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CHILDREN AND WAR¹

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Introduction

Children are the main victims of war. They are deliberately targeted by combatants; they are used as shields; they are killed as collateral damage, for example when a bomb lands on their school; they are routinely raped and physically abused by soldiers; they are often forced to flee their homes, and suffer disproportionately from war-induced hunger, thirst and diseases; war leaves them orphans, resource-less and at the mercy of the economic-cum-sexual predatory practices of adults. At the same time, it is estimated that there are several dozens of thousands of child soldiers worldwide, some of whom commit atrocities.² Notwithstanding the crimes which they commit, and as we shall see throughout this paper, those children too are victims, precisely for that reason.

The victimisation of children is morally egregious – in some respects more egregious still than the victimisation of adults. My aim in this chapter is twofold: to provide strong philosophical support for this intuition, and to highlight some important ethical issues arising from children's involvement in and exposure to war. In the second section, I defend the view that killing children, whether intentionally or not, is morally worse, other things equal, than killing adults. In the third section, I tackle the difficult issues raised by children who actively participate in armed conflicts. I defend the standard prohibition on child enlistment. But I also argue that, once children have been enlisted, it is morally permissible to kill them in self- or other-defence if they commit wrongful killings.

Two preliminary remarks. First, we need a rough and ready definition of a child, as distinct from an adult. Countries differ with respect to majority thresholds, and apply different age thresholds for different activities (permission to have sex no earlier than 16, right to vote no earlier than 18, etc.) I follow international practice, notably the 1989 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child, and define a child, in the context of war, as a human being under the age of 18 unless his or her country of citizenship has set a different majority threshold for the purpose of enlistment. This is unavoidably arbitrary, but one has to start somewhere.

Second, there is more to say about children and war than I can do here. In particular, the post-war rehabilitation and re-incorporation of children into civilian life are crucially important issues. I focus on the role and status of children during the war partly for lack of space but also and largely because it is there, I think, that philosophy has the most to say.

Children as non-combatants

Some of the harms which befall children in war are inflicted deliberately; others are an unintentional, albeit foreseen, side effects of military operations. In this section, I first provide support for the claims that children may not be deliberately harmed but that they may be harmed as a foreseen though unintended side effect of military operations, subject to various constraints. I then consider whether it matters to our moral assessment of harming in war that victims are children rather than adults. Throughout, for ease of exposition, I tackle that question by reference to killing: unless otherwise specified, the conclusions I reach with respect to lethal harm also apply to the case of non-lethal harm.

Just war theory's central question is that of the grounds upon which, if any, human beings may be harmed in general, and killed in particular, in and because of war. Just war theorists all endorse in its most general form the principle of non-combatant immunity, whereby non-combatants, who as such do not threaten, or contribute to threatening, the enemy, are not legitimate targets in war. This is why prisoners of war, or soldiers who are *hors de combat*, may not be killed *deliberately*. This is also why civilians who do not take part in hostilities are not legitimate targets either. Just war theorists also endorse, again in its most general form, the view that unintentionally though foreseeably harming non-combatants in the course of a military mission is morally permissible, so long as the military mission stands a reasonable chance of succeeding at bringing about its stated ends, as it is a necessary means to bringing about those ends, and as the harms thus inflicted are not disproportionate to the goods thus realised. Thus, a tactical bomber pilot is not deemed to commit a war crime if he targets a munitions factory in the foreknowledge that some civilians will die in the bombing, so long as he does not intend their deaths. These requirements have long been subject to thorough scrutiny, notably in contemporary just war theory (Fabre 2009; Frowe and Long 2014; Lazar 2015; McMahan 2009; Walzer 1992). For my purposes here, however, it suffices to note, in the first instance, that the principle of non-combatant immunity straightforwardly supports a prohibition against deliberately killing children. Furthermore, the permission to inflict collateral harms on non-combatants extends to non-combating children.

At first glance, the latter claim might perhaps seem hasty. Suppose that we are waging a just war, in the course of which three scenarios present themselves. In the first scenario, the munitions factory is located near an adult-only club. In the second scenario, it is located near a primary school. In the third scenario, it is located near a small town populated with both adults and children. I suspect that some readers might lean towards the view that our pilot may proceed in *Adult Club*, but not in *Primary School* – indeed, not even in *Small Town*, on the grounds, precisely, that children live in this town who would be killed. However, objecting to bombing in *Small Town* is, in effect, to rule out most wars as unjust, since very few wars can successfully be fought without destroying civilian areas in which both adults and children live. Moreover, such bombings, and even in *Primary School*, *ex hypothesi* serve just ends, one of which is the protection of *other* children at the hands of unjust combatants. Narrowing the scope of the principle of collateral damage to the killing of adults and thus forbidding *all* instances of child killings does seem unduly restrictive, not least because it would, in effect, dictate in favour of banning any war in which our combatants might unintentionally kill children – in effect, most if not all wars – at the cost of rescuing children who would otherwise die at the hands of our enemies. Unless one thinks that killing is *always* morally worse than letting die, there must be occasions when going to war is morally justified overall, even if in so doing we end up killing children.

Still, the harming of children in war does elicit greater revulsion than the harming of adults. In war, age discrimination in favour of children is not regarded as morally controversial – on

the contrary. Children's lives, it is often felt, matter more, other things equal, than adults' lives. For this reason, many would say that killing children is morally worse, *ceteris paribus*, than killing adults.³

So stated, the statement is ambiguous. It does not distinguish between the following three claims, all of which rest on the assumption that, in a given case, killing children and killing adults are both morally wrong:

- (1) Death is worse *for the children who die* than it is *for the adults who die*, and killing a child is, thus, morally worse for that child than killing an adult is morally worse for that adult.
- (2) The death of a child is worse than the death of an adult, and killing the child is, thus, morally worse than killing the adult, *from the point of view of other agents*, such as, for example, those individuals' nearest and dearest.
- (3) The death of a child is worse than the death of an adult, and killing the child is morally worse than killing the adult, *from an impersonal point of view*.⁴

Let me ~~illustrate~~ those views (without taking a firm stand on either of them): death might be worse for a 21-year-old than for a one-year-old – particularly death of which the former is aware of her impending fate. Likewise, a parent may find it far worse to lose his 21-year-old daughter than his one-year-old daughter, on the grounds that he has a fully developed relationship with the former, which he did not have with the latter. ~~Finally~~, from an impersonal point of view, the death of a child may matter more than the death of a young adult, for example because, assessed impersonally, it consists in the loss of more years of life overall.

When assessing the badness of death and the wrongness of killing, we must take those considerations into account; other factors are relevant too, such as the quality of the life that remains to be lived, the extent to which one has so far lived one's life well, the numbers of lives taken, and so on.⁵ Reviewing *all* of those issues is beyond the scope of this section. My main focus is on one particular question: what difference, if any, does childhood *as such* make to the permissibility of killing in war?

Interestingly, neither the prohibition on the deliberate killing of non-combatants nor the permission to kill non-combatants unintentionally account for the relevance of childhood. In so far as the prohibition articulates in the context of war the more general principle that individuals who do not pose a threat of lethal harm ought not to be killed deliberately, it applies with the same stringency to all non-combatants, irrespective of their age. To the extent that an unarmed adult poses no greater threat to the enemy than an unarmed child, those two acts of deliberate killing are equally wrong at the bar of the principle. Likewise, the permission to kill non-combatants unintentionally does not in itself weigh more heavily in favour of the collateral killing of adults than on the side of the collateral killing of children.

To justify the relevance of childhood to the permissibility of killing in war, we must identify morally salient differences between innocent children and innocent adults which are pertinent to war. In the remainder of this section, I scrutinise four such differences, and show that they provide only partial support for the view that childhood *as such* is relevant.

First, adults are to some degree causally *responsible* for the war which their community wages on their behalf, indeed sometimes at their behest. They pay the taxes thanks to which the war can be waged, they elect representatives who vote for the war, they work in war-related jobs, and so on. This does not turn them into combatants; nor does this always warrant deliberately killing them. If the war which they help support is unjust, it does, however, warrant conferring lesser weight on their lives, when making targeting decisions, than on the lives of children who do not in any way participate in the war.

Second, most children are more *vulnerable* than most adults to the ills of war. They are less likely to know where to find guns to defend themselves from marauding enemy soldiers, less able physically to fight, less economically resourceful and more dependent, morally and materially, on any such help which adults are willing and able to give them.⁶ But they are also less able than most adults to take evasive steps such as running quickly and for long, to hiding effectively, and so on. Their greater vulnerability than adult civilians makes it worse to kill them, and the younger the child, the morally worse the killing. However, by that token, it is morally worse to target a bedridden elderly adult than a robust 16-year-old. If the choice, then, is between bombing a military target which is located near a high school and one located near a nursing home, the vulnerability argument dictates against the latter and in favour of the former, *ceteris paribus*: of course, this is an extraordinarily invidious choice, but it might have to be made.

Third, even though not all children are more vulnerable to the ills of war than any adult, whatever age threshold we adopt as demarcating childhood from adulthood, all children by definition are *younger* than all adults. The point is blindingly obvious, yet highly relevant here. For it is appropriate, generally, to conceive of years of a worthwhile life as *distribuenda*, in so far as years of life afford opportunities to flourish. Suppose that there is only one liver for two patients in serious need of a transplant, and that one of the patients is a child while the other is an adult. Other things equal (such as the seriousness of the need and prospects for recovery), it is just, I think, to give the liver to the child rather than the adult: the latter has had more opportunities than the former to have a flourishing life. By implication, it would be more unjust to withhold the liver from the child than to withhold it from the adult. Those considerations apply not just to savings, but to killings as well, and support the view that killing children is worse than killing adults – both from the point of view of those children relative to the point of view of those adults, from the point of view of third parties such as relatives and from an impersonal point of view.

A final reason as to why killing children is generally worse than killing adults is this: killing children has very long lasting, *multigenerational effects*: the children who die today are not going to be the taxpayers, doctors, plumbers, engineers and teachers of tomorrow, upon whom the current generations and the not-yet-born will depend for their continuing social, economic and political existence. To be sure, not all of those children would grow up into those adults were we not to kill them. But some would, and the long-term harmful consequences of killing them – not for those children themselves, but for those who are left behind – ought to be taken into consideration.

Again, however, by that very same token, killing adults is worse than killing children in one important respect, numbers being roughly equal. Those adults are *today's* teachers, engineers, builders and doctors upon whom the still-alive here and now – notably children – depend. In some cases, in fact, leaving children without the protection of adults might be worse for those children than instant death at the ends of the enemy.⁷

With respect to multigenerational harms, thus, whether we should spare children to the detriment of adults or *vice versa* depends on two things. First, it depends on the extent to which having fewer years of life as a result of instant death is better or worse (from the person's point of view, her relatives' or the impersonal point of view) than having more years of a pain-filled life. Second, it depends on the extent to which one may or must give priority to the well-being here and now of current generations over their future well-being, the well-being of previous (co-existing) generations and the well-being of their successors. This is far too complex an issue to tackle within the scope of this paper. But it is worth highlighting, if only to draw attention to the fact that the question of whether or not children may justifiably be killed in war lies at the intersection of deeper and broader issues which are extensively studied independently of, but

seldom in relation to, one another – to wit, the permissibility of killing in war, the distribution of years versus quality of life and intergenerational justice.

In summary, the fact that someone is a child does make some difference to the permissibility of killing her: the younger the child, the more difference it makes. However, none of the four considerations I have outlined in support of that claim (responsibility, vulnerability, years of life as a *distribuenda* and multigenerational effects) yield the strong view that killing a child is *always* morally worse than killing an adult. In any given case, were we in possession of all the relevant facts and able under fire to make fine-grained judgements about (*inter alia*) quality of life, degree of vulnerability, etc., we might have to conclude that killing a child is not as bad as killing an adult. Therein lies the difficulty. In practice, it is impossible to make such fine-grained judgments. When making targeting decisions, thus, belligerents run two different kinds of risk. On the one hand, they might decide to harm adults on the grounds that children have had fewer opportunities for a flourishing life, are generally more vulnerable, less responsible for the war and more important to their community's long-term future. In so doing, they run the risk of harming those adults to a much greater extent overall than the children would have been harmed had the converse decision been made. On the other hand, they might decide to harm children on the grounds that adults have a lesser chance of recovery and adaptation, that the survival of adults here and now is in fact too important to the country's medium-term future, and so on. In so doing, they run the risks of harming children to a much greater extent than those adults would have been harmed had the converse decision been made. The question, then, is that of which risks are morally preferable. The issue of multigenerational harm seems to fare poorly as an action-guiding consideration: we simply do not and cannot know what might happen in 30 years from now if we kill x number of children versus y number of adults. By contrast, on balance, it is more likely that a given child is less responsible, more vulnerable and endowed with fewer years of a comparable life than a given adult. Under considerations of epistemic uncertainty, thus, responsibility, vulnerability and distributive justice seem to dictate in favour of sparing children as a matter of policy.

Children as participants in war

For all the suffering which they endure, some children are not *unambiguously* and *only* war victims: all too often they participate in it. They are used by adult soldiers in a variety of roles: messengers, cooks, sexual slaves, water carriers and, increasingly so, fighters thanks to the fact that lethal firearms are much lighter to carry than they used to be. They are plied with drinks and drugs, and are often forced to commit atrocities against their own families and neighbours as part of the 'enlisting process': taken together, their substance addiction and the reprisals to which they would be subject were they to return to their villages make them completely dependent on their commanding officers (Singer 2005).

The claim that sexually, physically and psychologically abusing children into becoming combatants is morally impermissible need not detain us here, so obviously true it is. I also assume that just as juvenile common criminals are both punished and rehabilitated once their sentence is served (or so is the aim), so should child soldiers who have committed war crimes, precisely because they are perpetrators as well as victims – though war crime trials may not be the most appropriate punitive channel for either. In this section, I tackle two ethical issues raised by the phenomenon of child soldiers: the ethics of non-abusively enlisting children into armed forces, and the ethics of killing child soldiers in war.

Let me turn to enlistment first. Children have always participated in wars. Until relatively recently, their incorporation into armed forces was a relatively normal phenomenon.

Yet, contemporary international *norms* – unlike contemporary *practices* – do not reflect the old consensus (Drumbl 2012: ch. 5). The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the 2002 Optional Protocol to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulate that the incorporation of a child younger than 15 into the armed forces is a war crime, and urge signatories to ensure that youngsters aged 16–18 are neither conscripted nor, if voluntary enlisted, treated as direct participants into hostilities. The International Labour Organisation Minimum Age Convention is more demanding, stipulating as it does that the minimum age for employing someone in a dangerous occupation is 18. In practice, most countries permit enlistment at 17 or 18.⁸

What justification is there, then, for *not* permitting the enlistment of children? Consider voluntary enlistment. As a first cut, children (one might think) are simply incapable of making an informed, truly voluntary, un-coerced decision to expose themselves to the risks of joining the army. So stated, however, the argument is too quick. For a start, there are many dangerous things that children in the 16–18 age bracket, indeed younger, are morally permitted to do and/or that it is morally permissible to have them do (albeit subject to tighter constraints than adults face): having sex (with concomitant risks, from sex itself or resulting pregnancy, to life and health), embarking in dangerous sports such as rugby or American football, consenting to risky medical procedures (see ch. 12). The incapacity argument against military enlistment must capture what is specific about this particular decision such that, even if the risks to life and limbs are the same and/or similarly likely to eventuate, it is worse than inducing children into those practices/activities.

Enlistment clearly *is* harmful in many different ways. First, as the laws of war stand, members of armed forces are legitimate targets. As far as the morality of war is concerned, some argue that it matters not whether soldiers fight for an unjust cause: *qua* soldiers they are legitimate targets regardless [ENREF 1](#); others maintain that they are legitimate targets only if they fight for an unjust cause. Either way, they *will* be so regarded, and that really is what matters. Second – and in these crucial respects enlistment differs from having sex and playing rugby – a child soldier participates in a lethal and often unjust enterprise. He, or she, is complicitous in acts of killing, indeed may well be led to commit such acts, with considerable costs to his or her moral integrity if those killings are unjust, and to his or her mental health whether or not the killings are just. Of course, in a given case, unwanted pregnancy resulting from consensual sex might turn out to be more harmful to a 16-year-old girl than spending a few years in a regiment without being deployed in a war zone. By and large, however, enlistment is psychologically and morally more risky than pregnancy, let alone sex itself and playing dangerous sports. To the extent that children are not capable of properly understanding and evaluating those risks, they are not capable of making a truly voluntary decision to enlist.

Admittedly, some children might in fact be able to do precisely that, particularly at the older end of the age scale. As a matter of public policy, however, the question is whether we should err on the side of protecting children who lack a claim to enjoy protection from the consequences of their bad decision, or on the side of not protecting those who do have such a claim. Under conditions of uncertainty and in the light of the potential damage which enlistment can cause to a child, it seems to me that we should err on the latter side, and thus reject child enlistment altogether. By the same token, of course, we should reject the enlistment of incapable adults.

Consider next child conscription. The incapacity argument and the worries about voluntariness which it articulates do not work against it. For if conscription in general is permissible, and if, thus, freedom from coercive enlistment is not a necessary condition for just enlistment, the fact that children cannot make a properly voluntary decision to enlist is irrelevant. Yet, conscripting children really does seem morally wrong. An argument against coercive child

enlistment specifically must account for *that* intuition, whilst accommodating adult conscription. (Of course, conscription might be morally unjustified for reasons which apply to both children and adults equally. I want to assume for the sake of argument, however, that conscripting adults is morally permissible, and to show that the best justification for it does not licence the conscription of children.)

Conscription is best justified as follows (Rawls 1971: 380–81; Gewirth 1982: 251–53). Individuals are under moral duties to contribute their fair share to the provision of the public and non-excludable good of national defence. Conscription – in effect, the legal enforcement of that duty – ensures compliance (or no free-riding) and provides coordination. On that view, conscription is justified only if and to the extent that there is a moral obligation to take part in the war effort: it justifiably sweeps in its net only those who are under the relevant moral duties. However, and this is crucial, children are not under those duties. For a start, very young children lack the requisite capacity for rational and moral agency, are not responsive to reasons and, thus, are not bearers of duties in general. Moreover, up until the age of 18, children are not considered mature enough to enjoy the rights and privileges of citizenship, notably the right to vote (see chs. 9, 34). If they are not deemed capable of participating, even if only indirectly through electing representatives, in decisions to go to war, then it is hard to see how they could, nevertheless, be deemed to be under an obligation to fight in that war. Admittedly, some children, particularly on the older end of the scale, are in fact appropriately held under those duties. Here again, though, as a matter of public policy, the question is whether we should err on the side of protecting children who lack a claim not to be conscripted, or on the side of not protecting those who do have such a claim. For reasons adduced in connection with non-coerced enlistment, we should err on the latter side and thus ban child conscription altogether – as well as, by the same token, the conscription of adults who lack rational and moral agency.

So much, then, for child enlistment. Even though there are good reasons for not permitting it, the fact is that children do take an active part in war, as members of regular or, more often these days, irregular armed forces. Studies suggest that in recent and current conflicts, only a minority carry weapons and are deployed on frontlines (Drumbl 2012: ch. 3). But when those children are actually engaged in combat, they present their enemies – notably their adult enemies – with a dilemma which to some might seem insoluble, between defending themselves or their comrades by killing a child, and letting the child survive but risking death/serious harm to themselves or others. What, then, may or should they do?

On some accounts, an agent loses his right not to be killed only if he is morally responsible for subjecting someone to an unjustified lethal threat (e.g., Otsuka 1994). Children (it is said) lack the capacity for moral and rational agency, are therefore not morally responsible for the threat which they pose and therefore have not lost their right not to be killed (McMahan 2009: 200–1). Moreover, if, as it is plausible to aver, extreme duress exculpates an agent ~~from killing~~ an innocent person, a child who is told, for example, that his entire family will be massacred under his eyes unless he commits atrocities, is not responsible for so acting either, and thus has not lost his right not to be killed as a means to protect his intended victims.

On this picture, childhood is seen without much differentiation between its different ages as an innocent, morally untroubled state; and child soldiers in particular are seen as passive victims, necessarily coerced into fighting, without exercising control over their fate, at the mercy of the adults around them. But this is not how it is. For without wanting to deny that many child soldiers are indeed vulnerable in this way, some are not. In particular, child soldiers who actually fight on the front line tend to be teenagers, not young children; as teenagers, their capacity for rational and moral agency is closer to that of an adult (Drumbl 2012: ch. 2; Vaha 2011). Even if it is true that agents who are not morally responsible for their actions have not lost their right

not to be killed, more children than we might be prepared to acknowledge are to some degree responsible for their actions and, thus, have lost their right not to be killed. To be sure, of those, most have been very badly abused. But then again, *by that point itself*, so have their adult comrades, and we do not say of those that they are not responsible for their actions.

Alternatively, one could accept this Western, post-17th-century conception of childhood (Ariès 1962; Archard 2004), and thus hold that (most) child soldiers are not morally responsible for their actions, yet maintain that they have lost their right not to be killed – simply in virtue of the fact that they subject some innocent third party to an unjustified lethal threat: they need not be in any way morally responsible for it (Frowe 2014; Quong 2009; Fabre 2012: 56–58). So long as a child poses just such a threat, he has lost his right not to be killed – even if he is acting under the influence of drugs, alcohol or both, even if he acts under extreme duress and however young he is (Gade 2011).

Crucially, the view that we are morally permitted to kill child soldiers is entirely compatible with the claim that we may not blame those children for so acting, and that we ought not to punish them *ex post* as we would punish morally responsible adults. It is also compatible with the claim that, given a choice between killing child soldiers and killing adult combatants, other things equal we certainly ought to opt for the latter; and things would have to be considerably unequal before we would be licenced to opt for the former. Finally, that view is also entirely compatible with yet another claim which I take to be correct: as a soldier defending myself from those children, I ought to incur greater risk to myself when confronting them than if they were morally culpable for their actions (McMahan 2006: 48–49.) For example, if I have a choice between killing five children but running a risk of being wounded in the process, and killing ten children at no risk to myself, I ought (other things equal) to do the former, not the latter.

Here is a difficult question. Assuming that I (a soldier) am morally permitted to kill enemy child soldiers who pose unjust lethal threats, am I also morally obliged to do so? If I desist, as some soldiers have been known to do (Coleman 2011), other innocent third parties will die at the hands of the children. This is particularly problematic when I am under a *prima facie* duty to protect those third parties – for example, my comrades-in-arms, or (in a war of humanitarian intervention or robust peacekeeping operations) innocent civilians, including children, caught into the crossfires. If I am under an independently justified duty to protect others from children's lethal actions, and if killing children who pose a wrongful lethal threat is morally permissible, then it seems that I ought to kill them (Zupan 2011).

Conclusion

In this paper, I have defended the intuitions that the killing of innocent children is generally worse than the killing of innocent adults, that child enlistment is morally objectionable, but that killing child soldiers is (sometimes) morally permissible. Childhood matters particularly in so far as it is indicative of lesser responsibility, greater vulnerability (see ch. 27) and fewer opportunities (measured in years yet to live) for a flourishing life. As we saw throughout, however, some of those considerations (notably lack of responsibility and vulnerability) also apply to adults who are similar to children in those ways. This is important, for however awful we find the suffering to which children are subject in war, whether they fight or not, there is no reason in principle to draw a thick red line between *all* adults on the one hand, and *all* children on the other hand. In practice, however, if we have to choose between killing adults and killing children under conditions of epistemic uncertainty, we have strong reasons to spare the latter at the expense, unfortunately, of the former.

I am aware that some of my lines of questioning/arguments may have appeared tasteless, repugnant even. It might have appeared repugnant, for example, to ask, as I did, how children's lives should be weighted towards adults' lives, or whether adult, fully grown soldiers are morally permitted to kill ten-year-old soldiers high on amphetamines. The taking of children's lives is morally horrible, period – and there comes a point where, confronted with this kind of awfulness, philosophising from the comfort of one's office seems a pointless enterprise. Still, civilian leaders, high-ranking officers at general headquarters and soldiers on the grounds do not have the luxury of not formulating judgments about what they ought to do when confronted with children, and cannot afford not to act on the basis of those judgments. If we believe, as we must, that those leaders and those ordinary soldiers are answerable to us, their fellow and civilian citizens, then the least that we can do is precisely to spend a few uncomfortable hours thinking about the issue.

Notes

- 1 I am very grateful to Alejandro Chehtman and Patrick Tomlin for their very helpful comments on earlier drafts.
- 2 See, e.g., press reports at <http://www.voanews.com/content/unicef-says-children-main-victims-of-war/2459908.html>; <https://www.warchild.org.uk/issues/child-soldiers?gclid=CKue8pG5rcgCFQic2wodQEYPYQ>; <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/effects-of-conflict/six-grave-violations/killing-and-maiming/>; <http://www.unicef.org.uk/UNICEFs-Work/What-we-do/war-conflict/>
- 3 The view I am describing here does not rely on the assumption that children have higher moral status than adults: it could be that they do have the same moral status, but that in some cases, a child ought to be given priority over an adult (as, in fact, I shall argue below). On the moral status of children, see ch. 6.
- 4 Note that I am *assuming* for the sake of argument that killing children and adults is morally wrong. This assumption is crucial, for it is not entailed by the claim that death is bad for those agents. (There is no reason to suppose that death is *not* bad for the morally culpable attacker whom one is permitted to kill.)
- 5 On the badness of death and related issues, see, *inter alia*, McMahan (2002: ch. 2); Nagel (1970); Bradley, Feldman, and Johansson (2012).
- 6 Some might worry that in so describing children and adults as more or less able to harm their attackers, I am turning them into combatants. I am not so sure: defending oneself or some other party as a one-off act does not make one a combatant.
- 7 I owe this point to Alejandro Chehtman.
- 8 http://www.child-soldiers.org/international_standards.php

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