# Contents

1 Situating the Debate  
I. A Brief Chronology of the Prevention of Child Soldiering 1  
II. Conceptualising an ‘Era of Application’ 5  
III. ‘The Politics of Age’ 9  
IV. Conceptualising the ‘Child Soldier’ 13  
V. The Potential Role of International Law in Preventing Child Soldiering 17  
VI. Summary 21  

2 Contemporary Child Soldiering: Distribution, Use and Causes 25  
I. Distribution of Child Soldiers 26  
A. The ‘Child Soldier Global Reports’ 29  
   i. Child Soldier Distribution Trends: the ‘Global Reports’ 33  
B. The United Nations Secretary-General’s List of Parties Who Use and Recruit Child Soldiers 35  
C. Summary 38  
II. The Contemporary Use of Child Soldiers 39  
A. Child Soldier Use as an Asymmetric Conflict Structure 39  
B. Modern Armed Conflict, National Armed Forces and the Use and Recruitment of Child Soldiers 41  
III. Causes of Child Soldiering 44  
A. Overarching Causes of the Child Soldier Phenomenon 44  
   i. The Common Causes versus Sui Generis Approach 45  
   ii. Forced versus Voluntary Recruitment 47  
   iii. The Cognitive Development of Children 48  
B. Proximate Causes of Child Soldiering 49  
IV. Summary 52  

3 International Humanitarian Law and the Prevention of Child Soldiering 53  
I. The Geneva Conventions 55  
II. Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions 58  
A. Take all Feasible Measures 61  
B. Take a Direct Part in Hostilities 62  
C. Shall Refrain from Recruiting Them 69  
D. Their Armed Forces 70  
III. Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions 71  
IV. Conclusion 73

I. The Co-application of IHRL and IHL in the Prevention of the Use and Recruitment of Child Soldiers 76
   A. The ‘Humanisation’ of IHL 78
   B. The Convergence of IHL and IHRL 79
   C. Resolving Norm Conflict 80
      i. More Favourable Principle 82
      ii. Lex specialis derogat legi generali 83
   D. IHL and IHRL: Potential Conflict of Norms 87

II. The Substantive Content of Child Soldier Prohibitive Norms: Human Rights Law 89
   A. Convention on the Rights of the Child 89
   B. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child 91
   C. International Labour Organization Convention 182 96
   D. African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 97

III. The Substantive Content of Child Soldier Prohibitive Norms: Customary International Law 98
   A. Status of Ratification of Relevant Instruments 103

IV. Summary 103

## 5 International Criminal Responsibility and the Prosecution of Individuals for the Enlistment, Conscription and Use of Child Soldiers 105

I. The Enlistment, Conscription and Use of Child Soldiers as a War Crime: Background and Drafting History 106
   A. The Child Recruitment Decision 108
      i. The Proscriptive Content of the Relevant Customary Crime 109
      ii. Differentiating between the Existence of a Criminal Norm and the Principles of Legality and Specificity 111
   B. The Drafting of the Rome Statute 116

II. ‘Using, Conscripting or Enlisting’ Children in Terms of the Positive Law 118
   A. Chapeau Requirements 119
   B. Objective Requirements 122
      i. Enlistment and Conscription 123
      ii. Use to Participate Actively in Hostilities 125
   C. Subjective Requirements 129

III. The Potential of International Criminal Law to Combat the Child Soldier Phenomenon 132
A. The ICC as a Deterrent to the Enlistment, Conscription or Use of Child Soldiers 132
B. The Role of the ICC in Building Capacity in Municipal Legal Systems 135
   i. Universal Jurisdiction 135
   ii. The Age of Criminal Responsibility 137
IV. The Criminal Responsibility of Child Soldiers 137
V. Summary 139

6 International Institutional Law and the Prevention of Child Soldiering 143
I. The Proper Levels of Engagement with Child Soldier Prevention within the United Nations 145
II. A Critical Appraisal of United Nations Initiatives Engaged with Child Soldier Prevention 147
   A. Historical Background 149
   B. The Committee on the Rights of the Child 151
      i. The Limitations of the Mandate of the Committee 152
      ii. The Committee’s Approach to Exercising its Mandate 157
   C. The Security Council 159
      i. Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism and the Security Council Working Group 162
   D. The Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict 164
III. African Union Engagement with Child Soldier Prevention 167
   A. The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 167
   B. African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights 168
      i. Subject-Matter Jurisdiction 169
      ii. Locus Standi 171
IV. Summary 174

7 Case Study: The Democratic Republic of the Congo 177
I. Methodology 178
II. The Contemporary Conflict Landscape in the DRC: From the Demise of Mobuto to the Force Intervention Brigade 182
III. Municipal and International Criminal Prosecutions for the Use and Recruitment of Child Soldiers in the DRC 185
   A. The International Criminal Court 185
   B. Municipal Courts in the DRC 187
IV. The United Nations and the Prevention of Child Soldiering in the DRC 189
   A. Engagement by the United Nations Peace Mission in the DRC and UNICEF with Child Soldier Prevention 190