ABSTRACT

In armed conflicts around the world, armed groups recruit child soldiers into their organisations to fill a wide range of roles. In response, transnational advocacy networks have been mobilised to name-and-shame such armed groups, and seek an end to this humanitarian concern through asserting the norm against the use of child soldiers. Some armed groups respond to this advocacy, and demobilise their child soldiers, while others ignore international pressure. There is a puzzle here: why do some armed groups demobilize child soldiers, while others do not? Why make armed groups more or less responsive to advocacy? I argue that some armed groups are engaging with the child soldiers norm in order to gain legitimacy from international audiences. Evidence shows that the armed groups that follow this behaviour are those who have a large domestic support base, but are losing their armed struggle. Armed groups do not embrace the norm if they are winning their struggle, or if they are losing and do not have a large domestic support base. In order to demonstrate this theory, I present evidence from qualitative interview-based research conducted in Syria and Myanmar in 2012 and 2013. I show that in these two dramatically different conflicts, armed groups follow the same forms of behaviour. In both cases, it is only when groups are losing but have support, they will engage with transnational advocacy networks in order to embrace the child soldiers norm and acquire international legitimacy.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Academic Studies: MSc in Comparative Politics, London School of Economics
BA in History and Politics, University of British Columbia

GRADUATE STUDIES

Field of Study: International Relations

Courses (500 level and above) for example:
POLI 511A Core Seminar in Comparative Politics Dr Max Coleman
POLI 516B The State in Comparative Perspective Dr Antje Ellermann
POLI 547C Human Rights in Theory and Practice Dr Sam LaSelva
POLI 563B International Organization Dr Katharina Coleman
POLI 561A Core Seminar in International Relations Theory Dr Richard Price
POLI 564A Evolving Security Order of the Asia Pacific Dr Brian Job
POLI 571A Qualitative Methods in Political Analysis Dr Alan Jacobs
SOCI 514 Analysing Quantitative Data in Sociology Dr Elizabeth Hirsch

AWARDS

Consular Corps of BC Graduate Scholarship (2017)
Public Scholars Award (2015)
IDRC Doctoral Award (2014)
JH Stewart Reid Memorial Fellowship Trust - 2014
Rotary International Peace Fellowship (2014)
Michael Smith Foreign Study Award (2014)
Arts Graduate Research Award, UBC (2013)
SSHRC Doctoral Award, 2013-15
Research Mobility Award, 2013
Bottom Billion Award, Liu Institute for Global Issues, 2013
Endeavour Research Fellowship (Government of Australia), Dec. 2012
Four Year Doctoral Fellowship (4YF) Award, UBC, 2011-12 to 2014-15.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS


SELECTED PRESENTATIONS


PROGRAMME

The Final Oral Examination
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
(Political Science)

WILLIAM PLOWRIGHT

MSc in Comparative Politics, London School of Economics
BA in History and Politics, University of British Columbia

Wednesday, June 13, 2018, 9:00 am
Room 200, Graduate Student Centre
Latecomers will not be admitted

“Armed Groups, Child Soldiers and the Pursuit of Legitimacy”

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Chair:
Prof Blye Frank (Educational Studies)

Supervisory Committee:
Prof Richard Price, Research Supervisor (Political Science)
Prof Arjun Chowdhury (Political Science)
Prof Katharina Coleman (Political Science)

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