers who have experience working in the field. Two types of questionnaires were made in order to gather a wide range of information from different backgrounds, allowing for a more comprehensive approach and having the ability to gain two varying opinions and ideas on the subject.

After the data collection process, the results were analysed using a deductive analysis of the two case studies. Deductive analysis is used when the research process begins with a hypothesis or theory, and then data is found and assessed in order to prove or disprove the hypothesis (Sybing, n.d.). In this study, the beginning theory and hypothesis was that colonialism provides an influence on the child soldier phenomenon, particularly in civil wars. Data was selected and case studies were used to evaluate the hypothesis. Data was analysed through content analysis where needed, which is a method to study documents and sources by searching for relevant concepts, themes or words (Kleinheksel et al, 2020). This was necessary in some instances to analyse how sources discussed the child soldier phenomenon, if they mentioned any potential background causes and how they examined certain aspects of the topic. Content analysis allowed for conclusions to be drawn from the literature by making connections and analysing patterns between literature and sources surrounding child soldiers and colonialism. Finally, a comparative case study method was used to analyse the data by providing a real-life representative example of the concepts. This method assisted the analysis process and allowed for comparisons between two cases with a similar historical context. A comparative case study analysis allows for exploration and comparison of characteristics, implications and trends within the two case examples. Furthermore, case study analysis attempts to give a representation of a wider idea or context using

individual examples, and therefore, by comparing and analysing the two case studies, it helps to provide an idea of the wider contextual situation, helping to understand if colonialism has an influence of child soldier use generally in other countries.

3.3 Limitations and Challenges of Research

The research for this study faced a variety of challenges and limitations. Firstly, due to the nature of the topic, the true extent of the child soldier phenomenon within the cases studies may not be known. Information regarding child soldiers in these countries found in online sources are relying on estimations, observations and work by those who have been involved in the countries as governments and insurgent groups are highly unlikely to divulge information on their use of children. Therefore, a limitation of the research is that the restricted access to data on “official usage” of child soldiers forces research to rely on academic sources and reports by organisations. Furthermore, official documents from the case study countries can be especially difficult to access due to nature of the countries’ governmental regimes being somewhat undemocratic or autocratic (Freedom House, 2023, p.31), suggesting that they are less likely to be transparent and providing of information, and therefore research will heavily focus on sources from “Western” organisations and charities, alongside research from academic sources. Another potential limitation of the research was a language barrier from sources from the case study countries, especially Myanmar. This limitation proved to be a limited issue due to research, as previously suggested, relying on sources from “Western” countries, however, potentially prevented the ability to search for such data. A potential limitation and challenge may also have arisen from research on South Sudan. As it is a new country, some sources do not

provide great detail about the county post-separation from Sudan, or information is limited.

Other limitations of research can occur during the data collection, in particular in relation to the questionnaire method. Whilst undertaking this method, some challenges were encountered such as issues with response rate from potential participants. Despite sending a request for participation to a number of individuals, only a selected number completed the questionnaire. However, this issue did result in a small but specialised sample and allowed for a more in-depth analysis of question responses in comparison to the potential analysis constraints of a larger sample due to quantity and variance of answers. Other challenges encountered with the questionnaire method were in relation to the questions asked and their answers. In order for the questions to fit a variety of participants' background, they were split into two types, academic and professional. However, despite this, it was occasionally the case that questions had to be made reasonably general in order for them to apply to different individual's experiences. This also resulted in different levels of responses and varied levels of detail being given in participants' responses. Furthermore, as the questionnaires needed to be sent to participants early in the research period, a challenge arose as it became apparent that other questions could have been asked surrounding the topic which may have facilitated more in-depth research and analysis.

4. Framing Colonialism: A Model of its Impacts

In order to assess the influence of colonialism on the phenomenon of child soldiers, this study will be following a five-variable model. This model is using the five most important and prevalent impacts of colonisation, which are also known to impact the phenomenon of child soldiers, in order to understand the potential link between colonialism and child soldiers. These five variables will then be further discussed in this study in how they impact the reasons for use of child soldiers. The five variables are poverty, undemocratic governance, displacement, conflict and ethnic tensions, and it will be explained how these are impacts of colonialism. These variables can be standalone issues or can intersect, with one issue having the ability to cause or worsen the other.

4.1 Poverty

One of the major and prevalent impacts of colonialism is poverty and economic inequality. Poverty in postcolonial countries is not an issue which has occurred in a short period of time, in fact, economic inequality and depravity in such countries is a result of a long process, deep rooted in historical processes, in particular colonialism. Colonial powers established what can be described as an “extractive institution” in the colonial countries. This is where they controlled and extracted the money and resources of the country and the people in it, which resulted in a population removed of assets and opportunities, causing deep-rooted poverty (Acemoglu, 2017). Furthermore, prior to colonialism, countries such as many in Africa were advancing economically, especially due to their trade. However, European African

colonisation, and in many other areas, exploited human and economic resources in order to benefit from them. Policies and practices undertaken by colonising powers resulted in a negative change to the development of the economies of colonial states compared to their pre-colonial levels and has been impacted ever since (Settles, 1996, p.1). A key part of colonialism policies and practices which resulted in poverty was the economic exploitation system. This is how colonial powers exploited the resources of their colonies without investing in colonial infrastructure, leaving postcolonial countries with highly underdeveloped economies and a lack of diverse industry (Kalu & Falola, 2019, p.5-11). Furthermore, colonialist policies resulted in a burden of debt left by the colonisers and inherited by postcolonial countries. This resulted in independent countries becoming burdened by debt owed to their former colonial inhibitors, and they sometimes had to pay compensation also, which compromised postcolonial countries' ability to progress and develop following colonisation, further exacerbating postcolonial poverty (Ahmad et al, 2022, p.3). Another way in which colonialism has resulted in poverty is by human capital depletion. Colonial powers often subjected indigenous populations to forced labour. This resulted in a depletion of human capital, the effectiveness of production, health and education of the population, resulting in hindered development and economic growth for postcolonial countries (Hickel et al, 2022, p.1-2). It is important to note that colonisation's impact on poverty can vary depending on the colony such as its resources and infrastructure, duration of colonial rule and processes of independence.

4.2 Undemocratic Governance

The colonial legacy can have the impact of hindering the establishment of democratic governments in postcolonial countries. Common arguments which support this notion suggests that colonial rule over countries was authoritarian, and therefore, upon leaving the colonies and them gaining independence, countries may have been unprepared for democracy. Other arguments suggest that the structural legacies of colonial rule and policies led to an unstable or undemocratic government, especially when in combination with nationalist movements inside the country being able to gain influence (Bernhard et al, 2004, p.229). Colonial societies were repressive towards colonised societies, this was especially the case because governmental systems during colonialism were controlled either from abroad in the colonial metropole or domestically by a group of selected, elite individuals. After gaining independence, postcolonial states often lacked the necessary infrastructures, institutions, egalitarian thinking or educational background needed to create a democratic governmental system post-independence. This, therefore, resulted in independent countries still being ruled by repressive, unstable regimes. In some postcolonial states, the independence process, and subsequent years, can be considered a change from one form of oppression to another (Marker, 2003). Furthermore, the impacts of colonialism on form of governance last long after independence, with current postcolonial undemocratic states still favouring hierarchy, compliance and other aspects of an unstable government. It can also be said that postcolonial states inherited characteristics and feelings such as hatred, fear, mistrust which were once directed towards colonial occupiers, and these feelings were then often directed towards new leaders, creating an unstable society and leadership. For many people

in postcolonial countries, new governments in independence, whose characteristics continued until contemporary times, were similar to colonial leaders. Many people were, and still are, being denied necessities such as food, water, shelter, security and health care by postcolonial undemocratic leaders, as a result of the inadequate position left by colonial powers (Muiu, 2010, p.1318). As stated, all the impacts in this five variable model can intersect, caused by colonialism by often made worse by other variables. For example, undemocratic governance can be exacerbated by variable such as postcolonial poverty or conflict. Overall, not all postcolonial countries experience post-independent governmental systems the same or as severe, however, the negative impact on governance caused by colonialism is undeniable.

4.3 Displacement

A very prevalent impact of colonialism is displacement, meaning those who have been forced to flee, leave their homes or areas of residence; essentially meaning those without a place to live. This is usually as a result of conflict, violence, or human rights violations (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, n.d.). Therefore, the variable of displacement is a representation of an impact that can be especially exacerbated by intersections between other variables, as well as being a direct result of the long-lasting effects of colonialism. Thus, in the example of displacement, the variables it mostly intersects with are conflict and ethnic tensions. One of the ways in which colonialism caused the impact of displacement is by practices undertaken during the colonial period which impacted the physical location of colonised people, which in turn impacted their cultural understandings. Colonial practices disrupted populations with

examples such as slave trade and forced redistribution of populations. Therefore, upon gaining independence, many people were left not only without a cultural identity, but also may have lost their homes (Saha, 2015, p.318). The impacts of this can last for many years. Furthermore, colonial policies often involved taking land from the indigenous communities, resulting in forced migration. Postcolonial governments often followed some of the same practices or kept the same ownership of lands, resulting in displacement of people (Greer, 2018, p.10). Another way colonialism impacted postcolonial displacement is exploitation of resources. This often led to a concentration of wealth and resources given to the colonisers or the local elite in power during colonisation, resulting in an uneven distribution and unequal opportunities which lasted long into postcolonial eras, often forcing people to migrate in order to better their lives, therefore becoming displaced (University of Zurich, n.d.). Overall, colonialism has had the impact of increasing the likelihood of postcolonial displacement by a combination of their policies causing deep-rooted societal, economic and cultural issues, and combined with other variables such as conflict.

4.4 Conflict

The aftermath of colonialism can result in the impact of conflict in postcolonial states. As stated, the impacts of colonialism can demonstrate intersections, and the example of conflict can clearly demonstrate this. Colonialism can cause conflict as a direct impact, or other impacts of colonialism, such as those in this model, can intersect, affecting and intensifying each other and result in conflict. Conflict can also, therefore, be a potential contributing cause for all other impacts of colonisation included in this model. Colonisation has a profound and

lasting impact on postcolonial states and can be a very high contributing factor to conflicts in these countries. Colonial policies created long lasting divisions between communities and often ethnicities, making institutionalised differences in the population in the postcolonial period, which then become highly likely to erupt into conflict (Lange et al, 2021). Furthermore, conflict is found in many postcolonial states with the source of a number of these conflicts being caused by colonial policies. Most of such policies include territorial changes, treatment of indigenous people, giving some groups within countries more privilege than others, unevenly distributing wealth, government infrastructures during colonial time, and formation of undemocratic systems, both in colonial times and in the postcolonial period, all of which increased the prevalence of conflict in postcolonial countries (Marker, 2003). In addition, colonialism created an issue of structural violence which continues to fuel conflicts and increase the risk of their occurrence, both as those in ex-colonies try to fight against this or are so adapted to violence that it is ingrained into their way of life, showing that the impact of colonialism remains ever present (Byrne et al, 2018, p.7). Colonialism resulted in trauma and violence against native people, causing them to experience the effects of this and impacting the identities of indigenous people (Byrne et al, 2018, p.13-14). Deep-rooted issues such as these, therefore, encourage and influence populations to partake in violence, revenge and conflict against new oppressive governments in the postcolonial era, hence why there is often an intersection between conflict and undemocratic governance as a result of colonialism (Byrne et al, 2018, p.14-15). Overall, colonialism created a range of persisting impacts from their policies which often directly increased the presence of conflict.

4.5 Ethnic Tensions

One of the most prevalent, impactful policies and practices of the colonial period were the implementation of, or changes to, borders and territories of colonised countries. This resulted in ethnic tensions and resulted in many other impacts, both intersecting with other variables in the model, and other examples. Ethnic-border implementations are the creation of boundaries and borders which divided or created ethnic or cultural groups within a country. This was most often in order to assert control by imposing political or administrative structures in these newly divided regions. By undertaking this practice, colonisers ignored pre-existing cultural, tribal or ethnic boundaries created and shaped by local populations (Hoffmann, 2021). This impact of colonialism creates a significant prevalence of secondary impacts in the postcolonial stage. These include slow economic growth, higher likelihood of civil war conflicts, weaker states and weak state ability, and under-providing of public goods and necessities (Ali et al, 2015, p.2). Furthermore, ethnic governmentality, whilst being both introduced and institutionalised during the colonial period, has had shaped post-independent countries, in particular causing violent conflicts, often lasting a long time. In addition, the nexus between ethnicity and territory exacerbated by colonial policies has been determining in a number of political issues in postcolonial countries. Most violent conflicts in postcolonial countries are related to ethnicity and territory as they are connected to authority over territory, population and resources, alongside other citizenship rights, all of which has been made worse by colonial policies of ethnicity border implementations (Hoffmann, 2021). Ethnic-border implementations contributed to the creation of current postcolonial states, therefore, the use of ethnic territories has remained and developed in postcolonial times. Some of these territories are

recognised and form part of political and administrative organisations of the states. However, others are not recognised, either internationally or nationally, and they become “tribal” or ethnic communities with political aspirations. Some of these ethnic groups identify as indigenous, autochthonous or ethnic minorities, and try to obtain inclusion and recognition of political rights and self-rule of their own territories. Therefore, colonial ethnic tensions and the aftereffects of these are crucial for resulting in both violent and non-violent disputes in postcolonial states (Anthias & Hoffmann, 2021, p.1).

4.6 Conclusion

Overall, the five-variable model shows that colonialism caused considerable impacts effecting postcolonial states in a multitude of ways. As colonised countries became independent, the colonisers had left the country in ways that were far different than before their occupation. Colonial policies and implementations have resulted in long lasting impacts causing poverty, undemocratic government, displacement, conflict, and ethnic tensions. All of these impacts could have been caused individually and resulted in considerable issues in postcolonial countries. However, it is most often the case that colonialism resulted in more than one issue in a postcolonial country, and then all of these impacts intersect with one another, exacerbating, worsening and sometimes causing the other. Furthermore, as will be explored in this study, all of these impacts can influence, cause, or worsen the phenomenon of child soldiers in postcolonial countries, and therefore, this five-variable model has been analysed regarding how it influences reasons for, use and recruitment of child soldiers.

5. Case Study: Myanmar

In this section, the case study of Myanmar will be explored. As stated, Myanmar is a country which has been experiencing a civil war within the last decade, endured years of colonial rule and is known to use child soldiers both by government armed forces and non-state groups (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict & UNICEF, 2016, p.1). In order to assess the influence of colonisation on child soldier use in Myanmar, this section will include certain components. Firstly, an introduction into the background of Myanmar's colonial past will be discussed. Following from this, there will be an introduction into the civil war in Myanmar, including its timeframe and major fighting groups. After these introductions have been examined, aspects of the child soldier phenomenon in Myanmar will be discussed. Specifically, these will be the reasons and drivers for the use, the recruitment, and the roles of children in armed groups, with more focus on reasons for use as this element is more heavily potentially influenced by colonialism than the other aspects. All of these aspects will be analysed in relation to links with the colonisation impact variables discussed in the previous chapter, and finally evaluating if these variables have influenced all aspects of the child soldier phenomenon in Myanmar in a concluding section.

5.1 Myanmar's Colonial History

Colonial occupation of Myanmar, then called Burma, lasted from 1824 until 1948. From 1824 until 1885, there were a series of wars called the Anglo-Burmese Wars which resulted in the full annexation of Burma

by the British forces (Godrej, 2008). In 1886, the British made Burma a province of what was then called British India, instigating changes within the country, including to its borders and population. It can even be said that British rule in Burma was among the most intrusive colonial rules in their whole empire (Webster, 2000, p.1003). In particular, the British would bring Indians into the region of Burma to fill job positions such as civil service jobs (Singh, 1980, p.826). Furthermore, it can be said that for the British, colonisation of Burma was seen as a means to an end, as controlling the country allowed them to have a market for trade with China, as colonisation there was less about the country itself. Therefore, business between Indians and Chinese inside of Burma was encouraged by the British colonisers, which caused growing resentment in many of the Burmese people. Burma was useful for the British in regard to exports as Burma soon became the world's largest exporter of rice, becoming an area of economic gain for the British colonisers (Godrej, 2008). Resistance to the British colonisation was prevalent in the northern territories until 1890 when the British destroyed entire villages and settlements in order to completely remove guerrilla activity, a method which can still be seen in the recent civil war activity in Myanmar. In Burma, British governance tended to favour certain ethnic groups above others, creating clashes and conflicts (Godrej, 2008).

In 1920, there were protests by university students, becoming the first signs of re-established and strong resistance against the British rule. Following from this, there were strikes and protests against tax (Godrej, 2008). Buddhist monks even lead an armed rebellion and played a prominent role in the anti-British sentiment (Artinger & Rowand, 2021). Universities became an important point of radicalism where students, including student U Nu who would become the first prime minister of

independent Burma, joined movements for national autonomy. With the outbreak of the Second World War, the administration of Burma was separated from India. The war presented some nationalist movements within Burma with the opportunity to gain compromises and allowances towards independence in return for Burmese support in the war. Some ethnic groups, however, refused participation in the war (Godrej, 2008). Some groups in Burma sought the assistance of the Japanese to help remove British occupation. However, after the Japanese invasion of Burma in 1942, it became realised that the Japanese were simply becoming another coloniser, and therefore, groups negotiated with British forces to remove the Japanese occupation. In 1945, the Japanese were finally expelled, however, much of Burma was in ruins after years of war (Godrej, 2008). Eventually, support for independence movements and groups grew so large that there were negotiations for Burma's independence in January 1947. There were also attempts with all of the country's ethnic nationalities to agree on a unified Burma. Burma finally became independent on 4 January 1948 with U Nu as the first prime minister after the assassination of Aung San, a prominent leader of independence groups who originally lead the country to independence. Burma decided not to join the British Commonwealth due to extremely strong anti-British sentiment within the country (Naw, 2023).

5.2 Civil War in Myanmar

Throughout Myanmar's history, it has experienced an unprecedented level of civil conflicts and insurgencies, essentially since its independence in 1948 until today (Sun, 2023). However, this study is focusing on contemporary civil war, and therefore, on the last decade, with particular concentration on the civil war in 2021 onwards which

began as a result of the 2021 military coup d'état (Maizland, 2022). In February 2021, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing along with other military leaders orchestrated a military coup after the pro-military party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) experienced a major loss in the 2020 elections. The military junta, named the State Administration Council, detained de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi with corruption among other crimes and placed other members of her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) and members of other parties, as well as activists, under house arrest (Maizland, 2022). This resulted in huge protests with many workers such as health workers, teachers and more joining protests and refusing to return to work until the elected government resumed power. NLD members, protest leaders and activists from a variety of minority groups established a government called the National Unity Government (NUG). The aims of the NUG are to bring together groups opposed to the junta, aiming to have better unity among ethnic groups and to have a plan for post-junta times. In September, the NUG declared war on the junta, forming an armed division called the People's Defence Force (Maizland, 2022).

The military coup caused resistance across the country, including a large number of anti-coup demonstrations. The military responded to these with violence and mass arrests. These events also re-started conflict in the borderlands which, until 2021, were beginning to decrease (Bynum, 2021). Furthermore, the civil war following the military coup has reignited fighting from numerous ethnic groups. Myanmar has over 25 ethnic armed groups as well as hundreds of militias (International Crisis Group, 2022, p.1). There are three main armed groups which have been most prominent in the civil war, with many others being involved also. These are the Arakan Army, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the Myanmar National Democratic

Alliance Army. Myanmar has numerous ethnic minorities and ethnic armed groups, which have been a central component of many past conflicts (International Crisis Group, 2022, p.1). In the 2021 civil war, many ethnic armed groups have been involved. Some of the main groups include the Karen National Union and the Kachin Independence Organisation and their armed forces have both pursued aggressive positions towards the military junta. These two groups are among the largest ethnic armed groups in Myanmar and participate in staging ambushes, training fighters and offering protection from those who are enemies of the military (International Crisis Group, 2022, p.3-4). The Karenni National Progressive Party and their army, and the Chin National Front and their armed forces both had signed ceasefires prior to the coup, however, this has since changed. They have been involved in direct combat roles and secondary roles such as providing weapons and training (International Crisis Group, 2022, p.4-5). One of Myanmar's largest ethnic groups, the United Wa State Army, has been less active in the conflict, with their lack of participation allowing the military to easily put troops in the group's region (International Crisis Group, 2022, p.7-8). Overall, Myanmar has faced insurgencies and conflict since its independence in 1948, and the 2021 military coup sparked a re-ignition of civil war. The civil war, therefore, sparked ethnic tensions with the military junta fighting against the opposition government and numerous ethnic armed groups.

5.3 Reasons for the Use of Child Soldiers in Myanmar

This section of the study will be detailing the contextual drivers and reasons children become soldiers in Myanmar. In the Myanmar civil war, and in many previous examples of conflict in the country, it is known that both government forces and insurgent, non-state armed

groups use child soldiers. As stated by questionnaire participant 3 (academic with a focus on child soldiers), reasons that cause the use of child soldiers and reasons they become a soldier can be classed as push and pull factors, as well as some broader reasons. (2023). As previously stated, the literature suggests that push and pull factors are aspects which drive a child to become a soldier, push factors, and often incentives or rewards obtainable from joining an armed group, often to better their life or situation (War Child UK, 2018). The push and pull factors, being the reasons children are in armed groups, are sometimes background, contextual factors about a country, and therefore, can be considered drivers of child soldier usage and sometimes aspects which can make them more vulnerable to becoming child soldiers, so therefore also circumstantial reasons for joining groups.

In Myanmar, children are used and recruited by both the Tatmadaw (the military) and by ethnic groups, particularly the Kachin Independence Army, Shan State Army and armed groups from the Kayin states, however, many armed groups use children (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict & UNICEF, 2016, p.1). Naturally, the most predominant and obvious initial cause for use of child soldiers in Myanmar is conflict, specifically ethnic conflict (Gupte, 2018, p.377). As discussed, the conflict in Myanmar can be considered an ethnic conflict due to the number of ethnic groups involved, and it has been mentioned that the colonial period exacerbated ethnic tensions due to border and population changes. Therefore, the aspects of conflict and ethno-border implementations, as discussed in the five-variable model, are causing child soldier usage in Myanmar and are certainly influenced by colonisation in the country. Conflict, both intersected and causing other

reasons for usage is, of course, the initial reason; with no conflict, there would be no child soldier usage in Myanmar.

The push factor of poverty is an example of an important reason children join armed groups, and why children are used, in Myanmar (Ventura, 2023). Years of colonial rule followed by years of conflict and insurgencies has resulted in Myanmar suffering with poverty (Maizland, 2022). Consequently, Myanmar has poor infrastructure, lacking in basic needs, high rates of malnutrition, and often education which is too expensive for most families (Trang, n.d.). Therefore, many children have been pushed into armed groups as they feel a burden to their families who often cannot afford to look after them, or to escape poverty and receive basic provisions. Children in poverty in Myanmar are very vulnerable to joining or being recruited by armed groups from a young age (Trang, n.d.). Furthermore, almost all questionnaire participants in the research of this study linked poverty as one of the main reasons of child soldier usage. Participant 2 (academic and child soldier organisation professional) elaborated further suggesting that poverty is an important factor as in conflict, such as in Myanmar, children are unable to go to school and do not have access to sufficient food and water, and therefore, they often join groups voluntarily. Participant 2 even suggests that it can be the case that parents encourage joining an armed group as they can no longer provide for the children (2023). In Myanmar, it can be seen that colonisation has had the influence of causing deep-rooted structural poverty, and poverty has made children more likely to join armed groups out of desperation for an improved living situation; therefore, this variable from the colonisation impact model is linked to reasons for use of child soldiers in Myanmar.

Another aspect which results in usage of child soldiers in Myanmar is undemocratic, unstable government (Freedom House, 2023, p.31). This is especially significant in use of children by the military government. Since colonisation until today, the government of Myanmar can be considered politically unstable which has resulted in not only ethnic armed groups, but also the government military itself, using child soldiers (Gupte, 2018, p.372). Furthermore, as with the impacts of colonisation from the five-variable model, political instability as a cause of child soldiers in Myanmar can be intersected with other issues. Political instability in Myanmar has created a context of unemployment, poverty, non-functioning schools and militaristic culture, all of which increase usage of child soldiers and reasons for joining armed groups. In addition, the unstable government has little control over the ethnic armed groups and does not provide education or opportunities in the regions of many ethnic groups, therefore, children become vulnerable to and unprevented from joining these groups (Gupte, 2018, p.377-78). Another issue of Myanmar's political instability and undemocratic governance is it allows them to be unaccountable for their actions and being more willing to commit human rights violations compared to more stably governed countries (Miller, 2018). Overall, in Myanmar, years of political instability and the current military junta's rule has resulted in fundamental issues for the country, such as socio-economic problems, which has made children more likely to be used in conflicts (Gupte, 2018, p.396). The government continues to use children and has little control over ethnic groups' use of children either. Using the five-variable model, it can be seen the colonialism and its after-effects can result in a lack of democracy, therefore, colonialism has an influence of child soldier usage in Myanmar in regard of political instability as a cause.

Another important cause of child soldier usage, and a factor which makes children more likely to be pushed into joining an armed group is displacement. Many years of conflict, and the current civil war, have resulted in large scale displacement of people, including many children with at least 150,000 children being forced to flee from their homes (Save the Children, 2022). High levels of displacement can lead to more incidents of children being forced to become child soldiers, and a factor causing the occurrence of child soldiers. For many displaced children, joining an armed group may seem like the only option for them as they may not have any other opportunities, especially if they have not been able to access education due to conflict (Lingappa, 2021, p.59). As stated by questionnaire participant 2, displaced children separated from their parents face multiple risks and insecurities with the further a child moves from their home, the greater the risk of exploitation, recruitment or being pushed into an armed group due to desperation (2023). In addition, children in refugee camps in Myanmar are more vulnerable to joining armed groups as they are usually unprotected and without families (Singer, 2006, p.6). Displacement is also likely to be a driver of child soldier use, and push children to join armed groups; it encourages children without families to seek protection or find a sense of order in their lives which have been changed dramatically, or to obtain something resembling a family as they have lost their own (Singer, 2006, p.7). Displacement, therefore, is a factor which a driver of the child soldier phenomenon in Myanmar because it causes children to be vulnerable to recruitment by both the military junta and armed groups. It can also intercept with other issues such as poverty and lack of education, making children even more vulnerable and increasing the severity of the issues of child soldier use. Displacement is also an issue which has been exacerbated by colonialism in Myanmar and, therefore, in this example, colonialism

does have a background influence on displacement as a cause of child soldier use in Myanmar.

There are some causes of child soldier use and reason children joined armed groups that can be considered pull factors and are influenced by colonisation to a lesser extent. For example, as suggested by participant 2, in many civil wars including in Myanmar, children may join armed groups out of trying to gain revenge. This is especially the case when given information and propaganda by armed groups, incentivising them that joining their group will help them right a wrong (2023). Furthermore, as suggested by Anuradha Lingappa, children often join the Karen National Liberation Army for the material benefits such as clothing or food, or also for protection and shelter. (Lingappa, 2021, p.59). In some cases, children are manipulated by propaganda that joining an armed group is “exciting” or patriotic, that joining an armed group of their ethnicity, especially in the Myanmar civil war where ethnicity plays a large role, would be helping their people and avenging losses of their ethnicity and family (Somasundaram, 2002, p.1269). Therefore, pull factors such as these, although perhaps less prevalent than the push factors, are still important reasons for children becoming soldiers and demonstrate a socio-cultural aspect of Myanmar.

5.4 Recruitment of Child Soldiers in Myanmar

Recruitment of child soldiers can be divided into forced and voluntary recruitment and involve various reasons and methods. Some reasons for recruitment can overlap with reasons for use of child soldiers, being similar to push and pull factors in some examples. In Myanmar, the United Nations reports that the military is believed to recruit more children than armed ethnic groups and usually recruits more boys than

girls (United Nations Security Council, 2020, p.6). A common method of forced recruitment undertaken by the Myanmar military is to take children to recruitment centres under the false pretence of offering them employment; an effective method given the poverty in the country. The military then only allows them to be released and not be a member of their group having received payment from their families, and therefore, they utilise blackmail techniques and often threaten families who ask for their child to be discharged (United Nations Security Council, 2020, p.7). Additionally, the military is reported to falsify age verification documents and steal children's identity cards so that international organisations cannot accuse them of violating children's rights (United Nations Security Council, 2020, p.7). Another method of forced recruitment used by armed groups and the military in Myanmar is abduction. Regarding abduction, the United Nations report that this method was used slightly more by ethnic armed groups in comparison to the military. Children abducted are often simply taken from the streets surrounding armed group territory or regions and groups are known to take both boys and girls (United Nations Security Council, 2020, p.11). Additionally, another example of forced recruitment is deceiving children into joining, suggesting that they are unaware of what they are agreeing to participate in (Lingappa, 2021, p.41). The military tend to use techniques of fraud coercion and force to recruit children (Lingappa, 2021, p.54). Such aggressive techniques may be able to be explained by the fact that the military and armed groups sometimes have a quota to fill, making children easy targets to fill their needed numbers (Lingappa, 2021, p.59). Examples of voluntary recruitment also occur in Myanmar where children intentionally join armed groups without any extreme force (Lingappa, 2021, p.41). This can include those joining even after being subjected to propaganda or enticements. In Myanmar this can include armed groups using

propaganda in places such as schools to convince children to join their groups (Singer, 2006, p.6). This is usually done by offering them some form of incentives such as money, drugs, clothes and protection. As stated by participant 1 (member of the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict), such recruitment methods, like those undertaken by armed groups in Myanmar, can include exploitation of grievances against the government or another ethnic group, where armed groups use persuasive techniques to encourage children that they can take revenge on the opposition (2023). Armed groups can also exploit vulnerabilities of children, such as displacement and poverty, incentivising them that their lives will be improved and promising them protection and a family. Furthermore, as suggested by participant 3, indoctrination techniques are usually used more by the military government than ethnic armed groups who perhaps have more sophisticated methods of encouraging participation as opposed to more aggressive techniques by armed groups (2023). However, it is important to note that even in the case of voluntary recruitment and joining of armed groups, many children who join are often not joining due to desire and willingness, but mostly out of necessity or to escape their detrimental situation.

5.5 Roles and Use of Child Soldiers in Myanmar

The roles of children in Myanmar can vary from active combatant roles to support, not actively fighting based roles. Despite many children in Myanmar being used and trained to be combatants, many are also given the roles of porters, cooks, messengers or for sexual purposes. There have also been cases of armed groups and the military using children as human shields (Maung, 2020). Furthermore, according to a report by the United Nations, children in Myanmar's armed groups and

military were often given labour-based roles and support positions such as building fences, digging trenches, camp maintenance, carrying bricks, and specifically harvesting rice for the Tatmadaw, Myanmar's military (United Nations Security Council, 2020, p.7). Armed groups have also been reported to use children for roles such as clearing bushes and bamboo (United Nations Security Council, 2020, p.7). Furthermore, other roles of children in armed groups in Myanmar include acting as spies, messengers or lookouts, essentially doing roles which armed groups believe they are less likely to be detected in and are important for gathering information on opposition groups (War Child UK, n.d.). Additionally, participant 3 of the questionnaire suggests that some other roles of children in armed groups can include carrying weapons and heavy equipment, looting, guarding mines and raising alarms. They also suggest that other more extreme roles can include burning houses of the opposition, taking part in abducting and training other children and being used to walk in areas of suspected landmines so that other "more important" soldiers will not be killed; being used as a disposable entity (2023). Both direct combatant roles and other support roles can be extremely damaging to children as they are exposed to violence, death, cruelty and manipulation when being a member of an armed group.

As previously discussed, the roles of boys and girls can differ in an armed group, and this is also the case in Myanmar. All of the roles discussed above can be completed by both boys and girls, however, in Myanmar, combat roles and violence-based roles are usually undertaken by boys. The role of girls in Myanmar's military and armed groups are often more support-based roles or can be sexual or marriage roles. As stated by participants 1 and 2, girls' roles in armed groups tend to be cooks, cleaners, maids or as disposable entities such

as human shields. Furthermore, girls are also often recruited for roles of wives or sexual slaves. As stated by participant 3, girls are often subjected to sexual violence in many armed groups, including those in Myanmar. Although, they do also state that in some groups, it is possible that they have units specifically for girls who may perform some limited military tasks (2023). Supporting this, participant 5 (owns an organisation helping former child soldiers) states that from their experience, they have witnessed both boys and girls being used as combatants occasionally (2023). However, according to the United Nations, girls in Myanmar since the military coup are even more vulnerable to exploitation by armed groups, specifically for child marriage and sexual slavery (United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures, 2022, p.2). Additionally, some girls' roles in armed groups are forced to have sexual relations with much older men, and sometimes join groups to avoid sexual abuse from their family, only to end up in a worse situation (Lingappa, 2021, p.41). It has also been suggested that out of Myanmar's ethnic armed groups, the Kachin Independence Army is the group which most notably forcibly recruits and uses girl soldiers compared to other armed ethnic groups (Trang, n.d.). Overall, the roles of boys and girls in Myanmar's military and armed groups can vary, with boys usually undertaking more active roles of combatants, labour roles or gathering information. However, girls, most often, are given more passive, objectifying roles such as sexual roles, marriage, cooks or maids.

5.6 Conclusion

In general, many of the reasons for child soldier usage in Myanmar can be linked to, and therefore influenced by, the many years of colonisation in the country. This is particularly evident in colonialism igniting ethnic tensions within the country due to their policies, forced migration and border changes. These ethnic issues, paired with poverty and undemocratic governance, have resulted in many years of conflict and insurgencies, and the 2021 military coup was also impacted by these issues. Without colonialism resulting in conflict and extreme ethnic tensions, the child soldier phenomenon would be far less likely to exist in Myanmar. Furthermore, other impacts of colonialism such as poverty, displacement and undemocratic governance have not only fuelled the conflict, but also have made use of child soldiers more prevalent as they directly increase children's vulnerability and make them more likely to be recruited or taken by armed groups. The impact of displacement is likely to be less influenced by colonialism and just by the conflict due to the time passed since colonial rule; this impact often only happens in the aftermath of colonisation. However, it can intersect with other impacts of colonialism, making them more severe and can be influenced mildly by colonialism as other impacts which are linked to colonialism can make displacement worse such as poverty. Therefore, displacement is a common cause of child soldiers in Myanmar, however, is most likely, in the immediate sense, caused only by the conflict.

Recruitment and use of child soldiers in Myanmar are only influenced by colonialism as a lower-level impact. This is because they are not influenced as directly as the reasons and drivers for child soldier usage. Reasons for child soldier usage are caused or influenced by

contextual, background issues, which can be from colonialism. Recruitment and roles of child soldiers are a result of drivers and reasons for use. The reasons and drivers are aspects which make the child soldier phenomenon exist, then recruitment and use show how they are “obtained” and how they are used. Therefore, the recruitment and use are influenced by colonialism to a low extent only due to them being related to the reasons for use which are influenced by colonialism. In Myanmar, recruitment is mostly focused on exploiting ethnic differences and poverty, which can be influenced by colonialism, and displacement, which isn’t always influenced by colonialism.

6. Case Study: South Sudan

This section will be examining the case study of South Sudan. South Sudan began experiencing conflict and violence very soon after its independence from Sudan (Marsden, 2023). Therefore, as with Myanmar, South Sudan has the same criteria being a country experiencing civil war in the last decade, suffered years of colonial rule, and is also known for its use of child soldiers by both government armed forces and non-state groups. To facilitate the assessment of the influence of colonisation on the child soldier phenomenon in South Sudan, this section will be exploring the following areas. Firstly, as with the case study on Myanmar, a background will be provided on both the colonial history of South Sudan, and information regarding the civil war in the country. Following on from this, the child soldier phenomenon in South Sudan will be examined. This will include detailing the drivers behind and reasons for the use of child soldiers, recruitment processes, and finishing on the roles of children in armed groups. More emphasis will be placed on the study and analysis of reasons for use as this

aspect has more potential to be influenced by colonialism than the other aspects. Therefore, this will facilitate the analysis of the influence of colonialism. Finally, as with Myanmar, to conclude these aspects will be analysed in relation to the five-variable model of impacts of colonisation, to assess if these variables influenced the child soldier phenomenon, therefore, evaluating the influence of colonialism on child soldiers in South Sudan.

6.1 South Sudan's Colonial History

Prior to 2011 and South Sudan's independence, it was a part of Sudan. Therefore, to explore the colonial history of South Sudan, it is necessary to study colonisation in Sudan, where modern day South Sudan once was. Between the years of 1899 and 1956, Sudan was under British control through a joint control called the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. This was established to give the illusion that Egypt also had power over Sudan, in reality the British had almost full control (Collins, 1976, p.6). During this time, British leaders divided Sudan into North and South Sudan, but both were still within the country of Sudan. This process was known as "Southern Policy" and resulted in the South being administrated separately from the North (Mayo, 1994, p.165). The North was more economically developed than the South and this policy was developed to aim to prevent exploitation of the underdeveloped South by the North. However, the South region was excluded from economic development, and furthermore, British colonial policies resulted in the North having political, social and economic domination over the South (Lin, 2018, p2). Consequently, the north received economic, educational and political benefits whereas the South did not, eventually this would lead to a huge power imbalance in independent Sudan, being a direct cause of civil conflict before South

Sudanese independence in 2011. Britain first intended to colonise Sudan for its goods and raw materials such as rubber, cotton and gold, seeking economic gains from obtaining the country (Lin, 2018, p.9). Furthermore, British rule of Sudan took the form of indirect rule. This meant the use of indigenous leaders to govern the country under the supervision of colonial administration. The reality for Sudan was that this installed an ethnic hierarchy and British administration placed Northern Muslim elites in the colonial administration (Lin, 2018, pp.9-10). Furthermore, the British attempted to ensure the North was ethnically Arab, they excluded Southern administration from conferences and meetings with Arab administration, instead trying to force collaboration with Uganda and Kenya as the British colonisers tried to force ethnic borders and relations with other “ethnically black” countries. Britain also founded “elite” schools and a better education system in the North whilst neglecting the South, further contributing to long term impacts for the country (Lin, 2018, p.11-12).

Sudan gained independence from Britain in 1956, becoming the Republic of Sudan. At the time of independence, Sudan had around 600 ethnic groups speaking a variety of languages with the North being predominantly Muslim and the South being mostly Christian (Zapata, 2011). Sudanese citizens started movements towards gaining independence in 1922. However, the British banned any form of demonstrations against the government in 1924. This led to further protests and a military mutiny in 1924, all of which the British suppressed. The British and Egyptians then created and funded the Sudanese Defence Force in 1925 as an attempt to diminish protestors. Subsequently, in 1947, the British notified Egypt of their intentions to prepare Sudan for their self-governance, which the Egyptians opposed (University of Central Arkansas, n.d.). Eventually, after some clashes

between governmental police and demonstrators. In 1951, Egypt overturned the 1899 Condominium Agreement after some years of disagreements between the British and Egyptians. In elections held the same year, the Independence Front party won a majority, and consequently, in 1952, Egypt and Britain allowed Sudan to hold a referendum to choose whether to be independent or in a union with Egypt, in which the majority voted for independence. By 1956, Sudan gained its independence from Britain and Egypt, with around 100 people being killed during the years of crisis surrounding this process (University of Central Arkansas, n.d.). As a result of colonisation, the South was left underdeveloped, lacking in education, resources and economy. Furthermore, religious and ethnic differences would eventually lead to many years of civil war in Sudan, with the South becoming its own independent country in 2011 (Lin, 2018, p2-3).

6.2 Civil War in South Sudan

Two years after its independence, in 2013 a civil war began in South Sudan. Therefore, for almost its entire history of being an independent country, South Sudan has been in conflict. The civil war began following a political disagreement between President Kiir and his former deputy Riek Machar (Center for Preventive Action, 2022). This led to the removal of Machar as vice president and violence broke out between presidential guard soldiers from the two largest ethnic groups in South Sudan, the Dinka and the Nuer. The Dinka ethnic group supported Kiir and the Nuer ethnic group sided with Machar (Howden, 2013). Kiir also accused Machar of attempting a coup, which resulted in increased violence, armed groups targeting civilians along borders of different ethnic groups regions, rape and sexual violence, looting villages, destroying property and recruiting children (Center for

Preventive Action, 2022). The war was fought between the government forces of President Kiir, the armed opposition group the Sudan People's Liberation Army led by Machar, and other smaller armed groups (Aufiero & Pur, 2021). In 2015, Kiir signed a peace agreement with Machar as an attempt to begin the end of the civil war and due to the threat of international sanctions. In 2016 Machar then returned to the capital Juba and was again sworn in as vice president (Lynch, 2016). This re-ignited violence to a more severe extent, with more aggression between government forces and opposition groups and causing displacement of thousands of people (Al Jazeera, 2016). Machar fled South Sudan and was detained in South Africa. More cease fires were negotiated in 2017 and 2018, however, all of them were violated by both sides and other armed groups (The Associated Press, 2018).

By 2018 after five years of civil war and various failed attempts of peace deals, it was estimated that nearly four hundred thousand people had been killed during five years and millions were internally displaced or fled South Sudan (Center for Preventive Action, 2022). The United Nations authorised the deployment of security forces and peacekeepers, even making the mission's mandate for civilian protection meaning the UN troops were authorised to use force, a rare action for the United Nations. The civil war has prevented farmers from planting and harvesting crops, which has resulted in food shortages all over South Sudan, with the United Nations declaring the food crisis in South Sudan as one of the worst in the world (Center for Preventive Action, 2022). Famine was also declared by 2017 (Sevenzo & Jones, 2017). Furthermore, the UN had issued a warning that 2021 was potentially the worst year as more than eight million people were in need of humanitarian assistance (United Nations, 2021). In February

2020, Machar and other opposition leaders were again sworn in as vice presidents this time in a new South Sudan unity government as a step to try to end the civil war. By this stage, South Sudan destroyed and exhausted from years of conflict, and a return to fighting would have been devastating for the country which had suffered a large number of loses and displaced people. President Kiir then declared the war officially over. The new unified government had to work to unite their armed forces and work together despite differences and years of fighting. They also had to attempt to make peace with the numerous rebel armed groups (International Crisis Group, 2020). Currently, South Sudan is dealing with the impacts of many years of civil war including a large number of displaced people, food insecurity, economic instability, and occasional outbursts of violence and fighting between some armed groups (The UN Refugee Agency, 2022).

6.3 Reasons for the Use of Child Soldiers in South Sudan

This section will be exploring the contextual enablers of and reason for the use of child soldiers in South Sudan. South Sudan has been in a state of conflict since 2013, only two years after its independence and formation as a country. The country has been known for its use of child soldiers by the government armed forces, the opposition's armed groups called the Sudan People's Liberation Army, and other small armed groups (Marsden, 2023). As stated in the case study of Myanmar, reasons for the use of child soldiers can be often divided into push and pull factors, those which compel a child to join and armed groups and those which incentivise them to do so (War Child UK, 2018). As seen in Myanmar's case study, push factors are more likely to cause a child to join an armed group as they rarely desire to do so.

Furthermore, push factors are those which are more influenced by colonisation as they are often contextual, background causes.

As with the case of Myanmar, the initial reason for the existence of child soldier usage in South Sudan is conflict. The civil war in South Sudan began only two years after its independence after a combination of political and ethnicity related tensions (Marsden, 2023). Almost all armed groups, both the government, opposition and other smaller groups, are known for use of child soldiers in South Sudan, with the country being one of the most prevalent child soldier users in the world (Mulroy, Oehlerich & Baddorf, 2020). The conflict, therefore, is a vital factor for the use of child soldiers in South Sudan, without the existence of the conflict, the phenomenon of child soldiers would be far less likely to exist. As stated, the conflict originally started due to a political struggle, however, the civil war in South Sudan can also be considered an ethnic conflict as a political dispute developed into an ethnic conflict. This is because the two opposing political figures are from different ethnicities, and it has resulted in other armed groups of those ethnicities, and even others, becoming involved in the conflict (Quarcoo, 2019). Conflict and ethnic divisions are known to be caused or exacerbated by colonialism, as discussed in the five-variable model, and this is very much the case in South Sudan after being divided for many years by the British. Consequently, the aspects of conflict and ethnic tensions which have resulted in child soldier usage in South Sudan can be considered to be influenced by colonialism.

An important push factor in causing child soldier use in South Sudan is poverty. Many years of colonial rule, conflict when South Sudan was part of Sudan, and conflict since becoming independent have resulted in South Sudan being among the poorest countries in the world

(Ventura, 2023). Poverty in South Sudan has been exacerbated by colonialism and intersected with other impacts of colonialism to become more severe, such as undemocratic governance and conflict. Children in South Sudan who are suffering from poverty are more susceptible to being recruited into armed groups as they become desperate to improve their living conditions (Marsden, 2023). Furthermore, some children are susceptible to joining armed groups not only to improve their living conditions, but also believing it will provide them with an income to support their families (World Vision, n.d.). Children are often promised they will make a good income from joining a group, which is almost always untrue, however, many join as they need to find a way out of poverty and gain basic needs, and this is becoming a very common cause of the child soldier phenomenon in South Sudan (World Vision, 2022, p.5). Poverty is especially increasing the child soldier situation in South Sudan as it is resulting in widespread famine. This is resulting in more children becoming desperate as they believe armed groups will provide food for them or to be able to help feed their family (Save the Children, n.d.). Furthermore, participant 3 suggests that in many countries with child soldiers, especially in South Sudan, the state is unable to produce a viable economy, education or employment opportunities for younger people or children (2023). Therefore, this contributes to poverty in South Sudan and increases desperation for children to escape their living situation. Overall, it is evident that colonisation does have an influence on poverty in South Sudan as the country has suffered for many years since their independence and during being part of Sudan, and therefore, colonialism does influence the child soldier phenomenon in this regard.

Undemocratic and unstable government can be a push factor and contextual issue causing the use of child soldiers in South Sudan. South Sudan appears on multiple reports and indexes as being one of the most undemocratic countries, in fact, a 2023 report places South Sudan as not only in the bottom five countries in terms of stable and democratic governments, but also place it in a list of countries which have had the most dramatic decline in freedoms in the last ten years (Freedom House, 2023, p.12 & 31). This contributes to use of child soldiers because political instability can cause unemployment, poverty, poor infrastructure, and substandard education, leaving children with very few options regarding how to improve their standard of living. In addition, the government of South Sudan is too unstable to regulate armed groups and take accountability for their own usage, imposing few restrictions and allowing themselves and others to undertake such human rights violations. Therefore, child soldiers were used by the government and other armed groups during the civil war in South Sudan and little was done from those within the country to stop or prevent this (Marsden, 2023). Furthermore, the government of South Sudan is corrupt, and citizens have very little trust in it, the government spent heavily on military and other resources, causing citizens to become more impoverished and did little effort to obtain international aid. Additionally, they began to supply local communities with weapons, escalating the civil war. These factors increased child soldier use during the civil war as increased poverty resulted in further recruitment, and increased weapons meant armed groups had more resources to escalate fighting and obtain more combatants, including children (Marsden, 2023). Overall, undemocratic and unstable governance play an important role in child soldier usage in South Sudan, especially considering it was an unstable government dispute which started the initial spark of the conflict. It can also be said that

colonisation has an influence on undemocratic governance causing child soldier usage in South Sudan. Colonisation left South Sudan with ethnic tension, a divided population, poverty, all aspects which contributed to conflict and unstable government. They also ruled over South Sudan in an authoritarian manner, and therefore, South Sudanese people had little experience of democracy, which resulted in child soldier usage later in their independence.

Displacement is a push factor which is predominant regarding reasons for children to join armed groups. Given that almost the entirety of South Sudan's independence has been spent in civil war, displacement is a considerable issue. The United Nations reports that over two million South Sudanese people were displaced and became refugees, with 65% of this total being children and many of these children were alone after being separated from their families (The UN Refugee Agency, 2023). Such high levels of displacement can greatly increase the occurrence of children joining armed groups. Displaced children in South Sudan are far more vulnerable to joining armed groups as they seek protection due to often being alone or without parents. Those in refugee camps are especially vulnerable as they can be accessed by anyone and are unprotected (Achvarina & Reich, 2006, p.140). Furthermore, displacement can cause traumatic experiences for children, cause disruption and reduced opportunities, especially economically. Therefore, children in this position may find the promise of stability and money very alluring and are vulnerable to believing such promises from armed groups (Lisher, 2006, p.2). As stated by participant 2, displaced children are at risk of not only being taken or recruited by armed groups, but also from suffering extreme abuse or violence in the process as these children do not have any family offering them help (2023). Therefore, displacement presents as a very

considerable issue in South Sudan and is the reason for many children becoming child soldiers. Due to many years of conflict, the number of displaced children is very high, so presents as an easier way for armed groups to obtain children. Displacement can be exacerbated by colonialism, especially in regard to the intersections which make displacement more severe, such as poverty. However, it can be said that immediate displacement has been influenced by colonialism to a lesser extent than other reasons for child soldier use.

In South Sudan, there can be other reasons for child soldier usage which are influenced by colonialism to a lesser extent. An example of this, as suggested by participant 2, is that children in South Sudan may be using an armed group as a way to get revenge (2023). This can happen as they are manipulated by an armed group, especially in cases of avenging a death of a loved one, that if they join an armed group, they can get revenge on another group who may have killed their family members. In addition, in South Sudan, there can sometimes be a culture of not believing in education. In this sense, family coercion can play a large role. Some families may misunderstand the intentions of armed groups and believe that doing some form of work for a group may be a good idea instead of education (World Vision, 2022, p.5). Furthermore, for some children, the concept of joining an armed group can be “exciting” if they are uninformed about what it entails. For some children, it can feel patriotic or makes them feel “grown up” to be a part of a group, giving them a sense of importance and allegiance (Somasundaram, 2002, p.1269). An example like this would be considered a pull factor. These factors are usually less likely than the push factors mentioned previously, however, all of these examples can occur in South Sudan which has a large number of armed groups trying to recruit children.

6.4 Recruitment of Child Soldiers in South Sudan

As with the case study of Myanmar, recruitment of child soldiers in South Sudan can also be divided into forced and voluntary recruitment. In South Sudan, boys are often prioritised for recruitment over girls, and they can be enlisted in a variety of extreme ways (Marsden, 2023). Forced recruitment is undertaken by the government armed forces, the opposition armed forces and by armed groups as there are few restrictions regarding recruitment of children (United Nations Security Council, 2020, p.5). One example of forced recruitment used often in South Sudan is abduction. Children can be abducted from refugee camps, from schools or simply in the street. A United Nations report suggests that extreme methods such as abduction are often undertaken by armed groups, although the undertaking of this method can still occur by government military (United Nations Security Council, 2020, p.5). Abduction can happen from refugee camps very easily in South Sudan as they are usually open and unguarded. Armed groups can enter in plain civilian style clothing, blending into their surroundings and taking children without being noticed (Achvarina & Reich, 2006, p.140). Forced recruitment in South Sudan can also mean in a literal sense. There have been cases of children who were physically forced onto trucks, often abducted at gun point so they cannot refuse (Human Rights Watch, 2015, p.2). Other children are beaten or detained by armed groups so that they cannot escape, having no choice but to join (Human Rights Watch, 2015, p.3). Armed groups can also use coercion and deception to force children to join armed groups. This can involve making children unaware of the extent of their role, promising them incentives and threatening them and their family if they refuse. Some armed groups in South Sudan undertake house-to-house forceful conscription and may also target schools, giving children

very little choice but to join (United Nations Security Council, 2020, p.5).

Voluntary recruitment takes place in South Sudan, although arguably less regularly. An example of voluntary recruitment in South Sudan is the importance of social and peer pressure and cultural norms. For some children in South Sudan, there is a culture in which one cannot be seen as a “coward”, that others in their community may make them feel weak for not fighting in conflict. Other boys may perceive themselves as “warriors” and try to encourage other children to join, ridiculing them if they do not (Human Rights Watch, 2015, p.21-22). Participant 5 supports this idea, stating that peer pressure can make a child vulnerable and susceptible to voluntarily joining an armed group (2023). Another way in which children may be convinced to voluntarily join is by propaganda and incentives by armed groups. This can be in the form of promising money and food, or it can be done by exploiting grievances and encouraging revenge (Singer, 2006, p.6-7). As stated by participant 1, children can be exploited by promising that by joining an armed group, they can get revenge on opposing groups, specifically those who have had family losses, armed groups can encourage them to avenge their death by joining their group (2023). Furthermore, there have been some examples in South Sudan of children who have been rescued from armed groups by the United Nations, however, have voluntarily returned to the armed group. This can be because of extreme levels of manipulation and indoctrination that a child is so used to being in that setting, they struggle to return to communities (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Even children who do join voluntarily, it is most often the case that they are either trying to escape an extremely atrocious situation and have few options, or that they have been indoctrinated to believe that the group is far different from reality. As

stated by participant 4 (employee at charity War Child who has worked in South Sudan), the line between voluntary and forced recruitment is blurred because in a situation of extreme insecurity, joining can be necessary (2023).

6.5 Roles and Use of Child Soldiers in South Sudan

The roles of children in armed groups in South Sudan can be varied from both combatant roles to other non-fighting roles. Support roles undertaken by children in armed groups in South Sudan include cooks, porters, spies and bodyguards to military commanders. In total of children in armed groups in South Sudan, around 48% of recruited children were used for combatant roles after receiving training and arms (United Nations Security Council, 2020, p.5). Many children were deployed to work at military checkpoints during the civil war, with the Sudan People's Liberation Army especially recruiting children for this role. Children in all roles, combatant and support, are noted to have received abuse and beating from the groups' commanders.

Furthermore, an increased number of children were taken for combat roles when there was an intensification in the conflict or more armed groups emerged and therefore, children were often taken in order to increase numbers of the armed force (United Nations Security Council, 2020, p.5). The armed group named the South Sudan United Front used children to control territory and complete combat roles against armed groups who tried to enter their area of operations (United Nations Security Council, 2020, p.6). Non-combat support roles in the South Sudan civil war included tasks such as washing clothes, cooking, collecting firewood and other domestic style duties. Essentially, many children who were not, or when they were not, being used as combatants, had to perform roles of being a servant to the military

commanders. They would undertake roles to ensure that the commanders were provided for, had food and water, cleaned for them, do errands for them, and many other similar roles (Human Rights Watch, 2015, p.31-33). Children in both support and combatant roles may also be subjected to extreme violence including forced sexual roles (Human Rights Watch, 2015, p.26).

As previously mentioned, more boys than girls are recruited and used by armed groups in South Sudan (United Nations Security Council, 2020, p.5). However, it is still important to understand the role girls played for armed groups during the civil war as they were often subjected to extreme sexual exploitation and harsh domestic roles, as well as occasionally undertaking combatant roles. Participant 4 states that most often boys engage in combat and girls in roles of sexual servitude, however, sexual abuse of boys does occur, and girls do fight as combatants as well (2023). Girls in South Sudan are often abducted with the purpose of being sexual slaves or wives for military commanders. As well as being forced to undertake sexual roles, girls are also used to cook and clean, and sometimes to kill civilians and loot villages. For many girls in armed groups, they end up remaining due to fear and follow all orders given as if they object, they most likely would get killed. Therefore, they become servants to military commanders and undertake sexual roles in order to not anger the commanders and risk their life (Savage & Ajak, 2019). One South Sudanese girl, speaking to the organisation World Vision about her experience in an armed group during the civil war, stated that she was forced to undertake some combatant roles, saying that she was previously afraid of guns, but she was indoctrinated to shoot people. She also explained that military leaders would convince her and others that they would perform rituals to the children and that they would be safe from bullets,

showing that they were brainwashed into becoming disposable entities for the armed forces as they were made to become able to fight and potentially be shot in combat (World Vision, n.d.). As stated by participant 3, roles of girls including sexual roles and cases of sexual violence are often not reported to the public (2023). This can be because of shame attached to this, and therefore, the true extent and full magnitude of girls' involvement in armed groups in South Sudan and the violence they are subjected to, is often difficult to assess.

6.6 Conclusion

Several of the reasons for child soldier usage in South Sudan are influenced by the many years of colonisation in the country. In South Sudan, this is especially evident with regards to unstable government, ethnic tensions and poverty. British colonial rule resulted in an unstable government after many years of oppressive rule; people in South Sudan were inexperienced with democracy. This factor also combined with the other impact of colonisation, poverty, led to oppressive governments in South Sudan's present and history, having corrupt leaders. Poverty, therefore, is also an impact of colonialism effecting South Sudan. The British did not invest in the southern regions' architecture, infrastructure, education or economy, resulting in deep-rooted poverty for South Sudan which has lasted for many years. Furthermore, ethnic tensions are rife in South Sudan as the British colonial policies prioritised some ethnicities over others, created institution hierarchy and hatred. They also adjusted borders which caused ethnic displacement. All of these issues intersect with one another as impacts of colonialism, as suggested in the five-variable model, becoming more severe. All of these impacts that have been severely influenced by colonialism, have resulted in the child soldier

problem in the country, and is becoming much more severe.

Undemocratic government was an initial cause of the conflict, therefore an initial cause of child soldier usage, but poverty and ethnic tensions made the conflict much worse, and therefore, made children far more vulnerable to being recruited by armed groups. Displacement is influenced by colonisation to a lesser extent and is more likely to be caused by many years of war, both since independence, and conflicts during being a part of Sudan. Displacement was certainly influenced by colonialism in the years after colonial independence, and can cause deep-rooted inescapable issues for a country, however, in the case of the South Sudan civil war, it was likely not as heavily influenced. It can intersect with other impacts such as poverty which are influenced by colonialism, so therefore, it can still have a minor link. Displacement is a common cause of child soldier recruitment in South Sudan, made worse by poverty and increased years of conflict.

As with the case of Myanmar, recruitment and use of child soldiers in South Sudan are influenced by colonialism to a lower extent. These aspects are as a result of the reasons and drivers of child soldier use, as the reasons for use make the child soldier phenomenon exist, and therefore, result in recruitment, use and various roles. Consequently, recruitment and use is only influenced in how it relates to the reasons for use. For example, if poverty has resulted in high recruitment, then recruitment for this reason has a low-level connection to colonialism as colonialism has influenced the poverty in the first instance. In South Sudan, most cases of recruitment are focused on exploiting poverty and ethnic tensions which are influenced by colonialism, hence the low-level link between recruitment and colonialism, however, for recruitment, there can also be many other factors which are contextual to the child or the country, not colonialism (Lin, 2018, p.2-3).

7. Comparative Analysis

This chapter will undertake a comparative analysis of the cases of South Sudan and Myanmar. It will consist of comparing firstly the similarities and then followed by assessing if there are any differences between the cases. The analysis of similarities and differences will consider this in regard to reasons for child soldier use, recruitment and use, and also including the civil war and colonisation in the countries, and how this may also play a role in similarities and differences between the child soldier phenomenon in these countries. The section will then end with a brief concluding part.

7.1 Similarities

The cases of Myanmar and South Sudan present with a number of similarities in many aspects. Firstly, in regard to their colonial past, both Myanmar and South Sudan were exploited for economic and resource benefits. Furthermore, both countries were a part of a different country during the colonial period and had numerous ethnicities. Colonial policies and administration in both countries exploited ethnic differences and created a hierarchy of races and ethnicities in the countries, and changed and implemented borders, forcing different ethnicities into different areas. In addition, British rule over both countries was oppressive and harsh, facing much resistance during its time. Subsequently, the impacts of colonialism are similar in these two countries. Both have experienced during their civil wars, previously or after in the case of South Sudan, all impacts of the five-variable impact model. This means that both countries have suffered poverty, undemocratic government, displacement, conflict and ethnic tensions.

Before discussing how the influence of colonialism and the five-variable model has similarities on both countries' child soldier phenomenon, it is first necessary to identify similarities in their respective civil wars in order to also assess the impact of these on child soldiers. Firstly, despite having slightly different causes, both civil wars were initially started due to a political situation. In addition, in both civil wars, the conflicts escalated due to the ethnic tensions, poverty and undemocratic governments. Both of these cases of civil wars have also resulted in large numbers of displacement, especially of children, with all of these factors exacerbating each other in both case studies.

Regarding reasons for use of child soldiers, the most important aspect when analysing the influence of colonialism, both countries share many similarities. For both case studies, all variables of the five-variable impact model can be considered a reason for child soldier use. In both countries, poverty, displacement and conflict itself are perhaps the most important reasons for child soldier use, with undemocratic government and ethnic tensions igniting the conflicts and making child soldier use more severe and exploitative. For both countries, the reasons of poverty, undemocratic governance, conflict and ethnic tensions can be said to be influenced by colonialism. This is because colonial rule in both of the countries caused these reasons to be long lasting, deep-rooted impacts. Poverty and ethnic tensions were so severe after colonial rule that they have remained for a very long time and colonialism did not provide the countries with the necessary economic infrastructure to remove poverty easily. Colonial border implementations led to ethnic tensions in both countries that will remain due to segregated communities and hierarchy implemented by colonialists that has remained in the fabric of both countries' identities. Undemocratic government and conflict are an issue in both countries

as a result of colonialism and from the other impacts of poverty and ethnic tensions as they are not accustomed to democracy due to repressive colonial rule. However, displacement causing child soldier usage can be considered less influenced by colonialism than the other reasons mentioned. This is because displacement in both countries is most likely caused by conflict and poverty as postcolonial displacement does not usually last until recent times. However, displacement can be caused or cause institutional issues for a country such as educational and poverty which can be influenced by colonialism and can result in child soldier use.

Regarding recruitment and use of child soldiers, the countries have many similarities. Myanmar and South Sudan use similar recruitment techniques to use child soldiers in their armed groups, with both countries having child soldiers in their government armed forces and in numerous ethnic armed groups. Both experience voluntary recruitment and partake in forced recruitment. Armed groups in their civil wars have exploited poverty, ethnic tension and displacement to recruit children, and armed groups in both countries abduct many children. Use of children in armed groups is similar in the case studies too, with armed groups using children for combat roles, and also for support roles such as domestic jobs, information gathering and resource collecting. More boys are used than girls, and girls in general undertake support or sexual based roles in South Sudan and Myanmar.

7.2 Differences

Regarding the colonial past of Myanmar and South Sudan, there are some important differences. One of the most essential of these is the difference in the time they were colonised. Colonial rule in Myanmar

lasted for 124 years, compared to a lesser time of 57 years in South Sudan. However, colonialism in Myanmar was seen as a means to an end for trade with China and an “add on” to colonial India. Therefore, despite being shorter, colonial rule in South Sudan can be said to be more severe as they were heavily exploited in terms of resources, economy and education. Consequently, the impacts as discussed in the five-variable model vary in severity in the two cases, despite both countries experiencing all five impacts. The two most exemplifying examples of this is with poverty and undemocratic governance. South Sudan is worse in both of these aspects being in more extreme poverty and overall having less freedoms and a more unstable government.

Looking into the conflict comparison of the two case studies, the civil war in Myanmar can be said to be more ethnically motivated as Myanmar’s ethnic tensions are deep-rooted in the civil war, with many ethnic armed groups being involved. Another slight difference between the two conflicts is that in South Sudan, the original cause of the conflict broke out between two groups, with other armed groups becoming subsequently involved, whereas in Myanmar, the conflict is mostly against one group, the military, with other smaller groups taking sides.

In relation to reasons for child soldier use, Myanmar and South Sudan are mostly similar, however, there are some differences. For example, the variables of poverty and undemocratic governance from the five-variable model of colonisation impacts are more severe in South Sudan than Myanmar. Therefore, these impacts may explain why child soldier usage in South Sudan is more prevalent and extreme than in Myanmar. Furthermore, ethnic tensions in Myanmar can be considered more severe than South Sudan and more important in the civil war there,

meaning that in Myanmar, ethnic tensions can cause more children to be exploited by armed groups as they seek to persuade children to join their group. However, despite having different severity of different impacts of the five-variable model, these impacts for both cases are still influenced by colonialism. Furthermore, as stated in the similarities, the impact of displacement for both case studies is influenced by colonisation to a lesser extent. However, displacement in South Sudan at this time is worse than in Myanmar, possible because it has higher levels of poverty and the conflict at this time has been occurring for longer. Therefore, it can be considered that displacement is a slightly more important reason for the child soldier phenomenon in South Sudan than in Myanmar, however this is hard to prove as it is important in both countries.

Recruitment and use in both case studies is overall similar, however, there are some differences, especially relating to differences in reasons for use. South Sudan, overall, uses more child soldiers than Myanmar and uses them for more severe roles. In South Sudan, almost 50% of children in armed groups undertake combat roles, compared to Myanmar where many children undertake support roles. Regarding recruitment, due to South Sudan being a poorer country, children are more easily exploited and become child soldiers for this reason. They are more likely to be recruited by promises of receiving money to join, and families in South Sudan have been known to encourage joining as they also misunderstand the full extent of the role their child will have. South Sudan has very high levels of displacement and many refugee camps. Therefore, abduction, indoctrination and occasionally voluntary recruitment occurs there. Refugee camps were an important place for recruitment during the South Sudan civil war.

7.3 Conclusion

Overall, there are far more similarities between the case studies than differences, and differences they do display do not relate a great deal to the influence of colonialism. This shows that, as the reasons, recruitment and use are similar in both cases, and that both cases had a reasonably similar experience with colonisation, that it does have an influence on their current situation of the child soldier phenomenon. However, despite both cases showing that colonialism can have an influence on the child soldier phenomenon, the influence in both countries varies slightly. It can be said that it left a more lasting impact on South Sudan as their poverty and undemocratic governance levels are worse than Myanmar despite Myanmar being colonised for a longer time period (Freedom House, 2023, p.31; Ventura, 2023). It can also be seen as child soldier usage in South Sudan is more extreme and widespread; they recruit children for more combat roles than in Myanmar, showing that it is possible the influence of colonisation has been deep-rooted there (United Nations Security Council, 2020, p.4). In general, nevertheless, colonisation has caused institutional long-standing issues in both countries as seen by years of conflict, instability, poverty, displacement and ethnic tension, and therefore, it can be concluded that it has certainly had an influence on child soldier usage in both South Sudan and Myanmar.

8. Future Importance, Recommendations and Conclusion

8.1 Future Importance and Recommendations

The importance of this study and its future implications are it has provided a new perspective on the study of child soldiers. By providing an understanding of potential background causes, it can improve understanding of why and how children are used in armed conflicts. This can aid future research regarding child soldiers. Understanding the causes of child soldiers, even if they have not been influenced by colonialism and not in postcolonial states, can help with prevention of their usage. By understanding what conditions are likely to cause armed groups to recruit children, governments and international organisations can aim to prevent the contextual conditions, which in turn can help stop use of children in conflict. Furthermore, this study aims to promote the continued education of postcolonialism. It is important to continue exploring the impacts of colonialism and provide critiques. Colonial impacts still affect a large number of countries and people and therefore it is necessary to promote decolonised thinking, encouraging cultural understanding in the field of child soldiers but also beyond.

Regarding future recommendations surrounding child soldiers, there are some possible actions that can be taken by governments and NGO's to help reduce child soldier use and to assist rehabilitation or support for former child soldiers. For example, as suggested by participant 5, many of the existing child soldier reintegration programmes do not follow a "child soldier centred" approach. They

suggest that to improve this, child soldiers should be in the centre of projects, focusing on their livelihood and sustaining their community relations as well as the economic aspects. Participant 5 also stated that projects by NGO's and governments could be amended. They discuss that in their country, former child soldiers are often used as the "face" of projects, but little is done to actually help them progress and reintegrate. Participant 5 suggests that sustainable livelihoods should be at the forefront of programmes by NGO's and governments (2023). Furthermore, participant 3 discusses that programmes by NGO's and governments should aim to be more specific in relation to the actual child, that many plans have a "one size fits all approach" which only works in some cases (2023). Other recommendations for actions surrounding child soldiers include that they should aim to be less "western centric" when undertaken by a western organisation, as it is important to understand the culture and dynamic of the country for the best possibility of success. It is also important to adopt a human rights approach in action plans and understand that being recruited as a child soldier is a human rights violation, and therefore, it is vital to promote sensitive reintegration of children. A gendered approach is also an important recommendation. Often, girls who are reintegrated into society are subjected to far more shame and risk of being shunned than boys, especially as girls are often not considered "soldiers" or are considered "tarnished" from the sexual abuse they received by armed groups (Savage & Ajak, 2019). Therefore, NGO's and governments should encourage programmes which specifically support girls, especially in terms of employment and housing, as these may be restricted to them by communities which reject them.

8.2 Conclusion

This study hypothesised that colonialism influences the child soldier phenomenon in postcolonial countries in relation to reasons for their use, how they are recruited and how they are used. After undertaking a comparative analysis of two representative case studies, it can be concluded that this hypothesis is to some extent correct.

The case studies chosen to provide a clear representation of two countries which have used or are using child soldiers in contemporary times, showing that the practice still occurs today, and that were colonised by the same coloniser, the British. This selection of cases was important to allow for a comparative analysis because they are similar regarding their history and colonial past. Therefore, a clear analysis of colonialism could take place, if two countries with different colonisers were chosen, analysis would be more difficult as the process of colonisation would have had more likelihood of being different, and subsequently, it would have been more difficult to assess the influence of colonisation on the child soldier phenomenon.

These two case studies, with a similar history of colonialism and child soldier usage, display a greater number of similarities than differences. High similarity between the cases supports the hypothesis because it shows that colonialism had comparable impacts in the cases, and that the process of colonialism influenced the child soldier phenomenon in ways that are alike. This is further evident in that the child soldier phenomenon can be considered worse in South Sudan as they use a greater number of children and have aggressive use and recruitment. This coincides with colonialism in South Sudan, despite having a shorter time period than in Myanmar, being very brutal, exploitative and

causing very extreme impacts such as poverty and undemocratic governance. Therefore, it can be clearly seen that there is a correlation between intensity of colonisation and intensity of child soldier use. The reasons for child soldier usage in the case studies also coincide with colonialism's impacts, further supporting the hypothesis. As explained in the five-variable model of impacts, colonialism most often has the impacts of conflict, undemocratic governance, displacement, poverty and ethnic tensions. In both of the cases, these were all important and large contributors of the child soldier phenomenon. For example, in the case studies, these variables all caused and exacerbated child soldier usage, as well as intersecting with one another to worsen the situation.

However, it is seen in the example of displacement that colonialism influences this cause of child soldier usage to a lesser extent. This is because displacement as an impact of colonialism is usually an immediate impact. The time passed since the case studies gained independence and the time of their civil wars suggests that displacement in the countries by the time of their recent conflicts has had other causes. Despite this, colonialism related displacement can exacerbate other impacts of colonialism and causes of the use of child soldiers, such as poverty. Furthermore, displacement can be caused and made worse by impacts of colonialism such as conflict, poverty and ethnic tensions. Therefore, displacement only slightly influences the child soldier phenomenon in relation to colonialism.

The influences of colonialism on child soldiers are most evident in the reasons for their usage as these are the aspects which are affected by the five-variable model of colonialism impacts. Therefore, this supports the hypothesis to some extent as it was hypothesised that colonialism influences all areas of the child soldier phenomenon, including use and

recruitment, when in fact colonialism mostly influences reasons for child soldier use. This is because reasons for child soldier use are mostly contextual background issues which can therefore be influenced by the context of colonialism in postcolonial countries such as Myanmar and South Sudan. For the concepts of recruitment and use of child soldiers, these are a result of the reasons for usage. Without having reasons for their usage, and the cause of child soldiers, recruitment and use would not happen. Therefore, recruitment and use are not as influenced by colonialism.

Overall, it is evident that there is a link between colonialism and child soldier usage in postcolonial countries. However, since this cannot be fully proved and can only be assumed based on the evidence from and the analysis of the case studies provided, and the five-variable model discussed, it cannot be said that colonialism causes child soldier usage in a direct way. It can be deduced it provides an influence because colonialism results in a set of impacts which then cause child soldiers. Therefore, this study suggests a type of three step process, that colonialism is the start, which then causes the impacts which then result in child soldier usage. It is not possible to completely prove that this is the case, however, evidence strongly suggests there is a connection between these occurrences. Of course, it can also be said that there are other causes of child soldier usage which are less influenced by colonialism such as geographical factors, climate change and social factors which can exacerbate issues such as poverty causing use of child soldiers. However, in a general sense, the influence of colonialism on the child soldier phenomenon is notable.

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Appendix 1

Professional Participant Questionnaire

1. Which countries have you been involved in/with regarding child soldiers?
2. Please may you briefly describe your level of involvement with the use of children as soldiers.
3. In your opinions, what may be the main reasons for a government or insurgent group to use child soldiers during a civil war or insurgency?
4. Based on your experiences, what is the main rationale and methods used in the recruitment of child soldiers? Which aspects make a child more vulnerable to becoming a soldier?
5. In your experience, which roles do children participate in during conflict aside from being deployed as soldiers?
6. Is there a gender imbalance regarding roles undertaken when children are used by armed groups? Have these gendered roles changed over time?

7. How successful do you think the programmes designed for reintegration of child soldiers back into society and beyond are? How do you think these programmes could be changed and improved?

8. What are your opinions regarding the future of work surrounding child soldiers? What further actions could NGOs and governments take, and are there any key policy recommendations to be made or adapted from working with child soldiers?

9. Additional information you may like to provide

Appendix 2

Academic Participant Questionnaire

1. Please may you briefly describe why you became interested in the field of post colonialism/child soldiers.

2. In your opinion, what are the main reasons for a government or insurgent group to use child soldiers during a civil war or insurgency?

3. Please may you briefly describe your opinions regarding the intersection between (post) colonisation, undemocratic governance, poverty and conflict, and how these aspects can lead to the use of child soldiers.

4. In addition to the issues listed in the above question, displacement can also be a product of post colonialism, does this also play a role in the occurrence and use of child soldiers?

5. Based on your experiences or research, what is the main rationale and methods used in the recruitment of child soldiers? Which aspects make a child more vulnerable to becoming a soldier?

6. In your experience or research, which roles do children participate in during conflict aside from being deployed as soldiers?
7. Is there a gender imbalance regarding roles undertaken when children are used by armed groups? Have these gendered roles changed over time?
8. How successful do you think the programmes designed for reintegration of child soldiers back into society and beyond are? How do you think these programmes could be changed and improved?
9. What are your opinions regarding the future of work surrounding child soldiers? What further actions could NGOs and governments take, and are there any key policy recommendations to be made or adapted from working with child soldiers?
10. What are your opinions regarding the future directions of research into child soldiers/post colonialism and conflict?
11. Additional information you may like to provide.