

UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE

Faculty of Political Science

Belgrade, September 2019

At the meeting of the Department of International Studies, held on 20 June 2019, the Master Thesis Defense Commission (hereby the Commission) for the candidate Vanja Milovančević was formed with the following members: Prof. dr Tamara Džamonja Ignjatović, assist. MA Janja Simentić and prof. dr Nemanja Džuverović. The Council for the Second and Third Cycle of Studies has accepted the proposal made by the Department.

After reading the master thesis, the Commission is submitting the following report.

R E P O R T

The master thesis of Vanja Milovančević entitled "Participation of Children in Armed Conflicts: The Case Study of Lord Resistance Army" is comprised of seven chapters next to the Introduction, the Conclusion, and the list of references. The main aim of the thesis was to research the effects of the participation in armed conflicts to the children.

In the first chapter, the candidate describes the problem of children associated with armed forces or armed groups. The first part of the chapter is oriented to the definitions of the terms and explanation of the issue. In the second sub-chapter, author presents the issue in all its aspects and provides data that mark it as the worldwide phenomenon.

The second chapter focuses on the international perspective and reactions on this problem. It is divided to the two sub-chapters. The first one is about the legal framework of the rights of the children, especially in the non – peaceful times. This includes rules of the human rights law, international humanitarian law and customary international law. Diverse agreements, conventions and custom law are presented. In this way, study presents legal system of the general and special protection for children. In the second section, international community's involvement in this problem is explained. It includes activities of the main international organizations, United Nations agencies and International Committee of the Red Cross.

The third chapter introduces us in the different methods of the recruitment of child soldiers. Firstly, author describes the role of a child soldier, along with diverse challenges that children experience on the daily basis inside armed groups. Secondly, author focuses on the possible ways of liberation.

The fourth and the fifth chapter are oriented to two special categories of children associated with armed groups. The first one are children in detention, and the second one are girls who endure with the special types of crimes related to their gender. These two chapters analyze use of the children in the armed conflicts in the more specific level. Detention presents difficult experience for children, so the study concentrates to diverse problems they may encounter, as well as the activities of the international organizations' field officers' related to that. When it comes to the girls as a special group of children victims, thesis explains the similarities and differences between the crimes toward girls and boys after their recruitments.

The further chapter explains the reasons why the reintegration process is important for children associated with armed groups or armed forces, and the process of reconciliation and stabilization of society as well. First two sections are dedicated to the analysis of the topic, as well as the special category of the reintegration project, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration program (DDR), adapted to the context of children in the armed conflicts. Reunite with families and learning new skills are separated parts of this chapter, oriented to the most important activities in the process of reintegration into the societies of former children combatants. After demobilization, children should be reunited with their families or relatives if possible, and it represents a big challenge for the society to accept entirely their return. In addition, they find difficult to continue with their lives without the skills requested by the market. The last sub-chapter under the topic of reintegration process are psychosocial interventions for children associated with armed groups. Psycho – social treatments and camps where they are firstly treated are analyzed, as well as the consequences on their health and well-being after the life of the child soldier.

The last chapter is empirical part of the thesis. Lord's Resistance Army is analyzed as a case study in this division. This group led by Joseph Kony is accused for committing severe war crimes, including crimes against children. The candidate chose this armed group as they present well organized mechanism for recruiting children in Africa. Their methods include the other methods from the different armed groups, but they are also well known for trials in International Criminal Court, as well as by the world campaign against Kony. The empirical chapter is divided to six sections. First one is introduction about the LRA's history and its activities, and the second one is focused to their use of children. The following one is dedicated to the international community's reaction to the LRA, especially to the United Nations, the African Union and the United States. The section continues with the "Kony's 2012" campaign and its critics, as well as the media coverage of the problem. The next sub-

chapter is oriented to the prosecution of the LRA's members by the international and national tribunals. The last two sub-chapters analyze the LRA's impact on the today's Uganda and neighboring countries, as well as the increase of its activities in the last couple of months.

The Commission is convinced that the candidate Vanja Milovančević has shown deep understanding of the issues of violent conflicts, children participation as well as their subsequent reintegration into the society. Also, the Commission is satisfied how the candidate has applied these concepts on the case studies of Lord Resistance Army in Uganda. Based on this, the Commission concludes that the master thesis "Participation of Children in Armed Conflicts: The Case Study of Lord Resistance Army" by Vanja Milovančević fulfils all the formal criteria for the public defence.

The Commission:

Prof. dr Tamara Džamonja-Ignjatović

Assist. MA Janja Simentić

Prof. dr Nemanja Džuverović