

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.