The Children of Islamic State

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Front cover pictures: Umm Summayah al-Muhajirah, 'A Jihad Without Fighting', *Dabiq*, 9th August 2015, The Clarion Project.

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FOREWORD

'There can be no keener reflection of a society than through the examination of how it treats its children' Nelson Mandela

The 2014 Annual Report of the United Nations Special Representative for the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict lists seven state armies and fifty non-state armed groups that currently recruit and use children in fourteen countries around the world (United Nations, 2014). We are in a period in history in which, despite the numerous advances in international law, technology, and human rights consciousness, we are witnessing the flagrant abuse of children in conflict zones globally. Globalisation has simultaneously made our children more vulnerable to abuse, yet also more aware of their rights and the many injustices of the world.

The world's inability to effectively address the new complexities of conflict has resulted in a world in which the spiralling cyclical dynamics of violent conflict will continue to be felt for generations to come. Our ability to access information, images and videos from every corner of the earth does not allow us to claim ignorance of such abuses. It is our collective responsibility to protect the most vulnerable populations in the world.   Children comprise one-third of the world's population, and if we fail to protect children worldwide, then we are ignoring a huge potential for positive change.

'The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative is proud to partner with the Quilliam Foundation on the creation of this seminal report.'

The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative is proud to partner with the Quilliam Foundation on the creation of this seminal report. The collective expertise of the two organisations has resulted in a unique report that attempts to shed light on one of the gravest situations for children on earth – the use of children in the Islamic State. It is hoped that this report will provide a critical perspective on the plight of these children that will then create essential reflections for policy makers, child protection agencies, governments, multi-lateral organisations, and those concerned with ending conflict in Iraq and Syria. It is the beginning of a long overdue conversation that requires a holistic approach, a willingness to be open to innovative solutions as well as harsh critiques of our failures to date.
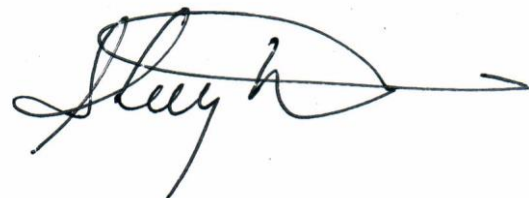
The international community views the abuse of children as a tragedy but it fails to recognize how their use as child soldiers is linked to the severity of conflict. Children are used deliberately as a combat tactic with strategic advantages and as such their recruitment must be recognized not only as a social and economic issue, but also as a security concern with lasting implications for peace and stability. If we are to ensure that current and potential conflicts are effectively addressed, then we will have to find tangible solutions to preventing the use of children in violent conflicts. General Dallaire states, 'Resolution of the conflicts in Iraq and Syria will require a concerted effort to end the use of child soldiers in that region.'

This report clearly highlights the many challenges faced by the entire world with respect to the use of children by armed groups. It is no longer an issue that is confined to one corner of the globe, our failures to protect children can be witnessed within our own borders as well as in distant conflicts. However, this report puts forward the fact that our actions in remote conflicts will continue to result in direct impacts on our own soil, with our very own children being drawn into the ideological rhetoric we actively or passively create.

'This report is the beginning of a long overdue conversation that requires a holistic approach, a willingness to be open to innovative solutions as well as harsh critiques of our failures to date.'

The new approaches to preventing the use of children must include how we prioritise the protection of children on the peace and security agenda. As Graça Machel stated: 'Our collective failure to protect children must be transformed into an opportunity to confront the problems that cause their suffering' (Machel, 2001).

Shelly Whitman, Executive Director

The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

Accident & Emergency (A&E)
Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)
Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (*Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar*) (ICBF)
Committee on the Rights of a Child (CRC)
Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)
Early Intervention Foundation (EIF)
Free Syrian Army (FSA)
Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
International Criminal Court (ICC)
Islamic State (IS)
Jabhat al-Nusra (JN)
Liberation Tamil Tigers Eelam (LTTE)
Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)
Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO)
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH)

National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA)
Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)
North-West Frontier Province (NWFP)
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNAMI/OHCHR)
Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC)
Pathways Multi-Agency Support (PMAP)
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
United Nations (UN)
United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)
United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP)

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Deradicalisation: *The process whereby individuals or groups experience a change in their extremist ideologies and attitudes to adopt more moderate views.*

Extremism: *An ideology, which when implemented, would significantly and negatively impact the human rights of certain sectors of society, such as women, religious or ethnic groups, persons with disabilities, and so on. By extension, violent extremism is an ideology that would justify the use of violence against such sectors of society.*

Fatwa: *An Islamic legal declaration, published by an expert in religious law in order to resolve a particular issue where Islamic jurisprudence is unclear.*

Indoctrination: *To teach a specific viewpoint or ideology without allowing anyone to criticise or question it, often in reference to religious ideas.*

Islamism: *The belief that Islam is a totalitarian political ideology. It claims that political sovereignty belongs to God rather than the people. Islamists believe that their reading of Sharia should be state law, and that it is the religious duty of all Muslims to work towards and pledge allegiance to an Islamic state that reflects these principles.*

Jihad: *Literally 'to struggle' but often used to refer to armed struggle.*

Jihadism: *Non-state violence used in the cause of Islamism. Just as Islamism is the politicisation of Islam, jihadists take the traditional concept of jihad and use it as a political and military tool to achieve a political end.*

Radicalisation: *The process by which individuals and/or groups come to adopt extremist ideologies. Scholars often distinguish between 'radicalisation' and 'violent radicalisation' to highlight the difference between engaging in violent activities and radicalised non-violent thinking.*

Sharia: *Literally 'path' or 'way' but used to refer to the Islamic legal system, principally derived from two primary sources: the Quran and the Hadiths (stories and opinions from the life of Muhammad).*

Terrorism: *The use of violence or illegal force targeted at civilians by non-state actors, which seeks to bring about political/societal changes.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The future of children born and raised in Islamic State is a pertinent and pressing problem, requiring the immediate attention of the international community. There are currently 31,000 pregnant women within the 'caliphate'[1]. As many as 50 children from the United Kingdom are growing up on jihad in Islamic State, and no prior research examines what will happen to them if they choose to return. This report attempts to fill this gap by addressing the reintegration, re-education, and rehabilitation challenges of returning or escaping children.

Over the last six months, Quilliam researchers have archived, translated, and analysed propaganda released by Islamic State featuring children[2]. This is the first database of its kind, and reveals the following:

- The largest amount of Islamic State media featuring children relates to violence, comprising either of children directly participating in violence, or being exposed and normalised to violence.

- Islamic State's *wilayats* in Iraq have released the most images showing children and teens in combat and acting as suicide bombers.

- In the last six months, Islamic State propaganda depicts 12 child executioners, and one child participating in a public execution.

The report highlights the following exclusive findings which pertain to the recruitment and training of child soldiers in the Islamic State:

- Direct coercion into joining Islamic State generally occurs through abductions. However, Islamic State also engages in more indirect, systemic coercion where people, specifically children, are pressured to join the group out of fear.

- Children can not only assist in meeting the present needs of the 'caliphate', but can continue to propagate its existence and expansion once they grow up, thus securing the long-term survival of the 'caliphate'.

- The current generation of fighters sees children as better and more lethal fighters than themselves. Rather than being converted into radical ideologies, children have been indoctrinated into extreme values from birth or at a young age.

- Schools and the education system are central to shaping the hearts and minds of the next generation. The indoctrination that begins in schools intensifies in training camps, where children between the ages of 10 and 15 are instructed in *shari'a*, desensitised to violence, and are taught specific skills to best serve the state and take up the banner of jihad.

- Boys learn a rigid Islamic State curriculum, where drawing, philosophy and social studies, the 'methodology of atheism', have been removed. Instead, children churn out memorised verses of the Qur'an and attend 'Jihadi Training', which includes

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[1] Information obtained from an interview between Noman Benotman and a senior intelligence officer.
[2] From August 2015 until February 2016, Quilliam documented 254 instances where children have been used in Islamic State propaganda. These have been organised into the five categories: participation in violence, normalisation to violence, state building, utopia, and foreign policy grievances.

shooting, weaponry and martial arts. Girls, also known as the 'pearls of the caliphate', are veiled, hidden, confined to the home, and taught to look after husbands.

- The prolonged exposure and desensitisation to violence that children experience affects their physical and psychological well-being, both in the short term and in the long term.

Looking to the future, it is inevitable that these children will suffer from severe physical and mental trauma, as well as systematic extremist indoctrination. By coupling in-depth fieldwork with extensive research, Quilliam was able to discern not only what life for children within Islamic State is like, but the extent of the challenge of re-integration to come.

Based on our findings, the report proposes a thorough assessment process for children who return or escape from Islamic State. This procedure evaluates the extent of radicalisation of the child, their degree of agency in joining Islamic State, the trauma and abuse they have suffered, and the immediate and long-term needs for ensuring effective Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration, and Rehabilitation DDR(R). The recommendations detail a multi-structural support network for monitoring a child's progress.

Some of these recommendations are as follows:

- The creation of a 'Commission to Protect Future Generations from Radical Violence' to oversee effective monitoring and re-integration of children within the EU. The body would house an intelligence system of at-risk children, share best practices of effective DDR(R) in the best interest of each child, and ensure proceedings uphold standards of international human rights. A flow chart of projected policy pathways involving judicial proceedings, placement, and DDR(R) on a case by case basis can be found on page 86.

- The establishment of a support network, administered by a local NGO and funded by individual states, to coordinate an array of community actors and specialists in ensuring the successful and sustained reintegration of children. In cases of radicalised, dangerous or non-existent families, young children can be housed in foster families that provide them with values-based support in their spiritual, intellectual, ideological, social, and emotional growth.

- The facilitation of deradicalisation procedures that aim to bring children out of the lifestyle they have adopted, and pay ample attention to the physical and psychological trauma caused by conflict.

- The construction of re-education procedures that focus on debunking the credibility of Islamic State ideology, and replacing these narratives with positive alternatives.

- The formation of network programmes to engage communities for input regarding children, and involve them in joint initiatives focusing on educational forums or career advice.

- We further recommend that care must be taken with regards to how children are grouped, so as to promote positive peer-to-peer mentorship, and avoid the possibility of more radicalised children further indoctrinating less radicalised ones.

INTRODUCTION

Defining a Child

There are various points of contention over determining the age at which childhood ends, and adulthood begins. The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as an individual under the age of 18.[3] Countries such as the United Kingdom have broadly followed this definition. The age of childhood could change, however, when it comes to cases of child protection, age of consent, and age of criminal responsibility.[4] According to Section 34 of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) the age of criminal responsibility in the United Kingdom, Wales, and Northern Ireland is ten years old. Criminal responsibility is based on 'when a child is considered capable of committing a crime and old enough to stand trial and be convicted of a criminal offence'.[5] In Scotland the age of criminal responsibility is lower, at eight years old, however, 'the age at which a child can be prosecuted is 12 years. Children under 12 may be referred to a social worker and a children's hearing. A children's hearing is a legal meeting and decisions made can become part of a criminal record.'[6]

Definitions of childhood are varied, and rest on numerous factors, including cognitive ability, emotional maturity, and social development. An area of particular interest when it comes to defining children is their use as adult fighters. State actors have differed over the appropriate minimum age for children to enter the military as soldiers, primarily because notions of coming of age differ among diverse cultures. This diversity has been reflected in international legal attempts to grapple with the child soldier phenomenon.

The first Additional Protocol to the Geneva Convention attempted to address how individuals aged between 15 to 18 years of age may be used in conflict, by stating that combating forces should prioritise recruitment of older children first[7]. However, the language of the Convention is vague, without clear provisions or procedures as to how parties should recruit teenagers, and under what circumstances. As such, it seems to be more of an effort to include the opinions of state parties, insisting on the 18-year cut off, while not offending those with different notions of adulthood.

This is slowly changing, and in recent years the progression of international law with regard to restricting the use of child soldiers has shown a drive towards increasing the minimum age of a combatant. While major international conventions prohibit military involvement for children under the age of 15, a push among state parties as outlined in the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict

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[3] Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Convention on the Rights of the Child', *United Nations*, http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx.

[4] National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 'A Child's Legal Rights: Legal definitions', https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/legal-definition-child-rights-law/legal-definitions/. Accessed 9th February 2016.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] 'Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I)', *International Committee of the Red Cross,* Geneva, 1977, https://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/INTRO/470.

(2000) and the Paris Principles (2007) insist the minimum age of an adult combatant should be 18.[8] These documents are also stronger in language than the Additional Protocol. The Optional Protocol highlights:

> …an optional protocol to the Convention raising the age of possible recruitment of persons into armed forces and their participation in hostilities will contribute effectively to the implementation of the principle that the best interests of the child are to be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.[9]

Furthermore, the Paris Principles ask communities which view persons under 18 to be adults reflect on the need to protect children from participation in armed conflict.[10]

> While recognising that States have different obligations under international law, a majority of child protection actors will continue advocating for States to strive to raise the minimum age of recruitment or use to 18 in all circumstances.[11]

This trend has not been confined to Western states. For example, it is interesting to note that although cases of the continued use of child soldiers have been cited in several African countries, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, adopted in 1999 by the African Union (then known as the Organisation of African Unity), defines a child as anyone below the age of 18 without exception. The Charter stipulates in Article 22.2, 'State Parties to the present Charter shall take all necessary measures to ensure that no child shall take a direct part in hostilities and refrain, in particular, from recruiting any child.'[12] Furthermore, the 1997 Cape Town principles served as an inspiration for the Paris Principles and Commitments.[13] While enforcement of child soldier policy, prevention programmes, and reintegration initiatives in Africa remain insufficient, the commitment and motivation to outlawing the recruitment and use of children under 18 is prevalent. Only African countries with the most sparse and fragile state structures, for example Mauritania, have not taken steps towards ratifying the relevant treaties[14].

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[8] 'Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict', *United Nations*, 2000, http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OPACCRC.aspx; 'Paris Principles: The Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups', *UNICEF*, 2007, http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/ParisPrinciples310107English.pdf.

[9] 'Optional Protocol', Paragraph 9, p. 236.

[10] 'Paris Principles', Article 6.27.2, p. 22.

[11] 'Paris Principles', Article 1.14, p. 6.

[12] 'The African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child', *Organisation of African Unity,* Article 22.2, http://pages.au.int/acerwc/documents/african-charter-rights-and-welfare-child-acrwc.

[13] 'The Paris Commitments to Protect Children from Unlawful Recruitment or Use by Armed Forces or Armed Groups', *Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict,* 2007, p.1, https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/ParisCommitments_EN.pdf.

[14] See, for example, the following map resource with all of the major treaties and State Party statuses, in particular, 'Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict': http://indicators.ohchr.org/. The following article lists countries that have not ratified the Optional Protocol: https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/mandate/country-status-2/, and also the article welcoming South Sudan for ratifying the Convention: http://www.ohchr.org/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15919&LangID=E.

The United States employs 17-year-olds in the military with parental consent, and in the United Kingdom, individuals can enter the military as early as 16, provided they do not take up roles as officers or in the reserves.[15] The US and the UK follow appropriate legal guidelines under the Optional Protocol, which both countries have ratified, as they take steps to ensure enlistment is voluntary, with consent of parents or legal guardians and with required proof of age. It is important to note that the Protocol also makes clear that age restrictions do not apply to military academies.[16] However, there have been at least two instances in the past when individuals under the age of 18 have been trained to fight in the frontlines in the United Kingdom[17].

'A dilemma within international law centres on how to prescribe universal principles to human rights issues while continuing to respect a diverse array of cultures'.

Legal Framework for Prohibiting Child Soldiers

The international legal framework with regard to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict seeks to protect children from violence and sexual abuse. To do so, it establishes monitoring and reporting mechanisms, as well as pathways for justice against perpetrators of war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. Treaties also provide recommendations for prevention and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) initiatives for traditional armed conflict, some of which may be applied to countering violent extremism in children, although additional international standards for these unique cases are needed.

A dilemma within international law centres on how to prescribe universal principles to human rights issues while continuing to respect a diverse array of cultures and national interests. As a result, there is often an inverse correlation between the stringency or completeness of an international legal principle, and the capacity for that law to be enforced at an international level. For example, universal and binding legislation, such as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, issues overarching statements prohibiting the most egregious crimes — for which perpetrators may be tried and imprisoned — while multi-lateral treaties such as the Paris Principles can go into more detail on appropriate behaviour for state and non-state actors, based on negotiations among state parties at the time of ratification. Consequences for violations of multi-lateral treaties often involve sanctions of other signatories against the offending state, or appeals to higher levels of international law, and state signatories may take reservations on treaties that outline their specific needs or concerns. The United States in particular has a history for taking reservations on numerous international treaties, while affirming the general aims and spirit of the laws.

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[15] 'Characteristics of Component Accessions Age', *United States Department of Defence*, http://prhome.defense.gov/portals/52/Documents/POPREP/poprep99/html/chapter2/c2_recruiting.html; 'How to Join', *United Kingdom Army*, http://www.army.mod.uk/join/How-to-join.aspx.

[16] 'Optional Protocol', Article 3.5, p. 238.

[17] See, for example, 'UK under fire for recruiting an 'army of children''. (May 2014) The Independent. Available online: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/uk-under-fire-for-recruiting-an-army-of-children-9431966.html#commentsDiv. Accessed 18th February 2016.

TABLE 1: Child Soldiers and International Law

ROME STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT	GENEVA CONVENTION AND ADDITIONAL PROTOCOLS
Established 1998. **Ratified by 122 State Parties.** **Age of Child: Under 15.** *Conscripting or enlisting children to participate actively in hostilities, international or intra-state, is a war crime.* *Forcibly transferring children from one group to another is genocide.* *Rape, sex slavery and forced pregnancies are crimes against humanity, and war crimes during conflict.*	**Established 1949.** **Convention IV Ratified by 196 State Parties.** **Additional Protocol I Ratified by 174.** **Age of Child: Under 15.** *Prohibits children under 15 and discourages use if under 18, from taking direct part in conflict* *Children have right to food, medical care, protection, reunion with families when possible.* *If prosecuted, separate quarters and exemption from death penalty if under 18.*
Enforcement: International Criminal Court (ICC) established to try individuals for violations, could result in imprisonment.	Enforcement: International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), custodian of Geneva Conventions, does not have power to enforce. States enforce within borders, sanctions from other states for violations.

OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT
Established 2000. **Ratified by 162 State Parties.** **Age of Child: Under 18.** *Direct role in conflict prohibited for anyone under 18 in armed forces and groups, but armed forces may enlist 16 and 17-year-olds if voluntary, with appropriate parental consent and proof of age.* *Encourages community and state participation in addressing economic, social and political root causes of child soldiering.* *Aims for comprehensive reintegration, with State Parties providing necessary funding.*
Enforcement: Reporting mechanism among State Parties to ensure enforcement, and States denunciations of the Protocol will not go into effect until the conclusion of a conflict. Violations can result in sanctions from other State Parties.

THE PARIS COMMITMENTS	THE PARIS PRINCIPLES
Established 2007. **Summary of Paris Principles.** **Ratified by 100 State Parties** **Age of Child: Under 18.** *Address harm of involvement in conflict through technical assistance and funding.* *Committed to resolve imbalance in help for girls involved in conflict.* *Child soldiers cannot be used for political leverage in peace or power sharing agreements.*	**Established 2007.** **Ratified by 100 State Parties** **Age of Child: Under 18.** *Bans children from conflict in active and support functions such as cooks, porters, messengers, spies or sexual partners.* *Prevention and DDR guidelines; economic, educational and community opportunities.* *No capital punishment, life imprisonment or international prosecution if under 18.* *Escaped children are not deserters; torture prohibited, truth seeking voluntary.*
Enforcement: Ban on arms, equipment transfers, military assistance. No amnesty for unlawfully recruiting children. State sanctions, including penal.	

LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of children by Islamic State (IS) – as a prop of the state apparatus and as a propaganda tool – is unprecedented both in scale and in breadth. Children are systematically trained to fulfil roles ranging from spies, to frontline soldiers, to suicide bombers. Although the exploitation of children in such a manner is shocking to many audiences, it is an unfortunate fact that throughout history, children have been used in times of war. While in the past children were used *in spite* of their youth, they are increasingly being used *because of* their youth[18]. This is in part because children can be easily trained to handle small arms, weapons that can be carried and used by one or two people, including handguns, assault rifles, machine guns, grenade launchers, anti-tank or anti-aircraft guns, and light mortars.[19] This category also includes light weapons, such as grenades and ammunition. These lightweight weapons encourage the use of children as combatants, as they can be easily taught how to fire them. In this way, the proliferation of small arms has made child combatants just as efficient as adults, mitigating any differences in capability which may have existed between child and adult fighters.[20]

To determine the extent of the threat posed by the 'caliphate', it is important to critically examine the existing research on how children are used in times of war. It is only by doing so that we are able to formulate potential solutions, and be preventative in this approach.

The past few decades have seen an increasingly rich body of work produced on why children become soldiers. A good example is Adel Assal and Edwin Farrell's work on the effect of the Lebanese Civil War on children and adolescents, whose childhood experiences encompassed war, politics, religion, family, play, boredom, career, and school. Their findings, published in 1992, demonstrate that war has a strong negative psychological impact on children, particularly in the process of identity formation, which often plays an important role in pushing children and adolescents to join militias.[21] Rachel Brett, alongside Margaret McCallin and Irma Specht, further explore the reasons why children participate in armed groups.[22] They found that 'war itself is the most crucial and fundamental environmental factor in the participation of young people in warfare.'[23] While a conflict obviously gives rise to which militias children join, war also creates certain push and pull factors that draw children into armed groups. Push factors include the desire to escape difficulties at home or at school, often as a result of insecurity, boredom, and war-induced poverty. The concurrent pull factors

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[18] Conradi, C. and Whitman, S. (2014). 'Child Soldiers and Security Sector Reform: A Sierra Leonean Case Study'. Security Sector Reform Resource Centre. Available online: http://www.ssrresourcecentre.org/2014/06/25/child-soldiers-and-security-sector-reform-a-sierra-leonean-case-study/. Accessed 18 February 2016.

[19] Small Arms Working Group, 'Small Arms and Children', *Federation of American Scientists,* 2003, http://fas.org/asmp/campaigns/smallarms/sawg/2003factsheets/small_arms_and_children.pdf.

[20] Jo Becker, 'Small Arms and Child Soldiers', 20 March 2001 Presentation at Workshop for 'Putting Children First: Building a Framework for International Action to Address the Impact of Small Arms,' New York.

[21] Adel Assal and Edwin Farrell, 'Attempts to Make Meaning of Terror: Family, Play, and School in Time of Civil War', *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 23, no. 4, December 1992, pp. 275–90.

[22] Rachel Brett and Margaret McMallin, *Children: The Invisible Soldiers,* Stockholm: Rädda Barnen, 1996; Rachel Brett and Irma Specht, *Young Soldiers: Why They Choose to Fight*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc, 2004.

[23] Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*, p. 36.

can be the promise of food, the chance to fight for an ideology, acquire an income, seek social credit, obtain protection, and to find entertainment. There are, of course, also instances where the child is forcibly recruited through threats or abduction, for example the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, which is infamous for its systematic and widespread kidnapping.[24]

Brett's work has been paralleled by reports produced by the UN and charities like War Child, exploring the ways in which children are affected by war. Graça Machel's 1996 report to the United Nations on the impact of armed conflict on children was crucial in highlighting the urgency of protecting children's rights. Her research reveals both the hardships that children face when living in a conflict context, and the resulting long-term impact on the social and psychological development of these children. The Machel study and its successor, the ten year strategic review, found that children and adolescents in militias suffer beatings, sexual abuse, and general maltreatment.[25] Although they initially perform indirect support functions, such as carrying substantial loads, ammunition, or injured soldiers, they swiftly adopt more battle-centric roles. These include acting as minesweepers, spies, decoys, and lookouts.

'The Caliphate'

It is clear that enrolling children into armed groups is now a major problem in Iraq and Syria, with many organisations, including IS, Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) and the Free Syrian Army (FSA) recruiting children and adolescents. Research in this area is understandably limited, although some authors have written several key articles on how IS recruits children,[26] what specific roles children perform,[27] and how the children are transformed into militants.[28] In doing so, they have divided the process of institutionalising a child into six stages – socialisation, schooling, selection, subjugation, specialisation, and stationing. Their findings show that there are several categories of children in the 'caliphate' – children of foreign fighters, children of local fighters, abandoned children, children forced to enrol (either from IS-controlled orphanages or those children that are abducted), and voluntary recruits, who together form what they call the 'Cubs of the Caliphate'.

While there has been excellent research into the use of children in Islamic State, this exists somewhat in isolation to the broader literature on child soldiers, which has important implications for policy making. This report seeks to bridge that gap by analysing the society in which the 'Cubs of the Caliphate' live and are raised, as well as extrapolating the long-term

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[24] P W Singer, 'Children At War', *Veterans Vision*, Fall 2002.

[25] Graça Machel, 'Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children: Impact of Armed Conflict on Children', *United Nations General Assembly*, 26 August 1996, http://www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/51/plenary/a51-306.htm; 'Machel Study 10-Year Strategic Review: Children and Conflict in a Changing World', *UNICEF*, 2009, https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/MachelStudy-10YearStrategicReview_en.pdf.

[26] Mia Bloom and John Horgan, 'The Rise of the Child Terrorist', *Foreign Affairs*, 9 February 2015, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2015-02-09/rise-child-terrorist.

[27] Mia Bloom, 'Cubs of the Caliphate', *Foreign Affairs*, 21 July 2015, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2015-07-21/cubs-caliphate.

[28] John Horgan and Mia Bloom, 'This Is How the Islamic State Manufactures Child Militants', *VICE News*, 8 July 2015, https://news.vice.com/article/this-is-how-the-islamic-state-manufactures-child-militants.

impact of war on these children by using relevant strands in existing bodies of work. In doing so, it is able to distil sustainable policy recommendations.

The primary sources used in the report are documents released by Islamic State that were collected, archived, translated and analysed from Arabic to English by Quilliam. While these offer valuable insight into the 'caliphate', there remain several areas for further research. Firstly, there is a vast amount of propaganda produced by IS on a daily basis, much of which includes pictures or videos of children. A systematic study is needed on how these children are portrayed, what messages they convey, and the intended target of this messaging.

Secondly, more in-depth research is required comparing IS recruitment and treatment of foreign and local children. While local children can be recruited through personal contact with IS recruiters and fighters, foreign children need to be attracted to the 'caliphate'. In what way are these children reached, radicalised and recruited, and do these methods differ for non-Muslim children? What specific propaganda is used for this purpose, and is it translated into different languages?

Finally, while research conducted on previous wars can be applied to the IS context to an extent, it would be worth analysing how IS-specific means of radicalisation impact the psychological wellbeing of children. Given that the long-term effects of war will not become apparent for some time, this will be an important area for future research, and is particularly important from a counter-terrorism perspective to prevent these children from becoming lifelong fighters.

Methodology

Locating the source and building the archive

There is no single account or source responsible for releasing or hosting Islamic State propaganda on the internet. The only way to successfully compile a full dataset of all Islamic State propaganda is to monitor and collect images and videos released using specific hashtags. However, this method only works with current and future releases. Finding propaganda released on a specific date is a much more daunting and difficult task.

For this report, Quilliam created a six month dataset of all Islamic State propaganda containing children beginning on 01 August 2015 and ending on 09 February 2016. A data search was conducted for each day of the analysis period. This was achieved through extensive internet searches particularly on Twitter, archive.org, and justpaste.it. Various pro-Islamic State websites such as CometoSuccess have Google+ accounts that have not been deleted since before the period of collection.[29] These sites posted an image and title for each video and picture set released by Islamic State, allowing researchers to search for cached or archived versions of each post.

It is impossible to ensure a zero percent margin of error. Some pictures and videos have been permanently removed from the Internet, and researchers may have missed some items. Additionally, it is impossible to be sure that every instance of a child was discovered: children located in the background of images and videos may have been missed in the investigation. Videos and images featuring utopian or state-building often show busy markets or crowded streets, and it is possible that children went unnoticed in the background. Children were most difficult to identify in combat footage. It is sometimes difficult to differentiate between a teenager and an adult, and even more so when everyone is pictured wearing baklavas and masks. Islamic State combat footage is often shaky and individuals are shown running, often in the distance. Researchers took a conservative view on combat footage, and did not include an image or video unless a child or youth was clearly pictured.

Over the period beginning on 01 August 2015 and ending on 09 February 2016, a total of 254 events that featured images of children were recorded in their original Arabic form. For each event, the title and content was translated, along with the respective *wilayat* (province) media office. Following this, they were sorted into five categories:

    (i)   Participation in Violence
    (ii)   Normalisation to Violence
    (iii)   State Building
    (iv)   Utopia
    (v)   Foreign Policy Grievances

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[29] See https://plus.google.com/105680930990105629640, for example.

These were further refined into sub-categories. For 'Participation in Violence', the four subcategories were defined as: children in combat, child suicide bombers, child executioners, and training camps and military schools. For 'Normalisation to Violence', the subcategories included: children threatening and playing with weapons, watching public executions and punishments, and Islamic State media centres. For 'State Building', the subcategories comprised of: schools, prayer and religious education, health services, civilian outreach and recruitment, and administration (Sharia enforcement, zakat, and money); and for 'Utopia', we identified subcategories of: Eid celebrations, families and daily life.

The Islamic State releases photos in sets. Each set was categorised as a single entity, regardless of the number of images in the set. Researchers collected and categorised sets according to geographic region, the use of children, and the expected intent of the propaganda. In a minor 4.33% of the cases, propaganda used children to fit the aims of more than one of our categorised criteria. To account for all cases evenly, researchers calculated rates out of the 254 total pieces collected for each categorical count, even if double counting occurred, then scaled the rates to percentages out of 100 to generate final percentages displayed herein. Intra-categorical counts remained constant, with pieces pertaining to two different categories placed accordingly.

Analysis

The largest amount of Islamic State media featuring children relates to violence. This comprises of either children directly participating violence, or being exposed and normalised to violence.

However, it is important to note that state building also comprises a large part of Islamic State media, with 31% of pictures and videos showing schools, health services, outreach, and state administrative works. As such, the group also wants to illustrate how legitimate it is as a state, by showcasing infrastructure and services for families who would be tempted to make *hijra* (migration) to the so-called 'caliphate'.

The images and videos collected herein were primarily released by media offices in Syria and Iraq, corresponding to the strength of Islamic State administration in each area. Islamic State's *wilayats* in Egypt, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and the Caucasus did not release imagery of children in the six month period analysed.

Two videos were released by the official Islamic State al-Hayat Media Office, and not from an individual *Wilayat*. These videos focused on projecting the image of Islamic State as a 'utopia', free from the immorality of the West.

In the most active frontlines, however, Islamic State's Iraqi *wilayats* released the most images showing children and teens in combat and acting as suicide bombers.

Syrian *wilayats* depicted more child executioners—a number which increases when one considers that in several cases, a video featured more than one child executioner. In total, Islamic State propaganda shows 12 child executioners, and one child participating in a public execution. Of the child executioners, eight are from Syrian *wilayats*, and four from Iraq. The two propaganda items from Iraq featuring child executioners were both released in August 2015, while the Syrian propaganda items are dated December 2015, January 2016, and February 2016. As a result, the recent focus on child executioners may be an attempt by Islamic State to project an image of strength and endurance in response to heavy airstrikes. By using children as soldiers and executioners, Islamic State attempted to convey the message to foreign audiences that airstrikes are not effective against the future generation of fighters, because, 'although you prepare your armies, we too are preparing ours.'[30]

Figure 1: Classification of Islamic State Media featuring Children
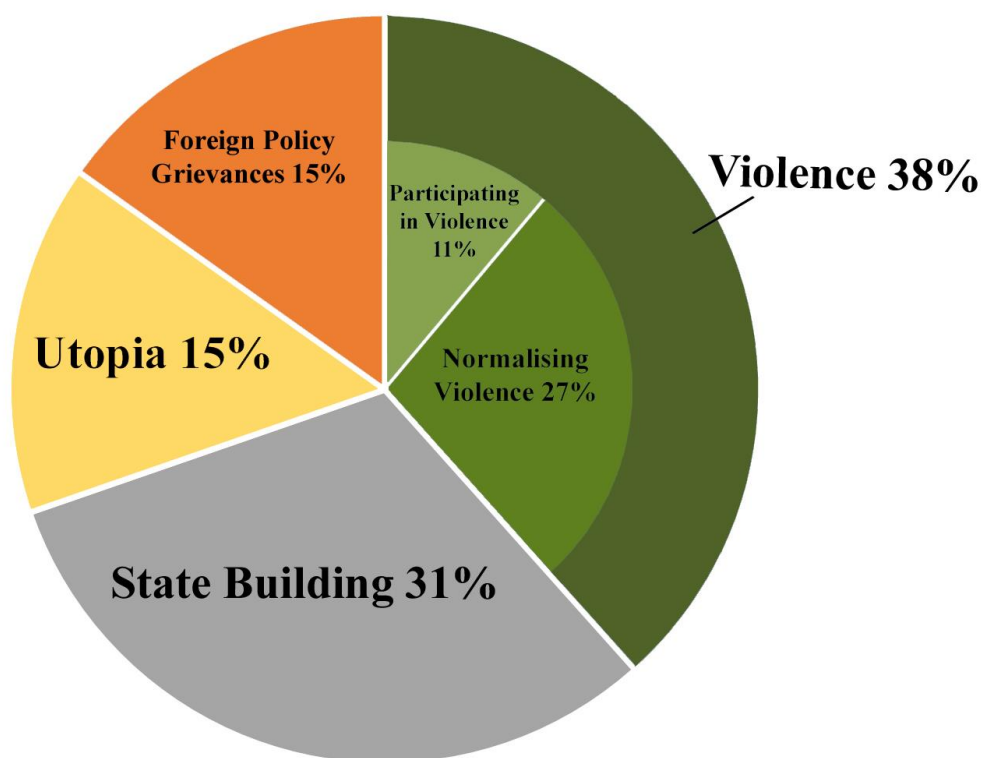
The area of most concern, however, is that Islamic State is indeed preparing its army by indoctrinating young children in its schools, and normalising them to violence through witnessing public executions, watching Islamic State videos in media centres, and giving children toy weapons to play with. The collated information provided a clear indication of the situation for children in the 'caliphate', enabling us to create an overall image of how children are recruited, taught, trained, and used within Islamic State.

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[30] 'They are the Enemy, So Beware of Them,' *Wilayat Raqqa Media Office,* 20 February 2016.

Figure 2: Propaganda Events by Area

Syria ■ Iraq ■ Libya ■ Afghanistan/Pakistan ■ West Africa ■ Al-Hayat Media
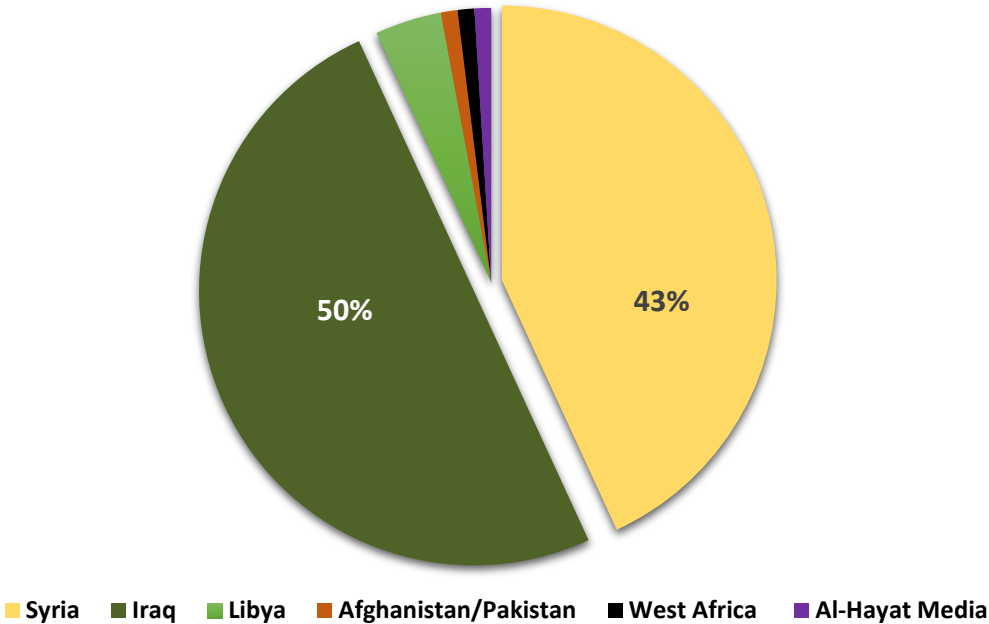
Figure 3: Sub-categorisation of State Building and Utopia Events by Country

Daily Life 46%
Schools 28%
Eid 53%
Religious 22%
Administration 12%
Health 12%
Outreach 26%

Utopia 33%   State Building 66%
Syria   Other
Iraq
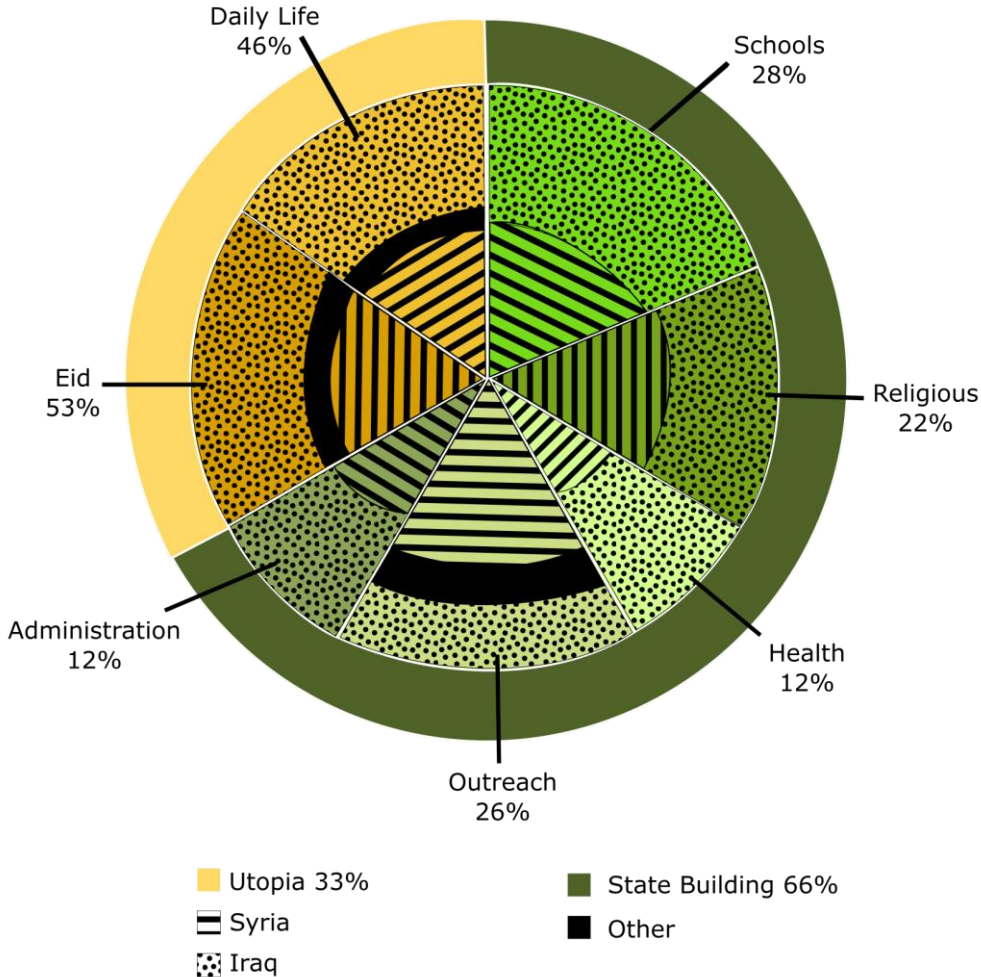
CHILD SOLDIERS THROUGH THE AGES

Unfortunately, children have been used as soldiers throughout history, with armies around the world employing youths and adolescents in the service of war. Studies show that the armies of the West were full of 'boy soldiers' from the Middle Ages through to the First World War, while in the 19th century, the British Army recruited young boys for their Gurkha regiments in Nepal.[31] The Dinka in Sudan initiated boys as warriors between the ages of 16 and 18. In East Africa, many traditional groups like the Maasai and Samburu systematically inducted their adolescents as warriors.[32] Meanwhile in the Americas, Native Americans of the plains, such as the Cheyenne in the 19th century, first joined war parties at the age of around 14 or 15, and evolved into seasoned warriors.[33]

Moving into the 20th century, children in the Soviet Union were instructed in the norms and values of communism through the utilisation of schools as ideological intermediaries.[34] This was perfected by the Nazi regime, which institutionalised and systematised the exploitation of children by employing the education system and youth groups like Hitler Jugend (Hitler Youth) to indoctrinate children; in particular, authorities used socialisation to create an adolescent Nazi identity.[35] Ultimately, many of these brainwashed children were enlisted in defending their country from the advancing Allies, for example Claus von Amsberg, who at the age of 16 was drafted into the Flakhelfer – a term used to denote the juveniles who were forced to serve as cannoneers in artillery emplacements.[36] When they weren't killed by the enemy, child soldiers were often shot as deserters because their nerves failed them.[37]

Despite the post-war codification and proliferation of international humanitarian norms, the use of child soldiers has only expanded,[38] particularly in African countries.[39] In Liberia, for example, Charles Taylor seized power in 1997 with a rebel army mainly made up of youths, who were recruited through abduction and false promises. The rebel groups who fought against him also used child soldiers: the UN estimates that 20,000 children served as combatants in Liberia's war, and they constituted up to 70 percent of the various fighting forces in the country.[40] A survey in Angola found that 36 percent of all Angolan children had

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[31] David M Rosen, 'Child Soldiers, International Humanitarian Law, and the Globalisation of Childhood', *American Anthropologist,* 109, no. 2, 1 June 2007, p. 297; Jason Hart, 'The Politics of Child Soldiers', *Brown Journal of World Affairs,* 13, no. 1, Winter 2006, p. 218.

[32] Rosen, 'Child Soldiers, International Humanitarian Law, and the Globalisation of Childhood', p. 297.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Joseph I. Zajda, *Education in the USSR: International Studies in Education and Social Change*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980, p. 109.

[35] Lisa Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, English Edition, Oxford ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011, p. 1.

[36] He would go on to marry Dutch Crown Princess Beatrix, and become Prince Claus of the Netherlands. Michael H Kater, *Hitler Youth*, Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 168.

[37] Ibid, p. 191.

[38] It is important to note the difficulties in stating with any certainty the number of countries on record and the number of armed groups that use children. The ILO and UNICEF are currently commissioning a study to estimate global number of child soldiers.

[39] Janet McKnight, 'Child Soldiers in Africa: A Global Approach to Human Rights Protection, Enforcement and Post-Conflict Reintegration', *African Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 18, no. 2, 2010, p. 113.

[40] P W Singer, 'Books: 'Children at War'', *The Washington Post*, 12 June 2006, sec. Live Q&As, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2006/05/22/DI2006052200785.html.

either served as soldiers, or accompanied troops into combat, while in Rwanda, thousands of children are believed to have participated in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, many younger than 14 when they committed the atrocities.[41] In the Democratic Republic of the Congo children are actively sought as soldiers, because the child soldier, known as the *kadogo*, is widely feared among civilian populations, who believe the children to be capable of incarnating evil and death.[42]

Although commonly used in African civil wars, child soldiers have been used in various conflicts around the world. During the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, Iranian President Rafsanjani declared that 'all Iranians from 12 to 72 should volunteer for the Holy War'. Thousands of children were taken out of school and sent to the frontlines with little more than a few grenades. Wearing keys around their necks (symbolising the key to heaven), they walked ahead of conventional troops to clear the minefields.[43] In India, several rebel groups are suspected of using child soldiers, including in the restive region of Kashmir, while Myanmar has a total of 357 cases of child recruitment and use by the '*Tatmadaw'* (government armed forces).[44] More recently, the Libyan civil war included underage combatants on both sides. Although Libyan national law codified the minimum age of recruitment as 18, Muammar Qaddafi had no qualms about recruiting minors.[45] Rebel armed groups also recruited adolescents, mostly 16 and 17 year olds. In some cases they were encouraged to join by their parents, in other cases, the youths defied their families and travelled great distances to join the armed conflict, driven to fight because they did not want to suffer the same indignities as their parents.[46]

Parallel to the increased recruitment of child soldiers, children are also being exploited in greater numbers by terrorist groups. Many of these groups have long had 'youth wings', which is sadly where indoctrination first begins, with children and adolescents often being used for actual operations. For example, captured al-Qaeda training videos showed young boys being taught how to manufacture bombs and set explosive traps, while Palestinian radical groups like Palestinian Islamic Jihad have recruited children as young as 13 as suicide bombers.[47] More recently, the UN has received credible but unverified reports on the creation of an IS youth wing by the name of '*Fityan Al Islam'* (Boys of Islam).[48]

In Somalia, the al-Qaeda affiliate al-Shabaab[49] has increasingly used children in its operations. Although it traditionally relied on extremist propaganda and material rewards to incentivise

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[41] P W Singer, 'The New Faces of War', *American Educator*, Winter 2005, p. 4, http://www.pwsinger.com/articles.html.

[42] Javier Aguilar Molina, 'The Invention of Child Witches in the Democratic Republic of Congo', *Save the Children*, http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/The_Invention_of_Child_Witches(1)_1.pdf.

[43] Singer, 'The New Faces of War', p. 5.

[44] 'Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council', *United Nations Security Council*, 5 June 2015, p. 23, http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2015_409.pdf.

[45] Mark A Drumbl, *Reimagining Child Soldiers in International Law and Policy*, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 32.

[46] Anthony Shadid, 'Libya's Youth Revolt Veers Toward Chaos', *The New York Times*, 12 March 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/13/world/africa/13opposition.html.

[47] Singer, 'Books: 'Children at War''.

[48] 'Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Iraq', *United Nations Security Council*, 9 November 2015, p. 9, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/852&Lang=E&Area=UNDOC.

[49] In fact Al-Shabaab is an Arabic phrase meaning 'the Youth'.

children into joining the group, since the conflict in Somalia intensified in 2010 and 2011, the group has increasingly forced children as young as ten to join its dwindling ranks.[50] The UN calculated a total of 819 children used by Al-Shabaab, the national army and allied militia, Ahl Al-Sunna wal-Jama'a, and other armed elements, with a total of 1,870 documented violations against children.[51] Children who are recruited are taken to training camps, where boys undergo harsh physical combat training, weapons training, and political and religious indoctrination. This includes desensitisation to violence, as they are forced to watch videos of suicide bombings. These children are then sent to the front lines, where they function essentially as human shields for more experienced fighters. Others are threatened into suicide bombing operations.[52] The Nigerian terrorist group known as Boko Haram is also infamous for forcing children to conduct suicide bombings by kidnapping and then either indoctrinating or threatening them.[53] According to the UN, by June 2015 Boko Haram had kidnapped more than 1,000 – and possibly as many as 1,500 – children. Some as young as eight were deployed on the front lines as human shields.[54]

The method of using children, both strategically and tactically, by state and non-state actors around the world is a key defining factor of war. So is the brutality with which children are engaged by armed groups, and the young age at which they are used. This poses a problem, not only from a humanitarian perspective, but also from a strategic point of view. Groups are able to present a disproportionate military threat because of their use of child soldiers. The Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, for example, only had about 200 core adult members, but was able to project military power through the estimated 12,000 children it abducted.[55] Consequently, the use of child soldiers not only violates the rules of engagement intended to protect innocent civilian populations, it also often renders conflicts more protracted and deadly.[56]

'The role of children in the 'caliphate' represents a culmination and acceleration of broader trends in the child soldier phenomenon.'

Historical Basis for Islamic State's Use of Children

The role of children in the 'caliphate' represents a culmination and acceleration of broader trends in the child soldier phenomenon. Echoes of Nazi Germany can be glimpsed in the systematic indoctrination of children through the schools and training camps in IS territory (to be further discussed later in the report), while the abductions and forced recruitment employed by armies in Africa have been observed throughout Iraq and Syria. Finally, IS leaders

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[50] Danielle Breitenbücher, 'Somalia: The Fate of Children in the Conflict', *International Committee of the Red Cross*, 27 August 2015, https://www.icrc.org/casebook/doc/case-study/somalia-the-fate-of-children-in-the-conflict.htm; 'Somalia: Warring Parties Put Children at Grave Risk', *Human Rights Watch*, 21 February 2012 https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/02/21/somalia-warring-parties-put-children-grave-risk.

[51] 'Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council', 5 June 2015, p. 25.

[52] Breitenbücher, 'Somalia: The Fate of Children in the Conflict'.

[53] Ludovico Iaccino, 'It's Not Just ISIS and Boko Haram, Child Soldier Recruitment is a Problem in Many Countries', *International Business Times*, 24 October 2015, http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/focus-its-not-just-isis-boko-haram-child-soldier-recruitment-problem-many-countries-1525390.

[54] Philip Obaji Jr, 'US Troops vs Boko Haram's Child Soldiers in Cameroon', *The Daily Beast*, 16 October 2015, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/10/16/u-s-troops-vs-boko-haram-s-child-soldiers-in-cameroon.html.

[55] Singer, 'Children At War'.

[56] Singer, 'The New Faces of War', p. 10.

have taken inspiration from terrorist groups using children in their operations, and expanded this on a larger scale.

The Ottomans

The use of children by Islamic State mirrors the practices of the Ottoman Empire in Central Europe. There have been several instances of IS militants taking children from the families of ethnic minorities to add to their ranks. For example, from August 2014 to June 2015 hundreds of boys, including Yezidis and Turkmen, were forcibly taken from their families in Ninewa and sent to training centres, where boys as young as eight were taught the Qur'an, the use of weapons, and combat tactics.[57] It is likely that Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is trying to emulate the Ottoman *devşirme* system. The Ottoman Emperor Murad I (1326-1389) was beholden to the Turkish notables, and resented the power they had over him. To counteract their influence, he instituted the *devşirme*, or levy, where every few years, Christian boys from the Balkan provinces were taken from their homes and forcibly converted to Islam, before beginning a lifetime of service to the sultan. These boys were slaves, and they gave the sultan total obedience.[58] The *devşirme* provided recruits for administrative and civil services, as well as elite military bodies like the Janissaries.[59]

IS leaders and propagandists frequently pay homage to the Ottoman Empire, which is perceived in some parts of the Muslim world as the last true caliphate, in order to bolster their credibility and cloak their violent ideology in the borrowed legitimacy of the Ottomans. As is often the case, a closer analysis reveals key differences between the IS and the Ottoman approach. Firstly, the *devşirme* evolved in the early years of the Ottoman Empire, when it adhered to a variety of Islamic beliefs, combined with unorthodox religious notions, Turkish tribal customs, and Byzantine traditions.[60] This cross-cultural melting pot is clearly at odds with the rigid Salafism of Islamic State.

Secondly, the boys who were taken by the Ottomans through the *devşirme* were afforded unfettered access to wealth and social status, and many rose to the highest offices of state. This was so successful that Muslim families began to resent the Christian converts, and eventually Muslims were also allowed into the Janissary corps.[61] Although the Janissaries were slaves, their title, *kul*, was one of dignity and pride, and it was more honourable to be known as *kul* than just a mere subject.[62] In Islamic State, on the other hand, the narrow scope of education that children receive means that rather than rising to the highest ranks of the 'caliphate', the children that are recruited and used are more likely to end up as cannon fodder.

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[57] Ibid, p. 9.
[58] Amihai Glazer and Björn Segendorff, 'Subordinates as Threats to Leaders', SSE/EFI Working Paper Series in Economics and Finance, *The Economic Research Institute, Stockholm School of Economics*, 2001, https://www.econstor.eu/dspace/bitstream/10419/56139/1/687673240.pdf.
[59] David Nicolle, *The Janissaries*, Osprey Publishing, 1995, p. 4.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Godfrey Goodwin, *The Janissaries*, Saqi, 1994.
[62] Ibid.

Finally, the *devşirme* system was entirely political in its conception, and was opposed by religious scholars in the Ottoman Empire, the *ulama*, as a gross violation of the rights of non-Muslim subjects.[63] By contrast, Islamic 'scholars' in IS territory are unlikely to defend the rights of unbelievers. Thus, although the 'caliphate' may try and evoke its alleged historical predecessor, in reality the common ground is limited.

Saddam's Lion Cubs

A more accurate predecessor for the child recruitment practices of Islamic State can be found in the Ba'athist regime in Iraq, which actively recruited children into its armed forces.

In the late 1970s, the Ba'ath Party established the '*Futuwah*' (Youth Vanguard) movement, which aimed to establish a paramilitary organisation among children. Children as young as 12 were organised into units and received military training and political indoctrination. These units were used in Iraq's most desperate moments during the Iran-Iraq War.

From the mid-1990s onwards, Saddam Hussein's regime organised an annual military summer boot camp for thousands of boys as young as ten. For three weeks, they practiced drills, took lessons on how to use small arms, and were indoctrinated into Ba'athist political ideology.[64] These boot camps were cleverly named after important current events to boost recruitment, for example, the 2001 summer camp was named after the Al Aqsa Intifada. This widespread militarisation of children allowed the regime to extend its reach deep into Iraqi society.[65]

The most important Iraqi child soldier units were the '*Ashbal Saddam*', or Saddam's Lion Cubs. Created after Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War when Saddam was attempting to reconsolidate his power, the *Ashbal Saddam* recruited boys aged ten to 15. These children were also sent to military camps, where they underwent indoctrination, and trained for up to 14 hours per day. Children were desensitised to violence through training techniques, including frequent beatings and deliberate cruelty to animals.[66] Some of these boys, like their predecessors in the Hitler Jugend, saw battle before they saw adulthood. During the 2003 invasion of Iraq, American troops encountered child soldiers in at least three cities: Nasariya, Mosul, and Karbala, in addition to the many instances of children being used as human shields by regime loyalists during the fighting.[67]

The Insurgency

Children continued to play an important role in the insurgency that followed the invasion, and US military intelligence briefings highlighted the role they played as attackers and spotters for ambushes.[68] In 2004, the radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's '*Mahdi Army*' employed child

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[63] Nicolle, *The Janissaries*, p. 11.

[64] P W Singer, 'Facing Saddam's Child Soldiers', Iraq Memo, *The Brookings Institution*, 14 January 2003, http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2003/01/14iraq-singer.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Singer, 'Books: 'Children at War''.

[68] Ibid.

soldiers, who were observed in battle by British and American forces. They were clearly heavily indoctrinated; a 12 year old who was fighting with the group proclaimed that, 'The Americans are weak. They fight for money and status and squeal like pigs when they die. But we will kill the unbelievers because faith is the most powerful weapon.'[69] As the security situation deteriorated, the UN was forced to set up a task force on children and armed conflict in Iraq in March 2009, after al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI, the predecessor of Islamic State) was listed by the Secretary-General for recruiting and using children.[70]

'Saddam Hussein's legacy runs throughout the administrative and bureaucratic structures of Islamic State.'

The Legacy

Saddam Hussein's legacy runs throughout the administrative and bureaucratic structures of Islamic State. This is rooted in the decision made by the head of the Coalition Provision Authority in Iraq, L Paul Bremer, to demobilise the Iraqi military and dismiss all Ba'athist officials from civil service positions, thus leaving over 100,000 Iraqis unemployed, angry, and in many cases armed.[71] Consequently, many former Ba'athist officers and officials joined IS at the highest levels, bringing with them their military and organisational skills, network of experienced bureaucrats, and perhaps most importantly, their knowledge of the smuggling networks that were established to circumvent sanctions in the 1990s, and now facilitate IS' illegal oil trade.[72]

This Ba'athist influence is evident in all aspects of IS recruitment of children, from the terminology (Saddam's Lion Cubs to Cubs of the Caliphate), to the military style boot camps, and the techniques like desensitisation to violence that are used to train children.

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[69] Ibid.

[70] 'Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Iraq', *United Nations Security Council*, 9 November 2015, p. 2, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/852&Lang=E&Area=UNDOC.

[71] Jessica Stern and J. M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, William Collins, 2015.

[72] Liz Sly, 'The Hidden Hand Behind the Islamic State Militants? Saddam Hussein's', *The Washington Post*, 4 April 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/the-hidden-hand-behind-the-islamic-state-militants-saddam-husseins/2015/04/04/aa97676c-cc32-11e4-8730-4f473416e759_story.html.

WHY CHILDREN ARE RECRUITED

Recruiters for armed groups see children as assets because they are able to perform multiple combat and non-combat roles. They are a crucial resource in times of war, given their ready availability in most conflict zones.[73] Children have been used as soldiers, human shields, messengers, spies, and guards, not to mention the forced marriage and rape that girls are subjected to. Children are considerably cheaper in comparison to adults, because they consume less food and do not need as much pay, while the immaturity of young recruits is beneficial to their recruiters.[74] In some places like Myanmar, recruiters prefer child soldiers to adults because they follow orders that adults do not. They are fast to commit, demonstrate loyalty fairly quickly, and are easy to indoctrinate, because they have fewer preformed conceptions and beliefs that recruiters would need to reverse or alter. Children are also highly susceptible to indoctrination from people they know, love and respect. This is particularly pertinent to the Islamic State context, because recruiters are able to employ the whole family in the indoctrination of the child.

> 'Not only can children help meet the current needs of the 'caliphate', once they grow up they will continue to propagate its existence and expansion'.

IS leaders pay particular attention to children in their territory because the future of any state lies with the next generation. Therefore, the 'caliphate' is investing heavily in indoctrinating children with IS extremist ideology as early as possible. Having been introduced to ideology at a young age, children are more likely to consider it normal, and therefore defend its practices. Thus, the indoctrination has both tactical and strategic value for IS. Not only can children help meet the present needs of the 'caliphate', once they grow up, they will continue to propagate its existence and expansion, thus securing its long-term survival.

There exists, moreover, an external strategic element to IS' recruitment of children. It allows IS leaders to gain the psychological upper hand against their opponents because their videos of children performing brutal acts break the boundaries of international norms, thus drawing global attention and increasing global fear of the 'caliphate'.

Islamic State is not only interested in war and small arms, however, and many of their efforts focus on the state-building process, and their image of the ultimate Islamic 'utopia'.[75] The

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[73] Marc Sommers, 'Children, Education and War: Reaching Education for All (EFA) Objectives in Countries Affected by Conflict', *The World Bank*, 30 June 2002, p. 5, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2002/06/2002835/children-education-war-reaching-education-all-efa-objectives-countries-affected-conflict.

[74] 'Child Soldiers', *War Child*, http://www.warchild.org.uk/issues/child-soldiers; Machel, 'Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children', p. 13.

[75] For example, while at Quilliam Charlie Winter collected a total of 1,146 events over a 30 day period to sub-categorise utopia into propaganda released by Islamic State based on economic activity, expansion, governance, justice, religion, social life and, lastly, nature and landscape. He found that over half of the propaganda events in the Shawwal dataset (469 of 892) convey utopia above all else. See Charlie Winter, 'Documenting the Virtual 'Caliphate' *Quilliam*, 2015,

organisation therefore focuses a large number of its efforts in indoctrinating children through an extremism-based education curriculum, and fostering them to become future terrorists. The current generation of fighters sees these children as better and more lethal fighters than themselves, because rather than being converted into radical ideologies, they have been indoctrinated into these extreme values from birth, or a very young age. Further, because they have been taught religious concepts from their early days, they are seen as a more 'pure', and have a greater chance to achieve martyrdom than the current generation.[76] In a spiritual sense, because these children are seen as blessed by God and without sin (for example, they are not adults who have made *hijra*, or migration to Islamic State, later on in their lives), it is more likely that they will be helped by God to a greater extent than adults would be. Furthermore, because these children are born in the Islamic State, and are not corrupted by previously living in countries with secular values (including Arab countries, which may have Islamic but also secular values[77]) these children are saved from corruption, making them stronger than the current *mujahedeen* (fighters), because they have a superior understanding of Islam from youth and from school curriculum, and are better and more brutal fighters as they are trained in violence from a very young age. Many children in IS-controlled areas are only taught 'religious studies', so there is no real sense of a normal education for them.[78] Therefore, the aim is to prepare a new, stronger, second generation of *mujahedeen* conditioned and taught to be a future resource for the group.

The prolonged exposure and desensitisation to violence that these children experience affects their physical and psychological well-being, both in the short term and in the long term. They are unable to contribute constructively to their societies because they do not develop the ability to socialise, or become loving parents.[79]

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http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/FINAL-documenting-the-virtual-caliphate.pdf. Accessed 10 February 2016.

[76] In the Democratic Republic of Congo, children are commonly used in armed groups for the purposes of witchcraft. There are three main types of child soldiers used for this purpose: the 'Erotic' – very young girls who take the place of adults as dancers, seducers and sex symbols; the 'Kadogo' – child combatants who are capable of incarnating evil and death; and the 'Shege' – street or market children who are recruited as embodiments of chaos and social disintegration. For more information, see 'Child Soldiers: A Handbook for Security Sector Actors', http://watchlist.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Romeo-Dallaire-Updated-Handbook_English.pdf.

[77] A document released by the Al-Khansaa brigade describes 'the enemies of the Islamic State, the enemies of chastity and purity, the secularists and liberals from among our own people'. See Charlie Winter, 'Women of the Islamic State', *Quilliam*, 2015, p. 41, https://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/women-of-the-islamic-state3.pdf.

[78] 'Syrian Arab Republic', *United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*, https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/countries/syria/. Accessed 23 December 2015.

[79] Ibid.

HOW CHILDREN ARE RECRUITED

Education

The Syrian Civil War has had a devastating impact on national education. At the end of September 2015, over a quarter of all schools in Syria were either damaged or destroyed, and an estimated two million people were internally displaced, with 700,000 refugee children out of school.[80] This is in line with experience of previous wars, where the human right to education has often become a luxury, due to the enrolment of children in militias, heavy fighting and bombardment in and around schools, and the collapse of government structures.[81]

However, unlike most previous conflicts, schools and the education system are central to Islamic State's recruitment and indoctrination of children, as they are the perfect instrument for shaping the hearts and minds of the next generation. Children are taught the rigid IS curriculum, and are encouraged to spy on their families and friends. Those who comply are deemed loyal, and often taken to IS training camps. Elements of this have

'Schools are central to Islamic State's indoctrination of children as they are the perfect instrument for shaping hearts and minds'.

been seen in Somalia, where schools in areas controlled by al-Shabaab are forced to adopt its strict interpretation of Islam. English, the sciences, and other subjects that are deemed improper are not taught, and severe restrictions are imposed on girls' clothing. Teachers who refuse to cooperate with this strict regime are threatened, and often killed. However, the dropout rates in these schools are high, and therefore al-Shabaab is not necessarily successful in influencing a new generation of *jihadi* children.[82]

By contrast, in IS-controlled areas, school attendance is compulsory for all children.[83] Home schooling has been declared *haram* (forbidden) because IS authorities are unable to monitor and control the child's education. These rules are strictly enforced; United Nations investigators received a number of reports of IS killing educators for refusing to teach its curricula. For example, four teachers were abducted from a high school in Mosul in January 2015 for opposing IS, and on 30 March a primary school teacher was executed for criticising the group in Tal Afar.[84]

Media released by Islamic State provides a clear insight into schooling in the 'caliphate'. Videos and pictures from a number of *wilayat* (provinces) reveal what is taught from the

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[80] 'Syria: Conflict Takes Unacceptable Toll on Lives of Children', *United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*, 16 November 2015, https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/press-release/syria-conflict-takes-unacceptable-toll-on-lives-of-children/.

[81] 'The Universal Declaration of Human Rights', *United Nations*, 1949, Article 26, http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html; Sommers, 'Reaching EFA Objectives', p. 10.

[82] Danielle Breitenbücher, 'Somalia: The Fate of Children in the Conflict', *International Committee of the Red Cross*, 27 August 2015, https://www.icrc.org/casebook/doc/case-study/somalia-the-fate-of-children-in-the-conflict.htm.

[83] Montgomery, 'ISIS Sets a "New Paradigm" for Child Soldiers'.

[84] 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 December 2014 – 30 April 2015', p. 24.

curriculum, what children wear, and the requirements for teachers. These rules are set out by the *Diwan al-Ta'aleem*, which is the equivalent of a Ministry of Education.[85]

Figure 4: The Diwan al-Ta'aleem committee responsible for this year's educational system and programme.[86]

The school week runs from Sunday to Thursday, and classes are segregated. Students attend five years of elementary school and four years of high school, which is 'divided between females and males', between the ages of six and 15.[87] Children under the age of six attend kindergarten, where they are taught in mixed classrooms.[88] The school day is planned in a way 'where it is not too long and boring or too short and condensed'.[89]

Children do not wear uniforms, however, their clothes must comply with Islamic State laws. Female students have specific clothing requirements based on their age—girls must begin covering their hair in the first grade.[90]

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[85] 'Imam Bukhari Institute in the Tal Abyad Area', *Islamic State Wilayat Raqqa,* 02 December 2015, https://archive.org/details/am_maa.

[86] Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, 'Specimen 5A: Minutes of a meeting on educational reform by the Diwan al-Ta'aleem for upcoming academic year (unofficial document)', 27 January 2015, http://www.aymennjawad.org/2015/01/archive-of-islamic-state-administrative-documents.

[87] 'Education in the Shade of the Caliphate', *Islamic State Wilayat Raqqa,* 03 May 2015, https://archive.org/details/ta_rq

[88] 'Cubs Under the Caliphate—Kindergartens in the city of Mosul', *Islamic State Wilayat Ninewa,* 13 November 2015, https://justpaste.it/oybs.

[89] Ibid.

[90] 'A Primary School for Girls in the City of Rutba', *Islamic State Wilayat Anbar*, 28 December 2015, https://justpaste.it/pzpy.

Figure 5: Primary school textbooks on various subjects including English, Quran, and Arabic Grammar.[91]

The content of the curriculum is similarly restricted, especially compared with the pre-Islamic State curricula in Iraq and Syria, and compared to what is normally studied in the West. Subjects such as drawing, music, nationalism, history, philosophy and social studies have all been removed. Instead, they have been replaced with Qur'an memorisation, *tawheed* (monotheism), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *salat* (prayer), *aqeeda* (creed), *Hadith,* and *Sura* (life of Muhammad).[92] Some subjects have been limited, for example, one Geography textbook only names continents, and a History textbook only teaches Islamic History.[93] Physical Education has been renamed '*Jihadi* Training', and includes shooting, swimming, and wrestling.[94] The Physical Education textbook includes workout routines, as well as a section on weaponry that teaches various parts of history, assembly, firing, and instructions on cleaning and storage of light weapons.[95]

Moreover, Islamic State teaches children brought up in Western educational systems that they were raised 'on the methodology of atheism' and are required to attend special schools.[96] The children of families who have immigrated to Islamic State from outside Syria and Iraq are given lessons on Arabic language, Qur'an, and *Hadith*.[97] Boys who have completed lessons in Qur'an memorisation, *tajweed* (recitation of the Qur'an) and Arabic language move on to physical and military training where they are taught hand-to-hand combat and weapons training.[98]

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[91] 'Tour of Schools in Raqqa Provence', *Islamic State Wilayat Raqqa,* 12 November 2015, https://justpaste.it/oxkb.

[92] 'Imam Bukhari Institute in the Tal Abyad Area', *Islamic State Wilayat Raqqa,* 02 December 2015, https://archive.org/details/am_maa; 'Islamic State Curriculum', *Islamic State*, 30 October 2015, https://archive.org/details/Mnahiij (Collection of Islamic State Textbooks).

[93] Ibid.

[94] 'Race Towards Good', *Islamic State al-Hayat Media Center,* 22 November 2014, https://archive.org/details/fstbqo_alkeeraat.

[95] 'Physical Preparation', *Islamic State*, https://archive.org/stream/Mnahiij/IadadBdny#page/n36/mode/1up.

[96] 'Race Towards Good'.

[97] 'Noble Youth', *Islamic State Wilayat Aleppo*, 11 November 2015, https://archive.org/details/gharib51_tutanota_201511.

[98] Ibid.

Figure 6: Children of foreign fighters recite the Quran in class.[99]

Teachers are also strictly monitored. Those who do not have previous teaching experience must undergo *shari'a* training in an institute.[100] If they were teachers before joining Islamic State, teachers are required to attend *shari'a* courses and claim repentance for teaching 'the disbelieving curriculum'.[101] In all cases, teachers are recruited to teach only Islamic State material. Teachers are distributed amongst schools based on their specialty, or are placed in any role that meets the school's needs.[102]

Figure 7: Female-only class in Rutba, Anbar.[103]

Islamic State's approach to education reflects elements of Nazi Germany, in the way that children and pedagogy are perceived. Nazi leaders chose to use German youth as a catalyst for change away from the 'decadent' politics of inter-war Germany, towards the new 'national community' of the future.[104] In order to successfully instrumentalise German youth,

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[99] Ibid.
[100] 'Education in the Shade of the Caliphate', *Islamic State Wilayat Raqqa,* 03 May 2015, https://archive.org/details/ta_rq.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] 'A Primary School for Girls in the city of Rutba', *Islamic State Wilayat Anbar,* 28 December 2015, https://justpaste.it/pzpy.
[104] Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 4.

education in Nazi Germany was turned into a system of indoctrination, rather than empowerment. This view is perfectly embodied in a Nazi educational directive which states:

> It is not the task of the elementary school to impart a multiplicity of knowledge for the personal use of the individual. It has to develop and harness all physical and mental powers of youth for the service of the people and the state. Therefore, the only subject that has any place in the school curriculum is that which is necessary to achieve this aim. All other subjects, springing from obsolete educational ideas, must be discarded.[105]

The concepts articulated in this directive are perfectly applicable to Islamic State. Indoctrinating children in this way is highly effective because children are in a heightened state of vulnerability during times of war and are therefore more susceptible to internalising views from trusted teachers, without critically analysing the information. The 'caliphate' takes advantage of this vulnerability to light the flames of extremism at a young age. UNESCO has long recognised that in times of conflict, destructive educational practices can fuel suspicion, hostility and ethnic intolerance, and that the content, structure, and delivery of education can catalyse violence.[106] Islamic State is conducting this with chilling efficiency, in a manner more reminiscent of an authoritarian state than a violent extremist group, using tight control and strategic planning to indoctrinate children with its message of hatred and violence.

Children, like adults, have different vulnerabilities, experiences, conditions, grievances, and desires that drive them towards extremism, and there is not necessarily a conveyer belt of radicalisation that leads them to extremist groups. It is likely that the factors leading to eventual enrolment are cumulative. However, the method of their recruitment into the 'caliphate' can be split into two clear categories – coercion and co-option.

Coercion

Direct coercion into joining Islamic State generally occurs through abductions, and has been well documented. For example, on 11 May 2015, Islamic State soldiers in charge of recruitment entered various high schools in the Hay al-Tamin region of eastern Mosul and imposed compulsory recruitment of the children, refusing them the right to decline. It was also confirmed by local media that the group has established military training camps for the children in both Tal Afar and in Raqqa, Syria.[107] On 14 May 2015, 15 IS fighters who had lost or retreated from previous battles were executed by child soldiers in the Hamdaniya district, in the Ninewa plains. In June 2015, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq in conjunction with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNAMI/OHCHR) estimated that IS had abducted between 800 and 900 children ranging between the ages of nine to 15 from various regions of Mosul.[108] IS enrolled the children aged

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[105] Ibid, p. 41.
[106] Sobhi Tawil and Alexandra Harley, *Education, Conflict and Social Cohesion*, Geneva: UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2004, p. 4.
[107] 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May- 31 October 2015', *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq- Human Rights Office*, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIReport1May31October2015.pdf.
[108] Ibid.

between five to ten in religious education camps, whereas children aged ten to 15 were put into military training. The local media released a statement claiming that children who refused to conform with IS orders were flogged, tortured or raped. Furthermore, UNAMI/OHCHR reported that in some cases, families in Anbar were forced by the local tribes to send their children to join IS.[109] Families who refused had their children taken away by IS, who claimed that children were obligated to participate in jihad.[110]

IS also engages in a more indirect, systemic coercion where people, specifically children, are pressured to join the group out of fear. Islamic State continues to brutally punish and kill individuals who do not abide by its code of behaviour, or who it perceives as opposed to its ideology. For example, on 5 January 2015, IS members stopped a wedding procession in northern Mosul because of decorated cars and loud music. When a disagreement broke out, IS fighters started shooting at the wedding party, killing both the bride and groom, and injuring several others.[111] IS also regularly persecutes any group that is considered 'other', as such, members of diverse ethnic and religious communities suffer violations at the hands of IS and its associates, including executions and targeted killings, abductions, rape, and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated against women and children.[112]

Co-Option

While coercion is broadly used to force children to join IS, in the context of the 'caliphate' children are often radicalised over a longer period of time. As such, co-option through a variety of means is more frequently the method of recruitment.

Circumstance

The payment of salaries by armed groups has been identified in the past as a key driver for child recruitment, and this is often the case with children in the 'caliphate'.[113] The relatively high wages paid by IS creates an incentive for children and their parents in difficult, war-torn, economic circumstances.[114]

Ideology

Fighting for an ideology is another central reason why children enrol in Islamic State. During early adolescence, the lure of ideology is specifically strong as young people develop their personal identities and seek social meaning.[115] In the context of war, truths become

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[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid, p. 16.
[112] 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014', *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq – Human Rights Office*, p. 6, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_11Sep-10Dec2014_EN.pdf.
[113] Katarina Montgomery, 'ISIS Sets a "New Paradigm" for Child Soldiers: Ideology, Combat and Forced Marriage', *Syria Deeply*, 27 November 2014, http://www.syriadeeply.org/articles/2014/11/6433/isis-sets-new-paradigm-child-soldiers-ideology-combat-forced-marriage/.
[114] 'Syrian Arab Republic', *United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*, https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/countries/syria/. Accessed 23 December 2015.
[115] Machel, 'Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children', p. 12.

increasingly indistinct due to the multiple factions that represent differing tactics and objectives. Thus the prospect of fighting for a clearly defined ideology within Islamic State is a strong incentive for children, as it gives explicit purpose to their lives. Children are drawn by the opportunity to have a specific role within the 'caliphate', which offers a certain degree of fulfilment in being needed and appreciated. Most importantly, the rigid uniformity of life in Islamic State provides a sense of power and structure in the midst of the ambiguities and uncertainties of conflict. These are powerful incentives in a war-torn society where many feel disenfranchised and powerless.

Socialisation

Socialisation involves initially interacting with children, usually in public spaces or mosques, and encouraging engagement with IS by offering free toys and candy, or the opportunity to hold an IS flag, and in some cases, weapons.[116] At this stage, children are exposed to IS ideology and are drawn in through the narrative of the so-called caliphate's military successes, its utopian society, and the alleged benefits for those who have already joined.

Figure 8: Islamic State militant gives a football to a boy during a street preaching event, Raqqa Province, Syria.[117]

In stark contrast with past conflicts, IS recruitment also heavily involves family members in co-opting children into joining the group. Reports of child soldiers in other conflicts reveal that they are sometimes forced to kill family members, both to preclude any possibility of returning home, and to break down the psychological defences of the child.[118] Islamic State, on the other hand, is not just a rebel group, but an aspiring state, and it needs societies, not just soldiers. As such, its recruitment tactics feed into its long-term strategy by enrolling the whole family, not just the youth. Mothers are given books instructing them how to bring up jihadi children, suggestions include telling bedtime stories about martyrdom, exposing children to graphic content through jihadi websites, and encouraging them to play sports and

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[116] Horgan and Bloom, 'This Is How the Islamic State Manufactures Child Militants'.

[117] Sofia Barbarani, 'Captured Boys Tell of ISIS Lessons in Beheading', *The Times*, 25 July 2015, http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/middleeast/iraq/article4510936.ece.

[118] Bernd Beber and Christopher Blattman, 'The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion', *International Organization,* 67, no. 01, January 2013.

games which improve their fitness and hand-eye coordination.[119] In this way, children are brought up exposed to Islamic State ideology by those they trust and love, consequently making them more likely to trust Islamic State itself.

Finally, children are also socialised into joining by other children. As previously recruited children are seen engaging with IS, children watching from the outside come to believe that the practices they witness are the norm, and a positive course of action for them. Child recruiters give speeches, which spur both adults and other children into action through the lure of status, purpose, and admiration.[120]

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[119] Adam Withnall, 'ISIS Booklet Issues Guidelines to Mothers on How to Raise 'Jihadi Babies'', *The Independent*, 1 January 2015,http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-booklet-issues-guidelines-to-mothers-on-how-to-raise-jihadi-babies-9952721.html.
[120] Bloom, 'Cubs of the Caliphate'.

How Children Are Trained

Figure 9: Cubs of the Caliphate training camp.[121]

The indoctrination that begins in schools intensifies in training camps, where children between the ages of ten and 15 are instructed in *shari'a*, desensitised to violence, and are taught specific skills in order to best serve the state and take up the banner of jihad.

Figure 10: Cubs undergoing physical training in the training camp.[122]

Girls are taught how to cook, clean, and support their husbands so that they can be good wives and mothers, while boys are prepared for combat by learning military skills.[123] For example, a video entitled 'Farouq Institute for Cubs', allegedly showing the training of 15 Yezidi children, depicted three types of training: teaching of the Qur'an, specifically in relation to jihad, weapons training, and how to deal with prisoners.[124]

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[121] 'Cubs of the Caliphate', *Islamic State Wilayat Raqqa,* 15 June 2015, https://archive.org/details/CubsIS
[122] 'Support the Caliphate', *Islamic State Wilayat Ninewa*, 09 June 2015, https://archive.org/details/medadalkhelafa
[123] Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, 'Specimen 3X: Opening of the Central Cub Scouts of the Caliphate Institute, Raqqa Province', http://www.aymennjawad.org/2015/01/archive-of-islamic-state-administrative-documents.
[124] 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 December 2014 – 30 April 2015', p. 23.

Figure 11: Cubs receiving weapons training, Raqqa.[125]

The training is not supposed to be easy. A video released by Province of Ninewa Media shows a training camp in which Cubs are taught martial arts and self-defence, and put through rigorous physical training with their teacher as he punches, kicks, and hits them with wooden sticks.[126]

Figure 12: A teacher kicks cubs participating in military training exercises.[127]

The video also shows the group of young boys advancing in a line with AK47s, all wearing matching military clothes with headscarves.[128]

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[125] 'Cubs of the Caliphate', *Islamic State Wilayat Raqqa,* 15 June 2015, https://archive.org/details/CubsIS
[126] 'Cubs of the Caliphate', *Islamic State Wilayat Dijla*, 22 June 2015, https://archive.org/details/ashb3l_alkhilafa
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.

Figure 13: Boys spar each other in a cage at an IS camp.[129]

It is unlikely that this video is a true representation of IS training camps. It has clearly been heavily choreographed, and the reactions from the children suggest that some of their 'trials' have been faked. Nevertheless, accounts from former children of the 'caliphate' reveal that their living conditions are trying both mentally and physically, for example, some are forced to sleep on flea-infested mattresses.[130] At this stage their loyalty to the 'caliphate' is crystallised, as they are isolated from their families, and their shared hardship creates strong bonds of camaraderie with their peers, who slowly become their new family. Parents have reported that children recruited by IS often refuse to return home, declaring that they were going to fight jihad for the 'caliphate'.[131]

After the children of Islamic State have completed their training, a graduation ceremony is held and the new graduates are paraded in public, wearing full uniform and carrying weapons.

Figure 14: Cubs of the Caliphate graduation ceremony, Mosul.[132]

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[129] 'Cubs of the Caliphate', *Islamic State Wilayat Ninewa*, 09 June 2015, https://archive.org/details/medadalkhelafa
[130] Bloom, 'Cubs of the Caliphate'.
[131] 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014', p. 17.
[132] 'In a Daesh Training Camp, Children Told: Behead the Doll', *Gulf News*, 19 July 2015, http://gulfnews.com/news/mena/iraq/in-a-daesh-training-camp-children-told-behead-the-doll-1.1552350.

They are ordered to stand still while their adult commanders beat them with sticks, in a show of strength and discipline.[133] This prestigious display draws new and younger onlookers, who can then be influenced by propaganda in the style of the document shown below.

Figure 15: Announcement justifying military training of children.[134]

In this document, Islamic State justifies the military training of children using a verse from the Qur'an stating, 'The Almighty has said: 'Go forth, whether light or heavy, and strive with your wealth and souls in the cause of God. That is better for you, if you truly know' [Qur'an 9:41]'. The document also cites Muhammad al-Bukhari, author of Sahih al-Bukhari (considered one of the most authentic hadith compilations by Sunnis), stating that, 'The Messenger of God said: 'And when you are called to fight, go forth'.' This attempt at theological justification is followed by an announcement which targets new potential recruits:

> In obedience of the command of God Almighty, and thus the command of the Noble Messenger, Islamic State calls on the youth of Islam in Wilayat al-Furat to fight, and calls on them to join the convoy of their mujahidin brothers in obedience to God and in support of His religion. So Oh you who love what is best and desire jihad, get up, hasten, and prepare the forearm of earnestness, perhaps you will be a just brick in the building of this blessed structure.

Therefore, more children are driven to become fighters for the 'caliphate' by witnessing practices such as the graduation ceremony, and gradually consuming Islamic State propaganda. In doing so, the cycle of recruitment perpetuates.

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[133] Horgan and Bloom, 'This Is How the Islamic State Manufactures Child Militants'.
[134] Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, 'Specimen 1A: Call for Recruitment: Euphrates Province', February 2015, http://www.aymennjawad.org/2015/01/archive-of-islamic-state-administrative-documents.

CHILDREN'S ROLES IN THE 'CALIPHATE'

Montgomery's analysis pinpoints that over 5 million children have been impacted by the conflict in Syria. Children have been used as soldiers, human shields, messengers, spies, and guards, with the increasing use of 'small arms' facilitating their active participation in the war effort.[135]

Having attended Islamic State schools and acquired military skills in their training camps, boys are subsequently allocated specialised roles and stations. These tend to involve acts for which children are better suited, both mentally and physically, than adults. These roles are not fixed, and as such children may change or adapt to new stations.

Spies

Children are initially trained as spies, and taught to share information on family members, neighbours, or friends who do not conform to the rules and practices of the 'caliphate'.[136] If and when they succeed at this stage, they are moved onto other roles with greater responsibility. Once they are on the frontline and engaging with the enemy, they are trained to spy on them as well.

Preachers

Islamic State propaganda shows children giving speeches and singing songs to crowds of people in public spaces. Children who show an aptitude for communicating Islamic State ideology are used to spread its message, gather support, and recruit others. Having children preach on behalf of the 'caliphate' can be highly effective, because children are often more passionate about a cause than their adult counterparts, and this, combined with their youth, automatically draws more attention. Children are also able to incentivise other children to join IS, through peer pressure and the formation of friendship groups.

Figure 16: First IS video featuring a child speaking directly to the camera at length.[137]

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[135] Montgomery, 'ISIS Sets A "New Paradigm" for Child Soldiers: Ideology, Combat, and Forced Marriage'.
[136] Horgan and Bloom, 'This Is How the Islamic State Manufactures Child Militants'.
[137] 'Cubs of the Caliphate', *Islamic State Wilayat Raqqa,* 15 June 2015, https://archive.org/details/CubsIS.

Soldiers

Children are trained in military skills in order to fight in combat on the frontline, guard headquarters, manufacture explosives, become snipers, and man checkpoints. Local media in the Ninewa governorate, for example, reported that children had been abducted and trained in the use of weapons, and some children were reportedly used to detonate bombs.[138] In Mosul, young boys have been used for patrolling and manning IS checkpoints.[139] Islamic State has released videos showing children conducting a wide variety of training exercises in order to prepare for these roles.

Figure 17: Abu Bakr al-Idlibi, child soldier who died in Raqqa.[140]

Executioners

Children are used to execute those who do not comply with Islamic State ideology. By forcing young children to participate in executions, Islamic State normalises these atrocities, and further indoctrinates children. Some children assist in executions by handing adult fighters knives, while other children carry out executions themselves. Moreover, children are taught that execution is a privilege and an honour—and in one case, a prize. In a recent video from Islamic State's Kheer Province, for example, six young children are awarded the opportunity to execute Syrian prisoners. The children run through a maze and celebrate after finding and killing the captives. A child states that they 'have been raised to conquer East and the West and we will restore Al-Aqsa and Al-Andalus.'[141]

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[138] 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 December 2014 – 30 April 2015', p.22.

[139] 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014', p. 17.

[140] Charlie Winter, '#Syria: In Second Report of Child Soldier Death in as Many Days, #IS's #Raqqa Province Eulogizes Abu Bakr Al-Idlibi', @charliewinter on Twitter, 24 July 2015, https://twitter.com/charliewinter/status/624619670314729473.

[141] 'To the Sons of Jews', Islamic State Wilayat Kheer, 03 December 2015, https://archive.org/details/oma_222_mail_20151203.

Figure 18: 25 teens shooting a line of Syrian regime soldiers, Palmyra.[142]

The above image is a still from an IS execution video showing 25 teenagers shooting a line of Syrian regime soldiers in the head. The images below show children executing prisoners.

Figure 19: Syrian child executing a prisoner.[143]

Figure 20: Boys filmed beheading captives.[144]

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[142] 'Healing the Chests of the Believers', *Islamic State Wilayat Homs,* 04 July 2015, http://archive.org/details/hemsnu.
[143] 'To the Sons of Jews'.
[144] 'Falsehood Has Vanished', *Islamic State Wilayat Halab*, 04 February 2015, https://archive.org/download/batil/batil.mp4; 'A Prisoner and the Elimination of a Captain in the Nusayri Army', *Islamic State Wilayat Homs,* 16 July 2015, https://archive.org/details/w.homs.asr.wa.tasfiyat.naqeeb.in.nosayri.army.OQ.

Suicide Bombers

Children are trained in how to commit suicide attacks, and are sometimes told to wear suicide vests while performing other jobs, such as guard duties, in case they come under attack. When children are used specifically as suicide bombers, they have been known to wear vests or drive vehicles full of explosives into areas and detonate them on arrival. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, in July 2015 there were as many as 19 cases of child suicide bombings.[145]

Figure 21: IS celebrates the deaths of Abu Farouq al-Ansari (left) who died in Fallujah province, and Abu Abdullah al-Ansari (right) who killed himself in Fallujah.[146]

Children are valuable to IS leaders as suicide bombers because they are generally less fearful than adults, and do not over-analyse situations based on previous experience. For someone who truly believes in Islamic State and its ideology, killing themselves in a suicide mission is considered the greatest honour. As seen in the above images, the 'caliphate' publically shares pictures and videos of these events, praising the bombers. As a result, suicide missions not only gain even more attention and momentum, the glory they confer is desired, and normalised. This can be seen in the increasing numbers signing up to the registers in the 'caliphate' to take part in suicide operations.

Girls

Girls are given a domestic education in which they are taught how to look after the needs of their husbands, bring up their children with IS ideology, and maintain their house. Known as the 'flowers and pearls of the caliphate, Islamic State ideology has very specific rules for girls: they are to be fully veiled, remain hidden, and never leave the house, except in exceptional circumstances.[147] Girls are expected to have a particular set of skills, such as sewing and knitting, so they can provide for the needs of their families. It is considered legitimate for a

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[145] Johnlee Varghese, 'Syria Report: 52 ISIS Child Soldiers Died Fighting in 2015; 19 Under-16 Jihadists Used as Suicide Bombers', *International Business Times*, 16 July 2015, http://www.ibtimes.co.in/syria-report-52-isis-child-soldiers-died-fighting-2015-19-under-16-jihadists-used-suicide-639451.

[146] 'Photo Report: Dozens of Shia army killed and many others wounded in suicide operations in the Tariq Camp area of East Fallujah', *Islamic State Wilayat Fallujah,* 02 February 2015, https://justpaste.it/q47o.

[147] 'Photo report: Cubs and Flowers of the Caliphate—Education in the City of Akhtarin', *Islamic State Wilayat Halab,* 30 January 2015, http://shortwiki.org/35089.

girl to be married at the age of nine, or at the latest by 16 or 17. In Islamic State, the woman's role is 'building the Ummah, producing men, and sending them out to the fierceness of battle.'[148]

Life in 'caliphate' territory can be brutal for girls and young women. Two young women alleged that they had been raped by IS members or fighters associated with the group. One woman described how she was raped in Mosul and that she heard the screams of girls who had been taken from the main hall where she and other women were being kept, to a small adjacent room. She recounted how she saw an IS man point a gun at a young girl who had been resisting. After Mosul, they were taken to a school in Tal Afar where there were reportedly more than 100 small children. The second girl said she was raped in a hall where she was being detained with other women in Mosul after her abduction by IS. She said the guards raped her three times a day for three days. According to her account, she also saw an eight or nine-year old girl being raped openly in the hall. IS then moved her and other women and girls to an abandoned school in Tal Afar.[149] Several women reported that, while in captivity, young women and girls were taken and raped on a daily basis by IS fighters. An elderly woman reported that the young women would come back after some hours or days in a 'miserable condition'. A young woman recounted that, after her capture in Sinjar in August 2014, she was taken to Tal Afar with about a hundred girls and young women. After several days, she and a thirteen-year-old girl were sold to IS fighters. The fighter who bought her raped her and if she tried to resist, he would beat her with his shoes. She reported, 'I used to hear a lot of cries and screaming from the other girl in the house, as God knows what the man was doing to her. She was too young to understand and probably was very scared.'[150]

> 'I used to hear a lot of cries and screaming from the other girl in the house, as God knows what the man was doing to her. She was too young to understand'.

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[148] 'To Our Sisters: A Jihad Without Fighting', *Dabiq 11*, 09 August 2015, p. 41, https://archive.org/details/Dabiq11_201509.
[149] 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014'' p. 13.
[150] 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 December 2014 – 30 April 201', p. 22.

IMPACT ON CHILDREN

The Effects of War Exposure on Children

War affects children in all the ways that it affects adults, but children can also be uniquely impacted.[151] Modern warfare kills, maims and exploits children more callously and more systematically than ever before.[152] The effects range from physical death, injury, disability, and illness, to psychological suffering, moral and spiritual consequences, and social and cultural losses. The prolonged exposure and desensitisation to violence that children experience during war causes long term trauma, which impairs the psychological and moral development of the child.[153] In addition, the loss of infrastructure like schools and hospitals interrupts access to education and healthcare, which can have a detrimental impact both in the short and in the long-term.

A historical example can be seen in Nazi Germany, where a large number of children were traumatised by violence, loss of relatives, bombings, destruction, displacement, illness, hunger, and emotional deprivation.[154] Parents of these children, themselves the children of WWI, were affected by shock and post war depression. As a result, the parents were unable to support the children in dealing with their suffering, and to avoid burdening their parents, the children did not ask.[155] The children of this generation, even 60 years later, could not entirely shake the Nazi heritage of discrimination and racial superiority.[156]

A more recent example is in 1994, when Rwanda witnessed a genocide where more than 800,000 lives were lost within a span of three months. A survey after the Rwandan genocide indicated that 95.9 percent of children witnessed violence, 87.5 percent saw dead bodies or parts of bodies, and 69.5 percent witnessed someone being killed or injured.[157] Twenty-two years later, the reverberations felt by those who have survived this horror can still be felt, heard and seen.

In other examples, Farhood et al found that economic hardship, reduction of the social network, and the breakdown of community services caused by armed conflict were key predictors of distress in Lebanese youth, while a study on Palestinian youth found they were more likely to be distressed by family violence than political violence.[158]

Thus, the impact of war on children can be both direct and indirect. Yet what is clear is that the negative consequences can take generations to address. According to UNICEF, more than

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[151] Joanna Santa Barbara, 'Impact of War on Children and Imperative to End War,' *The Croatian Medical Journal,* 2006, p.1, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2080482/. Accessed 26 January 2016.
[152] Graça Machel, *The Impact of War on Children*, C Hurst and Co, 2001, p.1.
[153] Singer, 'Children At War'.
[154] Prof Dr Michael Ermann, Diana Pflichthofer, and Harald Kamm, 'Children of Nazi Germany 60 Years On', *International Forum of Psychoanalysis,* 18, no. 4, December 2009, p. 225.
[155] Ibid, p. 226.
[156] Ibid, p. 230.
[157] Drumbl, *Reimagining Child Soldiers*, p. 33.
[158] Vindevogel et al, 'Beyond Child Soldiering', p. 487.

16 million babies were born in conflict zones in 2015 (1 in 8 of all births worldwide last year), a figure that underscores the vulnerability faced by increasing numbers of children.[159] Moreover, there are currently 31,000 pregnant women within Islamic State[160].

The Impact of Child Soldiering

The range of atrocities that the majority of child soldiers experience can also impact their physical and mental health.[161] Robert, a Ugandan boy abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army at the age of 13, found that even when he was able to return home to his family, 'I cannot sleep as my dreams carry me back and scare me. I see the faces of people being killed and the LRA comes after me again'.[162] A sample of former child soldiers in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) was found to display high levels of psychological distress. Between 93 and 97 percent of children displayed symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), 20 percent were struggling with depression, 13 percent suffered from anxiety, 37 percent experienced nightmares, and 54 percent experienced general emotional and behavioural difficulties.[163] Trauma causes nightmares and flashbacks, and also produces neurological changes, leaving people in a heightened state of fear or arousal, making it difficult to sleep or relax.[164] Trauma can manifest in children aged seven to 12 through social isolation, and through the repetitive enactment of traumatic events in their play. In adolescents it can lead to deviant behaviour and substance abuse.[165] This can lead to indirect dangers to the child, for example, a traumatised child may not be able to concentrate on learning, and as a result drop out of school, and then resort to dangerous labour to earn a living.[166]

'The experience of child soldiers goes well beyond the widespread image of traumatised, scarred children.'

That said, the experience of child soldiers goes well beyond the widespread image of traumatised, scarred children. Agnes, a 17 year old Angolan girl who was abducted by UNITA said that the sexual abuse she witnessed has made her unable to trust men again, and therefore she will probably never fit in with a society where it is the norm for girls to marry.[167] Mirwais, a 17 year old Afghan boy, fought with the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. He lost his right leg to a land mine and now cannot earn a living or support a family.[168]

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[159] 'Children from all walks of life endure violence, and millions more are at risk', *UNICEF.* See more at: http://www.data.unicef.org/child-protection/violence.html#sthash.5GeeExva.dpuf. Accessed 27 January 2016.

[160] Information obtained from an interview between Noman Benotman and a senior intelligence officer.

[161] Ilse Derluyn, Sofie Vindevogel, and Lucia De Haene, 'Toward a Relational Understanding of the Reintegration and Rehabilitation Processes of Former Child Soldiers', *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma,* 22, no. 8, 1 September 2013, p. 871.

[162] Michael G. Wessells, *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection*, Harvard University Press, 2006, p. 127.

[163] Sofie Vindevogel et al, 'Beyond Child Soldiering: The Interference of Daily Living Conditions in Former Child Soldiers' Longer Term Psychosocial Well-Being in Northern Uganda', *Global Public Health,* 8, no. 5, 1 May 2013, p. 486.

[164] Ibid, p. 129.

[165] Ibid, p. 130.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Ibid.

[168] Ibid.

These examples illustrate how many former child soldiers often find their post-war living situation very difficult. They also demonstrate the complexity, and nuance required, when helping rehabilitate and reintegrate child soldiers. Robert, for example, clearly needs counselling, whereas Mirwais needs access to prosthetics, occupational training, and opportunities to earn a living as well as psychological counselling.[169]

Thus, while trauma often does play a role, it is just one of the psychosocial consequences for child soldiers.[170] They face a whole range of post-conflict fears, such as revenge attacks, re-recruitment, stigmatisation, chronic poverty, and familial violence.[171]Child soldiers develop coping mechanisms, for example avoidance; in Bosnia the teenagers who suffered the lowest negative psychological impact were those who actively avoided thinking about their wartime experiences. The support of social structures like family and friends also helps child soldiers cope with the emotional stress of their experiences and retain a level of functionality.[172]

A strong ideology can protect somewhat from the effects of violence. For example, Israeli teenagers who regarded fighting Palestinians as a patriotic duty suffered fewer psychological consequences than those who lacked an ideological foundation.[173] The strongest protective factors, however, are social networks. Often the bonds of 'brotherhood' formed in armed groups make it very difficult to leave, and social support outside of the group needs to compensate for this.[174]

As a result, a strengths-based as opposed to a trauma-based approach should be taken to rehabilitation. Here, the psychosocial functionality of former child soldiers can be bolstered through an active focus on their skills and strengths, which also gives them agency, rather than a therapy, trauma-based approach which may reinforce a passive victim narrative.

Within the discourse on child soldiers, there has been a great deal of literature and debate on accountability, as well as the perpetrator versus victim frameworks (to be further discussed below). Some, such as Mark Drumbl, have argued that the narratives and assumptions of child soldiers need to be revisited. According to Drumbl, current humanitarian discourse sees all child soldiers as passive victims – tools of war who are vulnerable, and to a great extent not responsible for their acts.[175] However, this discourse has not allowed for critical innovations and understanding in preventing the use of children as soldiers.

In addition, the agency exuded and enjoyed by children is often overlooked and understudied. As an example, females who served as children in FRELIMO's female wing saw the experience as liberating and empowering, and continue to do so as adults. They saw this experience as

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[169] Ibid., p. 128.
[170] Wessells, *Child Soldiers*, p. 128.
[171] Ibid, p. 135.
[172] Ibid, p. 139.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid, p. 140.
[175] Mark Drumbl, 'Reimagining Child Soldiers in International Law and Policy', Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012.

freeing them from colonial rule and patriarchal structures of Mozambique's society.[176] Female former fighters who had served in Tigray Peoples Liberation in Ethiopia, moreover, were reported to be more self-confident, independent, and politically aware than those who did not serve.[177] Understanding the experiences, skills, and knowledge acquired by children who have partaken in armed conflict is critical for more appropriate and nuanced approaches to rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.

> 'Children witness stonings, crucifixions and beheadings… they not only get desensitised to violent practices, they eventually defend them'.

Children in Islamic State

Psychological Impact

Children are repeatedly exposed to violence in Islamic State, and as such desensitised to this violence over time. Not only do training camps ensure the education of children in violent practices, but in public spaces, children as well as adults are routinely exposed to executions. IS has reportedly encouraged children to participate in public brutality, including holding up decapitated heads or playing football with them.[178]

The filming of such events is an attempt to promote the idea that the general public support executions. Children have been seen to eagerly seek a front row seat, demonstrating that they are not shy to watch such killings in public. Additionally, children in IS regularly witness stonings, crucifixions and beheadings. Children not only get desensitised to violence, but they also deem these practices as normal, and eventually defend them. Children have been seen accompanying prisoners to their death and, in one example, distributing knives to adults before a mass beheading.[179]

Adolescence is a significant period in which young people learn and incorporate the values and norms of their society.[180] Consequently, observing what they assimilate is of utmost importance. The violence, ideologies and concepts that children absorb within Islamic State greatly influence their understanding of what is normal, and are also detrimental to their psychological wellbeing. According to Jensen and Shaw, the physical and emotional consequences vary in depth; greater exposure to violence increases the risk of negative consequences.[181] By the very nature of war, an entire generation is informed that conflict and

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[176] Rosen, 'Child Soldiers, International Humanitarian Law, and the Globalization of Childhood', p. 299.

[177] Ibid.

[178] 'Syrian Arab Republic', *United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*.

[179] 'Child Soldier Involved in Islamic State Mass Beheading', *Newsweek*, 30 March 2015, http://europe.newsweek.com/child-soldier-involved-islamic-state-mass-beheading-318025.

[180] Machel, 'Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children', p. 40.

[181] J Lasser and K Adams, 'The Effects of War on Children: School Psychologists' Role and Function', *School Psychology International,* 28, 2007, p. 6.

devastation are regular components of life.[182] According to Odland, in conflict children become 'conditioned': being educated in detrimental and violent practices, as well as exposure to continual fighting, inflicts extensive psychological damage.[183] Self-esteem is usually destroyed, and they become convinced that war is the sole option. Thus, as they become adults, they do not consider peacekeeping alternatives and tend to formulate violent solutions to problems. This is clearly harmful not just to the individual, but to an entire generation of children, who are indoctrinated into prejudice, and grow up learning that bloodshed is normal. The consequences for children in the 'caliphate' will be even greater; the effects of living in a warzone are greatly compounded by Islamic State's strategy of exposing children to high levels of violence.

Social Impact

The short and long-term toll that violence takes on a child's psychological health also has broader social implications. Violence undermines a child's ability to learn, develop as an adult in a healthy manner, socialise, become loving parents, and live in a community.[184] Thus, by compromising the children's capacity to constructively contribute to their societies, the high levels of violence encouraged by Islamic State will ultimately jeopardise the very 'utopia' it seeks to build[185].

Economic Impact

The post-war realities for ex-militia members in previous wars highlight the extent of the damage caused by the soldiers' roles. Although this report predominantly focuses on the current situation within Islamic State, noting the consequences for the children after having fought in other wars is important in fully appreciating the gravity of the present situation. One of the biggest hurdles child soldiers have had to overcome has been their greatly reduced post-war employment prospects. Firstly, child soldiers frequently cite injuries such as loss of hearing, sight or limbs. These disabilities reduce the number of jobs available to former soldiers as they are not capable of performing common tasks. The physical disabilities that adolescents suffer in battle may result in marginalisation from already impoverished families and communities, as they are unable to cope with an additional burden.[186]

Furthermore, in previous wars, fighting in militias meant adolescents did not attend school and the resulting lack of academic qualifications made acquiring non-military employment difficult. Although in the 'caliphate', education is a key part of the strategy to indoctrinate and secure the loyalty of the youth, the curriculum that the children are exposed to is highly

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[182] Kamel Muhanna, 'No Place For Children During the War: Lebanon Case', Amman, King Hussien Center for Research and Information, November 2008, http://www.amel.org.lb/aaimages/pdf/childrenhavenoplaceinwar.pdf.

[183] Lasser and Adams, 'The Effects of War on Children: School Psychologists' Role and Function', p. 8.

[184] Montgomery, 'ISIS Sets a "New Paradigm"' for Child Soldiers'.

[185] By this we mean the 'utopian' images of state-building - depicting governance, justice, social life, nature, and landscapes, and more. See Charlie Winter, 'Documenting the Virtual "Caliphate"' *Quilliam*, 2015, http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/FINAL-documenting-the-virtual-caliphate.pdf. Accessed 10 February 2016.

[186] Brett and McMallin, *Invisible Soldiers*, p. 175.

limited, and largely redundant outside of an IS context. This will naturally make acquiring non-military employment difficult. Perhaps more importantly, previous literature has shown that recovering from traumatic experiences in militias is extremely difficult, which not only makes sustaining a regular job strenuous, but in some cases, leads people to commit suicide.[187] Thus, it is evident that if and when they are thrust into a post-war environment, children of the 'caliphate' have very little hope of regaining a normal life.

REHABILITATING CHILD SOLDIERS

In any attempt to conduct programming for children affected by war, the best interests of the child should be the primary consideration. Ensuring the well-being of the child requires authorities to consider the child's particular circumstances, including their age, their level of maturity, the presence or absence of parents, and the child's environment or experiences.[188] Principles of 'do no harm' must be employed at all stages – in other words ensuring that whatever interventions are undertaken do not leave the child in a situation worse than before.

The traditional model of child soldiers that child protection agencies work with – the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration model (DDR) – does not adequately address the significant religious or political indoctrination that has increasingly been employed in current conflicts to contribute to a larger 'utopia' and state-building project. DDR programmes must address the ability to think critically, coupled with the respect for one to hold political or religious views, yet to ensure such views are not tainted in resorting to violent expression. In addition, understanding and addressing the need to find meaning in the lives of youths, and to dismantle negative narratives, has to be given serious consideration in the inadequacies that exist within current DDR approaches.

Part of the challenge will be ensuring that children's voices are heard and taken into consideration. This also entails providing confidentiality and transparency in the DDR process. This will be especially important for children used in terrorist activities and within IS as their safety will be a paramount consideration. The employment of social media and technological advances in the recruitment and communication with these children will have to be addressed to have effective rehabilitation and reintegration processes.

One of the main obstacles to the successful reintegration of former child soldiers is stigmatisation. This will also be true for the children of IS, as many will have very negative perceptions of these children as being 'willing participants'. At this point, the engagement of the communities, families and key leaders will be critical in any sensitisation campaigns or reintegration processes. This process requires long-term programmes that provide support to the children long after the initial demobilisation.

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[187] Ibid, p. 219.

[188] 'DDR and Children Operational Guidelines', *African Union Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Capacity Program*, pp. 9-10.

Idea of Statehood

A very important idea at the root of Islamic State's strategy is the concept of statehood, and this is often mixed with religious philosophies to justify the group's existence and the need to continue to build their state. As such, the idea of the nation state is mixed with historical concepts and values.

For example, a history text tweeted by an Islamic State supporters in March 2015 frames the creation of the state around the resistance to the American occupation of Iraq and the 'unity of jihad groups' to fight the American invasion.[189] The history text frames the creation and the glory of the state as a means to protect against foreign occupation. However, it also stresses how any nationality can join the group, implying that belonging to Islamic State transcends any individual nationality. For example, it clarifies that Sheikh Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is a Jordanian national, and while it is known that 'nationalism existed', the Jordanian was able to become a leader of thousands of fighters, because people from every corner of the world support the group.[190] As such, the idea of nationality is replaced by the idea of statehood, and the fact that any nationality can belong to this group. It is also important to note that the security of the state itself is heavily guarded and protected. Accusing someone of being a spy, for example, often comes with the most brutal of punishments, because it is a betrayal of the state.

Countering the theological and historical education that children receive in the Islamic State will be one of the most important aspects to consider when putting together a deradicalisation plan. A historic, yet widely misused text is Ibn Taymiyya's '*Mardin Fatwa*', which recognised that perhaps distinguishing a town as either 'a land of war' or 'a land of peace' was too black and white. Instead, Ibn Taymiyya proposed the modern idea of a 'compound land of Islam'. This land would be comprised of both Muslims and non-Muslims, living in peace with each other. The last paragraph of the *fatwa* goes as follows:

> As for its being a land of war or peace: it is compound, having both aspects. It is neither like a land of peace where the rules of Islam apply, having an army of Muslims, nor like a land of war whose residents are infidels: rather, it is a third type [of territory] where a Muslim is treated as he deserves, and the one who leaves the law (sharia) of Islam is treated as he deserves.[191]

In some later printed editions, the most important part of the *fatwa text* (in Arabic), *yu'amal*, which can be translated as *should be treated* was misprinted as *yuqatal*, meaning *fought to kill,* drastically changing the meaning of the phrase. This misprinted *fatwa* was widely circulated from Saudi Arabia, and used by terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and Islamic State, in order to justify the killing of civilians.[192] However, the *fatwa* was the opposite of a go-ahead to take up hostilities against non-Muslims. Any group who uses the misprinted version of the

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[189] 'History of Islamic State, from inception to today.' (March 2015). Available online: http://justpaste.it/history_Islamic_state. Accessed on 18 January 2016.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Translation by Dr Sheikh Usama Hasan, *From Dhimmitude to Democracy: Islamic Law, Non-Muslims & Equal Citizenship,* 2015*,* http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/from-dhimmitude-to-democracy-abridged-version.pdf.

[192] Ian Whiteman, 'Deadly Typos'*,* 30 September 2014*,* https://ianwhiteman.wordpress.com/2014/09/30/deadly-typos/.

fatwa in order to support their violent actions against non-Muslims has been mistaken in their translation, and has misapplied the original text. It should be noted that although Ibn Taymiyyah was an incisive theologian who made positive contributions to Islamic thought, such as the above, other aspects of his thinking are problematic. For example, his strict literalism and puritanism in many matters inspires a plethora of contemporary Sunni Islamist extremists.

This would be an important text to highlight when teaching children about interpretation of theology; they most likely would have been taught the incorrect version, as it has been used by influential leaders such as Osama bin Laden to justify killing Americans.[193] Instead, the correct *fatwa* should be promoted as a counter in educational curricula to teach children that their religion can encourage peaceful coexistence with other cultures and religions. It also demonstrates that what they have been taught is wrong, and it can perhaps push them towards a more critical approach, and also to question Islamic State's principles. An important implication for deradicalising children who emerge from Islamic State will therefore have to focus on battling this statehood concept, and helping children understand how to make sense of nationality.

DDR(R)

The normal paradigm for dealing with child soldiers is DDR, with some countries having added a second R for rehabilitation. While DDR processes are naturally as diverse as their contexts, they often begin with a process of disarmament, which helps demilitarise the environment in which they are operating.[194] In the disarmament phase, weapons held by the child soldiers are removed and publically destroyed.

'Cultural sensitivity and tailoring approaches to the local context are critical for successful DDR(R).'

During the demobilisation phase, child soldiers are removed from the armed group of which they were a part, in order to begin the transition back to civilian life. The demobilisation process involves holding children in care centres, and tracing their families so that they can be reunited. These processes are varied – in Sierra Leone children were held for as long as six months, whereas in Afghanistan the process generally only took a few days, and often children had already returned to their families when the process began.[195]

During the reintegration phase, they are returned to, and once again become a part of, their former communities and societies. Rehabilitation is often a critical component of the process, to deal with the trauma to both the child and the broader community caused by the conflict.[196] A crucial element of rehabilitation is a transition back to childhood through

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[193] Yahya Michot, 'Ibn Taymiyya's "New Mardin Fatwa". Is genetically modified Islam (GMI) carcinogenic?' *The Muslim World,* 2011, http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/michot/ITA-Mardin-Conference.pdf.
[194] Wessells, *Child Soldiers*, p. 157.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Wessells, *Child Soldiers*, p. 154.

reintegration with families and communities, which often shun former child soldiers for the role they played in conflict.[197] In Africa for instance, 80 percent of adults did not want their children to interact with children who had served as child soldiers. A multidimensional approach is needed to remove this stigma; for example, in Sierra Leone, UNICEF reached an agreement with local media to promote reintegration and reconciliation.[198]

While much research has been done on DDR, and a variety of guidelines for DDR processes have been developed by various agencies, it is not always entirely effective in practice. As Wessells succinctly observed, 'DDR processes are tidy in concept but messy in implementation.'[199]

Beyond DDR(R)

Cultural sensitivity and tailoring approaches to the local context are critical for successful DDR(R). Notions of childhood are not universal, and the ideal conception that often informs humanitarian work has a bias towards the modern, Western vision of childhood. As Rosen argues:

> Adopting a single universal definition of childhood in both international humanitarian and human rights law ignores the fact that there is no universal experience or understanding of childhood.[200]

Trying to implement work based on this ideal in communities may cause backlash. Experiences of childhood vary by age, ethnicity, gender, history, and location, among other factors.[201] When dealing with this issue, too often practitioners get stuck in a debate between pure universalism and pure cultural relativism, where either there is one conception of childhood applicable to all of humanity, or the experience of childhood is entirely unique to each culture, and no universal rules or guidelines can be adopted:

> At the conceptual level, there is a need to move beyond sterile debate around universalism versus cultural relativism in order to engage more fully with the realities of children's lives, which are inevitably shaped by ideas, practices, and power relations that are both local and global. It is essential to recognise that the vision of childhood manifest in the CRC [Convention on the Rights of the Child] may have only limited relevance for children who lack the social, economic, and political wherewithal to actualise this vision.[202]

A largely idealistic view of childhood can also lead to further issues. For instance, taking a position that children are purely victims of exploitation by adults absolves child soldiers of responsibility for any atrocities they commit, while both the children and communities may

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[197] Singer, 'Books: 'Children at War' '.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Wessells, *Child Soldiers*, p. 161.
[200] Rosen, 'Child Soldiers, International Humanitarian Law, and the Globalization of Childhood', p. 297.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Hart, 'The Politics of Child Soldiers', p. 223.

feel a degree of responsibility exists.[203] Consequently, child soldiers trying to reintegrate into communities often suffer social setbacks through discrimination, stigmatisation, and exclusion. The nebulous position of child soldiers as both victims and perpetrators only deepens these issues, because a key element of reintegration into communities is reconciliation and transitional justice.[204] Adopting the dominant view of child soldiers as victims, not perpetrators, undermines these processes because it neglects the perceptions of the communities. Context-specific approaches will have to be adopted to acknowledge this.[205]

'By damaging the social connections between individuals, collective trauma fundamentally alters the fabric of communities'.

Failure to implement an element of transitional justice can induce deep distrust and hatred in populations, leading to vengeance and reprisals. These divisions can be exacerbated by selective humanitarian support for child soldiers.[206] Despite its best intentions, the international humanitarian community has often only worsened these issues. Research has found that child soldiers may be more stigmatised by their communities because of the disproportionate level of international aid, attention, and professional care that they receive, as compared with the perceived innocent, but equally traumatised, civilian populations.[207] Communities may be disillusioned by the perception that these children are almost being rewarded for the atrocities they have committed, with their grievances heightened by the fact that they may not even consider the perpetrators to be children.[208]

Collective Trauma

The collective trauma that the community has suffered is also an important factor to consider when reintegrating child soldiers.[209] In many countries where child soldiers are a widespread problem, demobilised children are held for a time in interim care centres, where the priorities are: ensuring physical wellbeing through nutrition programmes, medical care, and health education; reinstating some form of daily structure through a fixed schedule of activities like cooking, praying, doing laundry, and sports; educational activities and vocational skills training; and therapeutic activities aimed at dealing with the effects of traumatic events.[210] There is a more limited approach to following up *after* the child has been returned to their families or communities. This can be damaging, because many former child soldiers cite the socioeconomic issues they face upon return to civilian life as one of their most pressing challenges, rather than enduring trauma from their experiences.[211]

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[203] Rosen, 'Child Soldiers, International Humanitarian Law, and the Globalization of Childhood', p. 297.
[204] Derluyn, Vindevogel, and Haene, 'Toward a Relational Understanding of the Reintegration and Rehabilitation Processes of Former Child Soldiers', p. 871.
[205] Ibid, p. 877.
[206] Ibid, p. 878.
[207] Ibid, p. 871.
[208] Ibid, p. 872.
[209] Derluyn, Vindevogel, and Haene, 'Toward a Relational Understanding of the Reintegration and Rehabilitation Processes of Former Child Soldiers', p. 872.
[210] Ibid, p. 873.
[211] Ibid, p. 874.

> The majority of existing rehabilitation and reintegration programmes targeting former child soldiers insufficiently address this interconnection between individual and collective trauma, leading to persisting difficulties in these youths' reintegration into their communities.[212]

Most existing rehabilitation and reintegration programmes are administered through national and international NGOs.[213] Humanitarian agencies have now started shifting away from rehabilitation programmes to building capacity for civilian life, for example through vocational skills training.[214] Programmes in recent years have been funding sensitisation activities for communities, aimed at reducing the stigmatisation and discrimination of former child soldiers.[215]

By damaging the social connections between individuals, collective trauma fundamentally alters the fabric of communities, through which humans ultimately derive social meaning.[216] Thus, rehabilitation needs to be located in a social context, which acknowledges both the collective trauma of the community, as well as the individual trauma of the child soldier.[217] Moreover, 'reintegration' may not be possible or desirable in many cases, because the communities may have been changed significantly by war, and the child will have been affected by his or her experiences. Thus, integration in the sense of returning a child to the status quo ante may not be possible.[218]

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[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid, p. 875.
[217] Ibid, p. 876.
[218] Ibid, p. 877.

Case Study: Afghanistan

Since the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, almost all sides in the conflict have used child soldiers, including the Northern Alliance, the Taliban and allied groups, and the military and police of the Afghan national government. The first American serviceman to die in Afghanistan was killed by a 14 year old Afghan boy.[219] Hundreds of children fighting for the Taliban have been arrested in Afghanistan, while the Northern Alliance also forcibly recruited children, with refusals leading to beatings and the destruction of homes.[220]

Since 2007, the Taliban and its affiliates, including the Tora Bora Front, Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia, and the Latif Mansur Network have been listed by the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, as actively recruiting and using children: 'These groups are considered to be persistent perpetrators of grave violations committed against children.' [221]

Since 2010, the insurgency in Afghanistan led by the Taliban has spread from the South to the formerly stable areas in the North, East, West, and Central regions of the country.[222]From this time, the Haqqani Network and the Hezb-e-Islami led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar have also been recruiting and using children.[223] The majority of these children are used to manufacture, transport, and plant improvised explosive devices (IEDs). However, the Taliban and other armed opposition groups have also used children to carry out suicide operations; between September 2010 and May 2015, 20 boys were killed carrying out suicide attacks.[224]

Some children who were arrested reported that they were abducted and taken across the border to Pakistan for military training, and the UN country task force for Afghanistan received reports claiming that religious schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan were used by the Taliban for recruitment and for training. In many cases the children's parents claimed they were unaware their children had undergone military training.[225]

In 2011, the Government of Afghanistan agreed on an action plan with the United Nations to end, and prevent, the recruitment and use of children by its National Security Forces.[226] Despite this, in the 2014 UN annual report on children and armed conflict, the Afghan National Police and the Afghan Local Police were listed as actors who recruited and used children.

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[219] Singer, 'Children At War'.

[220] Drumbl, *Reimagining Child Soldiers*, p. 31.

[221] 'Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Afghanistan', *United Nations Security Council*, 15 May 2015, pp. 2-4, https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/may_2015_-_report_of_the_secretary-general_on_children_and_armed_conflict_in_afghanistan.pdf.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Ibid.

[224] Ibid, p. 6.

[225] Ibid.

[226] Ibid, p. 3.

As a result, early 2015 saw the ratification of a presidential decree criminalising the recruitment of children under the age of 18, and a directive was issued prohibiting the use of children, including in support roles, and outlining sanctions for perpetrators.[227] Pilot child protection units in the national police reportedly prevented more than 400 children from enlisting.

Although the Afghan Government has signalled a strong intent to prevent child recruitment, problems remain. Due to poor socioeconomic conditions, many families encourage their children to join Afghan National Security Forces. Furthermore, they are able to enlist as a result of inadequate capacity or information available to the forces for assessing the age of children, widespread impunity and lack of accountability, and both the limited availability of birth certificates and the fact that identity documents are easy to falsify.[228]

Moreover, according to the Afghan Ministry of Justice, between September 2010 and February 2013, at least 656 boys were held in juvenile rehabilitation centres across the country for association with armed opposition groups.[229] In 2015 UNAMA continued to receive reports of torture and mistreatment and detention facilities, prolonged detention of children by the Afghan National Police, and the public display in national media of children detained for crimes related to national security. This has led UNAMA to express concern over the lack of protection for these children, and the apparent dearth of adequate reintegration measures.[230]

Thus, there remains much to be done in Afghanistan to both prevent the recruitment of children and also to meet the needs of demobilised children, such as addressing the lack of alternatives for children rejected from recruitment, or released from active service.[231]

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[227] 'Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict', *United Nations General Assembly*, 20 July 2015, p. 8, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/162&Lang=E&Area=UNDOC.
[228] Ibid, p. 7.
[229] 'Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Afghanistan', p. 7.
[230] Ibid, p. 8.
[231] Ibid, p. 17.

Case Study: Pakistan

Pakistan has seen the use of children by a variety of armed groups, including by the Taliban as part of the spill over from the conflict in Afghanistan. A UN report in September 2007 found that Pakistan was an important source of human and material resources for the insurgency in Afghanistan more broadly, but in particular for suicide attacks, with orphans and young students in Pakistani madrassas being particularly targeted for recruitment.[232] For instance, in the PBS Documentary 'Children of the Taliban', a Taliban commander revealed that he recruits children as young as five, saying that 'Children are tools to achieve God's will. And whatever comes your way, you sacrifice it.'[233]

In July 2007 it was reported that a 14-year-old boy returned to his family in Pakistan after being recruited from his madrassa in Waziristan, trained, and sent over the border to carry out a suicide attack on a provincial governor in Afghanistan, where security forces detained him. The boy claimed that at least two other boys from his madrassa had been indoctrinated to carry out suicide attacks.[234]

There have also been similar reports in towns on the edge of Pakistan's tribal belt, where children between the ages of 11 and 15 were being recruited from schools by pro-Taliban militants and trained in Afghanistan as suicide bombers. Young boys were promised adventure and sacrifice, but there were also reports that there was an element of coercion, where their parents and teachers risked retaliation if they prevented children from going.[235]

Pakistan did experience a suicide attack by a child in September 2007, when it was reported that a suicide bomber aged around 15 or 16 had blown himself up in the town of Dera Ismail Khan in North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), killing himself and 17 others.[236] According to Pakistani journalist Zahid Hussain, around 90 percent of suicide bombers in the country are aged between 12 and 18 years.[237]

In January 2010, the Pakistani military came across a Taliban compound in Nawaz Kot, which was reportedly used to train child suicide bombers. Children were allegedly shown brightly coloured paintings depicting heaven, including rivers of milk and honey, standing in stark contrast to their harsh, barren surroundings.[238] There have also been unconfirmed reports that Balochi armed nationalist groups were recruiting children as young as 14 for their ongoing insurgency in Baluchistan.[239]

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[232] Singer, 'Children At War'.
[233] Kalsoom Lakhani, 'Pakistan's Child Soldiers', *Foreign Policy*, 29 March 2010, http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/03/29/pakistans-child-soldiers/.
[234] 'Pakistan', Child Soldiers Global Report, 2008.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Lakhani, 'Pakistan's Child Soldiers'.
[238] Ibid.
[239] 'Pakistan'', *Child Soldiers Global Report,* 2008.

Pakistan originally did not institute government DDR programmes, despite the recommendation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in October 2003.[240] Since then, the Sabawoon Centre was set up in September 2009 to rehabilitate former child soldiers recruited by armed groups. This centre was established by the Chief of Army staff in Malakand, and initially housed 22 children, aged between 12 and 17 years.[241] In 2010, a reform school was established in the Swat Valley to deradicalise and rehabilitate former child militants.[242]

As an example of the need to address the cultural context in deradicalisation programmes, themes within Pakistani indoctrination camps often involved revenge. This is an example of clever localised recruitment tactics, as honour and revenge are important themes underlying Pashtun culture, and must be addressed in rehabilitation efforts.[243] Although the Sabawoon and Swat Valley rehabilitation centres are a good start, Pakistan needs to invest much more in these projects. [244]

A good example for Pakistan to consider is set by Sri Lanka, where the government established various transit centres to rehabilitate children who had fought with Liberation Tamil Tigers Eelam (LTTE).[245] This is a highly innovative programme, which has partnered with the International Cricket Council, the Sri Lankan Cricket Association, and UNICEF to use cricket to rehabilitate these children. By using programmes like sports, children are treated as children, rather than former combatants.[246] The children now live in camps outside the capital, where they receive an education, and training in vocational skills.[247] Called 'Cricket for Change', the programme aims to promote cricket as an agent of positive development for all disadvantaged youth, not just former child soldiers.[248]

With the common interest in cricket between Sri Lanka and Pakistan, this programme could serve as an inspiration for similar rehabilitation efforts in Pakistan.

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[240] Ibid.

[241] 'Alternative Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the Occasion of Pakistan's Fifth Periodic Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child', *Child Soldiers International*, July 2015, p. 8, http://www.child-soldiers.org/user_uploads/pdf/childsoldiersinternationalalternativereporttothecrconpakistanjuly20155457801.pdf.

[242] Lakhani, 'Pakistan's Child Soldiers'.

[243] Ibid.

[244] Ibid.

[245] 'UNICEF opens transit centre for child soldiers freed by LTTE', *UNICEF*, October 2003, http://www.unicef.org/media/media_14891.html.

[246] 'Cricket Helps Heal Sri Lanka's Ex-Child Soldiers', *Reuters*, 23 March 2010, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-srilanka-cricket-children-idUSTRE62M1H120100323.

[247] Ibid.

[248] Ibid.

Case Study: Iraq

With support from UNICEF and UNAMI, a national child protection policy situation analysis was finalised and approved by the Government of Iraq and a draft policy was developed in 2013.[249] UNICEF also worked together with authorities to set up a Child Protection Information Management System, and common case management protocols to track and address reported cases of vulnerable children.[250]

Led by UNICEF, a coalition of actors including UN agencies, and international and local non-governmental organisations concerned with child protection issues, was established in the three governorates of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and in Baghdad.[251] Between January 2013 and June 2015, child protection organisations were able to provide 103,181 children with psychosocial support, 10,398 children with specialised assistance, and identify and document up to 1,474 separated and unaccompanied children among refugees and internally displaced persons.[252]

Case Study: Islamic State

When it comes to children who have been indoctrinated by religious or political beliefs, traditional DDR is likely to be inadequate. Such programmes tend to focus on immediate physical health needs and on average last less than three months, making them too short to genuinely address psychosocial needs, let alone to fully address key elements of deradicalisation. DDR was originally conceived to rehabilitate adult soldiers, and as such it was never meant to be applied to children.

'Deradicalisation programmes can and should learn from efforts to deradicalise adherents of other forms of extremism, and efforts to rehabilitate former gang members.'

Despite the global focus on violent extremism since 2001, relatively few efforts focused on deradicalisation have taken place, and research on the intersection of deradicalisation and DDR is still young.[253] A number of countries have implemented deradicalisation programmes for adult terrorists, the largest of which was created by Saudi Arabia, with other efforts being undertaken by the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.[254] While these efforts are still in their nascent stages and have not received extensive research, deradicalisation programmes can and should learn from efforts to deradicalise adherents of other forms of extremist and terrorist ideologies, and from efforts to rehabilitate former gang members.[255] The latter may

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[249] 'Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Iraq', p. 16.
[250] Ibid.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Jessica Stern, 'Mind Over Martyr: How to Deradicalise Islamist Extremists', *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2010, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/saudi-arabia/2009-12-21/mind-over-martyr.
[255] Ibid.

be especially important for working with children who have been radicalised in violent extremism.

One example of both the importance and difficulties of deradicalisation of children is that of 'Madame Deradicalisation'[256] in France, who uses a variety of developed techniques to work with at-risk youth and addicts, and employs these techniques to deradicalise French children who support, or have attempted to join, the Islamic State.[257]

Many of the children Madame Deradicalisation works with are girls, who illustrate both the sophistication and abilities of Islamic State recruiters, who are able to tailor their tactics to the individual they are targeting. Interestingly, a majority of these girls are from families that are atheist or Catholic, with only one in five having a Muslim background.[258] The girls often also had a troubled past; the world of Islamic State can be particularly appealing to girls who have suffered from aggressive behaviour or sexual abuse, because their recruiters 'offer a world where men and women are kept separate and where a girl will be protected by her *niqab* [italics added] like an armour.'[259]

This and other examples show how terrorist recruiters are able to begin their indoctrination of children through targeting those who are vulnerable or at-risk more generally, and not just Muslim children who may have pre-existing specific grievances upon which recruiters can prey.[260] Understanding how terrorist recruiters exploit children's vulnerabilities will be important for developing deradicalisation programmes and employing lessons from other forms of rehabilitation programming[261].

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[256] Real name (Dounia Bouzar), a Muslim anthropologist who is a media face of deradicalisation in France. See Brabart, Justine (February 2016) 'Dounia Bouzar: Une 'Mme Deradicalisation' Tres Mediatique, Mais au Bilan Incertain'. Available online: http://www.arretsurimages.net/articles/2016-02-01/dounia-bouzar-une-mme-deradicalisation-tres-mediatique-mais-au-bilan-incertain-id8389. Accessed 19th February 2016.

[257] Emma-Kate Symons, 'The 'Madame Deradicalisation' of France Is Rehabilitating ISIS's Youngest Recruits', *Women in the World in Association with The New York Times*, 10 January 2016, http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2016/01/10/the-madame-deradicalisation-of-france-is-rehabilitating-isiss-youngest-recruits/.

[258] Ibid.

[259] Ibid.

[260] Rukmini Callimachi, 'ISIS and the Lonely Young American', *The New York Times*, 27 June 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/28/world/americas/isis-online-recruiting-american.html?_r=0

[261] A case to consider here is that of Omar Khadr, a 15 year old arrested and held at Guantanamo Bay for 10 years, where he was tortured. In 2002, Khadr threw a grenade during an armed conflict in Afghanistan; his father was, at the time, part of an extremist group.
Both ILO Convention number 182 and the Optional Protocol oblige the United States and other countries to assist in the rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers. The Paris Principles state that child soldiers should be able to 'play an active role as a civilian member of society, [be] integrated into the community, and where possible, reconciled with her/his family' (7.0; 2007, p.27). According to the Principles, 'all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration must be taken' (7.6.8; 2007, p. 28). In 2003, the United State released three children detained at Guantanamo to UNICEF to enable them to receive DDR assistance in Afghanistan. On May 7, 2015, Khadr was freed on bail with strict conditions.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Deradicalising children from Islamic State who have known no other way of life, and who have gone through severe physical and psychological trauma, will be a rigorous process. It will be important to first determine whether children are joining Islamic State of their own accord, or with their families. A second important factor will be age, whether the child in question joined Islamic State in their teenage years, or at a younger age. As such any process of assessment should discern the degree of agency and independent thought behind radicalisation, and in doing so determine the degree to which children are radicals or victims.

In the instances when children are travelling independently, families can be the first line of defence against radicalisation. It will be important to implement programmes that train parents and increase public awareness, distributed widely within civil society and the government, and work to make individuals aware of the radicalisation of children. This will be applicable to community spaces such as schools, religious areas, and the training of youth themselves.

Islamic State poses a unique scenario because of the number of voluntary foreign recruits travelling to join the 'caliphate'. Moreover, based on the specific circumstances of the war itself, it will be difficult to reintegrate children who escape or who are saved from terrorist groups. For example, as of September 2015, 436 children, all boys, were being held in detention facilities in Iraq.[262] Protection of children in Iraq is a big challenge due to both lack of institutions and alternative arrangements. We strongly encourage that juveniles be sent back to their homes with minimum delay, and while in Iraq, separated from prosecuted adults as per recommendations from UNICEF.[263]

Bringing children back to normality will be difficult, and we recommend assessment facilities to evaluate the extent of each child's radicalisation on a case-by-case basis, and to propose pathways for reintegration, followed by an extensive period of support from a community network. Keeping records of the children with recommendations from the assessment team will also help to determine which children can begin deradicalisation programmes without judicial proceedings, and aid in due process of continuous assessment and evaluation.

To Policy Makers of Nation-States and the European Union:

(1) Assessment. Assessment of each child's unique situation and needs is a crucial first component to successful and safe reintegration. Assessment requires a multi-party team including trained psychologists, teachers, interpreters, healthcare professionals including experts in sexual violence and PTSD, border services, local law enforcement, and community actors. The degree of children's agency and involvement in extremist groups and their continued affinity with violent ideology is variegated, as are their experiences and trauma unique, so personalised treatment determined by rigorous

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[262] 'Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Iraq', *United Nations Security Council*, p. 10.
[263] Christine Bakker, 'Prosecuting International Crimes Against Children: The Legal Framework', *UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, IWP 2010-2013,* June 2010, http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/iwp_2010_13.pdf.

assessment is vital. Confidentiality throughout the assessment period should be maintained to minimise future stigmatisation, and assessors should consider input on the readiness of communities to accept the children as part of their recommendations for long-term reintegration efforts.

Upon return to the EU, children can be housed in temporary facilities as close as possible to their hometowns and families, and should be allowed time with their families, if their families have not been radicalised. Children should never be housed with adults or juvenile criminals, and great care must be taken with regard to how the children are grouped, so as to promote positive peer-to-peer mentorship, and avoid the possibility of more radicalised children further indoctrinating less radicalised ones. Care and education of the children will be the highest priority during assessment, and temporary housing facilities should have ample opportunities for learning and play.

Assessment would determine the degree of agency involved in joining and leaving the extremist group, as well as the degree of continued allegiance with radical ideology and the risk of incitement to violence. Many children would not have conducted terrorist activities or violent crimes, or motivated others to do so. However, some are imminent threats and as such the stages and process of radicalisation will differ, and must be assessed adequately. An assessment could select an appropriate pathway for deradicalisation, re-educating, and reintegrating each child into society. A guideline of possible responses to children with a spectrum of degrees of radicalisation, using baseline questions and assessment techniques common to all cases, is detailed in the Policy and DDR Response Flow-Chart in the Appendix[264].

At the conclusion of the assessment period, the assessment team can recommend the appropriate deradicalisation pathway and judicial proceeding, if any, for crimes committed. A court, separate from the assessment process, would take up any claims with a recommendation from the assessment team in the form of a legal brief addressing the best interests of the child's reintegration, and the team can partner with local community actors and NGOs for long-term reintegration efforts.

Additional partners involved in assessing the needs of the children and community would vary by country, city and neighbourhood by drawing on existing infrastructure. In the United Kingdom for example, the Channel programme provides infrastructure to train frontline workers, and establishes community panels to help with foster care placements and re-education. Such workers and panels could coordinate as part of the assessment team. Denmark has established a very successful model for building

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[264] This is to be used as a visual picture of a process chart, and not as a direct guide.
There has been some excellent foundational work done on this already, for example: HM Government, 'Channel Duty Guidance (2015): Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism', Available online: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/425189/Channel_Duty_Guidance_April_20 15.pdf, p.6. As well as Ali, R. (2015) 'Occasional Paper – De-radicalization and Integration: The United Kingdom's Channel Programme'. Available online: https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/AliPaper-Final.pdf. The Policy and DDR Response Flow-Chart aims to build on this work by focusing specifically on returning children at risk of extremism.

trust with local authorities to promote the voluntary return of foreign fighters and smooth reintegration into society. In the 'Aarhus Model', returnees are granted access to employment, educational, and mentoring opportunities on a voluntary basis after an initial assessment establishing they have not committed any violent crimes. The additional assessment children may require can fit into the structures and principles of local models. Civil society actors and authorities can share information and resources with security services, and vice versa, to analyse and evaluate the progress of each case from the point of initial assessment to long-term reintegration.

(2) Supportive Network. Saving a lost generation of vulnerable children, and ensuring the safety of both this generation and their communities, hinges on reintegration efforts. This stage in the child's progression will also rely on the most diverse set of support actors in a coordinated response.

A supportive network, administered by a local NGO and funded by individual states, can coordinate a diverse array of community actors and specialists to ensure successful and sustained reintegration of children and reunion with families and homes. The assessment team, supplemented by an additional assessment post-sentencing for children serving time for violent crimes, would recommend services children require to the network on a case-by-case basis, and network administration would be responsible for providing regular reports and follow-up. The network might draw on existing local structures for returning adult radicals and also for children leaving local violent groups such as gangs, while customising these methods and structures to the needs of the children. For example, efforts to reintegrate gang children in the UK have drawn on the support of health practitioners, teachers, Accident & Emergency (A&E) departments, local youth workers, and employment specialists who follow protocol for information sharing and coordination of their activities.[265]

Children will have the option to be housed with foster families, in care homes, or back with their own families if their families are not radicalised, or have been de-radicalised. In cases with radicalised, dangerous or non-existent families, young children should be housed in foster families that can provide them with values-based support in their spiritual, intellectual, ideological, social, and emotional growth; this foster family network should be built in advance in each county, and children in need can be placed with available families during assessment.

Sustained activities of the reintegration network would involve the following four components of Deradicalisation, Re-Education, Reintegration and Community Outreach:

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[265] HM Government. 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence: Annual Report 2013'. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department by Command of Her Majesty December 2013. Available online: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/278779/EndingGangYouthViolence2013.pdf. Accessed 5th February 2016.

a. **Deradicalisation.** Deradicalisation procedures will aim to bring children out of the lifestyle they have adopted, with ample attention to the physical and psychological trauma caused by conflict. Measures should have a curriculum that is 'values-based', that is, one that re-inculcates children with national values, provides theological and ideological recalibration, and intellectual, social, and emotional support. Deradicalisation efforts can encourage anti-violence and competence training, as well as stabilisation coaching for children after the assessment period. The process might involve one-to-one mentoring with role models that share common traits with both the child's old and new life — a bridge between the past and the future — such as a former extremist or Islamic scholar. It is also important to have therapeutic counselling and a system of aftercare in place, so that children do not pose a threat to themselves or to society.

b. **Re-education.** Re-education procedures focus on debunking the credibility of Islamic State ideology and replacing these narratives with positive alternatives. Children will require learning new concepts on Islam, as opposed to their already existing framework. Additional lessons and mentoring for children will be undertaken by former extremists, or Muslims who do not hold Islamist views, and can critically refute the ideas and propaganda advocated by Islamic State. The efforts would delegitimise Islamic State's ideology, and invalidate the extreme notions of nationhood and religious indoctrination that children would have experienced in their previous education system in Islamic State. It would therefore be important to deconstruct the educational and intellectual components of Islamic State curriculum, and create a new curriculum to displace this, by teaching components of the Qur'an that advocate that one can be fully Muslim and British, for example. Verses such as those advocating for not only obedience to God, but also to 'authority among you', can give credence to legitimate, secular states beyond Islamic law and to the notion that religious identity need not define citizenship.

A sense of 'play' in the curriculum, through literature studies, fairy tales and story-books, can be therapeutic and teach children about their new country of residence. Secular Arabic literature such as 1001 Arabian Nights, to which children would not have been exposed, can also be incorporated into the curriculum. As such, new concepts can be added after displacing the existing framework. All children will eventually need assistance in finding a job, a school, and a home, as well as substantial emotional support and alternative references and points of view.

c. **Reintegration.** The bulk of the work of the network will be on long-term reintegration of children in their communities. As children craft new identities and seek a new sense of belonging, it is imperative they find acceptance and

opportunities to feel a sense of empowerment and self-worth within a non-violent lifestyle. Educational and employment opportunities can assist in helping children commit to their new lifestyle, and when possible, should utilise the unique skills of the children, even if learned under Islamic State (such as mechanical skills or organising peers) and transfer them to jobs or educational roles within the secular state.

d. **Community Outreach.** Policy cannot dictate community attitudes that ensure successful reintegration, which can be especially challenging as returning foreign fighters often come from minority backgrounds within their communities. The hopes expressed in the Paris Principles that children and families should 'not be regarded as taking a supporting stance toward or collaborating with either side to an armed conflict' may not be realistic with regard to children and families who have been radicalised and have clear allegiances to extremist groups and thought.[266] Therefore, significant infrastructure, drawing on the proposed network, is needed to facilitate return and reintegration efforts at international and community levels. Network programmes should engage communities for input regarding children and involve them in joint initiatives, such as granting community members in the children's immediate sphere of interaction access to some of the benefits the children receive in a communal setting — such as educational forums or career advice.

(3) *EU Structure.* Following the attacks in Paris on Charlie Hebdo in January 2015, and in November 2015, the EU has witnessed a call for more cohesive sharing of best practice among member states, as well as the removal of exchange hurdles imposed by state justice systems, police forces, and security services.[267] In line with the need to streamline intelligence capabilities across the EU, we recommend the creation of a European Union 'Commission to Protect Future Generations from Radical Violence', to be housed within the European Counter Terrorism Centre. The Commission would coordinate the sharing of best practices of DDR with regard to returning children from Islamic State, and would work to promote their best interests and safe reintegration into European society. It would also house the European database of returning children undergoing deradicalisation and reintegration programmes, the training of cross-border security officers, and impose appropriate restrictions on access to information on returning children to respect confidentiality and avoid stigmatisation in their home countries. We further recommend the coordination of experts and best practices from other DDR or child protection fields to cross reference the approaches.

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[266] 'Paris Principles', Article 5.10, p. 16.
[267] Lydia Tomkiw, 'After Paris Terror Attacks, EU Intelligence Sharing Must Improve, Security Experts Say', *International Business Times,* 19 November 2015, http://www.ibtimes.com/after-paris-terror-attacks-eu-intelligence-sharing-must-improve-security-experts-say-2191709.

(4) Care System. We recommend the creation of a care system on each child associated with Islamic State, whether travelled, returned, or simply vulnerable, at both the national and the EU levels to reduce re-radicalisation as adults and ensure appropriate follow up among trained social workers. Information the children provide themselves will be voluntary, and participation confidential, so as not to stigmatise children within their communities and offset reintegration.

Collection methods for the care system during the child's assessment period with regard to the child's personal statements and accounts should be voluntary, in accordance with truth-seeking efforts for children under international law. The focus should be on streamlining a robust method for the safety and reintegration of these children, to be directed to relevant and involved parties.

Condensed versions of the information collected would be issued in standardised reports to the European Union's 'Commission to Protect Future Generations from Radical Violence' for a multi-national care system. All information in the care system would be limited to members of the State and of the EU with appropriate clearance in order to protect the privacy of the child. The information, for the majority of incoming children, would not affect their lives after a period of deradicalisation or impose additional restrictions on their safe reintegration into society.

(5) Prosecution. The Paris Commitments and Principles Outline the following key principles in appropriate justice for children associated with armed forces and groups:

- No capital punishment or life imprisonment for children under 18 is permitted under international law, and any torture or other inhumane or degrading treatment is also prohibited.[268]
- Children awaiting justice should be held in separate detention facilities from adults; they should have access to education and care, and prioritizing the trials of children and mothers early should help limit the time they spend in detention facilities.[269]
- Exhaust reasonable alternatives in helping children who have committed crimes during conflict, such as counselling and rehabilitation, before proceeding to judicial measures that would place children in institutions;[270] uphold international standards for juvenile justice such as in a framework of restorative justice and social rehabilitation.[271]
- Children who escape armed forces or groups should never be considered deserters under applicable domestic law.[272]

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[268] 'Paris Principles', Article 3.9, p. 10.
[269] Ibid, Articles 8.9, 8.10, p. 42.
[270] Ibid, Article 3.7, p. 9.
[271] 'Paris Commitments', Article 11, p. 3.
[272] Ibid, Article 10, p. 2.

- Children should not be punished simply for involvement in an armed force or group without having committed any war crime.[273]
- Truth-seeking should be voluntary, with no provision of services or release dependent on participation.[274] Children should be treated equally as witnesses or as victims.[275]

When it comes to children in Islamic State, it is important to delineate the roles and responsibilities of nation states and international bodies. The responsibility of prosecuting criminals has been outlined in work by UNICEF, particularly in terms of conditional versus universal jurisdiction[276]. These are divided in terms of territoriality (the most common jurisdiction based on people who commit crimes within the territory of the state exercising its jurisdiction), active nationality (a state can prosecute an accused person having the nationality of that state for crimes committed abroad), passive nationality (nationality of victim of the crime, permitting state to prosecute those accused of crimes committed abroad against its own nationals), and universal jurisdiction (prosecute persons accused of certain crimes committed abroad, irrespective of nationality of the accused and of the victims).[277] States such as the UK have a legal precedent for prosecuting crimes among teenagers and providing a fair sentencing that will allow for a return to normalcy in a reasonable timeframe and in a manner communities will accept.

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[273] 'Paris Principles', Article 8.7, p. 41.
[274] Ibid, Article 8.16, p. 42.
[275] Ibid, Article 8.15, p. 42.
[276] Bakker, 'Prosecuting International Crimes Against Children: The Legal Framework'.
[277] Ibid, p. 2.

Gangs: A Comparative Tool for Child Extremist Policy

While Islamic State presents its own, unique challenges in classifying child participants, striking similarities exist with youth members of gang groups. Young people susceptible to gang recruitment experience many of the same push and pull factors of extremist groups: economic hardship and poverty, lack of opportunity and access to education, the need for a sense of belonging, ideological attraction, feelings of anger or revenge, loss of parents or guardians, the breakdown of an extended social support system, and the desire to feel in control and powerful.[278] Low expectations and low self-esteem cultivated by stereotyping and racism can further push youth to cling to groups such as gangs or extremist groups for a sense of achievement and belonging.

Recruitment for gangs seems to vary along a continuum from forced to voluntary.[279] This is an essential concept in recruitment of child extremists as well, as evaluating the degree of agency involved in joining Islamic State can give key indications of a child's current radical entrenchment and propensity to re-radicalise later on in life. In addition to recruitment of youth, gangs and Islamic State share several common traits such as a lack of international legitimacy, codes of conduct, the perception of criminality, or, in some countries, criminality under law for association with the group.

With regards to the core objective, as Islamic State aims to establish a global Caliphate and not just control over the region of Syria and Iraq, Islamic State does not fit into a direct comparison to either armed groups or gangs. Rather, an insurgency model would provide the most apt comparison as a global movement without a legitimate aim, as opposed to an entity vying for localised territorial control (gang), or control of an established state (armed group).

The role of religion in radical groups is also unique. While armed groups and gangs might be associated with a religious group, religion does not normally play a fundamental and definitive role. Association with a larger idea, such as a religion, can also be a strategic move for gangs. Religion can increase a sense of belonging and differentiate a gang from other groups, but it is generally not a cornerstone of the group's formation.[280]

However, there is a psychological comparison to be made among youth susceptible to gang recruitment and radical ideology, and a possibility that incarcerated gang members can become radicalised. Youth prone to gang rhetoric also tend to have attraction to religion. Gang members in prison engage in religious discourses, and Islam has become a unifying thread among some prisoners.

The following table details a few characteristics of armed groups and gangs, with shared traits to Islamic State shaded in grey:

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[278] Dr Noëlle Quénivet and Shilan Shah-David, 'Youth and Violence: Drawing Parallels between Child Soldiers and Youth in Gang,' Centre for Legal Research at Bristol Law School, (Bristol: June 2013), 19
[279] ibid., 20
[280] ibid., 26

TABLE 2: Characteristics of Child Extremists, Child Soldiers, and Gangs

	Child Extremists	Child Soldiers	Youth Gang Members
Core objective:	Global Caliphate – different core objective from armed groups and gangs	State/government takeover	Local, territorial control
Initiation:	Brutal, violent entry	Brutal, violent entry	More gradual entry
Conduct:	Codes of conduct	Conduct practical without strict codes	Codes of conduct, or 'street rules'
Perception:	Perceived as criminals	Perceived as soldiers	Perceived as criminals
Legitimacy:	No legitimacy	Some legitimacy under international humanitarian law	No legitimacy
Recruitment:	Various along a continuum of coerced to voluntary	Often coerced	Varies along a continuum of coerced to voluntary
Structure:	Organised, hierarchical	Organised, hierarchical	Semi-hierarchical, informal
Religion:	Religion is a fundamental, defining tenant	Goals political, but can be tied to religion	Religion can add a sense of association, but not an underlining or formative component

Policy

Gang policy can inform policy on children associated with extremist groups with regards to prevention, judicial proceedings, and integration initiatives. While child extremists are a new phenomenon, case studies of gangs can provide data on effective prevention, judicial and reintegration policy. In the UK, Preventative networks such as Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) collate police and other protection agencies, while youth and A&E departments are trained to refer young people at risk of serious violence.[281]

For some communities, lack of accountability for violence among youth can hinder reintegration, and some sentencing can ensure smoother transitions which allow all involved parties to progress.[282] The UK has court procedures in place to provide a holistic response to

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[281] 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence: A Cross-Governmental Report,' HM Government: (London: November 2011) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97861/gang-violence-summary.pdf
[282] Dr Noëlle Quénivet and Shilan Shah-David, 'Youth and Violence: Drawing Parallels between Child Soldiers and Youth in Gang,' Centre for Legal Research at Bristol Law School, (Bristol: June 2013), 36.

violent children, which involves both judicial procedures, and extensive counselling and reintegration.

Reintegration methods for gang members are most effective when they engage in community values, and important lessons can be learned from the successes and pitfalls surrounding reintegration of gang children. Programmes look to assist in building new identities for youth, generating enthusiasm for new projects, as well as a sense of empowerment. Cultivating trust of local authorities and voluntary participation in reintegration programmes are key aims of many gang prevention and reintegration efforts, as well as of the notable 'Aarhus Model' for extremists. One-to-one mentoring has proven effective, yet reintegration takes more time than funding often allows, and governments must craft prolonged plans to avoid relapses into criminal activity. Former extremists have provided important voices to counter radical narratives among teenagers and adults, and similarly, 'part-siders' or people outside of gangs who retain some familiarity with the gang, can offer a bridge between the past and future for youth seeking identities free from gang violence. This leaves the only way between universalism and relativism to be charting a pragmatic way forward.

Reintegration initiatives for gangs, as well as for child soldiers, must keep in mind cultural relevance of DDR initiatives to provide viable opportunities and futures for children. As a report from Bristol Law School comparing child soldiers and youth in gangs finds, 'a girl trained in skills which in the West may be ungendered or less gendered and which in Africa may be even legally gendered, will be for practical purposes, unusable and therefore disempowering.'[283] For example, girls might be trained in skills such as agriculture or small-business management that take for granted the possibility of women owning land, but in Sierra Leone, for instance, it is illegal for a female to own land. Not only would the skills training become unproductive, but also it could also prompt frustration, disillusionment and return to a criminal or violent lifestyle.

Education and skills training can re-invoke a sense of empowerment and control, especially when they harness skills learned during time in the gang, such as mechanical or organizational skills, which might be transferable to careers in civil society.[284] As a caution, however, training for similar jobs may cause saturation and weaken the local economy[285], breeding further resentment among community members, so diversifying training can cater career prospects to individuals and diffuse the market impact.

The current framework in the UK for reintegrating youth from gangs relies on the mainstream networks with which children have regular contact such as health practitioners, teachers, police, A&E departments and local youth workers, and seeks to develop risk assessment tools and information between agencies and referral arrangements for targeted support.[286] The

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[283] Ibid., 35
[284] ibid., 32
[285] ibid.., 34
[286] 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence: A Cross-Governmental Report,' HM Government: (London: November 2011) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97861/gang-violence-summary.pdf, 7.

Ending Gang and Youth Violence Team is a virtual network of 100 expert advisers to provide practical advice for children's reintegration into society alongside Multi-Systemic Therapy procedures and intensive family intervention work.[287]

Both academic and government reports called for greater coordination among authorities, frontline workers and other civil society actors — an important factor to keep in mind for extremist reintegration networks as well. Although numerous local authority and civil society actors had outreach efforts for preventing gang recruitment and violence and for reintegrating youth, insufficient coordination among these actors have rendered responses ineffective in the past.

'The church, the police, anthropologists, criminologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, etc. wish to assist these children in their journey towards a life without crime; yet, their approaches are sometimes so vastly different that it is difficult to implement viable strategies,'[288] the Bristol Law report found.

An overall strategy with regard to prevention and reintegration of child extremists can avoid many of these mistakes and allow for ample implementation sharing among support structures for children.

Policy on prevention and DDR of child extremists can also learn from the foibles of efforts to reduce gang violence in ignoring girls; the focus of gang prevention has been on boys in the past.[289] Yet girls in both gangs and armed groups are often less visible, but in some environments, they will go further to prove themselves as full members of the group, displaying less inhibition to kill and more brutality than the boys.[290] Often victims of sexual violence in gangs, as well as in armed and extremist groups, girls require attention and psychological care.

Because of similar motivating factors regarding recruitment and psychological tendencies of members, gangs offer an apt comparison to youth in extremist groups with a long history of activity and preventative policies. A study of best practices in helping children vulnerable to gangs can inform prevention and reintegration policy of child extremists.

The following table details initiatives the Home Office of the United Kingdom has enacted or facilitated between 2011 and 2015 to prevent and mitigate gang violence among youth. The initiatives might be adapted and applied to vulnerable or returning child extremists.

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[287] ibid.
[288] Dr Noëlle Quénivet and Shilan Shah-David, 'Youth and Violence: Drawing Parallels between Child Soldiers and Youth in Gang,' Centre for Legal Research at Bristol Law School, (Bristol: June 2013), 30.
[289] ibid., 26
[290] ibid., 26

TABLE 3: Innovation in Prevention and DDR for Gang-Affected Youth in the United Kingdom[291]

Initiative	Description
Ending Gang Youth Violence team peer network	An 80-strong peer network focusses on cross-agency support and has shown a high impact at a low cost (10 million GBP) with crime down by 20 percent.
Information Sharing	The Centre of Excellence for Information Sharing disseminated insight on gang activity and good practices among areas.
Training	300 frontline practitioners trained to understand the risks and motivations for joining gangs, with additional training assistance to NGOs that assist gangs in applying for appropriate funding.
Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP)	Gang practitioners are encourage to take up training with WRAP
Early Intervention Foundation (EIF)	The EIF launches a telephone helpline to provide advice on gangs and a website detailing early intervention good practices in schools.
Vulnerable and Disengaged Youth People Fund	From the Centre for Social Action, a 2.9 million GBP fund to help young people from disadvantaged backgrounds at risk of joining gangs. Through 26 grant programmes across England, the fund has garnered 1000 volunteers to support 2000 youth to develop interests away from negative peer groups.
Public health outreach	Podcasts about gang and youth violence are now available for health professionals.
Pathways Multi-Agency Support (PMAP)	The programme offers at risk and affected youth in-depth support by providing mentors, a gangs school officer, social services, care and possible relocation through the Safe and Secure programme.
Young People's Advocates	The Home Office and Safer London Foundation has trained Advocates for one-to-one support programs of young women

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[291] 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence Programme: Annual Report 2014/15,' Parliament of the United Kingdom, (London: March 2015)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/412235/48087_Cm9043_Ending_G_Y_Violence_web_accessible.pdf

	affected by gang violence, and Advocates have offered hundreds of professionals training on further awareness of intervention for gang and sexual violence.
Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan	Gang-associated girls included in the plan to protect, support and empower victims of sexual violence, with a 'problem profile' of an at-risk girl made known to local police.
'This is Abuse' campaign	The teenage relationship campaign website now includes a section on gang-affected girls.
Identity Matters programme	Intervention aimed at addressing gang-affiliated offending in both the community and within custody and helping youth to craft new identities.
Intelligence Directed Placement System	The Youth Justice Board and National Offender Management Service are to put in place a structure for providing information on under-18 offenders and at-risk youth such as gang-affiliation and other information that could impact their safety and security. The Metropolitan Police Service retains a matrix of the most violent gang-related offenders.
Assessment	A thorough assessment process among youth who commit crimes in undertaken to evaluate vulnerabilities and exploitation – and appropriate pathways for care and protection in the best interest of the child. Assessment initiates also enable local areas to gather information on youth and engage actors such as the national Crime Agency and community activists for effective prevention.
Pathways Out initiative	A new intervention programme for gang members provides a mentor to help each young person overcome challenges, receive steady coaching, and build confidence in pursuing higher education and entering the workforce.

CONCLUSION

This report couples historical research with primary and secondary source data analysis. This was achieved by studying child soldiers in various countries and time periods, as well as collecting, codifying, and analysing propaganda to discern the current situation for children within Islamic State.

It is clear that various military and extremist groups have influenced the way in which Islamic State uses its child soldiers. Elements from Nazi Germany can be glimpsed in the systematic indoctrination of children through schools and training camps in IS, while abductions and forced recruitment employed by armies in Africa have been observed throughout Iraq and Syria. However, the report found the most accurate predecessor to be the Ba'athist regime in Iraq, which actively recruited children into its armed forces, and which today influences all aspects of IS recruitment of children.

For the purpose of this report, we created a six-month dataset of all Islamic State propaganda containing children from 01 August 2015 to 09 February 2016. The data was organised into five distinct categories: participation in violence, normalisation to violence, state building, utopia, and foreign policy grievances. The unique results that emerged from this analysis are crucial to understanding what children are subjected to in Islamic State. In some instances children are coerced into joining the group through abduction or fear, in others, children are co-opted into joining the group by their family. They are heavily indoctrinated, both at school and at home, with IS ideology. That they are exposed to violence at such a young age, through watching executions and aiding in beheadings, is a serious form of abuse. This violence is justified by various religious texts Islamic State employs to suit their needs. Religious re-education will therefore play a key role in policy regarding these children, and, if employed successfully, will encourage children to question the other values and beliefs they learned while living in the "caliphate".

The full spectrum of atrocities that children experienced during their time in Islamic State will most certainly impact their physical and mental wellbeing. By reflecting on policy measures employed in the past, lessons learned can be applied in structuring rehabilitation programmes. The current model used by child protection agencies - the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration model (DDR) - does not sufficiently address the religious and political indoctrination used by IS contribute to its larger "utopia" and state-building project. Such programs have a history of focusing on immediate physical health needs, and last for too short of a time to properly address de-radicalisation and rehabilitate child soldiers. Thus a reformed strategy is proposed, which takes into account respect – respect to hold political or religious views which are free from violent expression. We hope that our proposed reintegration network will help children find a sense of belonging in their new community, and craft an individual identity.

Many similarities have been drawn between gang groups and extremist groups. Not only do their recruitment processes share certain push and pull factors, they also share fundamental characteristics, and realising this can assist policy with regards to prevention, judicial proceedings, and integration initiatives. The use of children by militant groups is something

that we have, unfortunately, witnessed in the past. However, the tools needed to provide specific policy recommendations, and to assemble coherent rehabilitation programmes, do exist. By using this report and consulting its policy recommendations, the international community has at its fingertips a preliminary procedure to follow and adapt as it sees fit.

APPENDIX

Legislation

The way in which children are tried as criminals differs in every country, depending on a number of different variables. The most disputed and difficult standard to establish is the minimum age of criminal responsibility, which, for the most part, is left up to each country to set. However, it is crucial that the prosecution of a child remains a last resort and the primary concern of any country should be the rehabilitation and reintegration of its youth offenders into society. This being said, a new issue arises regarding child soldiers who return from living in Islamic State. The majority of them will have blood on their hands, as 'IS teachers require their students to carry out a barbaric act of violence against their enemies before graduating to become a fighter'.[292] They force the children to behead a prisoner, in order to show that they are ready,[293] and in this way, all of the child soldiers would have most likely committed what is considered a war crime. For this reason, the government has an obligation to arrest and detain the child returnees, yet it would be a grave mistake not to attempt to rehabilitate them and use them in deterring others from joining Islamic State. This is an obstacle which many governments around the world will face in the future.

The following section will outline how children are tried as criminals in the United Kingdom, Europe, the Unites States and finally in international conflicts.

The United Kingdom

In both England and Wales, the age of criminal responsibility is set at 10; however, in Scotland, it is set at 8. This indicates that children under these ages cannot be arrested or charged with a crime. In England and Wales, children between the ages of 10-17 risk being arrested and taken to court if they commit a crime [294], and, by the law, once they turn 18 they are treated as adults by the criminal justice system. Scotland's Criminal Justice and Licensing Act 2010 details that children may be prosecuted for an offence after the age of 12.[295]

Europe

Throughout Europe, the ages of criminal responsibility range from as young as 7 until 18[296], with the bar most commonly being set at 14. However, the notion of 'responsibility' varies in different countries; for example, French law states that 'persons under the age of 18 'able to understand what they are doing:' are criminally responsible for their offences'.[297] In contrast, in the Czech Republic, 'no person who was under the age of 15 at the time he or she is alleged

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[292] Anne Speckhard & Ahmet Yahya, 'Discrediting ISIS from the Inside: Using Stories From Recent ISIS Defectors - Why they Joined, What they Saw, Why they Quit', *Perspectives on Terrorism,* December 2015

[293] Ibid.
[294] *Age of criminal responsibility*, 2015, https://www.gov.uk/age-of-criminal-responsibility
[295] *Criminal justice and licensing (Scotland) act 2010, c.* http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2010/13/section/52
[296] *Juvenile justice: Europe's children's champions challenge governments to respect young offenders' rights*, 2003, https://www.crin.org/en/library/publications/juvenile-justice-europes-childrens-champions-challenge-governments-respect
[297] *Minimum ages of criminal responsibility in Europe*, https://www.crin.org/en/home/ages/europe

to have committed an offence can be held criminally liable'.[298] Germany's laws state that 'children aged 14 to 18 can be criminally liable where at the time of the offence, he or she was mature enough to see the injustice of the act and act upon this knowledge'.[299]

The United States

In the United States, the age of criminal responsibility is decided on by each state. The majority of states rely on common law, 'which holds that from age 7 to age 14, children cannot be presumed to bear responsibility but can be held responsible'[300], however 13 states have set the minimum age at 6, ranging to 12.

How to deal with the issue of child soldiers returning from battle has not, in the past, been a common discussion for Western countries to have. In the past couple of years, an unprecedented number of children have been taken to Islamic State by their parents, and this is where they will grow up and be educated. Furthermore, many children have been born in Islamic State, creating a new generation of children who will only know violence. This is not an issue that Western countries have had to address in the past, and for this reason, without many country-specific policies for them to abide by, they will have to turn to the following international rules.

The Beijing Rules

The *Beijing Rules* were established by the United Nations in 1985, and state that:

'In those legal systems recognising the concept of the age of criminal responsibility for juveniles, the beginning of that age shall not be fixed at too low an age level, bearing in mind the facts of emotional, mental and intellectual maturity.'[301]

International Humanitarian Law

A minimum age of criminal responsibility for international crimes was not established by the *International Humanitarian Law.* However, Article 77(2) sets the minimum age of recruitment into an armed group at 15.[302] Thus, if a child under the age of 15 is deemed too young to fight, 'then he or she must also be considered too young to be held criminally responsible' while associated with the group.[303]

Due to these international provisions, children entering into a reintegration and rehabilitation process should be considered primarily as victims and treated differently from adults. However, the broad variation in age of criminal responsibility in different countries reflects a

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[298] Ibid.

[299] Ibid.

[300] *Progress of nations 1997 special protections - progress and disparity*, http://www.unicef.org/pon97/p56a.htm

[301] *United Nations standard minimum rules for the administration of juvenile justice,* 1985, http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/40/a40r033.htm

[302] *ICRC databases on international humanitarian law*, 1977, https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/ART/470-750099?OpenDocument

[303] *Children and Justice During and in the Aftermath of Armed Conflict*, 2011, *Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*, (Working paper number 3).

lack of international consensus, and the number of countries with low ages demonstrates that many juvenile criminal justice systems do not primarily consider the child's best interests.

Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, the minimum age of criminal responsibility is set at 13. In addition to this, there have not been any laws on a maximum duration for administrative detention created.[304] Children suspected of terrorism are dealt with in accordance with the Afghan Juvenile Justice Code of 2005.[305] This law stipulates that an officer may arrest and detain a child without referring him or her to a prosecutor for up to 48 hours.

Colombia

Abiding by international law, the Colombian authorities have set the minimum age of criminal responsibility at 18; anyone under 18 is considered a victim of the conflict. The programs put in place to care for these minors who have either voluntarily surrendered or were captured by the state provide care to them depending on their age. In spite of this, many of these minors are coming from groups in which they were allocated adult status, and so they 'expect similar treatment in reintegration programs'.[306]

The demobilisation programme for youths is offered by the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare [*Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar*] (ICBF), and it incorporates two principle aspects: prevention and care.[307] In this way, the programme combines child care, with special emphasis in areas where there is high risk for recruitment with protection in a safe environment, where the children receive schooling, psychological help and job training[308]. If the child has a family to return to, they will be placed back home with them. However if they do not have any family, a foster home is selected for them by the ICBF.[309]

Reforms of the juvenile justice legislation are taking place in the majority of countries in Latin America. The age of criminal responsibility has been raised to 18 in Brazil, Colombia and Peru[310].

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has a long history of child soldiers, recruited by the group the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In 2008 the government released a set of Regulations which defined a child as anyone under the age of 18, and stated that after a child is arrested, or surrendered to the authorities, they are to be taken to the police station and brought before a magistrate within 24 hours[311]. The decision of whether to return the child to his or her parents, or place

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[304] *Children and Justice During and in the Aftermath of Armed Conflict*, 2011, *Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*, (Working paper number 3).
[305] Ibid.
[306] Sergio Jaramillo & Yaneth Giha & Paula Torres, 'Transitional Justice and DDR : The Case of Colombia', *International Center for Transitional Justice,* June 2009.
[307] Ibid.
[308] Ibid.
[309] Ibid.
[310] *Progress of nations 1997 special protections - progress and disparity*, http://www.unicef.org/pon97/p56a.htm
[311] 'Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers: Sri Lanka', 2010, *Report to the committee on the rights of the child on the optional protocol to the convention on the rights of the child on the involvement of children in armed conflict*.

him or her in a 'Protective Child Accommodation Centre' is left in the hands of the magistrate[312].

Geneva Convention (1949)

The Fourth Geneva Convention, also known as the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, goes further in protecting children under the age of 15 during times of conflict by specifying obligations of the Occupying Power, an entity involved in a conflict outside its juridical territory, in ensuring the wellbeing of these children. Article 50 of the Fourth Convention states:

> The Occupying Power shall not hinder the application of any preferential measures in regard to food, medical care and protection against the effects of war, which may have been adopted prior to the occupation in favour of children under fifteen years, expectant mothers, and mothers of children under seven years.[313]

The Occupying Power is also obligated to work with local authorities to facilitate the availability of institutions devoted to care and education of children, the identification of and registration of parentage, and the education and care of orphaned or displaced children.[314]

Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Convention states:

> Children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of indecent assault. The Parties to the conflict shall provide them with the care and aid they require, whether because of their age or for any other reason.[315]

Article 77 outlines that the parties to the conflict 'shall take all feasible measures' to ensure children under 15 do not take a direct part in the conflict and are not recruited into armed forces and adds that protections for children apply even if they partake in the conflict and become prisoners of war; they will be held in separate quarters from adults unless among family and will be exempt from the death penalty for crimes of war if under the age of 18. With regard to individuals from age 15 to 18, the Convention states recruiting forces should focus on the oldest of the age set first.[316]

Article 4(3) of Additional Protocol II reiterates, 'Children who have not attained the age of fifteen years shall neither be recruited in the armed forces or groups nor allowed to take part in hostilities' and further outlines how children should be protected and given aid.[317] Over

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[312] Ibid.

[313] 'Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War', *International Committee of the Red Cross* Geneva, 1949, https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=E09D15BDEC76F8D9C12563CD005 1BDCC.

[314] Ibid.

[315] 'Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I)', *International Committee of the Red Cross,* Geneva, 1977, https://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/INTRO/470.

[316] Protocol I, Article 77, https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=8F7D6B2DEE119FBAC12563CD0051 E0A2.

[317] 'Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II)', Article 4(3(c)), *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*,

and above this, children should receive an education, including religious and moral education, according to the wishes of their guardians and should be removed from dangerous areas to safer ones with the consent of their caregivers. Further, the Protocol calls for 'appropriate steps' to facilitate the reunion of families separated during the conflict.[318]

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2000)

With 162 State Parties, the Optional Protocol (OPAC) is one of the most widely accepted and comprehensive pieces of legislation regarding child soldiers that establishes the minimum age for recruitment and use as 18. It is an addition to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child monitored by the Committee on the Rights of a Child (CRC).[319] An additional optional protocol, in effect as of April 2014, allows children to submit grievances regarding violations of their rights under the Convention and its first two optional protocols. Article 1 of OPAC establishes, 'State Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that members of their armed forces who have not attained the age of 18 years do not take a direct part in hostilities.'[320] The protocol additionally prohibits recruitment of children under 18 into armed groups but does not address children who might take on support functions for armed forces or groups but who do not take direct part in hostilities.[321]

However within a succinct 13 articles, OPAC not only outlines how armed forces (but not groups) may enlist 16 and 17-year-olds on a voluntary basis with appropriate parental consent and proof of age, but also discusses cooperation among state parties in implementing the protocol, funding reintegration programmes, and monitoring success. Parties provide reports two years after signing, and every subsequent five years, and can request further reporting from any other party at any time. Therefore the protocol provides a mechanism for investigating violations among signatories themselves, who can then impose sanctions against state parties who violate its principles. Under Article 11, any State Party can denounce the protocol, but denunciation will not take effect for a year. Moreover, if the Party is in armed conflict during the denunciation, this denunciation will not take effect until the end of that conflict.[322]

Concerned with long-term consequences of child soldiers on durable peace, security and development, the protocol addresses the economic, social and political root causes of child involvement in armed conflict and encourages the participation of the community in educational programmes to help with its implementation. 162 states have ratified the protocol, while 14 signatories, including Iran, Pakistan, Somalia and Sudan, have shown initial

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http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolII.aspx

[318] Ibid, 4(3(e)).

[319] The United States is the only country to have signed but not ratified the Convention, as it was unable to garner the necessary 2/3 vote in the Senate because of some concerns regarding lawsuits and parental authority for religious sex education, and because some states allow for life imprisonment for children under 18 without parole. The US has ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

[320] 'Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict', *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, Article 1, p. 237, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc-conflict.pdf.

[321] Ibid.

[322] Ibid, Article 11, p. 240.

support and 21 states, including Papua New Guinea, North Korea, the United Arab Emirates and Mauritania, have taken no action.[323]

The Paris Commitment to Protect Children from Unlawful Recruitment or Use by Armed Forces or Armed Groups (2007)

Derived from the 1997 Cape Town principles and best practices on the prevention and recruitment of children into armed forces, and on the demobilisation and social reintegration of child soldiers in Africa, the Paris Commitments summarise the broad takeaways of the lengthier Paris Principles. The Commitments recognise an imbalance in programming and diplomatic initiatives for girls involved directly or indirectly in conflict and seek to address the 'physical, developmental, emotional, mental, social and spiritual harm' through political, diplomatic, humanitarian means, as well as through technical assistance and funding.[324]

Unlike legal predecessors, the Paris Commitments engage the political sphere by describing appropriate processes for handling issues of child soldiers within peace negotiations. Article 6 commits the signatories to fighting impunity in prosecuting persons who unlawfully recruit children under 18 and details that peace agreements should not include amnesty provisions for perpetrators of crimes under international law.[325] Articles 13 and 18 show pragmatic insight about how the presence of child soldiers might be used by groups within political contests. Article 13 states that released child soldiers may not be used as political propaganda, and Article 18, that armed groups cannot levy children to secure advantages in peace negotiations or security sector reforms (for example, by including child soldiers as a portion of troop size in power sharing agreements).[326] The Commitments build on the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, resolutions 1539 and 1612, with regard to monitoring and reporting mechanisms for human rights violations against children and by invoking a ban on arms, equipment transfers, or other military assistance to parties that unlawfully recruit or use children.[327] The Commitments also describe appropriate legal procedures for violations of international law, whose methods are elaborated on in the Paris Principles and discussed in subsequent sections.

The Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups

Perhaps the most extensive legal work on child soldiers, the Paris Principles, provide detailed guidelines on the implementation of the Commitments. Taken together, the Principles and Commitments make several notable contributions to international law: the Principles identify previous shortcomings in supporting girls, while proposing gender specific solutions at all stages of prevention and reintegration, include support functions to armed groups among affected children, make a strong push to increase the minimum age of a combatant or supporting combat role to 18, describe guidelines for a multi-level prevention strategy

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[323] 'Status of Ratification: Interactive Dashboard', *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, http://indicators.ohchr.org.
[324] 'Paris Commitments', p. 1.
[325] Ibid, Article 6, p. 2.
[326] Ibid, p. 3.
[327] ibid, Article 7, p. 2 ; Ibid, Article 8, p. 2.

engaging local, state, regional and global actors, and posit extensive DDR recommendations, including offering economic support to families, raising community awareness of potential behavioural problems, and aiding children and mothers with disabilities or psychological burdens in reintegration.[328]

Rather than define a child soldier as an active participant in conflict, the Paris Principals develop regulations and reintegration procedures for girls and boys 'associated with armed forces and armed groups in conflicts around the world,' who may be used in various ways.[329] In the definition section of the treaty, Article 2.1 states explicitly:

> 'A child associated with an armed force or armed group' refers to any person below 18 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. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities.[330]

The Principles encourage communities to invest in young people in order to support long-term peace and stability; seek to ensure that the education of both boys and girls meets economic needs and allows children to build hope for the future; provide guidelines on avoiding re-recruitment in highly politicised environments; and emphasise positive alternatives through local initiatives, family support and community involvement.[331]
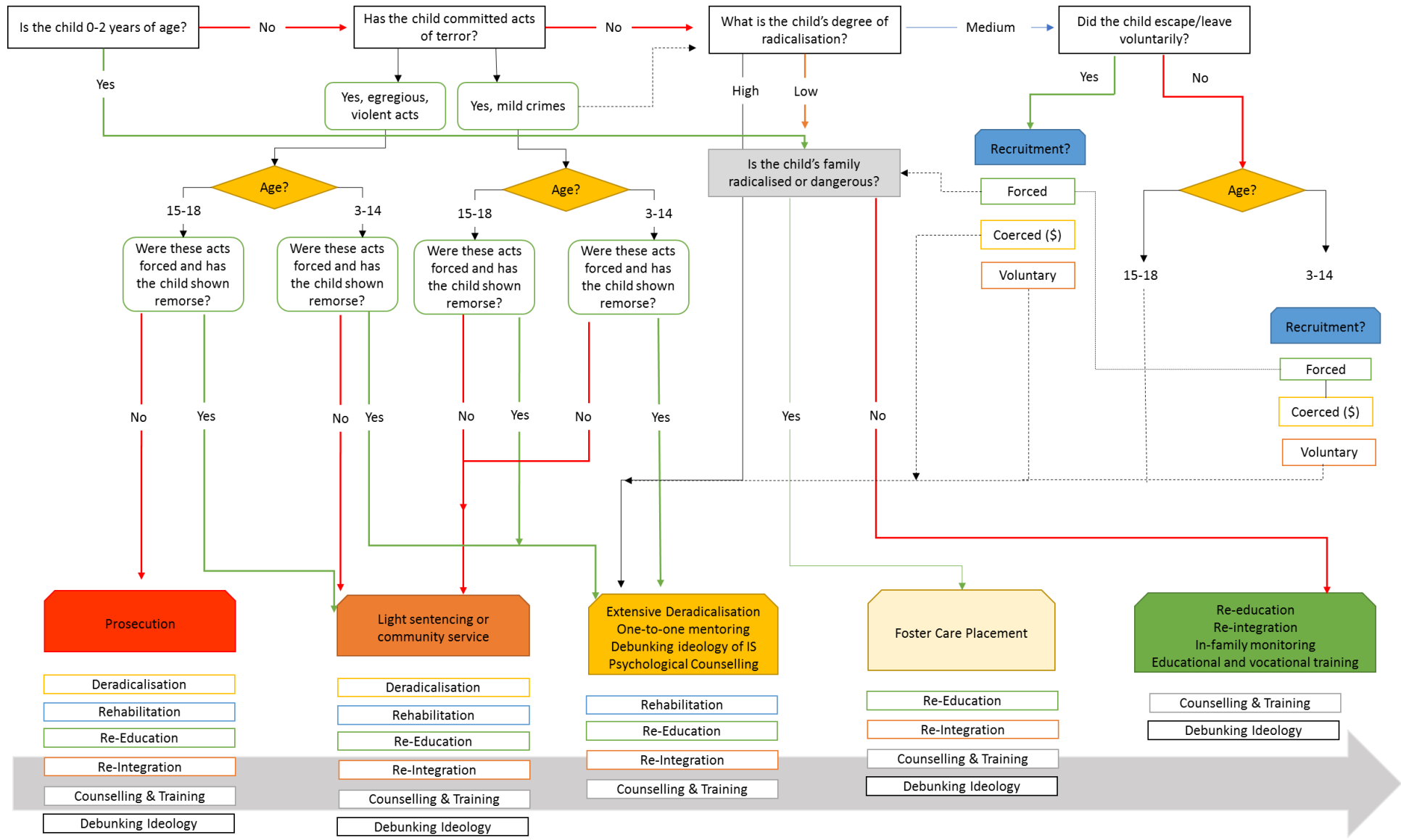
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[328] 'Paris Principles'.
[329] Ibid, p. 4.
[330] Ibid, Article 2.1, p. 7.
[331] Ibid.

DIAGRAM 1: Policy and DDR Response Flow-Chart

Is the child 0-2 years of age? — No → Has the child committed acts of terror? — No → What is the child's degree of radicalisation? — Medium → Did the child escape/leave voluntarily?

- Is the child 0-2 years of age? → Yes
- Has the child committed acts of terror? → Yes, egregious, violent acts / Yes, mild crimes
- What is the child's degree of radicalisation? → High / Low
- Did the child escape/leave voluntarily? → Yes / No

Recruitment? → Forced / Coerced ($) / Voluntary

Is the child's family radicalised or dangerous? → Yes / No

Age? (15-18 / 3-14)

Were these acts forced and has the child shown remorse?
- No / Yes

Age? (15-18 / 3-14)

Were these acts forced and has the child shown remorse?
- No / Yes

Age? (15-18 / 3-14)

Recruitment? → Forced / Coerced ($) / Voluntary

Prosecution
- Deradicalisation
- Rehabilitation
- Re-Education
- Re-Integration
- Counselling & Training
- Debunking Ideology

Light sentencing or community service
- Deradicalisation
- Rehabilitation
- Re-Education
- Re-Integration
- Counselling & Training
- Debunking Ideology

Extensive Deradicalisation
One-to-one mentoring
Debunking ideology of IS
Psychological Counselling
- Rehabilitation
- Re-Education
- Re-Integration
- Counselling & Training

Foster Care Placement
- Re-Education
- Re-Integration
- Counselling & Training
- Debunking Ideology

Re-education
Re-integration
In-family monitoring
Educational and vocational training
- Counselling & Training
- Debunking Ideology

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