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The Logic of Child Victimisation

A Comparative Case Study on Child Victimisation in the Case of Russia
and Myanmar



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Abstract

Despite increased scholarly attention on civilian victimisation in recent years, this research often categorises all civilians into one homogeneous group, thus obscuring the differentiation within, particularly that of children. This study addresses this gap by examining the underlying logic of targeting children in war. The study examines the case of Russian deportations of Ukrainian children and the recruitment of child soldiers in Myanmar through the use of a four-part theoretical framework. By combining Alexander B. Downes' theory on civilian victimisation with Stathis Kalyvas' theory on the logic of violence in civil war, and Peter W. Singer's framework on children at war, the study presents four logics for targeting children: (1) The Logic of Winning the War, (2) The Logic of Control, (3) The Logic of Protection vs. Threat, (4) The Logic of Low Cost. The analysis based on these four logics shows that child victimisation is not merely a byproduct of war, but a deliberate and strategic use of children as a means in these two cases. Through their malleability, low cost and accessibility, children make valuable targets in both cases.

Keywords: *Child Victimisation, Civilian Victimisation, Logics of Violence, Russo-Ukrainian War, Myanmar Civil War*

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1 Introduction

Millions of children are caught in armed conflicts around the world, facing death, separation from families, and forced recruitment. More than 473 million children live in war-torn areas around the world, which is the highest number since World War II (Unicef, n.d). The studies on civilian victimisation often focus on the civilian population as a whole, as they tend to combine women and men, the young and the elderly, the healthy and the weak, into one homogenous group, as if in war there exist two kinds, the fighters and the civilians (Stanton, 2015; Krcmaric, 2019; Schaub & Koch, 2026). In reality, it is much more complex. Different civilians are targeted in different ways, and one often overlooked group is children. In the media, children in conflict zones are often portrayed as the bearers of values or as passive victims (Gumusboga, 2026, p. 209). However, these portrayals do not fully cover the logics behind which ways children are used and targeted in armed conflicts.

At the same time, there is a well-established legal and normative framework that prohibits the targeting of children in armed conflicts. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is an example of an instrument where children are clearly defined as a protected category (OHCHR, 1989). Despite these norms, children continue to get targeted by armed actors, for example through deportations and forced recruitment of child soldiers. The puzzle becomes more pronounced when considering that the targeting of children is not occasional, but occurs repeatedly in different types of conflicts in different ways. Building on this puzzle, this study aims to examine whether there are underlying logics behind the targeting of children in armed conflicts. To do this, the study builds on a comparative study between Russia's deportations of Ukrainian children, and the forced recruitment of child soldiers in Myanmar. In Russia, children are removed from occupied territories and exposed to processes of ideological and national re-socialisation. In Myanmar, children are forcibly recruited and integrated into military structures as a part of a prolonged civil war. Even though the two conflicts differ in many ways, both cases demonstrate how children are not only victims of war, but targeted in ways connected to military and political objectives.

1.1 Purpose and Research Question

By comparing the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia with the forced recruitment of child soldiers in Myanmar, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the underlying logics on targeting children specifically. Studying the logic behind targeting civilians as a homogeneous group could result in the neglect of the extra vulnerability of children in warfare. Therefore, this study aims to answer the question:

“What are the logics shaping child victimisation in Ukraine and Myanmar?”

To do this, the study builds on Alexander B. Downes’ theory of civilian victimisation, Stathis Kalyvas’ theory on the logics behind violence in civil war, and an analytical framework by Peter W. Singer on the use of children in armed conflict. This thesis examines how children are particularly attractive targets in warfare. Four logics are presented, which together explain child victimisation: (1) The Logic of Winning the War, (2) The Logic of Control, (3) The Logic of Protection vs. Threat, (4) The Logic of Low Cost.

2 Previous Research

Childhood is fraught with many challenges. The dominant picture throughout the twentieth century is one in which childhood is depicted as a time of innocence and vulnerability. Consistent with this image, children and adolescents should not experience or witness violence, and definitely not partake in it. This image has its ground in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which emphasises that all children have the right to a life that extends beyond mere physical survival. Children are entitled to their own identity, both when it comes to name and nationality, but also to have privacy, dignity and a voice in decisions concerning their own lives (Berman, 2001, p. 243).

International norms, as Carpenter describes them, are the standards of behaviour defined in terms of rights and obligations. The civilian immunity norm, based on the idea that civilians are seen as a meaningful category and that they ought not to suffer, is embedded within international law. The principle is expressed in Article 51 of the 1st Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions (ICRC Database, 1977). As Carpenter mentions, many commentators argue that civilian immunity forms the foundation of the laws regulating wars. However, since the post-Cold War period, the “protection of civilians” has become a central issue on the global security agenda (Carpenter, 2016, pp. 2, 10).

In reality, as Berman mentions, many of these fundamental rights and norms are denied to millions of children living in conflict zones around the world (Berman, 2001, p. 243). One researched phenomenon which exemplifies this is the introduction of the Kalashnikov and similar lightweight, small arms weapon systems in the mid 20th century. The introduction has impacted children in contemporary conflict in a variety of ways. Mainly for the reason that it gives access to a whole new pool of recruits, children, for the simple reason of the weapons accessibility and light weight. Children are even in some cases more desirable for the reason that they are “more obedient, do not question orders and are easier to manipulate than adult soldiers” (Machel, 1996, p. 172). The mass availability and durability of small arms also mean that they may prolong conflict and that they remain after conflict, which in turn may re-ignite it, leading to more suffering, especially for children (Stohl, 2002, p. 281).

Even though the mechanisms of involving and targeting children in war, the logic of doing so remains understudied. The targeting of civilians in warfare has received more attention, as less focus has been placed on children as a distinct category of victims. Foote and Williams (2018, pp. 2-3) argue that throughout the twentieth century, civilians were dominantly understood as non-combatants, although this distinction continued to generate grey zones. This study aims to further articulate the distinction not only between civilian and combatant, but specifically between civilian and children. Furthermore, to get a deeper understanding of the logic behind targeting children.

3 Theory

The theoretical approach in this study is based on research done by Alexander B. Downes (2008) on the topic of civilian victimisation. Complemented by Stathis Kalyvas' (2006) theory on the logics of violence in civil war, and Peter W. Singer's (2005) analytical framework on children at war. Firstly, the section presents the approach to Child Victimisation, following presentations of the three authors' relevant aspects in separate subsections, ending with the theoretical framework of the analysis.

3.1 Child Victimisation

The study presents an approach to *Child Victimisation* through the combination of relevant aspects from Downes' theory on civilian victimisation, and Kalyvas' theory on the logic of violence in civil war. The mentioned theories present explanations to the targeting of civilians in interstate and intrastate wars, but treat civilians as a more or less homogeneous group. This study limits the research to how children are targeted and is therefore complemented with Singer's analytical framework. In line with this, the definition of a child in this study follows the Convention on the Rights of the Child (OHCHR, 1989, Part 1, Article 1) which states that:

... a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

3.1.1 Civilian Victimisation - Alexander B. Downes

Alexander B. Downes defines civilians as noncombatants, who do not participate in armed conflict by fighting, carrying weapons, serving in the uniformed military or security services, or building weapons. Downes identifies two factors that are primarily responsible for civilian victimisation:

- 1) The desperation to win and to save lives on one's own side in costly, protracted wars of attrition causes belligerents to target enemy civilians.*
- 2) The belligerents' appetite for territorial conquest: when states seek to conquer and annex territory that is inhabited by enemy noncombatants.*

Building on the first factor, Downes argues that civilian victimisation in wars of attrition emerge from two mechanisms: the desperation to win and the desperation to reduce costs. When the conflict becomes prolonged and militarily costly, the belligerents will use any means to secure victory. Targeting non-combatants will be used as a cost-reduction strategy, which in turn makes it possible to continue the war at an acceptable price in casualties. Downes highlights that within this logic, civilian victimisation is a form of coercion. Violence against noncombatants is used to change the behaviour of the enemy, by manipulating costs and benefits (Downes, 2008, pp. 1, 13-14, 29-30).

Downes distinguishes between two coercive mechanisms, the logic of punishment and the logic of denial. The logic of punishment aims to erode the adversary's will to fight. Firstly, by making the government believe that the civilian costs outweigh the benefits of resistance. Secondly, by turning the civilians themselves against the war in hope that they will pressure the government to end the war. In contrast, the logic of denial focuses more on undermining the enemy's ability to continue fighting. It is not as much a punishment strategy, but rather a way to disrupt the material and logistical foundations of war making. The logic of denial is even more apparent in counter guerrilla warfare, where insurgent forces depend on the support from the civilian population. As a result, counterinsurgency strategies often seek to sever the link between the guerrillas and the civilians, either by deterring people from helping the guerrillas or physically preventing such support by removing the civilians from the areas where the guerrillas operate (Downes, 2008, pp. 30-31).

Focusing on the second factor, belligerent's appetite for territorial conquest, civilian victimisation is described as a *tactic of later resort*. Downes argues that the presence of civilian populations sharing the enemy's nationality in territories a belligerent seeks to annex produces civilian victimisation. This occurs either to coerce these populations into submission, or to force their removal from the territory altogether. In conflicts like these, at least one side of the conflict but often both, try to establish a national state on all or part of the territory inhabited by another group. Downes points out how this goal would be hard to sustain over time, because the group of "nonnationals" poses a permanent threat. Because of this, belligerents in these situations attack the other groups' civilians to avoid the risk of being attacked themselves (Downes, 2008, pp. 33, 35-36).

The presence of the civilians creates a persistent incentive for their co-nationals in neighbouring countries to intervene in order to protect them, while also providing the territory's former sovereignty with a basis for claiming the land. In interstate wars the regime occasionally identifies one group as a serious threat, and groups like this may then be singled out for harsh treatment, such as deportation. In wars in which the annexation of the enemy-inhabited territory is the goal, civilian victimisation can also be seen as a *tactic of early resort*. This because civilians are readily accessible and targeting them yields immediate military and political gains. Deterrence is less likely to constrain such actions, because one side often has exclusive access to the adversaries' civilians after an invasion. Moreover, Downes presents that states involved in aggressive wars to seize territory are probably less restrained by norms prohibiting harm against non-combatants (Downes, 2008, pp. 36-37).

3.1.2 Logic of Violence in Civil War - Stathis Kalyvas

Kalyvas developed the theory of violence in civil war on the theoretical foundation of the technology of warfare, especially the nature of irregular (guerrilla) warfare. The technology of warfare best accounts for the unique strategic and practical challenges that drive violence on the ground in civil wars. Kalyvas describes irregular warfare when a weaker actor avoids direct confrontation with a stronger opponent, and instead fights by deception. The weaker actor relies on indirect tactics, reflecting on clear military asymmetry. Such wars often tend to become wars of attrition, where insurgents seek to win by not losing and by continuously weakening their opponent (Kalyvas, 2006, pp. 67, 85).

Kalyvas (2006, p. 19) defines civilians as “all those who are not full-time members of an armed group, thus including all types of part-timers and collaborators”. Irregular warfare fragments the space and the boundaries between the fighters and civilians, and the lines become blurred. This creates the *identification problem*, where combatants can hide among the civilian population. Distinguishing civilians from combatants becomes hard and it primarily hurts the incumbents as its opponents, the weaker part, hide. The insurgents however, could also face difficulties if the civilian population they hide among turn them in. Guerrilla victory depends on the loyalties of civilians, and cannot survive without civilian support. Kalyvas argues that on one hand does the support reflect genuine support, and on the other is the support a result of coercion. Coercion is pointed out as the most cited chief motivation behind the support. Moreover, Kalyvas argues that

economic motivations also matter, as does fear and revenge (Kalyvas, 2006, pp. 19, 88-90, 92, 94, 98-99).

One of the main arguments made by Kalyvas is that of *control* and how it outweighs preference. He argues that the population's prewar preference of either side might have some initial say in patterns of control, along with existing military resources. However, as the war drags on, collaboration by the civilian population in a certain area is determined by the group controlling said area (Kalyvas, 2006, pp. 111–114). Over time, control produces something Kalyvas calls *mechanical ascription*. Long lasting control over a territory creates a setting where the population is socialised into the belief that joining an armed group is the natural course of actions. The joining of one family member also further sets the family's allegiance in stone, as the families of fighters tend to support the armed factions where their younger members are fighting (Kalyvas, 2006, pp. 125–126).

Children in civil wars are, according to Kalyvas (2006, pp. 58, 72–73), a double target. They are exposed to direct violence through killings, kidnapping and torture, while at the same time becoming instruments of violence themselves. Along with what Kalyvas describes as the new logic of war, children are not only victims, but also perpetrators, exposing to others what they were previously spared from. Civil wars are mostly fought in poor countries, with a weak state and where the military or rebels are weak. Because of this, civil wars tend to be protracted, inconclusive, and characterised by the rival actor's inability to establish full control over territories. The possibility to cover all areas all of the time is non-existent. Because of the phenomena described above, by limiting the population in a contested area you thus strengthen one's side to succeed in controlling it, through targeting civilians either by displacement or through the use of indiscriminate violence (Kalyvas, 2006, pp. 138–141).

3.1.3 Children at War - Peter W. Singer

Unlike the two previous authors who presented theories explaining civilian victimisation and the logic of violence, Singer (2005) presented an analytical framework of how to approach the phenomena of children in modern warfare. While being one of the fundamental aspects of war, the differentiation between civilians and combatants, the norm of sparing civilians has in modern times broken down. During the first world war, civilian casualties constituted 10 percent of the

total casualties. During World War II, that number had risen to nearly 50 percent and the targeting of civilians has since continued to flourish. The law of noncombatant immunity has “in the chaos and callousness of modern-day warfare [...] seemingly broken down” (Singer, 2005, ch. 1). Maybe the most disturbing aspect of civilian targeting is that of the children. Not only are civilians, and in particular children, now the target in modern warfare, some have also become the perpetrator. Singer (2005) identifies three critical factors which have led to the recruitment of child soldiers in the 21st century:

- 1) *Social disruptions and failures of development caused by globalisation, war, and disease have led not only to greater global conflict and instability, but also to generational disconnections that create a new pool of potential recruits,*
- 2) *Technological improvements in small arms now permit these child recruits to be effective participants in warfare,*
- 3) *There has been a rise in a new type of conflict that is far more brutal and criminalised.*

These, according to Singer, are necessary factors behind the phenomenon of child soldiers. These factors simultaneously created the mass availability of child recruits, and the possibility of using them as effective soldiers. As Singer points out, “the strategy of using children as an alternative source of fighters has proven appealing to many groups, not only because it is cheap and easy to implement, but also because the costs are outweighed by the benefits so far” (Singer, 2005, ch. 3). At the same time, groups target children for the simple fact that they are young and therefore malleable as well as expendable in the view of warring groups. The main obstacle stopping actors from crossing the line and start recruiting child soldiers is the moral opprobrium, but once an actor starts thinking about it, it has shown itself unwilling to be restrained by morals (Singer, 2005, ch. 3).

When recruiting child soldiers, it begins with recruitment, either through abductions or *voluntary* means. This is then followed by training and conversion, characterised by abuse and brutality to hinder escape and promote the child's dependency on the organisation (Singer, 2005, ch. 4). While children can *volunteer* to become a soldier, this choice is often not that simple and should not be considered voluntary since children are not capable of making such decisions. One aspect is the economic one, which in conflict zones is often dire, and children, often those orphaned or

disconnected, might turn to volunteer in order to secure regular meals, clothing or medical attention (Singer, 2005, ch. 4).

3.2 Theoretical Framework

This study develops a comparative theoretical framework to examine logics that can explain child victimisation in interstate and intrastate armed conflicts. The objective is not to determine set rules for how or why child victimisation takes form in all interstate and intrastate wars, but instead draws on findings in two cases, one interstate and one intrastate, in order to research the phenomena of child victimisation. The framework integrates aspects of Downes' theory of civilian victimisation, complemented by aspects of Kalyvas' theory of violence in civil wars and Singer's analysis of the strategic use of children in armed conflict. While Singer addresses the strategic use of children in conflict, his framework does not cover logics explaining the variation across different conflicts. Therefore, this study develops a theoretical framework that bridges this gap by specifying four logics explaining child victimisation across interstate and intrastate contexts. The four logics are outlined as follows:

- 1) *The Logic of Winning the War*
- 2) *The Logic of Control*
- 3) *The Logic of Protection vs. Threat*
- 4) *The Logic of Low Cost*

Together, these four logics construct a theoretical framework guiding the analysis of child victimisation in the selected cases.

4 Research Design and Method

This section presents the methodological foundation of the thesis. It begins with motivating the chosen method design, followed by the case selection. Thereafter, the section provides a discussion on the material the thesis is based on, ending with an operationalisation of the four logics presented in the theoretical framework.

4.1 Comparative Case Study

When conducting a Small-N case study, it is rarely interesting to study two cases which are the same in every aspect or different in every aspect. Instead, cases are most often selected using either a Most Similar- or a Most Different Systems Design. This paper takes the framework from the latter approach. The Most Different Systems Design (MDSD) focuses on cases which are different on most aspects and only similar on the key explanatory variable of interest (Halperin & Heath, 2017, pp. 217, 221).

As the phenomenon of child victimisation resides at a systemic level, the dependent variable must be constant in terms of the phenomenon under study. As Anckar (2008, p. 396) describes it: “This is so, because if the phenomenon we wish to explain resides at the systemic level, we cannot identify the explanatory factors across different countries unless we look for similarities in these dissimilar systems.” Thus, when using the MDSD on a systemic level, the ambition is to find common denominators across systems. The MDSD is therefore most useful in researching the phenomenon and its similarities despite the many differences between the countries and their dissimilar systems. However, because of the limited sample of cases and the differences between them it is hard to draw any final conclusions on the generalisability to other cases.

4.2 Case Selection

When choosing cases to analyse for a Small-N study, selecting cases from the characteristics of the independent variables is of importance as choosing on the dependent variable may lead to selection bias (Halperin & Heath, p. 223). This study builds upon the assumption, presented in the theories by Downes (2008) and Kalyvas (2006), that targeting children is based on logic in war and not a result of war. Because of this, the cases of Russian deportations of Ukrainian

children in the Russo-Ukraine war, and the Myanmar military juntas forced conscriptions of children are selected. The cases are selected because of their many differences in state aspects. The case of Russia being an interstate war over territory, whereas Myanmar is an intrastate conflict of attrition. The common denominator is simply the Logic of Child Victimization, as this study aims to examine logics behind the targeting of children concerning different types of child victimisation across different types of wars.

4.3 Material

This study builds on material consisting of official reports by IGOs such as the United Nations and its subsidiaries, and NGOs such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. The United Nations reports consist of first-hand material, verified by either the General Assembly Security Council, their Special Representatives or a subsidiary to the United Nations before publication. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch on the other hand, gather information by other sources (including the United Nations) and therefore act as a second-hand source. Reports published by both IGOs and NGOs have been carefully selected, due to the fact of their institutional credibility being valuable sources of information. More partisan and unverified sources were strategically excluded to reduce the risk of bias and strengthen the study's validity and reliability (Öberg & Sollenberg, 2011, p. 52). The only exception being some news articles providing information regarding specific events on the ground. Furthermore, academic articles and legal documents connected to international humanitarian law and children in armed conflict have been included to give insight behind the logic of child victimisation.

The material is valuable for this study as it provides documentation of patterns of child victimisation including the deportations, forced recruitments and coercive practices. The material in combination with the theoretical framework provides the necessary information which is then analysed through the four proposed logics.

4.4 Operationalisation

The theoretical framework that will be used in this study focuses on four main logics: (1) The Logic of Winning the War, (2) The Logic of Control, (3) The Logic of Protection & Threat, and (4) The Logic of Low Cost. These logics are operationalised below in order to examine how they explain patterns of child victimisation in the two cases.

<i>Logic</i>	<i>Operationalization</i>
The Logic of Winning the War	Child victimization as a part of military or political objectives.
The Logic of Control	Child victimization in order to strengthen control over population/territory.
The Logic of Protection & Threat	Child victimization through collaboration to legitimize the targeting of children.
The Logic of Low Cost	Child victimization because of children being strategically attractive in armed conflicts.

Table 4.4 Operationalisation of the Logics of Child Victimization

1) The Logic of Winning the War

The logic of winning the war refers to situations where children are targeted as a part of military or political objectives. Through this logic the targeting of children can be understood as a means to strengthen military advantage, weaken the opponent, or reshape the demographic composition of the occupied territory. The logic is identified in the material through deportations and forced recruitment.

2) The Logic of Control

The logic of control refers to situations where armed actors target children in order to strengthen control over both populations and territory. The targeting of children is used to influence civilian behaviour, weakening resistance from the community, and reshaping loyalties over time. The logic of control is identified in the material through institutional control, ideological socialisation, coercive recruitments and the identification problem.

3) The Logic of Protection & Threat

The logic of protection and threat refers to situations where armed actors try to shape civilian behaviour and legitimise the targeting of children through the use of insecurity, fear, or promises of protection. In this case, civilians may collaborate with the armed actors either because they see them as protectors, or because they fear punishment. The logic is identified in the material through coercion, financial hardship, and intimidation.

4) The Logic of Low Cost

The logic of low cost refers to situations where children specifically become targets in armed conflicts. Examining child victimisation through this logic, the understanding deepens as it highlights how children are strategically attractive due to their vulnerability, malleability, low cost, and long term value. The logic is identified in the material through practices aimed at children, such as the indoctrination and cost-benefit reasoning in armed actors' decision making.

5 Background

In the following subsections, the two cases chosen for the analysis will be presented in short to provide the reader with some background information, crucial for understanding the context for the cases.

5.1 Russo-Ukrainian War

Russia and Ukraine share history that dates a thousand years back to when Kyiv, the present day capital of Ukraine, was the centre of the first Slavic state, Kyivan Rus, also known as the origin of both Russia and Ukraine. Following this, Russia and Ukraine have had a long history leading up to the 18th century, a period defined by centuries of divisions between competing powers as Poland, Lithuania and the Russian empire. In 1793 a major turning point occurred when Russia annexed western Ukraine resulting in a long era of Russification, where the Ukrainian language and culture were suppressed. By 1917, these tensions reached a critical point when the Russian revolution sparked a bloody civil war that eventually led to Ukraine being integrated into the Soviet Union in 1922 (Sawal et al., 2022, p. 79)

During the 1930s Josef Stalin, the Soviet leader, staged a famine that resulted in the death of millions of Ukrainians to make peasants join collective farms. To then repopulate the east, Stalin sent massive numbers of Russians and other Soviet residents who had little or no knowledge about Ukrainians. These historical events left behind permanent fault lines. In the east people developed closer ties to Russia and have historically been more supportive of pro-Russian leaders. However, the western Ukraine, according to Sawal et al., tends to prefer leaders who are more pro-Western because their region has experienced prolonged influence from European powers such as Poland and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Sawal et al., 2022, p. 80).

Ukraine gained independence in 1991 following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and since then the country has faced many challenges in unifying the country. In 2014 the Russian military annexed Crimea, with president Vladimir Putin justifying the intervention by claiming to protect Russian nationals. This crisis further deepened the divisions in Ukraine, especially in the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, where pro-Russian separatist movements emerged. The conflict developed into an active stalemate and international actors made many efforts to de-escalate the

conflict. Meanwhile, tensions increased between Russia and Western actors, with NATO strengthened military presence in eastern Europe and the US imposing sanctions on Russia while providing Ukraine with military support (Sawal et al., 2022, pp. 81-82).

In 2022 the conflict entered a new more intense phase when Russia launched a full scale invasion on Ukraine. The war is still ongoing and has resulted in approximately 1.5-1.8 million military casualties on both sides, including an estimated 300 000 to 600 000 deaths. However, because of the ongoing nature of the conflict and limited access to reliable data, the figures remain highly uncertain (Russia matters, 2026).

5.2 Myanmar Civil War

Myanmar first gained their independence from the British in 1948 after the end of World War II. Since then, the country has gone through several stages of transition, from colonial rule to democracy, to military rule, back to democracy, and since a military coup in 2021, back to military rule (Kipgen, 2016, pp. 1-2; Stokke, 2023, p. 118). The Myanmar military (the Tatmadaw) overthrew the democratically elected National League for Democracy (NLD), and installed the State Administration Council into government. The *National Unity Government* (NUG) was established by elected representatives overthrown in the coup which claims legitimate power in Myanmar, acting as a sort of *shadow government* and the main opposition to the military regime (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, n.d). The grievances and reasoning behind the Coup d'Etat on 1 February 2021 were allegations of fraud during the election of the previous year, an election which showed a landslide victory for the NLD. Thus leading the Tatmadaw once more to take control of the parliament and arrest the NLD leaders (Pedersen, 2022, pp. 235–236). Other researchers, on the other hand, have other reasons for the outbreak of civil war, such as mistrust between the majority population and ethnic minorities in the country (Kipgen, 2016).

6 Analysis

This section presents an empirical and comparative analysis of the two selected cases, the *Russo-Ukrainian War* and the *Myanmar Civil War*. It examines the logic behind child victimisation, based on the four logics constructed in the theoretical framework: (1) The Logic of Winning the War, (2) Logic of Control, (3) Logic of Protection & Threat, and (4) The Logic of Low Cost.

6.1 Russo-Ukrainian War

In the case of the Russo-Ukrainian War, Ukrainian children are being victimised through deportations to Russia. A strategy that has since the invasion in 2022 dramatically expanded in scale and geographic distribution. Since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, deportations of Ukrainian children from occupied territories has been a systematic component of Russia's governance practice there. In late 2024, 19,546 cases of child deportations were reported by Ukrainian authorities. The scale of these actions led the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2023 to issue arrest warrants against Putin and Russia's Children's Rights Commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova, on charges classified as war crimes (McGlynn & Romaniuk, 2026, pp. 1-2, 7). According to Article 49 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, individual or mass forcible transfers or deportations of protected persons from occupied territories is prohibited, regardless of motive (ICRC Database, 1949).

6.1.1 The Logic of Winning the War: The Case of Russia

Aligning with Downes' second factor behind civilian victimisation, Russia's deportation of Ukrainian children can be interpreted as a part of a broader strategy of territorial conquest. Mearsheimer points out that Putin is often described as having imperial ambitions, which means that he is determined to conquer Ukraine and other countries in order to create a greater Russia resembling the former Soviet Union. Even though this narrative is highly brought up in the west, Mearsheimer claims that there is not much evidence for it being Putin's primary motive. Some emphasise that Putin called Ukraine an "artificial state", and that he sees Russians and Ukrainians as "one people" with a common history. Others highlight how he called the collapse of the Soviet Union as "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century". Mearsheimer

himself argues that the real cause lies in the American-led effort to make Ukraine a Western bulwark on Russia's borders (Mearsheimer, 2022, pp. 14, 18).

Although there are competing interpretations of Putin's underlying motivations, this study does not seek to determine intent, but rather analyse the logic behind patterns of violent behaviour towards children. From this perspective, Russia's actions in Ukraine can be understood through Downes' logic of territorial conquest. As Downes argues, in conflicts where annexation of territory is the objective, civilian populations sharing the enemy's nationality will create a long term threat. In such contexts, strategies aimed at gaining control often involve coercion into submission or forcible removal from the territory. The deportation of Ukrainian children can therefore be seen as a part of this logic, as it weakens the Ukrainian presence in the territory while it increases Russian control. As Downes claims, "when states try to seize territory from each other, they will seek to change the demographic situation in the conquered area by targeting civilians" (Downes, 2008, pp. 4-5, 36). Brunk and Hakimi (2022, p. 688) point out in their research how Putin himself wrote an essay highlighting Russia's shared history with Ukraine, putting blame on the west for instituting in Ukraine a "forced change of identity". The authors argue that Putin's message of the essay was clear, mainly that "true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia". Which in turn could be a possible explanation of the underlying logic behind the deportations of children.

According to Downes, the deportation of Ukrainian children based on the appetite to annex territory from a neighbour tends to be a tactic of early resort. This is because after the invasion, the Ukrainian children are immediately accessible. Targeting or removing the children helps prevent future rebellions, eliminating the risk of rescue attempts from the opponents, and strengthens the attackers claim to the land. Because of the deportations not being produced by desperation in this case, the child victimisation can occur when the belligerent is doing well or even winning (Downes, 2008, p. 5).

6.1.2 The Logic of Control: The Case of Russia

The deportations and their underlying mechanisms can, in line with Kalyvas' framework, be understood as tools of population control in areas where sovereignty is contested. McGlynn and Romaniuk identify several ways in which these deportations occur, all of which can be

understood through Kalyvas' insights in how armed actors use both population and territorial control to enforce compliance and reshape identities. The first mechanism McGlynn and Romaniuk brings up is the transfer of children in orphanages or state-run facilities, under the rationale of "protection from hostilities". The orphan children are thereby rendered administratively legible and placed within institutional categories that allow for their relocation and reclassification under the occupation authority. Under this control, the children are subjected to what Kalyvas call mechanical ascription. The long-lasting control over territory allows political leaders to socialise the children into a new identity (McGlynn & Romaniuk, 2026, p. 8: Kalyvas, 2006, p. 125).

6.1.3 The Logic of Protection & Threat: The Case of Russia

In line with the logic of protection and threat, the use of "recreation", "holiday", and "respite" programmes shows how collaboration arises from within systems of control. McGlynn and Romaniuk argue that in many documented cases families have agreed on sending their children to "summer camps", due to fears for their safety amid combat or financial hardship (McGlynn & Romaniuk, 2026, p. 8). According to Kalyvas, civilians that are survival orientated have strong incentive to collaborate with the political actors enjoying substantial control over that territory, irrespective of their true or initial preferences (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 12). The boundary between voluntary participation and coercion gets blurred and parental consent is secured under conditions of constrained choice and/or deceit, resulting in the children not returning. Furthermore, violence against children continues to occur in the Russian administered schools the children are placed in. McGlynn & Romaniuk points out how teachers threaten Ukrainian children into compliance with the involvement of soldiers if they disobeyed. Speaking the Ukrainian language or expressing pro-Ukrainian sentiments could lead to punishment or physical harm (McGlynn & Romaniuk, 2026, pp. 9, 14).

6.1.4 The Logic of Low Cost: The Case of Russia

Downes and Kalyvas' insights explains how the deportations occur in line with the logic of child victimisation, but the question of why particularly children are targeted is still unclear. As McGlynn and Romaniuk questions, why has the Russian state sustained the large-scale child transfers despite its political, logistical and legal costs? (McGlynn & Romaniuk, 2026, p. 1).

Russia continues to break international norms regarding civilian immunity and committing crimes against humanity (Carpenter, 2016, p. 10; OHCHR, 2026). This is where Singer's framework becomes particularly relevant. Singer argues that moral opprobrium is often the only major risk to a group, or a state in this case, targeting children in conflict. However, the Russian state has shown itself willing to violate prevailing moral norms when the perceived strategic gains outweigh the costs (Singer, 2005, ch. 3).

Singer's analytical framework further deepens the understanding of why children in particular are strategically targeted in armed conflict. Singer moves the focus from children as passive victims to them being strategically attractive resources for armed actors. One of Singer's main explanations to why children are targeted is that they are psychologically malleable and more easily indoctrinated than adults. Singer describes how actors may take advantage of the fact that children are in that stage of life where they are still defining their identity. The use of recreation, holiday, and respite programmes can be seen as education systems to glorify war. This is mirrored in how deported children are subjected to intensive Russian socialisation intended to erase their Ukrainian roots (Singer, 2005, ch. 3).

Singer argues that children are inexpensive to maintain, while they offer long-term benefits for an organisation or state (Singer, 2005, ch. 3). For Russia, the deported children represent an investment in demographic engineering. Downes points out how states with the appetite for territorial conquest are less tolerant of costs and in greater need of victory (Downes, 2008, pp. 5, 29). The "cheapness" of converting children, compared to adults, is weighed against the massive gain of acquiring a new generation of "loyal subjects" (McGlynn & Romaniuk, 2026, pp. 1, 16). The logic behind targeting children is according to Singer based on a systematical planned process. To maximise efficiency, states or groups target places where children will both be collected in the greatest number and are at the most vulnerable stage. Singer claims orphanages to be one of the most frequent targets, where children are out of contact with their parents who are therefore unable to spirit them away. The main goal, according to Singer, is to foster the children's dependency to their new lives and destroy bonds to their previous (Singer, 2005, ch. 3).

6.2 Myanmar Civil War

On the 25th of May, 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted the *Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*. The optional protocol is a commitment that states won't use children under the age of 18 in direct hostilities and armed groups which are not part of the state's armed forces won't recruit or use in hostilities anyone under the age of 18 (OHCHR, 2002). Since the Tatmadaw came into power in Myanmar in 2021, several NGO:s and IGO:s have reported on the targeting of children and the recruitment of child soldiers (Human Rights Watch, 2025; Amnesty, 2026; United Nations, 2025). More than 2100 verified cases of grave violations against children occurred in 2024 alone. Among these, the UN verified 400 cases of recruitment and use of child soldiers by the Tatmadaw and affiliated forces (United Nations, 2025, p. 17). Worth mentioning is that the Tatmadaw is not the sole culprit of recruiting child soldiers, 82 more cases of child recruitment by other groups in 2024 were verified by the UN (United Nations, 2025, pp. 17-18).

6.2.1 The Logic of Winning the War: The Case of Myanmar

The Myanmar civil war is, according to Downes, a war of attrition and the targeting of civilians is thus primarily a coercive strategy. As Downes argues, the targeting of civilians is aimed at getting the rebel group to accede to the coercer's demands, political as well as military (Downes, 2008, p. 4). The targeting of children and that of civilians as a whole is however different. In Myanmar, almost a fourth of all grave violations against children consist of forced recruitment of child soldiers (United Nations, 2025, p. 17). Other grave violations include killing, with 262 cases, and maiming of children with 999 cases (United Nations, 2025, p. 18). Through these actions, the Tatmadaw undermines the rebels ability to protect the civilian population and thus, through the weakening of their ability, try to coerce them to lay down their arms and defeating them. Simultaneously, they use their tactics brutally. This is in line with research done by both Downes and Kalyvas. Downes points out that when either one or both of the warring actors simply try to win by defeating the other, they seem to use increasingly violent instruments in defeating the adversary, this includes the targeting of civilians and the disregard for human life. When states face an insurgency with widespread popular support, the government is very likely to target civilians more brutally, often resulting in mass murders (Downes, 2008, pp. 11, 156). By

using Downes theory on wars of attrition, the Tatmadaw's reasoning for the forced recruitment of child soldiers follows both of the following logics, (1) the logic of punishment were they reason that by targeting and recruiting child soldiers from areas supporting the rebel group they will eventually rise against the rebels inability to protect them and thus demanding them to end the war. (2) By the logic of denial, on the other hand, Downes argues that the reasoning for targeting civilians is to undermine the adversary's ability (Downes, pp. 157-158).

6.2.2 The Logic of Control: The Case of Myanmar

Kalyvas argues that since most civil wars tend to take place in poor, underdeveloped countries, either side is limited in their ability to fully control an area and the population within (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 138). Because of this, by reducing the enemy population and strengthening one's own side through the recruitment of enemy children, this phenomenon is slightly limited. The adversary's support from their population is weakened, both in sheer numerical and as Kalyvas (2006, pp. 125-126) argues, through the fact that the family of a child soldier is more likely to support that side than that of the opposition. The recruitment of child soldiers thus serves as a double logic in this aspect for the Tatmadaw. They gain control over the population by strengthening their lines via abductions of the populace, something which is needed since some sources report that the Tatmadaw has suffered great losses since the 2021 coup (Human Rights Watch, 2025; Pyae, 2026). The fact that the family of a soldier (or in this case a child soldier) is more likely to support the armed force which the child is a part of also gives the Tatmadaw greater support from the population, which may provide greater control over the population (Kalyvas, 2006, pp. 125-126).

Downes argues that there are two ways in which states target civilians in guerrilla wars, either through targeting some civilians in order to scare the others into submission, or try to disperse the population through killings and relocations in order to stop insurgents from obtaining food, shelter, recruits, or intelligence from the people (Downes, 2008, pp. 157-158). Both of these phenomena can be seen in the case of Myanmar as children from all over the country are recruited. The problem is also found in Kalyvas's research, as he points to the fact that success in guerrilla warfare depends on the loyalties of the civilian population. Through the *identification problem*, states find it hard to differentiate between civilian and enemy and therefore apply

indiscriminate tactics as a means to control the population (Kalyvas, 2006, pp. 89-90). By targeting and forcibly recruiting children, the Tatmadaw creates a leverage on the civilian population and gives a reason for the civilians to no longer help the rebel group as that may risk the life of their loved ones. If the civilian support of the insurgents weakens, this creates a threat to the rebels hiding among the population as the civilians may turn on them, and turn them in. What both Downes and Kalyvas seem to miss however, is the intentional targeting of specifically children in intrastate war. Singer argues that the recruitment and use of children in war are a deliberate practice and systematic choice, and that the benefits outweigh the costs (Singer, 2005, ch. 3).

6.2.3 The Logic of Protection & Threat: The Case of Myanmar

By recruiting children to their armed forces, the Tatmadaw intimidates and hinders enemy civilians from helping the rebel group and thus undermines the NUG's capabilities. Through forced recruitment, the threats which linger over the Myanmar population if they do not act in accordance with the will of the Tatmadaw may be enough to sway popular support. The distinction between sympathising with the Tatmadaw and supporting through the fact of rational behaviour about what will happen if they don't is two different aspects. Reports also indicate the abduction of family members of defectant soldiers and holding them hostage (Taw, 2025). This highlights the use of threats by the Tatmadaw, as they show that it is not only empty words. Kalyvas points to the fact that violence is often used to "police groups internally and to achieve the desired [...] total "overlap" between specific leaders and [...] underlying populations" (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 10). The assumption of unwavering support from the population is contrasted by the fact that the army is often constructed by conscripts and, in the case of Myanmar and other extreme ones, by children. The violence and use of threats forces the population into a submissive role, although perhaps only a temporary one.

6.2.4 The Logic of Low Cost: The Case of Myanmar

Myanmar is the second largest country in southeast Asia with a population of almost 55 million. Despite this, they have the lowest GDP per capita in the region and have since the coup suffered from donors ceasing operations (Lowy Institute, 2025). Because of the weak economic status in

the country, warring actors in the country feel the need to take drastic actions. Singer (2005, ch. 3) explains that weak economies is one of the main reasons for actors to start recruiting child soldiers. Children are understood as low-cost, low-maintenance and easily malleable into a soldier, as well as more easily disposable than adults.

In reality, the cost of recruiting children is outweighed by the benefits, and the repercussions for violating the norms are neither enforced nor harsh enough to act as a deterrent. The cost, as Downes (2006, p. 29) argues, is one of the main reasons for targeting civilians in protracted wars of attrition. As Singer (2005) explains, weak and failed states, often a result of post-colonial failure of building a solid structure, are more exposed to resorting to child soldiers. Myanmar, as previously stated, got their independence from Great Britain almost 80 years ago and has since been troubled by different forms of military rule and dictatorships (Kipgen, 2016, p. 2). The economic situation, readily available cheap weapons such as the AK-47 and the vast number of children created an environment in Myanmar which enabled groups to turn to child recruitment. If the popular support in Myanmar is not on the side of the Tatmadaw and their affiliated militias, Singer argues that child recruitment is the only way for the government to acquire new recruits in an unpopular war, when the adult pool of recruits starts to run dry. With little or no investment, the Tatmadaw through the use of child soldiers are able to project significant amounts of force. The only major obstacle in resorting to child soldiers, Singer (2005, ch. 3) argues, is the moral one. However, “any group that contemplates using children as fighters has already shown itself unwilling to be limited by prevailing moral codes.”

The targeting of civilians is clear to not be that of chance or the initiative of a single soldier through the countrywide forced conscriptions (Taw, 2025). Instead, in the case of Myanmar, it is a calculated risk and a tactic of the Tatmadaw on a systemic level to simultaneously weaken the rebels and strengthen themselves. Filling their own ranks with children because of their low-cost and high-malleability.

6.3 Comparative Discussion

Despite the many differences between the Russo-Ukrainian war and the Myanmar civil war, the analysis showcases how the underlying strategic logics are much the same. While the conflicts differ in much of the political reasonings and the military objectives, both cases showcase how children are intentionally targeted as a separate group different from other civilians in modern warfare. The analysis and this following comparative discussion therefore suggest that child victimisation follows a strategic pattern which transcends different types of conflicts and regions. See **Table 6.3** for a summary of both cases along with their similarities and differences.

<i>Logic</i>	<i>Russia</i>	<i>Myanmar</i>	<i>Similarities/ Differences/Comments</i>
The Logic of Winning the War	Appetite for Territorial Conquest	War of Attrition	In the case of Russia, the logic is part of a broader strategy to alter the demographic composition in occupied territories. In Myanmar, the Tatmadaw target children to undermine rebel support and pressure civilians into submission.
The Logic of Control	Population	Population	Different approaches with the same expected outcome: reshape the social and political landscape.
The Logic of Protection & Threat	Promises of protection	Promises of threats	Insecurity creates an arena for armed actors to shape civilian behavior.
The Logic of Low Cost	Socialized into Russian citizens abandoning their Ukrainian heritage. Deportations and demographic engineering	Cheap and accessible Child recruits, intimidation tactics and weakening of rebel groups	In both cases children are viewed as low-cost, high-benefit and easily malleable assets. Not only vulnerable, but also adaptable.

Table 6.3 Logics of Child Victimization: Similarities and differences between the cases

6.3.1 The Logic of Winning the War

The logic of winning the war highlights the strengths and weaknesses of Downes' theory explaining child victimisation. Even though Downes primarily focuses on the targeting of civilians, the two cases demonstrate how children occupy a different position. They are separated from the broader civilian category by being targets beyond battlefield outcomes. In the case of Russia, Downes' logic of territorial conquest provides strong explanations for the reasons why civilians in general are targeted. The deportations of children can be understood as part of a broader strategy with the goal of changing the demographic composition in the occupied territories. The demographic engineering is meant to eliminate "fifth columns" and create a more pro-Russian narrative. The deportations of children reveal an extension to Downes' second factor, highlighting that the territorial conquest becomes less about eliminating threats and more about demographic reconstruction in the long run. However, in the case of Myanmar, the forced conscription of children could also be seen as a way in which to change the demographic composition in Myanmar, although this is not as clear and harder to explain through the use of this logic as Downes created it to explain interstate war. Instead, his logic of denial and punishment is more applicable and helps explain the child victimisation. The violence against children serves two functions, (1) to suppress the rebels ability and their support base, and (2) to pressure the civilians into submission, mainly by undermining the rebels. Although these logics are applicable to explain child victimisation, in the case of forcible recruitment of child soldiers, Downes' second factor needs to be complemented. Even though the logic appears to be able to explain why the Tatmadaw is recruiting children, it is still hard to draw any final conclusions if this is the only reason. Reports indicate an economic collapse in the country and high desertion rates from the military, which could to some extent also explain the recruitment of children.

6.3.2 The Logic of Control

One of the main similarities between the two cases is that children are strategically targeted as a means of exercising control over population and thus territory. Insights from Kalyvas' theory complement Downes, in the case of child victimisation, by highlighting the micro perspective of how for example control over population is used to reshape long term loyalties. In the case of Russia, deportations occur as a mechanism of demographic and political control over occupied territories. Based on the findings of this study, the deportations and ideological socialisation of

Ukrainian children can be used as a strategy to weaken Ukrainian national identity while at the same time strengthening Russian authority. Through prolonged exposure to education designed to express Russian national identity and values, children growing up under occupation may gradually align their normative orientation with the Russian ideological framework. In Myanmar, the Tatmadaw uses children as tools in a similar way to reinforce its control over the civilian population and reduce support for insurgent groups. As well as strengthening the Tatmadaw's ability, the forced recruitment of child soldiers simultaneously put pressure on communities that otherwise could support the opposition. Although the form of child victimisation differs in the two cases, the findings demonstrate how children are used as instruments through which armed actors attempt to reshape the social and political landscape. Rooted in the long-lasting control, Kalyvas' idea of mechanical ascription appears in both cases. The empirical examples illustrate how mechanical ascription operates as a process in which control in the long term reshapes identities, especially among children who are specifically vulnerable to these dynamics.

6.3.3 The Logic of Protection & Threat

Both cases further demonstrate how the actors in both types of conflicts, interstate as well as intrastate, make use of the insecurities of war. As civilian day-to-day life becomes harsher in times of war, this creates an arena for armed actors to shape civilian behaviour. Kalyvas further complements the understanding of child victimisation by pointing out how the group controlling an area can coerce civilians into submission through either promises of protection or promises of threat. Civilians thus start relying on the armed actors for protection, necessities and survival. Rather than treating insecurity as something in the background, the analysis demonstrates how armed actors make use of the fact that civilian survival becomes dependent on compliance with the power holder. Through the use of summer camps, Ukrainian families sent their children to Russia due to the fear of combat and financial hardship. The Russian authorities made use of promises of security and provided something that Ukrainian authorities could not, thus undermining them. In the case of Myanmar on the other hand, the civilian population is coerced into submission to the Tatmadaw through their use of threats. The child victimisation takes form in the use of kidnapping, forced recruitment and maiming of children. Similarly undermining the rebels ability to protect the children. Thus child victimisation is closely linked to the actors ability to try and control territory and shape civilian behaviour.

6.3.4 The Logic of Low Cost

Although both Downes and Kalyvas provide strong explanations of the logics behind the targeting of children, they focus on civilians as a group, including children. As a result of this, their theoretical frameworks do not fully account for why children specifically become targets and overlook some of the key aspects as to why children are particularly attractive strategic targets. This is where Singer's framework comes in to address the gap. In both cases, children are viewed as more accessible, more easily controlled and more malleable than adults. Children are viewed as low-cost, high-benefit targets which can be shaped and are able to adapt to a new setting, despite the differences in approach by Russia and the Tatmadaw. In Russia children are victimised to be socialised into Russian citizens and abandon their Ukrainian heritage. On the other hand, in Myanmar, the Tatmadaw target children because they provide cheap and accessible manpower, needed to fill their ranks. Intentionally or not, this also creates a socialisation process as the families of children partaking in an armed conflict tend to also identify with and support that group. The economic situation, together with desertions and the inability to control forced adult conscripts in Myanmar, can not be excluded from a potential factor into why children are targeted.

Singer's framework further fills the gaps in explaining why both Russia and the Tatmadaw continue to violate international laws and norms. Despite ICC judges issuing arrest warrants for Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, and despite international condemnation and outcry by human rights groups regarding the Tatmadaw's recruitment and use of child soldiers, both actors continue these practices. Singer's argument that moral opprobrium is often insufficient to deter armed actors helps explain this phenomenon. This is because the perceived strategic gains outweigh the costs. The broader military and political objectives in both cases, including territorial consolidation and weakening of opposition, outweigh the political and normative risks associated with violating international norms concerning civilian immunity and children's rights.

On the basis of this analysis, child victimisation should not only be seen as a result of coercion or the attempt to control present armed conflicts. Rather, the findings suggest that child victimisation includes the logic of a long term strategy shaping future political orders and loyalties. From this perspective, the separation of civilians as a homogeneous group becomes more important. Children are uniquely attractive targets in warfare because of them being young

in the beginning of their identity formation where they can be socialised, re-educated and militarily incorporated more easily. Therefore, child victimisation is not only happening because of children being at the wrong place at the wrong time or to weaken the opponent, it is also about securing long term outcomes such as demographic reconstruction and lasting political loyalty beyond war itself.

7 Conclusion

By comparing the logics behind child victimisation in two different armed conflicts, this study has sought to examine if similar logics can explain the use of violence against specifically children, or if these logics differ depending on the nature of the conflict. In comparison to Downes and Kalyvas, this study contributes to the understanding that children are used more indirectly in warfare, which differentiates from the conventional insights that civilian victimisation is focused primarily on killings. Child victimisation can be explained through the presented research as calculated military and political strategic logics, instead of accidental by-products of warfare. Both deportations and forced recruitment illustrate how children are strategically used to control identities, loyalties and future populations.

To begin with, the study found that *The Logic of Winning the War*, exemplified with Russia's deportations of Ukrainian children and the Tatmadaw's use of denial and punishment tactics, demonstrates how both cases in different ways use targeting of children as a means to win the war. Although, using only Downes' logic of civilian victimisation fails to show the entirety of child victimisation and needs to be complemented. One of the main similarities of why children are targeted in the two cases is illustrated through the second logic, *The Logic of Control*. Despite the differences regarding the targeting of children, both cases demonstrate how control over territory and population is used to reshape the social and political landscape. Through control it is easier for dominant power holders to strengthen their authority and reduce support for the opposition. Aligning with Kalyvas' idea of mechanical ascription, long term control creates an arena in which identities and loyalties can be reshaped.

The insecurities of war are highlighted in the third logic, *The Logic of Protection & Threat*, which showcases how armed actors make use of the vulnerability permeating a war affected area. Through promises of protection, the Russian authorities coerced Ukrainian families into sending their children to summer camp as one example of this. On the other hand, in Myanmar families are forced to accede to the Tatmadaw through the use of threats, particularly aimed at the children. Despite different tactics, the use of either promising protection or threats targeting children share the same logic: to undermine the adversary, to gain control and to shape civilian behaviour. The use of specifically children is further elaborated in the final logic, *The Logic of*

Low Cost. Contributing to address the gap of why armed actors specifically target children in warfare. Both cases illustrate how children are low-cost, high-benefit targets that are more accessible, more easily controlled and more malleable than adults. The perceived strategic gains outweigh the costs of targeting children, which also explains why both Russia and the Tatmadaw continue to violate international laws and norms.

Through analysing the four logics, the study set out to answer the question:

“What are the logics shaping child victimisation in Ukraine and Myanmar?”

The four logics on which this study is built, despite their different approaches in some aspects, relate to each other. Despite the many differences between both cases, the four logics combined demonstrates how child victimisation is not only a short-term tactic, but also a long-term strategy aimed at changing the entire military and political scene. Showcasing how children should be distinguished from civilians as a group with their uniqueness and increased vulnerability in times of war.

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