Conceptualizations of Childhood in International Policies: A Review in the Context of Armed Conflict

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled, **"Conceptualizations of Childhood in International Policies: A Review in the Context of Armed Conflict"** by **Mr. Javaid Rashid**, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** has not been previously submitted for any degree in this or any other University. To the best of our knowledge this is an original work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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I declare that the dissertation titled **"Conceptualizations of Childhood in International Policies: A Review in the Context of Armed Conflict"** submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** is my original research work and has not been submitted so far, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma in this or other university/institution.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Born in 1985, I belong to that generation of children which played with arms and ammunition instead of toys and teddies. Beyond the ideas of a normative childhood, our innocence more often than not swung between life and death. In fact as children our first infatuation and romance was with AK-47[1]- the symbol of a militant-secessionist movement in the valley of Kashmir. When we approached our teens, many of my friends with whom I had shared my childhood, joined the movement, consciously or otherwise. Most of them worked as 'upper ground workers' for the Kashmiri militants. Some of them were arrested; booked under various insurgency-related offences; incarcerated and tortured so many times. As adolescents we would discuss all that happened; they would relate their stories of torture or their detention in the security camps. I, as not having directly witnessed or confronted such an incident or happening, was too pre-occupied with their traumatic accounts of torture. My reaction was a mix of fear, curiosity, helplessness and anger. The interplay of these feelings had a significant impact on my mental disposition and I developed an extremely intense craving for listening to such incidents, stories and things related to that.

After joining Science College in the city, 50 km from my hometown, I could hardly meet my childhood-friends. With the passage of time, I could find a lull in my interest for such stories and happenings. It was only after when I shifted from science to social sciences and joined Kashmir University under PG program in Social Work that my interest in children, childhood and armed-conflict rejuvenated. Without denying my allegiance to the Kashmiri peoples' struggle for right to self determination, there was, however, quite a sharp change in my approach. The focus and understanding was somewhat professional and academic. I read literature on the subject and did my PG dissertation and internship on the areas related to it. I worked for 4 months with Save the Children, a UK based organization working in Kashmir, and then after I got an opportunity to work with Action Aid International on the topic of my interest. The support from Action Aid and the experiences, thereof, were quite enriching that

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[1] AK-47 is an automatic assault rifle almost used globally across the regions experiencing armed conflicts.

sharpened my skills in the area and motivated me to continue working in the field. During my fieldwork, I met and interacted with a lot of children and others, who had been incarcerated and tortured. Here, I would like to relate one of the most important day in my career. While travelling in a bus from Srinagar, Lal Chowk (city centre) to my University, a middle-aged woman was sitting just beside me. Pertinently, the Srinagar central jail falls on the same route. We somehow got into a talk and she told me that she was going to meet her son in central jail. I defensively poked till she revealed that two years back her 13 year old son was falsely implicated into a case of killing *four* army men in one the markets of his hometown. Coincidently she belonged to a nearby village of my town. She would come to meet her son twice or thrice a week. This she had been doing for almost two years then. Somehow I managed to request her that I wanted to accompany her to the central jail; I wanted to meet her son. Eventually, we reached the jail and I pretended to be a close relative of them. As her son came to the meeting hall, I was emotionally frozen, choked; thinking that he was too young, too innocent to be kept in jail. Consciously being subjective, a strange kind of feeling overpowered me. Her son had turned 15 and was continuing his education in Jail. Then after, I on my own visited him in the jail. He related to me his trajectory of events. This was the period I felt quite strongly that this is really the field I will work in. My visits to Central Jail and various prisons of the valley reinforced my interest and I decided with my teacher in Kashmir University that I would dedicate my academic career in this field. Many of my teachers guided me; people from various organizations motivated me and eventually my parents gave an unexpected nod to it. Since then I have been working in this field, which brought me to Jawaharlal Nehru University to pursue my research in the same field. The exposure to public health perspective and the dominant interdisciplinary approach in JNU, especially of my Centre (Centre for Social Medicine Community Health), and the consistent guidance of my supervisor, has broadened my understanding of the issues related to children in conflict zones, in particular.

Having lived and experienced an armed conflict situation since childhood, I, the present researcher/ author, regard myself methodological advantaged in this study. Moreover, my experience and work with the prominent international child rights and humanitarian organizations enormously facilitated the process of research at various

levels that includes understanding and prioritizing the issues of children in conflict situations, searching and identifying the relevant literature on the subject, and more importantly, exposing me to the ground realities vis-à-vis children and child rights situation in Kashmir. Above all, the contribution of the course work, methodological training and exposure to critical theory in JNU initiated a radical shift in my own approach of understanding the issues of children in armed conflict situations. I started to evaluate my own work on children in Kashmir context that included the work on torture, incarceration, imprisonment, issues of Kashmiri orphans, juvenile justice and so on. This self-evaluation was a radical departure from the typical social work perspective that had initially informed my work in and out. I questioned the basic conceptualizations of children, their childhood and issues which were rooted in the typical western frames of reference.

Dedicated to 119 Kashmiri child-protesters
who were killed in firing by state-led forces
in the recent Kashmir uprising of 2010

ABBREVIATIONS

ACHR:	ASIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
AFSPA:	ARMED FORCES SPECIAL POWERS ACT
AI:	AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
CRIN:	CHILD RIGHTS INFORMATION NETWORK
DIA:	DEFENCE OF INDIA ACT
HRW:	HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH
IBC:	IRAQ BODY COUNT
ICPS:	INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES
IPA:	INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS
ICC:	INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT
ICRC:	INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR RED CROSS
IFHS:	IRAQ FAMILY HEALTH SURVEY
IHL:	INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW
IMF:	INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND
KMS:	KASHMIR MEDIA SERVICES
NATO:	NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION
NGO:	NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
MRGI:	MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP INTERNATIONAL
MSF:	MEDICINES SANS FRONTIERS
PSA:	PUBLIC SAFETY ACT
PTSD:	POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER
JJS:	JUVENILE JUSTICE ACT
JIC:	JOINT INTERROGATION CENTRE
J&K DDA:	J&K DISTURBED AREAS ACT
RAWA:	RADICAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN
SAP:	STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMME
SC:	SAVE THE CHILDREN
SOG:	SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUP
UCDP:	UPPSALA CONFLICT DATA PROGRAM
UN:	UNITED NATIONS
UNCRC:	UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON CHILD RIGHTS
UNHCR:	UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES
UNICEF:	UNITED NATIONS CHILD EMERGENCY FUND
UNPJDL:	UN RULES FOR THE PROTECTION OF JUVENILES DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIBERTY
UNRRA:	UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND REHABILITATION ADMINISTRATION
UNRWA: REFUGEES	UN RELIEF AND WARS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE IN THE NEAR EAST
WB:	WORLD BANK
WHO:	WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1: BACKGROUND

Childhood is a complex and highly diverse phase of life moulded not only by biological and psychological forces but also by the environmental, cultural and other social contexts and factors (Nandy ; Boyden & Hart 2007). The exposure of children to the complex emergencies and adversities like armed-conflicts and the related situations, quite significantly influences their lives. Interestingly, the research, though scarcely done, in the field has shown that such children also act consciously upon and effectively influence the environments that confront them (Boyden 2003; *Ibid*). The issues of children of conflict-zones, child labourers, abused children or those variously exploited and disadvantaged have got immense attention (Ressler et al 1992) in the present arena of child research and policy, both nationally and internationally. There has been quite a huge allocation of funds globally for the advocacy of these children and that has simultaneously attracted commitments of policy makers, legislators, human rights activists and other professionals of the field. However, the dominant child protection strategies and policies have outcomes not always positive and prophetic. The underpinning uncertainty in the approach owing to the erroneous conceptualization of children and childhood has in reality added dysfunctions to the international policy response concerning children. The universalistic, positivist and decontextualized conceptualization of childhood is the base the policies emanate from. The inadequacy of empirical data and weak theoretical analysis disease the policies affecting children living in highly stressful contexts like armed-conflict. Moreover, the excessive dependence on the western models and theoretical understanding of childhood and its issues has raised quite serious questions on the applicability and utility of such policy interventions across diverse social and cultural contexts (Boyden 2003; Werner & Smith 1998; *Ibib*). Unfortunately, the research done in the contexts of Europe or America is being exported and globalized throughout the world, especially in the third world countries, when the latter countries have different social, cultural and economic situations.

Besides, this conceptualization of children and childhood is paradoxically an individualized and bio-medicalized construct that presumes children to be 'vulnerable', 'weak', 'dependent' or 'incompetent', undermining their resilience and coping mechanisms that in turn are quite relatively dynamic and variable. In this background the present study attempts to review the conceptualizations of childhood across academic, policy and international domains. The study identifies diverse perspectives and debates of childhood with a particular focus on international research and policy concerning children in armed conflict situations.

1.2: OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is conceptualized around the following specific objectives:

- To examine the conceptualizations and perspectives on childhood in the domain of International policy and practice concerning children in the context of armed-conflicts.
  - Understanding the issues of children in armed conflicts;
  - Revisiting dominant conceptualizations and perspectives on childhood and understanding children as having resilience and agency;
  - Critically reviewing the international child rights and humanitarian policy response for children in conflict zones and identifying the political and ideological agendas underlying their policy and research.

1.3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This analytical research study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What are the dominant paradigms of understanding the issues of children experiencing armed conflicts?

2. How do social, cultural, economic and political factors impact the creation of knowledge about children, their issues and their childhood, and particularly about those facing armed conflicts?

3. What are different perspectives, discourses and debates around childhood? How the emerging paradigms of childhood locate children's agency, risk, resilience in the context of an armed conflict?

4. What are the underlying political and ideological agendas in the interventions of international child rights agencies and humanitarian organization primarily working in developing and under-developed nations?

1.4: RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

While it is important to acknowledge the painful, humiliating and profoundly debilitating experiences that many children suffer during periods of political and military conflict, it has to be recognized that the dominant discourse of vulnerability, sickness, crisis and loss has the potential for seriously undermining children's wellbeing (James & Prout 1997). Notions of children's passivity and susceptibility disregard the important emotional, social, economic and political contributions children make to family and community during periods of political and military conflict, as well as trivializing their coping efforts. The perception of the child as vulnerable victim may have powerful emotional appeal for adults, but can in many circumstances be quite detrimental to children since it renders them helpless and incompetent in the face of adult decisions and actions, many of which may not be in children's best interests (Boyden 1994; Hinton 2000). It also ignores the possibility that children may have insights and opinions about solutions to their problems that could be highly appropriate and valid. The cultural sensitivity, regional identity, and socialization patterns greatly influence the potentialities of an individual as social beings. Thus, these westernized, universalistic and normative ideas and perceptions of childhood, influencing the International policy affecting children in conflict zones, do more harm than good (Jamess & Prout op. cit.; LeVine 1999). The outcomes are in the form of irrelevant and decontextualized polices and strategies for child development and protection, especially in armed conflict situations. Moreover, following this tradition of focusing on the survivor of war as opposed to the social formations that gave rise to it, emergency interventions with children exposed to armed conflict have tended to reflect the pre-eminence awarded to the bio-medical model in theories of human suffering. Biomedicine also concentrates on the functioning of those affected; in this case the individual human being, perceived as a universalized victim of a specific traumatic experience and bearing a disorder as a

consequence of that experience (*Ibid*). In the biomedical model the origin of illness and disease is held to be in the physically bounded body, which is understood to function as the receptacle of the mind. Hence, physical and mental health is separated and illness is thought to reside either in the body or the mind. Aid interventions with children in war zones have been particularly influenced by psychiatric and psychological research and therapeutic work conducted in Europe during and in the aftermath of the Second World War and more recently by investigations undertaken in the United States with veterans of the Vietnam War. The central goal of this research has been to highlight the disastrous effects of armed conflict on the young. Children's responses have been explained largely through a mix of stage, cognitive, psycho-dynamic and attachment theories (*Ibid*). Often, a fairly mechanical relationship is posited between exposure to environmental adversities and mental health disturbance. Attention has centered increasingly on one particular psychiatric category, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Despite its profoundly cultural origin, many claim this to be the condition that most effectively characterizes and embodies the global human response to major traumatic events (Nader & Pynoss 1993). Assessments of children exposed to armed conflict often show significant pathology and very high rates of prevalence of PTSD in particular. Moreover, since early behaviours and experiences are taken to influence subsequent developmental achievements, children exposed to stressful war events are thought to be prone not merely to traumatic reactions in both the shorter and medium term, but also to long-term developmental impairment.

Given the highly pernicious nature of armed conflict, it may seem self-evident that the dominant research focus on the psychopathological impacts on children is the most appropriate. But there are many difficulties with orthodox research in this field. For example, several critics have questioned the validity of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as an interpretative model due to specific cultural and historical origin and conception. Similarly, research that focuses on psychopathology tends to omit important structural, environmental and relational dimensions of young people's wellbeing and development. In as much as this literature informs policy and practice, it affects children's lives directly. Hence, it may prove useful at this point to highlight some of the ways in which such research, together with the scholarship on childhood

and child development mentioned above, have shaped aid interventions in areas affected by armed conflict.

Keeping the above discussion in the background, the present research study is an attempt to explore and understand the underlying ideological forces and factors that shape the international policy response towards children confronting complex emergencies. The sheer volume of research on the psycho-emotional effects of conflict has led to a recent shift in priority away from physical and towards mental health interventions. For a long time physical health, especially nutrition, water, sanitation, immunization and other basic survival needs, received overall priority and psychological and emotional wellbeing was of secondary importance. However, more recent conflicts (especially in Rwanda, Bosnia and Kosovo) have produced a rather different programmatic response, in which psychosocial interventions constitute a significant proportion of the total aid package (James & Prout 1997; Hart & Tyrer 2006). The idea that continuity, stability, predictability and security are essential for children's well-being and healthy development, has led to an expectation that armed conflict and other major societal adversities will have heightened potential to overwhelm children emotionally and psychologically (Last 1994). Hence a programmatic focus on the treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration of affected populations, particular priority being given to groups that are considered to be at special risk, such as former child combatants and children who are separated from their families (Jenks 1996; James & Prout *op. cit*). It is assumed that there is a complex *power/knowledge nexus* featuring the international organizations, where-in the latter greatly influence the global research and practice concerning children facing complex adversities. The last argument is in no way against prioritizing children's needs in the international agenda. But it is reiterated that child development and protection is excessively complex and complicated business. This complexity quite vehemently negates the promotion of universalistic and decontextualized policy interventions on part of the international bodies and organizations.

1.5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This analytical review study revisited the relevant literature cutting across social science disciplines by identifying the key themes around the objectives of this

research. The key themes were fed into online search engines that retrieved the relevant research material for analysis. Besides, the subject related books and the print versions of various academic and policy journals were also thoroughly searched for the literature. As I explored the literature on the subject, I came across some of the pioneer authors, researchers and scholars who have been extensively working in the area of childhood, armed conflict and humanitarian aid. Some of the prominent among them include Allan Prout, Allison James, Jason Hart, Jo Boyden, Sharon Stephens and so on. Importantly, I was able to build contacts with the prominent research institutes and centres working in this field like Refugee Research Centre of Oxford University, Young Lives Centre in London, Centre for Childhood Research and Innovation and Centre for Global Childhood Studies in Hong Kong. My online subscription to the various organizational groups, policy institutes and research networks like International Juvenile Justice Observatory (IJJO), PCDN, CRIN, INIE, greatly facilitated my access to the emerging literature on the subject and kept me updated about the contemporary debates and discourses on children, armed conflict and international policy and research. Quite enriching, the reading list provided by the Refugee Research Centre's senior researcher, Jo Boyden, exposed me to the emerging literature on the subject and immensely helped to locate and get access to that literature on the themes of the present topic.

1.6: Conceptual Framework

Drawing from the earlier discussion, the international policy response towards children experiencing adverse situation like that of an armed- conflict has been too functionalist and positivist, and with-in the bio-medical paradigm. It considers children as mass of victims and over-emphasises the treatment of 'symptoms', rather than solving the broad social structural problems. The erroneous conceptualization of childhood (Boyden 2007) and excessive reliance on the western models of policy formulation has narrowed down the approach of international research and practice to a pure psycho-pathological nature (Last 1994; Hart & Tyrer 2006) where-in the whole focus is on mental and psychological health. Eventually, the much advocated psycho-social interventions stress on individual pathology over structural forces, in an utter disregard to the cultural, regional and social specificities and sensitivities. Moreover,

the dominant understanding among the international policy formulators of global child development and protection has an inherent knowledge-power nexus. There is an underlying politics and creation of knowledge around children, childhood and the problems of children living in adverse situations. The global organizations working for children, especially in regions of armed conflicts or like emergencies, have a universalistic knowledge/information/terminology in relations to their strategies. The interventions and strategies are formulated and developed, without taking into consideration the local, traditional and cultural contexts and perspectives on children, childhood and their needs in emergency or adversity. Thus this study tries to explore those simplistic and universal conceptualizations underpinning international policy response *vis-a-vis* children who are facing adversity like armed conflicts. In this way it will argue a case that contextualizing children and their childhood would surely bring relevance into the international policy response and ensure efficient and fruitful results that are empowering for the children, in particular and their social set-ups in general; and also taking into consideration their potentialities and capacities that vary from region to region, culture to culture and one social set up to another. The study tries to bring to the frontline that if children are to be helped to overcome highly stressful experiences, their views and perspectives need to be treated as a source of learning and strength, not weakness (Last *op. cit*; Hart & Tyrer *op. cit.*) It should be stressed again that arguing for a view of children as at least potentially resourceful is not to sanction their exposure to adversity, nor to deny that some children may be rendered very vulnerable. Instead, this view questions normative ideas about childhood weakness and considers whether a focus on children's susceptibilities really is the most effective way of supporting self-esteem and self-efficacy in adverse environments. The practical value of an understanding of children as resourceful is that it builds on children's strengths, rather than emphasizing their frailty and dependence on adult (often outsider) expertise, which in many settings is simply not forthcoming. The study challenges the present universalistic and decontextualized conceptualizations and understating of children and childhood, particularly in the case of the children who face complex emergencies and adversities like armed conflicts. The study would be an attempt to add to the emerging literature that has brought to the surface the dysfunctional Westernized approach in the international policy response towards the disadvantaged children like those in conflict zones. It will

showcase the problematic understanding of childhood in global organizations that is being exported to the organizations working in third world countries or countries facing armed conflicts. Through this review-study, it is attempted to emphasize that social, cultural, psychological, regional and economic situations and contexts are quite forceful and effective in determining the responses of children to any adversity. Thus it necessitates a contextualised approach towards policy formulation for the children confronting adversity, so that the strategies, interventions and polices are culturally, socially and economically relevant, acceptable and meaningful. In this way, the international policy for children living in complex emergencies like armed conflict would be in the focus of the present study, where-in their approach and understanding of children, childhood and the related issues was revisited.

1.7: METHOD:

The study adopted an analytical approach in reviewing the diverse literature on the subject of childhood, armed conflict and international policy. The following flow-chart describes the process of this review:

Analytical Review Plan
1. Identifying key concepts, words and terms reflecting the topic of the research.   (Social Construction of Childhood; Debates and Perspectives on Children and Childhood; Globalization of Childhood; Armed conflict; Children and their Exposure to conflict situation; Children's Socialization, Resistance, Risk and Resilience in Conflict Zones; Humanitarianism; Aid Conditionality; International Organizations and Children in Conflict situation; Conceptualizations and Perspectives underlying the International Policies and other Humanitarian Interventions)
2. Searching, locating, compiling and tagging the relevant literature.   (Journal Databases - Sage, Elsevier, Oxford, JSTOR, GISTFIND; specific online/ print journals; subject-related books; policy documents of prominent international/ national organizations, research institutes and bodies, especially working for children, like RRC, CCRI, CRIN, PCDN, YL, SC, IRC and UNICEF; reports; fieldwork notes; working papers; policy notes; my own field work/ experience with Action Aid International and Save the Children)
3. Developing key themes of analysis around the topic   (Dominance of paradigm of vulnerability in conceptualizations of childhood w.r.t

international policy; preoccupation with psychological and psycho-pathological interventions; mental health; major allocation of aid for mental health; PTSD as global response to trauma; neglecting broader structural determinants and formations; out of agenda: health, wellbeing, nutrition and education. debates: agency/structure; emerging paradigms: social constructionist approach to childhood; underlying political and ideological agendas of humanitarianism)

4. Identifying diverse academic, historical and emerging debates and perspectives on childhood

(Paradigm of universal vulnerability of children; emerging paradigm of social construction of childhood; paradigm focussing on children's agency, resilience and resourcefulness; paradigm focussing on broader structural, political and economic factors)

5. Analysis the role of international child rights agencies and humanitarian organizations

(Focus on the approaches and policies of International Committee for Red Cross/Crescent; *Medicines Sans Frontiers*; Save the Children, Amnesty International and United Nations and its various organizations working in developing and under-developed nations)

1.8: CHAPTERIZATION

- *Chapter I-*
  Introduction to the Study
- *Chapter II-*

  Children and Conflict Situation: Issues
- *Chapter III-*

  Conceptualizations of Childhood: Debates and Perspectives
- *Chapter IV-*

  International Policy, Humanitarianism and Children in Armed

  Conflicts: A Critique
- *Chapter V-*

  Concluding Discussion

1.9: BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: The first chapter of the dissertation introduces the field of research and discuss the background of this review study. It identifies the basic conceptualization of the study and draws a review plan for the study. The methodological details are presented in this chapter.

Chapter 2: In the second chapter, the thorough review of the issues of children who experience armed conflict and war is presented. It discusses some of the important issues of children in detail and critically analyses the prioritization of these issues in international polices.

Chapter 3: The chapter third reviews different paradigms and conceptualizations of childhood in academic domain and locates their historical and chronological variability. It discusses in detail the dominant paradigm of vulnerability and compares it with the emerging paradigms of childhood that focus on the social construction of childhood, children's agency and resilience.

Chapter 4: The fourth chapter elaborates on the humanitarian discourses and identifies the ideological and political agendas that underlie the polices of international humanitarian organizations and child-rights agencies.

Chapter 5: In the fifth chapter the discussions on the themes of this review study are concluded. It summarizes the major and dominant themes that emerged from the study.

Chapter 2

Children in Conflict Situation: Issues and Non-Issues

CHAPTER 2: CHILDREN IN CONFLICT SITUATION – ISSUES AND NON-ISSUES

2.1: Introduction:

When exposed to any complex emergency, children owing to their physical, social and structural position in the society are prone to have serious and wide-ranging consequences on their lives. During crisis situations children's social ecologies get profoundly transformed and altered. This sudden or undesirable change, in fact, is not always negative or catastrophic for children or their conditions. Nonetheless, the exposure of children to serious adversities has both direct and indirect consequences in terms of their social, economic, physical and mental wellbeing. However, it is also recognized that besides the extreme negative impact, the exposure of children to adversities also makes children to confront such precarious situations effectively and to consciously act upon such environments and develop innovative survival strategies and adapting mechanisms. There is enormous literature (Nandy 1987; Oldman 1991; Qvortrup 1987, 1991, 1994; Boyden 1991, 1994, 1997, 2003; Jenks 1996; Cairns 1996; Boyden & Gibbs 1997; Dawes & Donald 1994; James & Prout 1997) that showcases the 'positive contributions' of the adverse circumstances on the children's social and mental ecologies. For instance, the enhancement of resilience and coping mechanisms in the context of armed conflicts has been fairly documented in the recent research studies (Prout 2005; Hart & Tyrer 2006; Patel et al 2007; Doty 2010). Here it is important to clarify that such 'positive contributions' are in no way desirable. But keeping in view the fact that the children in present times are confronting diverse complex emergencies in the form of armed-conflicts, wars, torture, incarceration or displacement, it becomes imperative to intensely reform our conceptualizations in congruence with the social realities and contexts of the subjects so that our policy is adequately informed and relevant. In this scenario, the inclusion of such dimensions both in research and practice brings more relevance to the policy formulation and interventions concerning children in adversities like war, conflicts or natural disasters.

Keeping in view the focus of this analytical review, the following section will elaborate on the theme of children in conflict situations. The literature that has documented the impact of armed conflicts on the lives of children would be reviewed and analysed in the background of the objectives of this research study. The main purpose of this exercise would be to understand the vulnerabilities, risks and issues that children get exposed to in the context of armed conflicts. It would also explore the trends and the dynamics of the sensitive issues concerning these children. This section would also briefly outline the prevalence and impact of armed conflicts around the world.

2.2: Armed Conflicts across Globe:

The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research defines conflict as "a clash of opposing interests or positional differences over national values and issues like independence, self-determination, borders and territory, access to or distribution of domestic or international power" (Conflict Barometer 2003[1]). It further states that "a conflict has to be of some duration and magnitude involving at least two parties
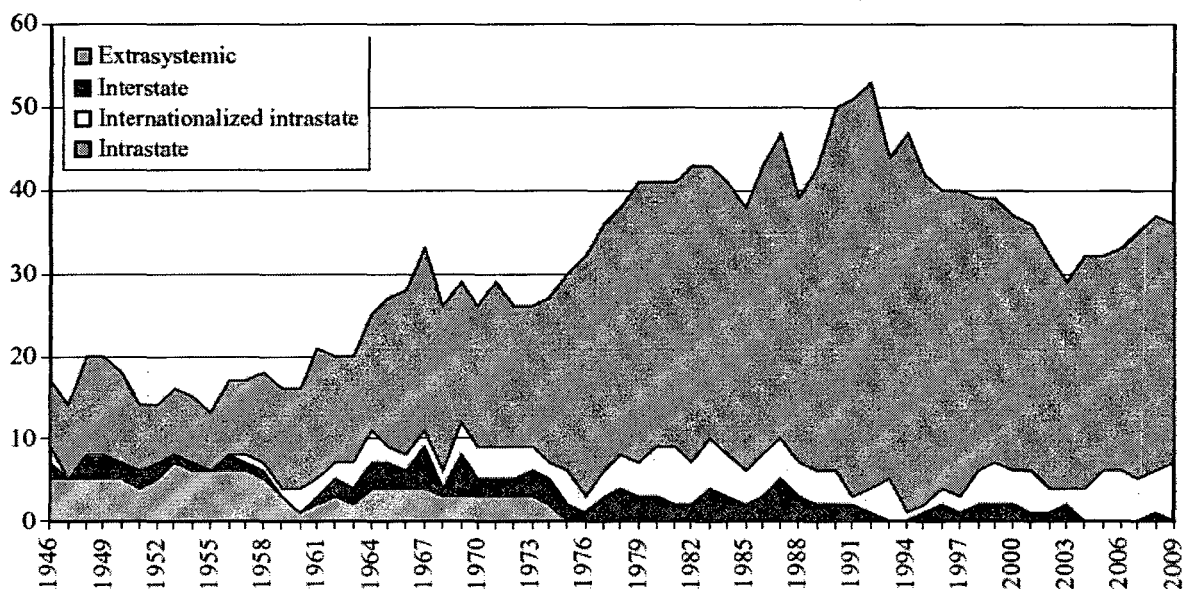
Figure 1: The graphic representation of the annual incidence of armed conflicts (with types) from the year 1946 to 2009; adopted from Harbom & Wallensteen 2010.

[1] Conflict Barometer is an annual conflict analysis report of the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, Department of Political Science, University of Heidelberg.

(states, groups of states, organisations, or organised groups) that are determined to pursue their interests and win their case. At least one party is the State". Also, an armed conflict is defined by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) [2] as a contested incompatibility that concerns government or territory or both, where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year. Of these two parties, at least one has to be the government of a state. (Harbom & Wallensteen 2010). In such a conflict situation open armed clashes between two or more centrally organized groups, with continuity between clashes in disputes about power over government and territory (Smith 2004). Armed conflict is generally categorized into the following forms: 1). Interstate conflict; 2). Intrastate conflict; 3). Internationalized Internal conflict (Transnational conflict), and 4). Extra-systemic conflict. The *Interstate armed conflict* occurs between two or more states while the *Internationalized internal armed conflict* occurs between the government of a state and internal opposition groups, with intervention from other states in the form of troops. The *Internal armed conflict* occurs between the government of a state and internal opposition groups. UCDP has also coded a fourth type, *extra-systemic armed conflict*, a conflict that occurs between a state and a non-state group outside its own territory. These conflicts are by definition territorial. The last such conflict ended in 1974.

The conflicts are also divided according to their intensity into two categories: -*Minor armed conflicts*: at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year but fewer than 1,000.
-*War*: at least 1,000 battle-related deaths in a year (UCDP; Vayrynen 2006).

After the World War-II, 244 armed conflicts have been active in 151 locations across globe. In the early years of 1990s, almost 50 armed conflicts were recorded. The early years of this decade saw the higher annual incidence of armed conflicts with the year 1992 having highest annual incidence, that is, 53 armed conflicts prevalent across 39 locations. (Harbom & Wallensteen 2010). In 2009, there were 36 armed conflicts active across 27 locations. Though the figure is quite low as compared to the annual

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[2] *Uppsala Conflict Data Program* is a research program of Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University that, since 1970s, is recording the ongoing violent armed conflicts across globe. (For more information see www.pcr.uu.se; visited before June, 2011)

incidence in early years of 1990s. Nonetheless, it has increased by 24% (see the figure 1) as recorded in the early years of the same decade. *(Ibid)*

Moreover, 45 active dyads[3] operated in 2009. Also, a little over 1/5th of the armed conflicts active in 2009 saw more than one rebel group challenging the government (Harbom & Sundburg 2010). In 2009, no interstate conflict was recorded, but seven intrastate conflicts were internationalized, which involved support in the form of military aid from external agency or foreign government. These conflicts were in Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda and USA[4]. Pertinently, 15 armed conflicts were active in Asia in 2009 (Harbom & Wallensteen 2010).

2.3: Why do Conflicts Emerge?

A wide range of conditions and circumstances prefigures any conflict situation. The start of armed clashes or first use of weapons and arms in a conflict situation is a complex process having diverse and intricate factors and actors operating in it. Any theoretical endeavour to develop explanations for the causes of armed conflict must, therefore, broaden its frame of analysis and holistically include multiple and interactive variables of analysis. Here, it is worth mentioning that the conflict research prior to 1990s studied causes of armed conflict as a global phenomenon in a typical international perspectives. That is, it focussed on interstate or international conflicts, despite the fact that the world witnessed a substantial decline in *interstate* conflicts and remarkable upsurge in *intrastate* or civil conflicts (Singer 1996). It is only in the post-Cold war era that the importance of civil and intrastate conflicts for global peace and stability has been recognized. As the annual incidence of armed conflict was very high in 1990s, there has been a substantial growth in the research and literature on the causes of armed conflict that are civil or intrastate. Research on internal conflicts takes into account, more-or-less, wide ranging factors and contexts to study and develop explanations for the causes and genesis of armed conflicts across various regions in the world, having specific social, political, cultural and economic

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[3] A dyad is defined as a pair of warring parties. In interstate conflicts, these warring parties are governments of states, whereas in intrastate conflicts, one is the government of a state and the other is a rebel group. For more information about the dyadic dimension of armed conflicts, see Harbom, Melander & Wallensteen (2008).

[4] The names of their countries don't necessarily indicate where the actual fighting takes place. The names indicate the location of incompatibility- which government it is that is being disputed, or in which country a disputed territory is located (Harbom & Wallensteeen 2010; UCPD).

conditions (Smith 2004). Particularly, it focuses on the ethnic, environmental, political and economic factors and dimensions.

There have been many endeavours in the theoretical domain to explain the phenomenon of armed conflicts and its genesis. The theory of Relative Deprivation (Gurr 1970, 1995; Copson 1994) describes the conflict as based on the contrast between groups' "expected" and "actual" access to power and prosperity. The theory has a close relationship with the Group Entitlement theory (Horowitz 1985), which places more emphasis on the ethnic factor which accompany the economic and political forces. Imperatively, it is reemphasized that ethnic identity or diversity may not in itself be the main or major cause of armed conflict. In other words it is the ethnic politics rather than the ethnic diversity that cause conflict, and that use ethnic identity as the most sensitive and effective tool for mobilization.

The diverse and relative political and economic conditions and circumstances that prevail or accompany any population with ethnic diversity may turn out to increase the possibility of clashes and confrontations, and ultimately giving rise to armed conflicts. Interestingly, the ethnic diversity may indeed reduce the risk of conflict and violence, as it encourages divergent groups and parties to adjust and learn the skills of living with cooperation, peace and mutuality. Nonetheless, the ethnic identity could easily be used, and in fact is being used across conflicts, as the most sensitive tool for mobilizing and motivating masses or specific groups to confront the 'other' (Collier 1999).

It is reiterated that causes of armed conflicts must be located in the historical, political and socio-economic conditions and contexts. Generally, the factors that facilitate and even could be the main causes of armed conflicts are the repressive and oppressive political systems, exploitative models of development, socio-economic inequality and injustice and environmental degradation. However, projecting any one factor or condition as 'the' cause of any conflict situation is quite problematic. In fact, it is the interplay of a wide factors and conditions, having political, economic, social and cultural dimensions that motivate or mobilise groups to fight against the 'other'. Both the macro- and micro realities of any armed conflict must be studied to comprehensively understand the underpinning dynamics and complexity. As Smith (2004, p7) argues that any attempt to understand armed conflict as a global

phenomenon must deal with the socio-economic picture, while efforts to analyse a particular armed conflict will need to focus instead on politics and on the actions of specific organizations and individuals.

Thus, integrating the different causal explanations of armed conflicts – the broad structural background causes and the context-specific foreground causes, and analysing it at multiple levels, one arrives at a comprehensive explanation of the cause

WHO region	Deaths			Disability adjusted life years		
	Number due to war (1000s)	% of total due to war	% of total	Number due to war (1000s)	% of total due to war	% of total
African	167.5	53.96	1.58	5 476.2	53.07	1.55
Americas	2.1	0.66	0.04	69.9	0.68	0.05
Eastern Mediterranean	39.0	12.56	0.97	1 365.9	13.24	1.02
European	36.7	11.83	0.38	1 043.1	10.11	0.68
South East Asia	63.2	20.35	0.45	2 210.3	21.42	0.52
Western Pacific	2.0	0.63	0.02	1 54.3	1.50	0.06
World	310.4	100	0.56	10 319.9	100	0.70

Figure 2 Burden of Conflict reported in World Health Report 2001, cited in Murray et al 2002: p 348.

of armed conflicts that reflect the social, cultural, economic, environmental and regional dimensions. Moreover, there have been, and are still continuing, numerous peoples' movements and struggles across globe that challenge the dominant and exploitative political, social and economic regimes. In many regions such movements have also taken shape of armed struggles that use weapons and arms against the State oppression and suppression[5]. One has to be careful about these dimensions of any conflict situation. These movements are generally influenced by certain religious or political ideologies that motivate and mobilize people or specific groups against injustice, exploitation or any kind of oppression.

2.4: Impact of Armed Conflict:

It is estimated that annually more than one million people die and many more get injured as result of violence or any other conflict-related tragedies and events. In fact, violence is the leading cause of death between the age-group of 15 to 44 (Welch 1993; Valenti et al 2007). It has been seen that conflict or violence related situations

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[5] The armed movement that erupted in Indian Administered Kashmir; the Naxalite and Maoist Movement; the Telengana movement in India; the peoples' struggle for justice in Pakistan Adminstered Kashmir are some of the relevant examples.

have been more prevalent in the low- income countries, where there is more strain on resources and where weapons and arms are easily available (Murray et al 2002; Ibid). If this argument is given due consideration then regions in Africa could be categorized as the most vulnerable to develop conflict situations. What makes it more evident is the fact that the largest number of war-deaths since 1990s has been witnessed in African countries (Lacina & Gledisch 2005 cited in Valenti et al 2007). Moreover, interpersonal violence is 3rd only to HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis as a leading cause of death for the age group 15 to 29 years (WHO 2002; Kobusingye 2006; Valenti et al 2007). Quite interestingly, these data indicators reflect a very major concern in the form armed conflict, particularly, in those countries that have a colonial past (Sadowski 1998). It also brings into debate the growing relevance of armed conflict and violence in the arena of public health. Here, it is summarily argued that the incorporation of the holistic public health perspective in the area of conflict mitigation and resolution becomes imperatively essential (Zwi, Fustukian & Sethi 2002; Smith 2004; Boyden 2003). Health interventions and initiatives could add fuel to the peace building processes in any conflict-torn region. At the World Health Assembly 1996, the WHO declared violence "as leading worldwide public health problem" (WHO 1996, 2002), and called for the public health strategies to address and deal with it. It adopted a broad definition of 'violence':

"The intentional use of physical force or power, threatening or acting against a group or community, that either results in or has a likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation." (WHO 2002, p5).

The direct consequences of violence include mortality, morbidity, destruction of economic resources and assets, collapse of welfare institutions and mal-functioning of other social security systems. In conflict situation men are generally more prone to get killed while women suffer other forms of victimization like sexual violence, physical abuse, etc. The indirect consequences of violence include poverty, where families get caught in its vicious circle as they lose their access to economic resources. The

problems of trauma and implications for mental health have been rigorously studied and documented in the context of armed conflicts (Dawes 1989; Leavitt & Fox 1993; Cairns 1994; Green & Wessels 1995; Patel 2007; Doty 2010) Moreover, the collapse of health services system is one of the serious concerns in a conflict situation. Such circumstances increase the chances of the epidemic emergence of infectious diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhoea and respiratory infections, which take heavy toll of
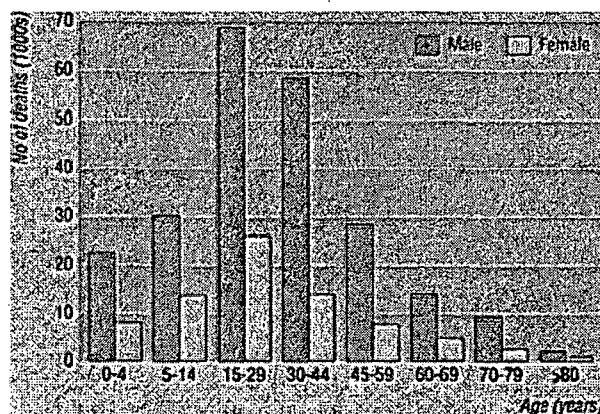
Fig 3 Estimated age and sex distribution of deaths due to conflicts in the year 2000

Adopted from Murray 2002: p 348

children, in particular. These diseases are otherwise easily preventable in the absence of such precarious conditions like armed conflict. Moreover, the treatment cost for injuries and wounds caused due to armed clashes and violence are very high seriously affects the budgets of the other health programs like that related to malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, nutrition, etc (Stover 1994; Zwi Fustukian & Sethi 2002; Valenti et al 2007). Further women and children in armed conflicts bear very often bear long-lasting and indirect consequences of war and fighting. It is being estimated that women and children have as much mortality (as a result of indirect and lingering consequences of war) as men have from direct exposure to fighting and armed clashes (Plumper & Neumayer 2006). The impact of conflict and violence on school education, child nutrition, immunization, child survival and overall social ecologies of children has been quite devastating. The issue of child combatants or child soldiers has been enormously highlighted by the human right organizations. Besides, the armed conflict also creates huge barriers and difficulties for aid and humanitarian organizations in delivering their duties (Muggah & Batchelor 2002 cited in Valenti et al 2007). In general sense, any conflict situation has very grave implications for the prosperity, peace and overall development of that region.

Armed conflicts gravely affect, both directly and indirectly, the mortality and morbidity patterns of the affected-regions over time, having immediate and long-lasting consequences for human populations. As armed conflict is known to cause

killings and has deleterious implications on public health and human welfare, it becomes indispensable to study and understand these conflict situations in a much broader framework. The framework to study armed conflicts and any other situations of conflict must take recourse to interdisciplinary, holistic and a systems approach.

Apart from health, there are various direct and indirect mechanisms through which armed conflict affects humans and society. Conflict directly reduces the overall life expectancy of the affected populations. The causalities are caused to civilians, combatants and soldiers. It includes injuries and disabilities caused to people due to armed violence. The impact of armed conflict on national economies is quite catastrophic. The destruction and other costs due to war seriously affects the economic prosperity and stability of the nation, having drastic consequences for the people, especially poor, disadvantaged and under-privileged (Li & Wen 2005). Consequently, the problems of wide-spread homelessness, unemployment, forced migration and displacement, deterioration of health services system and collapse or under-development of other essential sectors like education, food security, and water & sanitation and environment. Moreover, this disruption in economic infrastructure and collapse of social security institutions exacerbates poverty, forces people into mass-migration, increases illiteracy and hampers health interventions. The emergence of infectious diseases, which are preventable and non-lethal in normal conditions, take a heavy toll of people, especially children. The diseases like malaria, diarrhoea, respiratory infections, tuberculosis, etc are the most prevalent diseases in the areas of conflict (Murray et al 2002; WHO 2002). The scenario of HIV/AIDS also worsens in a conflict situation because of the mal-functioning of health programmes and initiatives, and also due to other dangers meted out to health personnel and health related facilities and infrastructure. Likewise, the social implications of armed conflict further exacerbate the already malaise-ridden situation. The deterioration of social cohesion, cooperation and integrity has serious consequences for the overall human relationship in such volatile contexts. Moreover, the temporality in the effects and consequences of conflict makes the problem more complex and intricate. That is, some effects are immediate and instant that dissipate once conflict ends like direct killings. The other effects linger beyond conflict, such as the effects on the social cohesion and psychological wellbeing of the populations (Li & Wen 2005).

2.5: Children and Armed Conflict - Issues and Impact

Historically, children have been victims of wars and armed conflicts that have taken a horrific toll on them. Recent armed conflicts and wars cause more civilian causalities that have increased from 5% to 90% of all causalities (Machel 1996, 2001). Modern armed conflicts more consciously and systematically kill, rape, abuse and exploit civilian populations than ever before. Children in such circumstances bear the brunt most horribly. They are sucked into the endless endemic struggles of power, control and resources, whereby they are exposed to the spiral of violence. During 1990s, 2 million children died in armed conflicts targeted deliberately and strategically (Zwi 1995; Ibid). Many more millions, in fact 6 million children, were seriously injured or permanently disabled (*op. cit.*). Moreover, the problems of diseases, malnutrition, sexual abuse and violence accentuate the miseries of children in armed conflicts. The preventable and non-lethal infections and diseases prove excessively lethal for children experiencing armed conflicts (Zwi, Garfield & Loretti 2002). It is reported that more than 20 million children are uprooted from their homes and communities and living their lives, accompanied or unaccompanied, in the camps for refugees and internally displaced. (Brett & McCallin 1998). 3,00,000 child soldiers are reported to have joined armed groups at any given time. (Brett 2000 cited in Machel 2001). In 2009, nearly 4000 new casualties were reported from landmines, un-exploded explosives and victim-activated improvised explosives devices. One third of the victims were children, as reported by Child Rights Information Network[6] (2010).

The present wars and armed conflicts also have roots in the struggles for gaining control over natural resources like crude oil, etc. With the global dominance of international capital in almost every sphere of life, such global businesses make wars and armed conflicts not only possible but profitable too. As conflicts have markets in the affluent countries, the dominant policy institutions and instruments seem to perpetuate the conflict through highly de-contextualized and problematic policy and humanitarian interventions. The international legal instruments have proven to be ineffective because of the unwillingness of the state parties to uphold them. Though,

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[6] Child Rights Information Network is a global child rights network that work in the area of child rights and development. It has a network of more than two thousand organization. For more information see www.crin.org ((Visited before May 2011)

these were somewhat powerful and formidable instruments to uphold human rights and to prosecute the perpetrators of genocide. The international market for small arms and light weapons has grown tremendously in recent decades. The easy availability and access to such weapons and arms among general populations encourages violence, turning a mere difference of opinion into a bloody slaughter and thus sowing seeds of conflict. Moreover, the relief and aid interventions are inadequate, uneven and irrelevantly conceptualized and operationalized. The issues have been taken further in the following chapters of this dissertation. The following sections of this chapter briefly discuss the issues that children face in the conditions of armed conflicts.

2.6: Child Soldiers: Politics of Age

The majority of the recent modern armed conflicts are characterized by the widespread use and exploitation of children as active combatants or as members of armed groups. It is being estimated that about 3 lac child soldiers are active at any given time (Machel 2001). The huge availability of small arms, rifles, grenades, pistols, etc have greatly encouraged the trend. Machael (2001) defines a child soldier:

> "A child soldier is any child boy or girl- under the age of 18 who is compulsorily, forcibly or voluntarily recruited or used in hostilities by armed forces, paramilitaries, civil defence units of other armed groups." (p7)

Children quite often are forced to play gendered roles in any armed groups. Generally, girls are used for sexual services, cooking, as messengers or porters while boys as active combatants and fighters. (Ibid, Hart & Tyrer 2006; Rosen 2007). A myriad of factors and conditions could be identified that beset children and consequently force them to join armed groups. There are economic, social, political and cultural circumstances and contexts that impact the social ecologies of such children in armed conflicts. The vicious circle of poverty in a continuing armed conflict makes children and adolescents of poor families more vulnerable to get recruited in armed groups. Moreover, children working on streets, orphans, unaccompanied displaced and refugee children are abducted and forced in military life. For instance, Myanmar represents those conflict zones where one of the highest number of active child soldiers are present, not only in armed insurgent groups but in governmental forces too. More often, children of minority, disadvantaged and oppressed sections of

populations are forcibly taken into the armed groups. In other cases the indigenous children, like in Guatemala civil wars[7], are forcibly pushed into armed violence and fighting. In the regions where government control is weak, the armed groups kidnap children from streets, schools, orphanages or other institutions. Quite horribly, the Militia government in Myanmar, many a times announce forced recruitment of children, particularly adolescents, in armies or state forces (Brett & McCallin 1998). Likewise, the Islamic *madarasas* in Pakistan and Afghanistan were believed to supply new and young recruits to Taliban across the region in late 1990s (UN 2000).

More often than not, the recruitment of children in armed groups is depicted as 'voluntary', and a matter of free choice of children. But many critics vehemently argue that such a choice is in reality a reaction to the interplay of economic, political, social and cultural forces that overarch the social ecologies of children. Nonetheless, there can be no denying the fact that in many cases children do consciously exercise their agency. Although, such reactions do have determinants in the broad structure that overwhelm their lives in a conflict situation, without ignoring the so called 'positive' contributions of exposure to adversity like enhancement in resilience and coping (Boyden 1997, 2003; Prout 2005; Hart & Tyrer 2006). Interestingly, some children in armed conflicts join armed groups in order to ensure their or even family's safety, survival, food, medical care and protection in violent and chaotic environment around (*Ibid*) And yet for other children the state's oppression, harassment and human rights abuses on their families and community motivates them to join insurgent groups. In Indian-administered Kashmir, for instance, hundreds of adolescents in the age group of 13 to 18 have joined the insurgent-ranks to fight and agitate against the state repression and extensive human right violations (Hussain 2007; Rashid 2009).

Moreover, the attraction and allurement of military life and feelings of power and control when handling deadly weapons, encourages many adolescents to join armed group. Also, the influence of religious and political ideologies on children is one of the important determinants of children participating in combatant groups. The ideals of martyrdom, freedom and self-determination are indoctrinated into their personalities. Pertinently, it is worth-mentioning that in the recent agitation of 2010 in

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[7] Children from Mayan community were forcibly recruited into Guatemalan Army. The forces used to terrorize the indigenous community by paring its girls, destroying crops and agriculture, humiliating women and frequently killing ad torturing adults. (Macheal 2001)

Kashmir, there was a huge participation of school children and adolescents in the public protests in favour of the peoples' struggle for right to self determination and against the human rights abuses by the State. More than 120 youth, mostly in the age group of 9 to 18 were killed in firing by the security personnel (Junaid 2010; ACHR 2010).

Eventually, children who escape or are released from armed groups often have to confront problem of stigma, alienation and rejection from their communities. Especially for girl child soldiers the reintegration and reunification with the family or community is excessively difficult particularly in those who have faced sexual violence. Most of them end up in prostitution (Brett 2002 cited in WHO 2002). The physical, emotional and intellectual instability of child soldiers offers little prospects of life for such children and endanger their acceptance, reintegration and mainstreaming in the community life. There military identity and earlier association with violence creates severe abhorrence against them. In the lack of alternatives or any support, such children develop more aggression, alienation and sullen personalities that may force them into more serious and higher order crimes[8]. In other cases, a proper environment of restorative justice, acceptance and support would ensure his physical, psychological and social rehabilitation to a large extent. Though, many children find it hard to disregard violence as a legitimate means of acquiring their goals, especially when they still live in poverty, injustice and oppression. Amazingly and interestingly, there is a rich amount of emerging literature (as mentioned earlier) that argues that exposure of children to adversity like armed conflict enables then to enhance their resilience and coping mechanisms. In the case of child soldiers it has widely been seen that after their reintegration in the community they are more resourceful, patient and innovative in developing survival strategies and who consciously take decisions on their own. This phenomenon was also starkly visible in the study conducted by this researcher on the children exposed to torture and incarceration (Rashid 2009). The discussion on this subject has been taken further in the 3rd and 4th chapter of the dissertation.

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[8] This phenomenon has been discussed thorough Escalation Theory that there is career escalation or offence specialization from status to misdemeanor to felony offences (Erickson, 1979).

2.7: Displaced Children

Forced displacement or migration from a region caught in armed conflict is a common phenomenon. People abandon their communities, families and property in fear of death, torture, abuse or exploitation at the hands armed groups or enemy parties, It has been estimated that almost 40 million people[9] are living a life as 'refugees' or 'internally displaced'. Around 20 million are children who are deprived of the family protection and community security (Machel 2001). Such children get exposed to diverse vulnerabilities and risks that have catastrophic bearing on their lives. Their survival and security gets engendered, becoming victims to sexual abuse, trafficking, illegal adoption, psychological trauma and other forms of violence and exploitation. The 'unaccompanied-children[10], and 'separated-children[11]' prove to be more prone to such dangers. In the case of girls and women, their lives in the camps of refugees and internally-displaced are fraught with immense vulnerabilities and dangers for their safety, protection and health. They become victims of the difference and conflicts that emerge in the camps between diverse groups. The risk of being exploited or sexually abused by military and other armed groups is also quite high. The rejection from the local and host community exacerbates their living conditions and endangers their food and health needs. The lack of reproductive health care, in particular, deleteriously affects their condition and exposes her to reproductive tract infections and other related ailments that may prove fatal and life-threatening (Plumper and Neumayer 2006).

Moreover, the people, especially children, of minority and indigenous groups are among the most vulnerable within the displaced populations (MRGI[12] 1997). The most powerful groups in the refugee camps exploit the disadvantaged populations in

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[9] The number of persons displaced as a result of conflict and human rights violations is based on the number of internally displaced, estimated at 23 million by the Norwegian Refugee Council Global Survey, combined with the number of refugees and asylum seekers of the concern to UNCR, 12.8 and 3.2 million Palestinian refugees covered by a separate mandate of the UN Relief and Wars Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

[10] Unaccompanied children are those children who are separated from both parents and are not in the care of another adult, who by law or custom has taken responsibility for them.

[11] Separated children include those children who are separated from both parents, but not necessarily from other relatives.

[12] Minority Rights Group International is the leading international human rights organisation working to secure rights for ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous people around the world.

diverse ways. The latter's children suffer higher rates of infections, malnutrition, mortality and morbidity due to intense lack of food, health, water and sanitation facilities. The scenario of education in such precarious circumstances for these children exacerbates continuously. The threat to the cultural and lingual identity of the displaced populations has serious implications for the coming generations. Thus, the phenomenon of displacement and migration due to armed conflict devastates the social ecologies and social security systems of children. Children lose the protective environment and supportive network and thus become prone to violence, exploitation and abuse.

2.8: Children's Health and Armed Conflict

Children living or confronting an armed conflict are not only killed and injured in direct armed violence, but the indirect impact of the conflict situation and violence also takes a heavy toll on children's health. Children of conflict-zones are beset by malnutrition, infectious diseases, acute respiratory infections, besides complicacies developed out of injuries and disabilities caused by armed violence. Wars and armed conflicts disrupt food supplies, agriculture, health services system and water & sanitation network. The collapse of these essential and basic needs system throws thousands of children into a deadly spiral of disease and illness. The mortality and morbidity rates increase manifold and drastically for those uprooted from their homes and communities and living in the camps for refuges and internally displaced. In these conditions, the most vulnerable to disease are the children under the age of five. The already-malnourished or weak face the greatest risk to survival and development.

Machael (2001) reports that among the 10 countries with the highest rates of under five deaths, 7 are in the midst of or recovering from armed conflicts. The child survival and development scenario in the countries caught in armed conflict is worst: Angola, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Somalia. It is estimated that nearly 1 child in 3 dies before attaining the age of five (UNICEF 2001).

It has been reported by the International Rescue Committee that 2.5 million civilian died s a result of armed conflict in Democratic Republic of Congo between August 1998 to April 2001, and alarmingly, one-third of them were children under five. The children who face permanent disability due to armed violence are three times more

that those who get killed (WHO 2002; UNICEF 2011). Landmines viciously and greatly contribute to the casualties among children in conflict zones. Moreover, the children permanently disabled or seriously injured hardly have any access to social or rehabilitative services due to the collapse and dwarfing of the welfare and social security institutions, and more so , because of the changing priorities of the States. UNICEF reports that only 5% of children with disabilities in developing nations have access to rehabilitative and social support, and less that 2% of children with disability go to mainstream schools (UNICEF 2001).

Infectious Diseases:

The population that are uprooted or driven out of their communities and environment face immense vulnerability and risks of infectious diseases. Particularly, the impact of forced migration or displacement on children is accentuated by exposing them to infections like malaria, measles, acute respiratory disorders, tuberculosis, diarrhoea, cholera and other communicable diseases. The factors of food insecurity and unhygienic water and sanitation exacerbate the situation from worse to worst. UNICEF (2009) reports that diarrhoeal   diseases cause half of all the child deaths in conflict regions. The growing problem of tuberculosis in the camps of refugees and internally displaced people and accentuated by HIV/AIDS, throws such people into the fatal spiral of death and destruction. The WHO estimates that half of the world's refugees are tuberculosis carriers (WHO 2010)

Besides, the negligence of reproductive health facilities for women and girls in conflict zones gravely complicates the issue. The vulnerabilities of women and girls to sexual abuse and violence, unsafe sex, pregnancy and abortion related emergencies increase their risk to disease, illness and death. It has been estimated that between 25% to 50% of maternal deaths among refugees are the result of post-abortion complicacies (UNFPA 2010) . It is reemphasized that the health of newborn and children is strongly linked to the health and wellbeing of their mothers and families.

Health Services:

In conflict situations around the world the health services remain sub-optimal or completely devastated. The direct attacks on hospitals, clinics, ambulances take a heavy toll on doctors, nurses and other medical and paramedical staff. The basic

health facilities and infrastructure remains poor or totally collapsed. The armed violence halts medical supplies, distribution of drug and other essential health activities like immunization, vaccinations and awareness drives. The wartime travel restrictions also affect the movement of the people. Event the humanitarian organizations like International Red Cross, Save the Children, UNICEF and other UN agencies have lost hundreds of medical, professional and civilian staff to violence. Moreover, the disruption and collapse of health systems severely breaks down the vaccination and immunizations initiatives. In war-torn regions like Democratic Republic of Congo, only 15% children get immunized for measles. In Somalia it is 25% only. Likewise Afghanistan, Angola, Liberia, Ivory Coast have very low rates of vaccinations and immunization coverage (UNICEF 2001, 2009).

Food insecurity and Malnutrition:

The agriculture and food security is often disrupted and destroyed accidentally or intentionally in armed conflict situation. Besides the direct use of agriculture and food as a weapon of war by armed forces, the prevailing dangers and disruption de-motivates people to venture out for agricultural practices. The restrictions on movement, the fear of landmines and disruption of market seriously affect food production, supply and distribution. These miserable conditions of food systems worsen food scarcity and malnutrition especially in children. Such chronic hunger and food insecurity many a times escalates armed violence among diverse groups in a region already war-torn. Moreover, this chronic hunger and malnutrition is of the most important causes of death and disease among children in armed conflicts (Zwi Fustukian & Sethi 2002; Zwi, Garfield & Loretti 2002; UNICEF 2011). It has been found that the malnutrition increases the risk of death in children under five by 4 to 8 times that of children who are adequately fed (Pelletier et al 1998). The most malnourished children are found in the region caught in armed conflicts. The unhygienic water and poor sanitary conditions further accentuates the already malaise-ridden situation, and thereby exposing populations to communicable diseases when their mal-nourished bodies develop low resistance and less immunity.

2.9: Sexual Violence and Exploitation

While conflict inflicts suffering on everyone, women and young girls are particularly affected by its short- and long-term effects and interestingly experience conflict in a

different way. Conflict increases the crimes of violence against women and girls. Sexual assault and exploitation are frequently employed. Victimization results in isolation, alienation and prolonged emotional trauma among women (HRW 1996; Amin & Rashid 2010). Conflict often increases the number of households with female heads and as a result women assume a role of primary provider, which subsequently exposes women and girls to further abuse in conflict settings. Conflict situation more-or-less shatters the comfort assured by daily routines and expectations from social institutions. Although conflict may, in some cases, improve gender relations as a result of shifts in gender roles - by and large its impact on women is devastatingly negative. Additionally, the forced displacements of populations are often used for strategic purposes in conflicts in order to destabilize the social structure of warring factions. These displacements impact women disproportionately given that they reduce access to resources aimed at coping with household responsibilities, and increase their vulnerability (Watts & Zimmerman 2002) to physical and emotional violence.

Rape in a conflict zone is often related to the dynamics of power and aggression rather than to sexuality only (Tompkins 1995; Coomaraswamy 2001). It is endemic during conflict situations and is arguably least scrutinized and documented aspect. Though often seen as the random excesses of poorly controlled soldiers, it is more accurately viewed as instrument of terrorization deployed on more or less systematic basis. It functions like other forms of torture and is used as a tactical weapon of war to humiliate and weaken the morale of oppressed population. A study conducted by an International organization working in Kashmir, Medicines Sans Frontiers, revealed that the Kashmiri women are among the worst sufferers of sexual violence in the world. "Sexual violence has been routinely perpetrated on Kashmiri women, with 11.6% of respondents saying they were victims of sexual abuse," says the 2005 study (MSF 2005 cited by Motto 2009). Moreover, the study contests that the figure is much higher than that of Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Chechnya. Shopian incident[13] that involved rape and murder of two young women has been the recent addition to it.

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[13] Allegedly, between the night of May 29 and 30, 2009, one woman and a young girl were first raped and then mercilessly murdered in Shopian, which is one of the district of Indian Administered Kashmir.. The incident resulted in wide-spread protests and 61days of complete strike in the district, leading to the disruption of normal life.

While as imprisonment and deaths are immediate dangers for men, the circumstances vary for women and are quite different in nature. Women and girls are often deliberately targeted for sexual abuse as a means of "dishonouring" their community or "demoralizing" their male populations in liberation or ideological struggles (Amin & Rashid 2010). The use of sexual violence in conflict zone is too widespread, too frequent and seemingly too calculated and effective (Machel 1996, 2001). In conflict zones rape is frequently used as means of psychological warfare in order to humiliate the 'enemy' and undermine their morale. In war zones when part of a widespread and systematic practice, 'rape' is now recognized under the Geneva Convention as crime against humanity and also as an element of the crime of genocide, when committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a targeted group. The International Criminal Court (ICC)[14] explicitly identifies rape as prosecutable as a crime against humanity. Strategic rape attacks not only the victim but also aims to impair the social structure of the attacked group, creating serious social pathologies. It heavily weighs on the collective honour and dignity of the community as a whole. It is usually characterized by any physical invasion of a sexual nature perpetrated without the consent of the victim, that is by force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, pressure, detention or by taking advantage of a coercive environments (*Ibid*). Rape as an event is a nightmare that sends shivers down a women's spine no matter, who she is, how old she is, whether she is illiterate or literate, urban or rural. Something no woman ever wants to go through in her life time. It leaves the scars of brutality so extreme that survival seems for some a worse fate than death (Amin & Rashid 2010). There is no consensus as to whether sexual violence is a question of sex with a violent manifestation, or it is opposite, i.e. violence with a sexual manifestation. The definition of rape and sexual crimes has changed over time. The Psychoanalytical theory describes the perpetrator of rape as the one with deviant and abnormal behaviour. While as feminist scholarship has understood rape and sexual violence as criminal attempts of violence, dominance and control aimed at maintaining patriarchy and women's subordinate position within the social order (HRW 1999; Watts & Zimmerman 2002). In addition, the impact of sexual violence or rape on the women in the community, particularly young and adolescent girls has horrible implication on their career and prospective life. These traumatic events and

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[14] See http://www.icc-cpi.int

experiences have wide range of vile ramifications that disease their psychological identity, social position, cognitive disposition and behavioural inclinations. Fear of getting raped can lead to disruption of normal developmental trajectories, which can set into motion a cascade of effects on development. In conflict zones, like in Kashmir security personnel have searched, initiated unsolicited physical contact, detained, leered, teased, passed lewd remarks, psychologically degraded, propositioned, extorted, physically harassed, molested, and assaulted girls/minors and women in the course of everyday life (Rattan 2001; Amin & Rashid 2010). However the trauma of rape is worse than any kind of bodily harm. The rape victim often perceives herself as an abject, as a 'dirty', morally inferior person, so does her family members (Tompkins 1995; Amin & Rashid 2010). The perpetration inflicts on her family and friends a mark, a stigma, which cannot be effaced. This abjection has a communal aspect as well, as the family is excluded by neighbours and other community circles. Rape often leads to the destruction of the spirit, of the will to live and of life itself. Many-a-times women are blamed for inviting the act (Snow 1994:397). However, the opinions with respect to it vary from culture to culture and region to region. Consequently, the act of rape has wide and far reaching psychosocial ramifications, the entire community experiences a sizeable impact, as it traumatizes the community members, particularly the close associates of the victim. Moreover young children exposed to such violence are at greater risk of getting adversely affected.

Hence, children living or experiencing armed conflicts have myriad of issues and concerns that are both directly and indirectly related to the large scale destruction, devastation and disruption caused to the social, economic, political and cultural institutions and structures that are very closely and dynamically related and linked to the social ecologies of children. As discussed in the detailed description above, the exposure of children to adversity like armed conflict, tremendously affect and endanger their life, survival and development. Nonetheless, the exposure of children to such extreme adverse conditions makes them to consciously take decisions and exercise their personal resources to adapt and develop survival and coping strategies. The enhancement in their resilience and coping mechanisms in such precarious circumstances has been thrown into an intense debate in the academic corridors. Interestingly, the ethnography and anthropological studies (Boyden 1991, 1994, 1997, 2003; Jenks 1996; James and Prout 1997; Hart & Tyrer 2006) have taken a great leap

forward in raising such debates. It has questioned the vulnerability paradigms of childhood that conceptualize children as weak, dependent and passive. Contrarily it argues that children's agency, resourcefulness, activity and creative production must also be taken into consideration particularly when policies are being formulated and implemented.

More importantly, the issues and problems which children face in conflict situations are only the manifestations and symptoms of a much bigger and complex problem. That is, the global political and economic structures have an immense role in creating or perpetuating the armed-conflicts. As witnessed in the African context, the aggression of the imperialistic and colonial powers have bred or sown the seeds of various civil wars and armed conflicts. The case of Rwanda[15] perfectly epitomizes this trend (Sawdoski 1998). There is an immense role of the international capital in determining the nature of the social, economic and political relations between and with-in the nations across the world. For instance, the international humanitarian organizations' policies and priorities are greatly influenced by this global politics. Children, in particular, become victims of such global order and processes. An attempt to understand these complex issues has been made in the proceeding chapters of this dissertation. The next chapter traces the historical variability in the meaning and concepts related to children and childhood, and will also focus on the conceptualizations, debates, diverse and emerging perspectives on childhood.

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[15] The intense rivalry between Tutsi and Hutu tribes began to emerge only after the European colonial powers interfered in the social-economic and political processes of the country. The colonial powers were able to divide them and sowed the seeds of conflict. This set in motion a cycle of violence that culminated in December 1963, when Hutus massacred 10,000 Tutsis and drove another 130,000-150,000 from the country. These tragedies laid the seeds for the genocide of 1994 (see Sawdoski 1998).

Chapter 3

Conceptualizations of Childhood: Perspectives and Debates

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF CHILDHOOD: PERSPECTIVES AND DEBATES

3.1: Introduction

In children, though the biological facts of life, like 'immaturity' are universal, but the meanings and connotations of that 'immaturity' quite significantly vary across cultures (Simmerville 1982; Nandy 1987; Prout and James 1997). These cultural facts and features of any phenomenon add complexities and dimensions to it, as the human populations have innumerable cultural orientations across globe. Besides, the socio-political, economic and regional specificities further complicate such phenomena. Similarly, 'childhood' is conceived to be located in such diverse contexts and factors that necessitate its recognition as a 'social institution' within which 'early years of human life are constituted and where an actively negotiated set of social relationships' characterize it. Keeping such complex nature of 'childhood' in mind, this chapter attempts to review different paradigms and conceptualizations of childhood, considering the chronological and historical variability of different constructions and conceptualizations of childhood. Simultaneously, it explores the *emerging paradigms* of childhood, and tries to differentiate the childhood-paradigms of 'vulnerability' from those of emergent-ones that focus on children's 'agency' and 'activity', adopting social constructionist and interactionist approaches in understanding childhood. Moreover, the latter values essentialize the study of the broader structural determinants that beset children at diverse levels of social interaction.

3.2: Childhood: Historical Trajectory of Constructions

Childhood is a complex and highly diverse phase of life moulded not only by universal biological and psychological forces but also by the environmental, cultural, geographical and other social contexts and factors. Notions and constructions of 'childhood' have differentially varied in relation to children's body, space and time (James 1993, Hardyment 1995, Reynolds 1996, Woodhead 1998, Boyden 2003, Prout 2008).

Tracing the chronological and historical trajectory of different constructions and conceptualizations of childhood from 1800 onwards, some of the dominant schools of thought would be discussed in this section. There is a consensus among the modern historians that during the late 17th century a new attitude towards children began to emerge that was carried into the 18th century (Hendrick 1997; Jenks 1992). It heralded 'a new world' for children and set in motion the newer notions of childhood. Infact, the seminal work of Rousseau, *Emile* (1762) emphasized the 'natural goodness' of child and advocated that 'nature wants children to be children before they are men' (Sommerville 1982:127-31). These notions heavily influenced some sections of the people in that period who invested their children with a new understanding and affection. Though the view - the naturalness of child, was reiterated by numerous reformers but most of them lost the subtle and sensitive dimensions as identified by Rousseau himself (Horn 1974; Hendrick 1997). Consequently, these notions of childhood were reduced to a crude view of children as distinguished merely by 'natural incapacity and vulnerability (Ibid, Hendrick 2007). At the end of the 18th century, the Romantic revival greatly influenced the notions of 'naturalness' associated with childhood. Children came to be seen as endowed with the 'blessings' of God and the childhood was regarded as the age where 'virtue' was domiciled, and everything thereafter was 'downhill rather than upward' towards maturity (Colls 1976; Hendrick 1997: 37). The Wordsworthian conception of childhood was of a special, genderless phase of life where 'growing up becomes synonymous with the loss of paradise' (Cunningham 1991 & 1995, Hendrick 1997). However, these notions of 'innocent' childhood specifically reflected the elitist, educational and literary themes only. Moreover, the Evangelical movement, with its belief in the Original Sin[1], perceived children as 'sinful polluted creatures' (*Evangelical Magazine* 1799 cited in Hendrick 1997). The evangelicals produced their own agenda for child welfare reforms that strongly influenced the discussions on the meanings of childhood in an industrializing and urbanizing contexts of the 19th century.

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[1] Original Sin, in Christian doctrine, is the condition or state of sin into which each human being is born; also, the origin (i.e., the cause, or source) of this state. Traditionally, the origin has been ascribed to the sin of the first man, Adam, who disobeyed God in eating the forbidden fruit (of knowledge of good and evil) and, in consequence, transmitted his sin and guilt by heredity to his descendants. (*Encyclopædia Britannica 2011, see* http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/432565/original-sin).

In that period the influence of growing capitalism and the political economy of emerging child labour-force in the industrial set-ups and mines forced many to raise voices against miseries and exploitation of children in industries and factories. During the course of debates, a new construction of childhood was put together by participants and advocates that no longer considered 'wage-earning child' as a norm. Contrarily, it saw childhood as constituting a separate and distinct set of characteristics requiring protection and fostering through school education and discipline (Hendrick 1997; Hurt 1979).

Importantly, the mid-nineteenth century reconstruction of juvenile delinquency is seen as a more obvious attempt in the direction of universalization of childhood (Pearson 1983 cited in Hendrick 1997). Jenks (1996) points out that attributes of deviancy in childhood serve as a way of 'acknowledging' differences in children's lives while also legitimating universalized notions and ideals of childhood. The debate of juvenile delinquency and juvenile justice mainly emerged from the discussions on increasing child labour and huge presence of children at economic sites. Also the economic and political upheavals of the 1830s and 1840s and the increasing popularity of the school as a means of 'class' control accentuated these middle-class concerns (Hewitt 1973; Hendrick 1997; Prout 2007). The institution of schooling was regarded as the symbol of discipline and control for children. It emphasized the danger of those in need of 'care and protection'. The phrase *'he has to be turned into a child'* served as a fundamental guideline with respect to juvenile delinquency (Carpenter 1853 cited in Hendrick 1997). These middle-class conceptualizations threw apart the child's knowledge and experience, derived from parents, community, peer groups and his immediate socio-political and socio-economic circumstances. Rather this approach demanded 'a state of ignorance' in children in order to exercise control and authority and reinforce child's dependence and vulnerability (James, Jenks & Prout 1998). The school emphasized the value of children in parenthood, economic competitiveness, a stable social order and investments in future. Besides, it strongly denounced the wage-earning and working-children and introduced the 'authoritarian State' into parent-child relationship (Ibid; Rosen 2005). Interestingly, the phenomenon of mass-schooling made children easily available to researchers from disciplines like psychology, education, sociology and medicine. School- pupils became attractive research subjects and the studies on children's mental, physical and psychological

health and wellbeing started getting impetus (Hardyment 1995; Harkness and Super 1996). However, the findings and results of these studies generated intense debates about the vulnerability of child population and, there-by, attracting the politicians and philanthropists, and also the researchers and scholars across disciplines. This movement, famously known as child-study movement, identified the fears of 'racial deterioration and degeneration' (Colls 1976; Cunningham 1991) and, therefore, served to position the social, educational, psychological and racial importance of childhood and of children. It was considered to be socially and politically essential and relevant to understand and develop solutions to a number of dominant problems of that period. The authoritative constructions of childhood achieved a new social and political identity that described children as beings 'of the nation', and commanded 'children' to get involved in a consciously designed pursuit for 'national efficiency, education, racial hygiene, responsible parenthood, social purity and preventive medicine (Ibid; Jenks 1996; Hendrick 1997; Dawes & Donald 2000). The role of state in this regard was conceived as more of an interventionist through legislations and authority. Moreover, the family was seen as a 'haven' in a liberal-capitalist system, where children were being conceptualized as uncritical, passive and universal units of material-investments in national progress (Boyden & Mann 2005; Rosen 2005). These notions got reinforced in the age of fierce imperial, political, military and economic national rivalries. Importantly, the State regarded itself as the sole authority to determine the *'best interests'* of *'its child'*. The state built upon the ideals of domesticity and, through psycho-medicine reinforced the universal and normative notions of childhood in terms of education, socialization and the culture of dependency. Thus, these several authoritarian conceptualizations of childhood have reinforced the adult hegemony in the form of the 'politics' that pervades the social ecologies and lives of children, in and out. The children's space, body and time is controlled and made to resonate in line with the adult concerns for social reproduction and order (Ingleby 1986; James 1993). These notions have strongly shaped the politics around children and their childhood, thus victimizing them through de-contextualized, hegemonic and imperial policies and interventions. Hence, the modern constructions of childhood is a product of free-market, liberal capitalism and the emergence of 'modern nation-states' with its accompanying authoritarian 'child-focussed' institutions (Stephans 1995).

The chronologies of constructions and reconstructions could be located in conceptually and ideologically diverse public identities, ranging from 'Rousseauian natural *child'*, 'Romanticized innocent *child'*, 'Evangelical polluted *child'*, 'Economically valueless *child'* 'Delinquent vulnerable *child'*, 'Schooled industrial *child'*, 'Individual utilitarian *child,* 'Psychological developmental *child'*, 'State's national *child'*, to 'Welfare idealized *child'* (Hendrick 1997; James 1993; Dekker 2009). This historical variability narrates a complex trajectory of the professional middle-class conceptualizations of childhood that were shaped as per their responses to different social, economic, religious and political circumstances. The ambiguity and uncertainty around the conceptualizations of childhood in the early 19th century got resolved with the influences of Romanticism and Evangelicalism, the socio-economic impact of the industrial revolution and the changing socio-political order that involved the creation of a capitalist liberal and industrial democracy *(Ibid; Ruxton 1999).* The profound impact of such changes on social relationships and social institutions quite emphatically shaped the constructions and conceptualizations of childhood in those periods and the times to come. As a result, the 'modern' notion of childhood got institutionalized and 'universalized' through various socio-economic, cultural and political structures (Anderson 1980; Jenks 1992). Such understanding of children and childhood was also composed by certain child rights and humanitarian global organizations based in European and North American tradition of thought, emphasising privacy, primacy of individual, family and the other liberal ideals (Boyden 1997; Hart and Tyrer 2006). A new compulsory relationship, as Hendrick (1992) puts it, got instituted and legislated between the State, the family and the welfare, which was an outcome of the 'consciously executed political and cultural enterprise'. On these lines, the universalized notions of childhood like that of a characteristic of 'a little human animal destined for the spiritual and moral life', who is in a 'state of dependency'; who is 'innocent', 'passive', 'incompetent', 'weak', 'vulnerable', requiring adult care, protection and fostering; and, while prefiguring adult-life, is in the process of becoming a 'being'; and where adults, owing to their structural position, are expected to exercise power, control and discipline (James 1993, Qvortrup *et al* 1994; Simmerville 1982, Kakkar 1978). These dominant discourses of childhood neglected the variance that children in diverse societies and cultures across globe confront. 'Childhood' was seen as the 'unitary natural

phenomenon and 'a monolith' while seriously undermining its situational and cultural dimensions. The 'modern idealized' notions of children and childhood that were exported and globalized through attractive policy structures find too little relevance in the lives of the children in many parts of the world (Oldman 1991; James 1993; Waksler 1994; Woodhead 1998; Ruxton 1999; Patel et al 2007). Particularly, in the context of the third-world, which is diseased by gaping socio-economic inequalities, deprivation, poverty, political unrest and armed conflicts (Black 1986; Machel 2001; UNDP 2010), such de-contextualized and universalistic conceptualization (Boyden 1997) of children and childhood is problematic. In this background, the following sections review these problematic conceptualizations and paradigms of childhood that are located in the ideas of children's vulnerability, incompetence, dependency, and passivity. Thereafter discusses some of the 'emergent paradigms' that take recourse to social constructionist perspective, where children's social relationships and structural position is studied in their own right, independent of the perspective and concerns of adults, and where it is correlated with other variables of social analysis like gender, race, ethnicity or political affiliation, that reify this 'one childhood' into a variety of childhoods. It proclaims a new paradigm of sociology of childhood that is interpretive frame for constructing and re-constructing early years of human life, with children as 'active' agents in determining their own social lives and, simultaneously, influencing the broader social structural order (Boyden 1991; James and Prout 1997; Prout 2005, Hart and Tyrer 2006).

3.3: Childhood: The Paradigm of Vulnerability

Sociology of childhood has devoted very little attention to the study of children and childhood, and in the instances where some research is present, the key concepts used for conceptualizing children, childhood and the related issues have been quite faulty (Dawes and Donald 1994; James and Prout 1997; Boyden and Gibbs 1997). These approaches own this allegiance to the dominant academic and disciplinary developments. Pertinently, the 19th century saw the early years of human life, in particular, and the whole human life cycle, in general, crystallized in the western thought that was rooted into positivist tradition were children are assumed only as 'human becomings' who are important and interesting because of what they will 'become' and not what they 'already' are (Qvortrup 1991; James 1993; Hart and Tyrer 2006). It considered children as 'partial adults', who are led passively into

'adulthood' by the structure, and without having any 'active' role in its processes. Moreover, the notion that *'children must be segregated from the harsh realities of the adult world and protected from danger'* prevailed the scene (Aries 1962).This understanding of children and childhood got reinforced in the 20th century, when psychology filled the theoretical space with 'empirical findings' and dominated the research in this field. The work of Jean Piaget on child development that depicted the stages of human development as 'universal' and 'natural' greatly influenced the understanding of childhood. The dominance of the psychological studies was pretty much connected to its repertoire of the experimental and statistical tools like socio-metric mapping, psychometric testing, longitudinal surveys and other psychological experiments (Donaldson 1978). On similar lines, the emergence and dominance of child-rearing and teaching practices supported the psychological explanation of early years of human life. Within the ideals of Piagetian developmental psychology, the approach mediated the mainstreaming of the ideals like 'naturalness', 'universality', 'irrationality' of childhood (Nandy 1987; Prout 1989; Jenks 1992; James 1993; Boyden 2003), concealing of the fact that the institution of childhood is a social construction and a complex phenomenon.

Moreover, these positivist, de-contextualized and universal notions of childhood were fiercely propagated across disciplines that greatly influenced the development and orientation of such subjects. Interestingly, the influence on sociology was quite pervasive. The themes of human development like 'naturalness', 'rationality' and 'universality' which the developmental psychology had mainstreamed, profoundly informed the theory and practice of social sciences, in general and sociology, in particular. In 1950s, the emergence of the sociological accounts as the *theories of socialization* could be located in the Piagetian psychological models and the positivist ideals that had cropped into the social sciences (Aptekar 1989; Harkness & Super 1996; Dawes 2000). As a result, the *universality* of social practices was taken for granted and considered unproblematic, emphasising the *naturalness* of childhood. Such was the influence and sway that too little theoretical space existed to explore alternatives. Childhood was conceptualized as a 'pre-social period' through which children pre-figure a 'full human adult status', and are in a progression towards it while traversing the path from 'irrationality' to 'rationality'. The 'liminality' in this phase of childhood was analysed in a social evolutionary perspective, characterizing

the argument that the 'decrease in the irrationality is a measure of an evolving rationality' (James and Prout 1997). Further, the traditional sociological accounts (the structural functionalist approach) emphasized the adoption of social roles through normative socialization that in turn is based on adult perspectives and their concern for the reproduction of social order (Jenks 1992; James 1993). Reflecting the Newtonian notions of universality and conformity (as in mechanics), these conceptualizations depicted social relationships and contexts as fixed by laws of nature, where 'child' is seen as 'passive' representation of 'future', subject to adult power and authority owing to its structural position. A chronic neglect of the cultures, contexts and factors that affect the lives of children and their meanings they attach to institutions of family, school, etc, intensely pervades these adult perspectives. Undermining these inherent contradictions, it, nonetheless, stressed on conformity to such perspective as essential to remain viable in that theoretical and practical spaces, with-in which children are as 'muted' or 'silenced' subjects (Hendrick 1992; Prout 2008) The resulting dissent, assertion or non-conformity would mean deviance, irresponsibility, backwardness or failure.

As a consequence of the historical processes of colonization, de-colonization, civil war and mechanisms of global capitalism, children across world have experienced ruptures, breaches and breakdowns in their lives. These experiences, no doubt, became the subject-matter of research and inquiry among scholars across diverse disciplines (Cairns 1996; Bracken 1998; Boyden & Hart 2007). However, in social sciences the traditional, uni-disciplinary and pre-post-modernist approaches and frameworks dominate the research on children experiencing adversity and victimization. In particular, the discipline of anthropology with the traditional approach - speaking for people (children) who are unable, muted or silent, took the 'burden' of giving voice to such children who are passive, subjugated and exploited. But these 'subaltern voices' of children were often transformed and inserted in different narratives and agendas of the interest groups and there-by ignoring the complexity of the interaction between a child, family, society and the structure (Boyden 1997). Infact, children are coerced into various actions by the overwhelming structures and processes over which they have little or no control. They are controlled by the institutions of kinship, family, education and 'the burden of past'. As Sartre (1961:15) opines:

'Violence in the colonies does not only have for its aim the keeping of these enslaved men at arm's length; it seeks to dehumanize them. Everything will be done to wipe out their traditions.... If he shows fight, the soldiers fire and he's a dead man; if he gives in, he degrades himself and he is no longer a man at all; shame and fear will split up his character and make his inmost self fall to pieces.'

The encompassing state, political system and global market configures and shapes children's lives and experiences. These processes expose them to diverse forms of adversities like war, famine, poverty, homelessness, exploitation, rape, and abuse (Macheal 2001; Doty 2010). As discussed earlier, in such conditions of adversity children utilize their resourcefulness, activity and creative production to 'shape' and 'shake' these structures. It other words, children and young people 'shape and get shaped' by the structure and at the same time they 'shake and get shaken' too (Honwana & Boeck 2005; Comaroff & Comaroff 2005; Honwana 2005: Weiss 2005). At one particular time children occupy multiple positions and categories and represent both an 'emerging influence' and as 'submerged by power' (Coulter 1998). It is this multiplicity of positions and categories that is being neglected in the modern notions of the universalized childhood. And institutions that do not conform or follow these normative Western child-rearing practices are immediately seen as 'irresponsible and deviant'. (Levine et al 1994; Ennew 1996).

Childhood is not a fixed group or a demographic cohort, but indeed a relational concept situated in a dynamic and discursive contexts having a social landscape of knowledge, power, creativity and cultural notions of agency and personhood (Honwana & Boeck 2005). The impacting variables and effects of these discourses are located in gender, religion, class, history, race, caste, ethnicity, and social responsibilities and expectations. In Africa, and the other post-colonial regions, very few children have the 'luxury' of being taken care of by parent, families , communities or the State until they reach the age of eighteen (Reynolds 2005; Weiss 2005). They assume responsibility and work at an early age and participate in the social and economic processes of the family or community. Besides, children and young people have frequently taken part in armed conflicts as child soldiers (Last 1991; Macheal 2001). In such contexts growing 'strong and resilient' is synonymous with future security, wealth, and productive (Weiss 2005). The earlier analysis of

children and childhood in relation to socialization, education and development portrayed them as mere 'objects' of adult activity. But the recent research and experience is emphasizing their role in shaping the social, economic, and political processes (Hart & Tyrer 2006). In Africa the recent studies have focussed on youth and politics, their role in resistance against apartheid, young peoples' participation in armed conflicts and post-war rehabilitation. (Obikeze and Mere 1985; Hyslop 1988; Carter 1991; Furley 1995; Honwana 1999; Reynolds 1995). In 1997 Journal of African Development of Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) published a special issue on youth, violence and the collapse of the state in Sierra Leone. The contribution analysed and looked at 'youth' from a position of marginality, alienation, underclass- and subaltern status. It explored the underlying factors responsible for the young peoples' central role in war, resistance and other political processes that changed the course of the things in the region. Consequently, this special issue generated important debates around dynamics of youth culture, identity, marginality, citizenship and agency. The other literature from outside Africa analysed these situations in a Marxist and Gramcian perspectives, reiterating that the young people have capacity for rebellion, opposition, counter-hegemony and anti-structure resistance (Gilroy 1987; Abdulkader 1995; Valentine, Skelton & Chambers 1998). These specific regional instances about the dominance and influence of young people's 'subaltern grammar' in local contexts have had enormous bearing on shaping young peoples' narratives in other similar contexts of war and armed conflicts. Particularly, the use of technology like Internet by children and young people has created a transnational activism that has transformed the 'local place of youth into a global cyberspace' (Harvey 1989, 2000). It reflects their ability to tap into globalizing spatial politics as a newly found source of power. 'Time' becomes spatialized, annihilating 'place' as the site of being (Ibid). Quite interestingly, during the recent uprisings in Kashmir when print- and TV media were banned, the use of Internet and online social networking by young -people were the only source of information available to people with-in and outside. These new communication tools were put to use to mobilize the masses effectively. So much so, the 'Pro-struggle leaders'[2] with the help of youth communicated their protest

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[2] In Kashmir, the Pro-struggle-' or 'Pro-Freedom leaders' are the ones who are identified with the 'Azadi movement' and who support the cause of the Right to Self Determination in Jammu and Kashmir.

calendars through internet and online e-groups. As a result, the State in J&K booked and detained hundreds of children and young-people, charging them of 'waging war against the State' through internet (Junaid 2010; Greater Kashmir 2009-2010; ACHR 2010, Navlakha 2010). These typical examples validate and showcase the emerging research findings that how children and young people utilize their critical agency, resourcefulness and creativity while confronting structural adversities and victimization. As Sartre (1961:22) befittingly argues:

> 'The rebel's weapon is the proof of his humanity. For in the first days of the revolt you must kill: to shoot down a European is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time: there remain a dead man, and a free man; the survivor, for the first time, feels a national soil under his foot. At this moment the Nation does not shrink from him; wherever he goes, wherever he may be, she is; she follows, and is never lost to view, for she is one with his liberty.'

Contextualizing these instances in Sartre's argument, it is reiterated that children are conscious of their experiences of marginality, dislocation, violence, victimization, disenfranchisement and pain, and they attach their own meanings to such situations from their frames of understanding and analysis. Nonetheless, agency and resourcefulness in their contexts is also painful, yet pain can produce 'agency' in them (Weiss 2005). On the other hand, they also have hope, desire and longing to be as active participants in social relationships and other spaces of empowerment (Honwana 2005; Hart & Tyrer 2006). But the colonial processes and the neo-colonial agendas construct for children and youth of colonized and collapsed states, a world that is 'lost', 'ruined', 'destroyed' and 'without future' (Dawes & Donald 2000; Comaroff & Comaroff 2005). The neo-colonial discourses of loss, absence and inferiority empties them of their 'intrinsic content', turning them into a receptive and empty shell for external cultural colonization. This logic is the integral part of the neo-colonial and global neo-liberal forces (Seremetakis 1994; De Boeck 1999). The logic glorifies western culture and lifestyle, and projects 'colonized and exploited' sites as having 'violence', 'poverty' and bereft of opportunities for youth people, in particular, and people, in general. The logic tends to be a global norm. There is literature (Hall & Jafferson 1976; Abdulkader 1995; Rashid 1999; Abdullah 2005; Rashid 2009; Navlakha 2010;) that has explored that how children and young people contest such grand narratives by having self-invented and explored spaces and practices of resistance, negation and opposition. This power and resourcefulness is derived from

the diverse spaces of confrontation, resistance and movement in which cultural itineraries meet and mix (De Boeck 1999; Honwana 2005) Thus, the juvenile vocabulary and grammar finds itself in conflict with the official culture and political order, particularly when the latter is based on the colonial and post-colonial models. This juvenile culture stands against structural inequality, suppression and victimization, and breeds continuous efforts that contest the hegemonic and unjust world they are forced to live in. It has become increasingly global in reach while taking different forms in different locations and through domestication and contextualization it is reshaped then to address local concerns (Ibid). Yet the fact remains valid that the marginalization and victimization of children and youth is intense, and it is being perpetuated through powerful global structures and systems.

Relevantly, Foucault's (1976:80) claim that the 'modern Western society accentuated the gap between children and adults' holds much weight. The political hegemony of Western and European nation-states commodified and romanticized this 'space' and projected 'children' and 'young-people' in a life-phase whose liminal[3] force could be tapped tor 'collective good' and also which reflects a source of 'surplus value' (Horn 1974; Comaroff & Comaroff 2005; James and Prout 1997). Children from this perspective are potentially a category of exploitation and exclusion, reducing them to uncritical foot-soldiers of adult hegemony. In neo-liberal states, especially in the post-colonial Africa and elsewhere, children are victims of the industrial capitalist economies and political orders. As mentioned earlier, a new compulsory relationship has been created between the neo-liberal state, family and children, which idealizes the principles of production and coercion to utilize and exploit the physical and imaginative resources of children, and thus, control their bodies, energies and imaginations (Ibid).Thus, the marginalization of children is a structural consequence of the overwhelming rise of neoliberal capitalism that has got insinuated even into the research, policy and practice of international organizations and humanitarian agencies.

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[3] The term 'Liminality', as developed by van Gennep (and later Turner), is used to "refer to in-between situations and conditions that are characterized by the dislocation of established structures, the reversal of hierarchies, and uncertainty regarding the continuity of tradition and future outcomes". Although initially developed as a means to analyze the middle stage in ritual passages, it is "now considered by some to be a master concept in the social and political sciences writ large". In this sense, it is very useful when studying "events or situations that involve the dissolution of order, but which are also formative of institutions and structures.". *See* Ashley (1990) and Barfield (1997).

3.4: Childhood: Policymakers Dilemma and Predicament

In modern industrial world the 'instrumental value' of children has eroded and replaced by the 'expressive value'. That is, children have become economically valueless, but priceless in terms of psychological and emotional worth. (Boyden 1997). As pointed out earlier that notions of childhood are culturally and historically bound to the preoccupations and perspectives of Europe and US, which had resulted from the historical interplay of Judeo-Christian belief system and the changes in the production and demographic base of society corresponding with capitalistic development. The growth of private property and ideals of privacy in the middle-class families led to the 'demonization' of 'street (Hendrick 1997 &; 2000). Homeless and street-children were seen as untamed, 'wild' beings and a threat to community and social cohesion. The institutions of family and school were regarded as the chief legitimate agents of socialization, development and empowerment. Interestingly, the emerging research contradicts these prepositions. In the research studies on street children by Boyden (1985) and Swart (1989 cited in Boyden 1997) they found that 'street-children' are more creative, intelligent, resourceful and independent than the *ideal* home-child. These researchers considered them as the victims of 'structural violence' and their acts of theft and looting as 'survival strategies'. Yet there is dominance and influence of the disciplines and professions like Social Work and Law on policy and welfare (Zietz 1968; Younghusband 1981). Their vulnerable constructions of childhood are the focal points of child policy and welfare, and, thereby, the pretext for the 'state manipulation' of the affairs between children, family and community. Moreover, both the professions - *Social Work and Law*, down-play the social, economic, political and structural determinants that actually shapes any social phenomenon. These subjects advocate individual and remedial solutions to problems by emphasizing on the individual causation, personal dysfunction, individual pathology and piece-meal rehabilitation. In fact, the United Nations (UN) is the supreme mediator of the principle of liberal democratic rule globally and has strong interest in spreading to the poor countries of the South the values and codes of practices designed by the public sector in industrial North that has a completely different social, political, economic and cultural identity and ethos. By encouraging private and voluntary sectors, it is ensured that the state regulation of childhood is done in line with colonial diktats. Simultaneously, schools of social work are being

developed and supported by such forces to churn out thousands of social work professionals that work as man-force to Ministries of Social Welfare, especially in the third world countries (Hardiman & Midgley 1982; Boyden 1997). Further, there is an enormous focus on family planning, counselling, anti-labour laws, schooling and population control (Qvortrup 1994; James & Prout 1997). These kinds of approaches study and analyze the problems of third world in a neo-Malthusian frame of understanding. The over-emphasis on education, schooling and vocational training is to supply uncritical foot-soldiers for the production of capitalism (Sadgopal 2010). In spite of the fanfare around the modern liberal discourses on child rights, the condition of children is exacerbating in the present circumstances. In most parts of the developing and under-developed regions across globe they are victims, directly or indirectly, of the global capitalist hegemony, and are facing the worst forms of structural violence and inequalities (Bequele & Boyden 1988). The extreme forms of poverty and inequalities are being created and perpetuated by the present models of development and policy. In such precarious circumstances children are bound to get exploited and victimized in diverse forms. Ironically, the legislation that are being developed to secure the so-called child welfare and development are the colonial products and heavily influenced by the European and North American contexts. In other words through these legislations and policy structures the so called 'ideal and normative childhood' is being exported and globalized (Boyden 2003; James & Prout 1997). For instance, the United Nations Convention on Child Rights (UNCRC), ignores the evidence that conception of 'rights' is intimately tied up with cultural values and outlook of societies and communities. It could only apply to a geo-political area in which the same attitude to law, the same political system and compatible cultural traditions are rooted firmly (Ibid; Qvortrup 1991; Rosen 2005). Nonetheless, the role of UNCRC in moulding and developing new discourses around child rights and development is profoundly acknowledged. Yet, without contextualizing such universal and global normative ideals of childhood and child-rights, its relevance is severely questioned then. For example, it is illegal to leave infant in charge of juveniles and small children under fourteen. While in Peru National census records show a significant group of 6-14 years of children who head households (Boyden 1985). In India in a survey of 600 children in Bangalore 6% of them were the sole working and earning member of families (Patil 1986). Also, the neglect of extended-

family system and preference to nuclear-family system illogically undervalues the lived-experiences of the children in such contexts, like Middle East or other muslim nations, where extended family or shared parenthood is a cultural norm and deeply embedded in the social structure. Similarly, the juvenile justice system on the Western pattern proved inefficient and ineffective in Nigeria. (Igbinovia 1985; Midgley 1986) Thus, it is the socio-economic and politico-cultural milieu that mainly determines the conditions of children.

Much similar to the analysis by feminist theorists of women's position in the overarching male-dominated social structure, the status of children in the dominant paradigms remains dotted with incompetence, vulnerability, dependency, immaturity, and irrationality, and in want of adult protection and supervision, who are regarded as mature, competent and autonomous. These psychological models, reflecting Cartesian dualism or Binarism, were uncritically absorbed into the theory and practice that affected constructions and conceptualizations of childhood (Mackay 1972), and, subsequently, that informed the de-contextualized child policy frameworks across globe (Boyden 1994 & 1997; Qvortrup 1991). In a Foucauldian sense, these vulnerability-paradigms of childhood draw institutional legality from 'regimes of truth' that pervade the social structure and institutions. Such institutional power and authority validates certain ideals and practices, and resists the 'others'. In such a scenario, any new or emergent paradigm would definitely meet resistance from the existing dominant academic discourses and that resistance is located in the same structural functions. Nonetheless, the dissenting and critical voices made some impact and mediated 'a re-arrange' in disciplinary fundamentals. Similarly, the psychological models of childhood attempted to take into account the social context, and thus trying to bridge social and psychological perspectives. Though, this contextualization of child development turned out to be too superficial. Here, it is emphasized that that this dominant 'development-in-a-social-context' or 'individual/ society binarism' merely introduces the psychological processes to social forces, without identifying the links and pathways that actually determine this complex and dynamic relationship (Ingleby 1986). It assumes individual subject, here child, separate from the social structure, and being in the process of 'becoming' adult. In this dissertation, this debate has been taken a bit further in the following section that

discusses the emergent social constructionist paradigm of childhood originating from the post-structuralist and post-modernist discourses.

3.5: Childhood: The Emergent Social Constructionist Paradigm

In dissolving the academic distinctions between psychology and sociology, the inclusion or taking into account the 'social context' in the developmental psychology models was a pioneering advance. In fact, it was the first step towards a social constructionist analysis of childhood. Quite interestingly, it became a precursor in the deconstruction of the *grand narratives* of 'universality', 'vulnerability' and 'naturalness' of childhood. Even though there have been tendencies in developmental psychological tradition to overcome the Cartesian dualism by taking recourse to Foucault's work, preoccupation with the individualistic focus has not changed radically. These emergent notions of childhood are not a complete disjuncture from the dominant childhood discourses. Moreover, the influence of Cartesian dualism (Binarism) that assumed 'subjects' to be outside the social relationships and social context, on the childhood-conceptualizations got overcome mainly with the work of Foucault *(Ibid)*. One of the main distinctions between Structuralism and Post-Structuralism that heavily shaped the social constructionist notions of childhood was that the former 'abolished' the 'subjects' and consider them just 'bearers' of social relationships, but the latter retained them as 'effects' of 'discourse (Oldman 1991; James and Prout 1997; Prout 2005). Arguably, it is these discursive 'effects' that are differently constituted as *'childhoods'* within these structural arrangements of social practices and institutions. This emphasis on 'subjectivity' traverses the diversity of these social relationships and arrives at a social constructionist interpretation of early years of human life-course *i.e.* childhood. Moreover, the discursive transformations or different forms of childhood are assumed to be happening even within one *'child'*.

Nonetheless, the social constructionist approach to children can't be one more paradigm of 'compartmentalization', diseased with self-fulfilling prophecies, individualism and complacency. A lot many problems emerge from the fact that both the biological and social factors constitute childhood and the variability of different biological and physical stages of growth in early years of human-life need to be counted too. What weight should be given to each factor – social and biological, in the construction of childhood(s). Is there anything called 'real' or 'authentic'

experience of childhood? Pertinently, the proponents of social constructionist paradigm emphasize that each 'variant' of a childhood is 'real' in its own 'regime of truth' (James 1993; Hart and Tyrer 2006; Prout 2008). The contribution of ethnography in this emergent paradigm has strongly been recognized as that methodological tradition (Boyden 2003) which gets nearer to the truth in conceptualizing children and childhood by giving voice to 'previously silent' or 'muted' groups like children.

3.6: Childhood: Agency/Structure Debate

Much in congruence with the present debate of 'agency' and 'structure' in the contemporary sociological thought, the emergent paradigms of childhood certainly confront the same. In the social constructionist paradigm the focus on children 'having agency' or on their 'activity' and 'creative production' in social life quite significantly influences the constructions and conceptualizations of childhood. On the other hand, the dominant discourses around childhood stressed the role of 'structure' and 'social relationships' in determining the social life of children. The 'one-against-other-approach' of this debate was somewhat negotiated by taking recourse to the works of the theorists like Giddens. His theory of 'Structuration' attempts to dialectically link the 'Interpretivists' – who focus on 'agency', with the 'Interactionists' – who emphasize on 'structure', essentially forms a theoretical space, where the construction of childhood extends beyond compartmentalization and uni-disciplinarity. More importantly, it reifies it onto another interdisciplinary plane with dimensions of 'time', 'space' and 'body'; considers childhood as an institution, and simultaneously, values children's 'agency' that they execute upon the structural and institutional determinants (Qvortup 1991). Significantly, the social construction of time or the incorporation of temporality, into this emergent discourse of childhood broadens its scope for analysis and practice (James and Prout 1997). The attention, a comprehensive one, on the children's 'body, space and time' is an indispensable component of the analysis. This is a departure from the dominant conceptualizations of childhood rooted in developmental psychology and social evolutionary perspectives. The latter frames of analysis regard the 'past' and 'future' of children's life-course, and the 'present' gets cornered in oblivion. Thus, placing all accounts of

childhood in spatial and temporal context, and deconstructing the notions based on social reproduction and socialization theories, have great influence on understanding the 'variance' in experienced childhoods across globe. Such an approach has an enormous bearing on the policy and practice affecting children's daily lives in different parts of the globe, particularly in those confronting complex emergencies like armed-conflicts, etc.

3.7: Childhood: Experience in Armed Conflicts

The dominant research, policy and practice in the field of 'children confronting armed conflicts', has focussed, too narrowly, on the affected and disadvantaged children and the survivors of war, rather than on the structural determinants and social formations that actually give rise to such conditions of conflict. These approaches employed to study childhood in conflict situations reflected the over-arching influence of the bio-medical paradigm on childhood theory and practice. Moreover, most of the social science research has been developed in the contexts other than that of an armed conflict. The policy and practice concerning children in war zones is greatly influenced by the psychological and psychopathological research done in some 'unrelated' contexts and with problematic conceptualizations of childhood. The use of the therapeutic work conducted in West enormously emphasized the psychopathological impact and resorted to intense psychological categorization by using the universal PTSD criteria (Boyden 1991 and 2003; Hart and Tyrer 2006). The children's responses to the traumatic situations, as usual in an armed conflict, were explained through Piagetian stage and cognitive depiction and psycho-dynamic and attachment theories (Bracken 1998 and Le Vine 1999). In its sheer simplistic understanding, the PTSD was regarded as the 'global response' to the exposure of any traumatic experience, ignoring the cultural and historical origins and variabilities of the coping and management of risk and stress. Such was the influence of the psychological and emotional focus of this research that the global policy concerning children witnessed a drastic shift from addressing the structural determinants and outcomes of any disadvantage – inequalities, nutrition, survival needs, water and sanitation, etc, to focus on the psychopathological interventions. The excessive stress on the individual pathology, quite in congruence with the bio-medical paradigm, changed the nature of the 'aid packages', where the major portion of allocation is for psychopathological issues in children facing armed conflicts. The emphasis on the

psychological and emotional treatment and rehabilitation is locating in the redefinition of the children's needs in a conflict zone - security, continuity and stability (Boyden 1991 , Doty 2010). The conceptualizations of children as passive victims of war, conflict and violence, rather than competent survivors, excludes them from the decisions and planning concerning them (Bracken and Petty 1998). In a qualitative study on Palestinian children, Gillham *et al* (2008) cautiously concludes that the Western models of dealing with children in conflict zones ignore 'a local idiom of communal care and support'. Much problematic is the concept of having a 'universal' and 'uniform patterns' of children's response to a traumatic event. This oversimplification of the patterns of responses of children in conflict situation further narrows the scope of acknowledging the cultural and social constructions of children and their experiences. As Boyden (2003) reiterates:

> Scientific studies that claim to have discovered a general condition of childhood belie the ethnographic evidence that childhood is an extremely diverse life phase and ignore the fact that the globalized image of childhood they project is in many respects a normative one. In practice, childhood is not a fixed state bound by predetermined developmental stages, but a diverse, shifting category that follows certain biological sequences, and responds to the cultural and social environment, genetic heritage, personal agency and economic and political circumstance. Social constructions of childhood are extremely variable and context-specific. *(para 7)*

Thus, there are no common patterns for growth, development and socialization, and it is actually the interplay of 'biology', 'culture' and 'structure that determines the personality, perceptions, and behavioural inclinations in a social being. Similarly, the responses of children to violence and trauma in an armed conflict are quite dynamic, varied, unpredictable and not universal. As Gardener (1983) argues that children's responses are varied and diverse and 'not simply a function of age or any developmental-stage'. Alternatively, the focus of the policy and practice must be the social reconstruction and reconciliation that aims to restore social structures and social ecologies of childhood by actively working with the community. Building participatory networks and constituencies that are informed by the principles of justice and equity, is the foundational process involved in such an approach. The basic conceptualizations of childhood that garner such orientation are to consider children as active agents for overcoming adversity; who resolve problems and explore alternatives; who protect their self-esteem; and who actively manage their social

interactions, that in turn enhances their resilience (Doty 2010) and coping mechanisms (Beristain 1996; Patel et al 2007). The self-defeating and self-destructive responses get prevented by consciously exploring alternative and developing survival strategies to face adversity (Nandy 1987; Boyden 2002; Prout 2007; Ibid).

The role of culture in the cognitive, emotional and mental development of children is an essential aspect on which policy makers could focus (Vygotsky 1978 cited in Boyden 2003; Oldman 1991). Pertinently, the responses of children to any traumatic experience in a conflict situation have an 'active and structuring' effect on such children. These adverse circumstances or exposures to traumatic events enable them to acquire skills, coping strategies and survival competencies. In the emerging literature on children and conflict, the enhancement in children's resilience and coping in the abnormal and dehumanizing conditions has been significantly documented (Woodhead 1999; Dawes 2000, James and Prout 2007, Harkness and Super 1996; Boyden 2007; Gillham et al 2008; Patel et al 2007; Doty 2010). As pointed out in the earlier sections, the de-contextualized, universal and vulnerable discourses of childhood prove to be quite problematic in this scenario. The adoption of such conceptualizations of childhood in international policy and practice has chronically neglected the child's personal agency, resilience and capabilities to explore alternatives in the contexts of adversities like armed conflicts. However, it is also emphasized that even with in a specific context a child's structural position is subject to his social power and status. Acknowledging these dynamic and complex aspects of childhood is quite essential in determining children's responses to a traumatic experience and its subsequent impact. To develop a comprehensive policy intervention in complex emergencies, the stakeholders ought to be conscious of the dynamic relationships and pathways between children's social structural position, relativity in exposure to vulnerability and trauma, and their resilience, coping and survival strategies. It is reiterated that in the emergency situations, the vulnerability of children with less 'power', 'value' or 'status' gets accentuated (Woodhead 1998). The emergency bereaves them of the protective mechanisms and support networks, and thus exacerbating their susceptibility to diverse hazards and risks. Bringing in the 'age' and 'gender' variables further complicates the problem: where elder boys (sons) get exposed to violence and direct confrontation, and elder girls (daughters) are prone to sexual assault, extortion, trafficking and prostitution (Black 1986; Cairns 1996;

Boyden and Hart 2007). The lower age-group children face risks of abandonment, forced labour, sexual abuse, etc. The risks and vulnerabilities of children confronting complex emergencies have determinants in the broad socio-cultural, political and economic milieu that pervades the social ecologies of these childhoods. Unfortunately, in the international research and policy too little attention is paid to such broad structural formations and children's own social power and agency (Cairns 1996; Prout 2005).

3.8: Childhood: Between Risk, Resilience and Rhetoric

Humans have socially-mediated mechanisms, patterns and approaches to manage adverse and complex emergencies. Their indigenous notions of well-being, causality and spirituality, power and identity, define their perceptions of and responses to any event (White 1998). Thus, to formulate and develop policy intervention for children in adverse contexts, the approach necessitates a departure, though not in totality, from the dominant biomedical paradigm that claims to have an 'objective' closeness to reality and causality, demeaning subjective interpretations of human life. The positivist frameworks on which the present child policy and practice rests, de-contextualises and reduces 'children' to replicable units having universal patterns of development, socialization and adaptation. As mentioned elsewhere, this approach is in contradiction with the revelations from the emergent literature on the children's agency and resilience in situations of adversity (Dawes 1992; White 1998; Prout 2008, James and Prout 2007, Black 2001, Punch 1998; Waksler 1994 cited in Boyden 2003). It is emphatically concluded in these studies that children reared in the environment that guarantees self-assurance, autonomy and independence had promoted-levels of self-esteem, well-being and self-efficacy (Aptekar 1989; Patel et al 2007). Children have valid insights and analytical perspectives of their own and which may not be perfectly congruent with the adult perspectives and notions. However, the present dominant childhood research and policy-orientation is based on adult opinions that treat children as 'mass of victims' and 'passive' objects of adult decision. The overwhelming and pre-conceived notions of vulnerability of children create barriers to understand children's varied-responses to complex traumatic experiences. It poses threat to their self-esteem, self-efficacy and personal strength.

Similarly, the misplaced policy-interventions neglect the creative approaches that children take recourse to manage risks and adversities (Oldman 1991; Qvortrup 1994; Cairns 1996).

The growing literature on the subjects of 'children facing adversity' has enormously focussed on the children's exercising of agency, exploring alternatives and consciously taking control of their lives in the adverse situations (Dawes 1992, Hart and Tyrer 2006, Doty 2010). Surprisingly, it is revealed that how the emergency situation and upheavals create additional obligations and possibilities for children to explore, think and contribute their ideas, skills, and energies that enhance their resilience and coping mechanisms. Thus, the resourcefulness, competence and contribution of children must be integrated with the global and national policy and practice that affects children directly or indirectly. This argument is no way to generalize that *all* children manifest resilience or resourcefulness in the times of trauma and damage, but it is reemphasized that the assumptions – children have *inherent* vulnerability, could blind our vision and distract policy makers and researchers and make them complacent in not taking into account the self-protective strategies, strengths, capacities and participation of children in policy formulation. Moreover, it is reiterated that the complete departure is not what is being argued here. Rather, a deconstruction of the *grand narratives* like 'universality' in the globalized notions of childhood is advocated. The approach takes into account the structural causes and effects, social formations and contexts, children's own agency and resources. It gives children a space in both the theoretical and practical domains, to assert their views and perspectives. These insights of children are considered as 'sources' of learning and informing the policy and practice affecting them in complex emergencies like armed conflict.

In conflicts children are not just the passive victims but also active participants. They identify with the movements or struggles of their people and communities against imperial or foreign aggression and occupation, state repression and human rights abuses. Hein et al (1993) found in a Palestinian-community sample of 1200 children that in spite of facing severe atrocities and repression at the hands of Israeli army these children's identification with the intifada as a struggle for Palestinian identity seemed to be socially and psychologically protective. It was found that those children

who reported a 'willingness' to confront 'enemy-soldiers' included many with history of confrontation and beatings and had higher 'self-esteem' than the others. Similarly, in Kashmir conflict since 2007 the massive public protests[4] in favour of the Right to Self Determination and against the human rights abuses, witnessed a huge and persistent participation from children and young people (Junaid 2010; Navlakha 2010; Kashmir Media Services[5] 2011) When these public protests and demonstrations are dispersed and thwarted by the state forces, these children and young people actively confront the security-forces with stones and engage them for days together. Since 2007 more than 150 'teenagers' got killed and many hundreds seriously injured in the firing on 'child stone-pelters' by the police and para-military forces. A lot more have been tortured, booked and incarcerated under severe punitive acts like J&K Public Safety Act[6](Ibid). Yet the persistent and undeterred participation and confrontation of children and young people with 'stone-pelting' brought the Kashmir conflict once again in the international limelight. The young peoples' resistance contests the grand-narratives of the 'state-perceived' peace, security and normalcy. As Wessells (1998) argues that young people may define own identity in part by extreme opposition to those perceived as 'enemies, and they find considerable meaning in identifying with and working for the cause or struggle of their people and communities for liberation and nationhood. This pattern of associations and identifications of children with popular struggles and resistance movements has been associated with the reduction of

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[4] After passing from a two-decadal militant phase, the Kashmir conflict has witnessed huge public participation of common masses irrespective of age, gender and region. Particularly, since 2007 massive public protests and demonstrations have taken place in support of the Right to Self Determination and against human rights abuse by the army and other security personnel. These demonstrations have seen unprecedented participation of young people and children, and from where the revival of 'stone-pelting' on security forces took place.

[5] For more details and statistics related to Kashmir Conflict see www.kmsnews.org/ (Consulted on May 10, 2011).

[6] Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, is considered as a most dreaded Draconian act and the State's major tool of suppression and oppression in Kashmir. Under this act a person can be detained for two years without any trial. The detention under this Act is a State-perceived preventive custody. In Kashmir, hundreds of people, including children, have been detained for years under this Act. The Act finds its roots in the Defence of India Act (DIA) during the British rule in India. In fact, the PSA happens to be a more punitive form of the DIA that was described by various Indian 'National' leaders including M. K. Gandhi as draconian and a black law enacted by Britishers to suppress Indian freedom struggle. After independence of India, Defense of India Act changed nomenclature in the year 1967 and is presently known as Public Safety Act, more precisely in Jammu and Kashmir as Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act-1978 with provisions and impunity almost similar to the act of British era. Legal luminaries and international human rights organizations have been persistently demanding review of this act. (Hashmi 2007).

anxiety and depression (Straker 1992; Punamki 1996). In South Africa similar observations were made by the research on children of Soweto (Swartz 1989).

Shortcomings in policy and practice concerning children in armed conflicts are the result of the erroneous and problematic conceptualizations of the issues and their solutions, inadequate empirical evidence to support specific interventions, and unquestioned assumptions about children's development, capacities and vulnerabilities. The social science research in the field of 'children facing adversity' has challenged the conventional paradigms and provided new insights into how to assist children who are experiencing complex emergencies like armed conflict. The emerging perspectives have questioned the relevance of child policy and practice imposed from 'outside' the child's social, economic and cultural context. This approach makes it imperative that the policy interventions must not be hegemonic and decontextualized, but inclusive and culturally relevant and meaningful. Moreover, the dominant child protection philosophy is beset by the challenges posed to it at conceptual, methodological, theoretical and practical levels (Boyden and Mann 2005). The children's experiences of adversity are mediated by a host of internal and external factors that are insuperable from the social, political, economic and cultural milieus in which children live. Besides, the research has documented that 'resilience' of children gets enhanced if they experience 'approval, acceptance and opportunities' but decreased if children face 'victimization, rejection, failure and humiliation' (Tompkins 1995; Amin & Rashid 2010). The role of family, extended-households and community is essential in enhancing the skills, competence and resilience among children. Though the phenomenon of 'resilience' is a complex and developmental process, yet in most of the literature on children and conflict it is conceived of more as the absence of pathology rather than the presence of the personal agency in children. The main reason of this trend is the privileging of adult perception over children's experience.

The disparities exist between groups and categories of children with respect to their exposure to risk, survival, coping and wellbeing (Boyden and Mann 2005). The inequalities and disadvantages have structural causes that heavily influence or mould lives of children. Being seldom in the control of the individual, these disparities get transmitted to successive generations. These structural inequalities emanate from the

political, economic and social conditions besetting such people and communities. As a child grows up in such circumstances this structural vulnerability gets compounded and accumulated at various levels of socialization and interaction, rendering it susceptible to social, economic and psychological disruption and distress. Some 'radical' child rights advocates have strongly emphasized the *role and responsibility of state* in perpetuating these disparities and inequalities among various groups and categories of children, owing to the latter's ethnicity, race, religion, political or cultural origins. Gathering evidence pointing to the political causes of childhood suffering and problems, they have shown that the states and political structures victimize and imperil children, and sometimes even under the guise of 'protection' (Kakkar 1978; Qvortrup 1994; Woodhead 1998; Macheal 2001; Boyden & Mann 2005; Rashid 2009; Amin and Rashid 2010). Thus the social, economic and political arrangements and structures heavily influence the lives of children, directly or indirectly. The policy and practice, however, rarely considers such structural determinants and dimensions in its understanding of children and their issues. The policy makers are quite often reluctant to engage with the issues that have political, social or cultural roots. Though, it in itself reflects the underlying and implicit politics that diseases such problematic conception and perception. In a typical biomedical paradigm, they prefer to 'depoliticize the suffering and deprivation, and advocate individual remedial interventions and programs. Such a narrow simplistic and trivializing analysis of these complex issues deepens the suffering and victimization of children and creates more dangers to their wellbeing, prosperity and development. Pertinently, the growing emphasis of present research on mental health, especially of children, in the regions of armed conflicts, and categorization of the human response to adversity in the *'global PTSD syndrome'* (Bracken, Giller and Summerfield 1995) detracts attention from the social, political and economic nature of the adversities, suffering and victimization. Unfortunately, the majority of humanitarian aid allocations are made or diverted to sectors of psycho-medicine and mental health and to 'address' such psychopathology and problems. The approach emphasizes individual psychopathology and individualized therapeutic care in clinical settings and undermines the structural determinants and contexts that actually shape and lie at the roots.

As pointed out earlier, the policies affecting children, especially in the context of armed conflicts, has been unjustly dominated by the European and North American values and ideals. This dominance of North ethnocentrism and hegemonic conceptualizations is influencing and informing the mandates and programs of the major humanitarian agencies and international child rights organizations (Keen 1998). Contrarily, in cultures where life is colored by spiritual cosmology, the people have faith-based mechanisms of healing, treatment and purification, In Angola, for instance, the local people prefer to use traditional methods and ritual-purification of 'child-soldiers'. It is believed that a child soldier is haunted by the 'spirits' of those he killed (Green & Wessells 1995; Wessells 1998).

In such a scenario the excessive reliance on Western methods of psycho-medicine marginalize the local cultures, adding irrelevance to the lives of the local people, particularly children. The problematic individual focus of the western models undermines the communal and community-based support for children in distress. These models fail to acknowledge that 'trauma' is viewed as a manifestation of a social disorder deeply embedded in the social structure and not as an individual phenomenon.

Chapter 4

International Policies, Humanitarianism and Children in Armed Conflicts

CHAPTER 4: INTERNATIONAL POLICY, HUMANITARIANISM AND CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICTS

4.1: Introduction:

The review and discussions on the issues and experiences of children in armed conflicts and the diverse debates and perspectives on childhood in academia attempted in the previous chapters have led to a number of central themes around the topic. These themes range from: 1. The complexity and dynamics of the issues of children experiencing conflict; 2. The dominant paradigms of understanding children facing adversity, their childhood, needs and issues; and 3. The underlying political, economic and cultural forces and factors that influence these academic debates and that how the 'ingrained politics', mainly western, determines the international policy towards children in armed conflicts. The present chapter of this dissertation locates and analyses the international policy response concerning children in conflict situation in these debates and perspectives. In this background, it attempts to critically evaluate the role of humanitarian organizations and international chid-rights agencies in complex emergencies like that of an armed conflict.

4.2: Humanitarianism, Transformation and International Politics

Within the fast-growing agenda of human rights and the excessive emphasis on the human rights at international level, the humanitarian policy and aid interventions have occupied a central place in international politics and relations. Under the garb of 'ethical' and 'moral' rhetoric, the humanitarian and foreign policy is no longer seen separate or mutually exclusive. The integration of humanitarian organizations and other international agencies into the policy-making has given so called 'humanitarian face to the State's strategic policy and foreign relations (Parekh 1997; Curtis 2001; Barakat & Wardell 2002). Though, such transformations have strongly taken place in developed states, but many non-western states like India and China, have also taken a lead in this direction (Chandler 2001; Kapila 2004; Sengupta 2006). The present approach of humanitarian agencies – state or non-state, is more interventionist and

legitimized as a rights-based, ethically-driven and non-political 'new-humanitarianism' (Reiff 1995; Weiss 2001). This redefinition and re-conceptualization of humanitarianism has deep-rooted political, economic and ethnocentric factors that have an immense bearing on the nature, extent and distribution of humanitarian aid interventions in the third-world especially in the regions of armed conflict (Summerfield 1996; Chandler 2001). The excessive involvement and integration of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and private agencies in such endeavours has tremendously politicized the present day humanitarian aid and policy. Moreover, the functionalist and individualistic disciplines and approaches like that of social work and psychological perspectives have greatly influenced and shaped such humanitarianism. The 'new humanitarian approach' has transformed itself into an international politics, which has taken a serious retreat from the traditional principles, not un-critiqued though, of humanitarianism like neutrality, impartiality, humanity and universality (Barnett 2005; Domini 2010). The consequences of this change at the international level is manifested in the increasing role of western states and its allies in military aggressions, gloated as 'military humanitarianism' in the developing and poor nations particularly in the regions caught in armed conflicts. The nature of the 'need-based' or 'rights-based' aid interventions is greatly moulded in line with the western international advantages and interests.

The International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) has been at the forefront in establishing values of humanitarian universalism and in propagating the principles of neutrality, impartiality and universality to its interventions. Importantly, the separation of humanitarian sphere from that of political one is projected as the core value being emphasized through ICRC guidelines (Weiss 2001; Curtis 2001). The non-political outlook of ICRC, in the words of Michaeal Ignatieff (cited in Chandler 2001), is described as that '...[ICRC] makes no distinction between good wars and bad wars, between just and unjust causes, or war between aggressors and innocents." (p 680).

Similarly, the United Nations set up institutions solely for the humanitarian aid like UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in 1943-47, the UN International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 1946 UN High Commissioner

for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950. These institutions were conceptualized to be non-political, impartial and non-discriminatory platforms for humanitarianism. Besides, Amnesty International set up in 1961, pursued universal campaign for the protection and safe-guarding the rights of political prisoners irrespective of the political affiliation, belief or region of the prisoner. It advocated for establishing a minimum universal standards of treatment for political prisoners. Likewise, the ICRC values and principles for the humanitarian interventions also started getting reflected in the policies of private charities and organizations like Save the Children, Oxfam, etc. In the aftermath of World War-II and Cold War era many of these organizations pursued to fill the gaps in the humanitarian needs which the collapsed political systems failed or were unable to do (Leebaw 2003; Lischer 2005). By the end of 1940, these organizations widened the scope of work and intervention and took a more permanent role in humanitarianism especially in the developing world. There was an emphatic claim of universality, neutrality and non-political outlook in their work. It is claimed that such organizations mediated a radical change in humanitarianism so much and so that, aid NGOs intervened in certain crises like Biafre Crisis[1] in 1968, in spite of international dis-approval towards assisting and intervening in such situations (Summerfield 1996; Chandler 2001). The geo-political divide and pursuing realpolitik in the aftermath of cold war, the major western states were not willing to assist or provide aid. These organizations claimed that their humanitarian relief and aid interventions were non-political and un-conditional, without linking it to western states or to dictate foreign, economic or social policy of the recipient nations (Rieff 1995; MacFarlane 1999). During 1960s and 1970s, there was a clear distinction between the state-led aid and the NGO humanitarian aid to meet the 'needs' of the developing and poor states that had problems of war and famine (Leader & Macrae 2000; Murshed 2002; Vaux 2006). The so called radical non-state humanitarian organisations, nonetheless, did not locate and study problems of inequality and deprivation in an international context, which in reality lie in the broader structural relations of power and dependency. The post-cold War changes in humanitarianism

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[1]   Biafra, officially the Republic of Biafra, was a secessionist state in south-eastern Nigeria that existed from 30 May 1967 to 15 January 1970, The creation of the new country was among the complex causes for the Nigerian Civil War, also known as the Nigerian-Biafran War or Crisis. (For details see: Minahan, James 2002. _Encyclopaedia of the Stateless Nations:_ Greenwood Publishing Group).

led to a shift of focus from emergency aid to the 'long-term developmentalism' that was conceptualized to be as an increasing involvement of NGOs and grass-roots organizations with a more extension of rights-based approach. The long-term assistance was defined in the terms of 'peace-making', 'empowerment', 'capacity-building and development'. Unfortunately, such humanitarian endeavours and approaches were dominated by the over-simplistic analysis of problems with an extreme individualistic orientation and models of intervention. Particularly, the problems and concerns in the regions of armed conflicts were seen as the indigenous and internal, having roots in the ethnic and cultural norms (Sadowski 1998). The rhetoric of empowerment and development was used with the language of morals and ethics, with an alleged non-political guise. The resulting polices and interventions in developing nations and other non-western states were conceptualized in line with the western models and frameworks, much in contradiction with the local cultures and contexts. Hence, the shift in humanitarianism from need-based approach to rights-based one made little contribution in changing the quality of life of the people living in third world and marginalized regions (Summerfield 1996; Parekh 1997). The piecemeal and individualistic focus of humanitarian aid interventions proved to be too superficial and problematic that the onus of the underdevelopment, poverty, disease and illness is put on the indigenous and local populations itself (Ibid; Sadowski 1998). The aid and interference of external agency is projected as an ethical, moral and humane duty and responsibility, chronically neglecting the socio-economic and structural inequalities caused and perpetuated by the colonial rule and neo-colonial western politics and economic development (Harvey 2005). The involvement of NGOs led to the 'discovery' of a new humanitarian tool of neo-colonialism and neo-liberalism in the moral and ethical guise.

4.3: 'Humanitarian' Transition: Growing NGOs and the Shrinking State

An important shift was seen in 1970s and 1980s humanitarian discourses with governments and states directly funding NGOs and integrating them in the policymaking and international politics (Billon 2000; Chandler 2001). The organizations like Christian Aid, Oxfam, Save the Children and many other received huge financial grants from the state institutions and were tremendously relied upon to

execute government and international relief and aid operations across regions. As discussed, the increasing role of NGOs in the developing and underdeveloped nations and their integration and inclusion in the policy formulation, foreign politics or other political engagements, where in reality they have little or no proficiency, has worsened the conditions of already-malaise ridden populations in the third world (Parekh 1997; Curtis 2001). In such a scenario the manipulation of the humanitarian aid and assistance has been quite effectively used as a substitute to any resolute political action or intervention. Moreover, humanitarianism is seen an alternative to diplomacy just making the world believe that 'something is being done' (O'Hagun 1999). There is a serious lack of concerted endeavours to devise coordinated and comprehensive political and economic solutions to the crises. On the other hand, there is extreme form of readiness in the international humanitarian organizations to fund aid programs and intervention that are in itself too superficial and narrow. Moreover, on the pretext of humanitarianism different actors, having their own or of their donors' stakes in the activism, intervene in the regions caught in complex emergencies. The problem has become more complicated with western and rich nations attaching severe *conditionality* with aid and almost completely withdrawing *aid-without-conditionality* to poorer or underdeveloped nations. In fact, the NGOs increasingly started to become the face of the governments, particularly under the influence of neo-liberalization. This transition was explicitly visible in the area of humanitarianism (Natsios 1995; Weiss 2001). The state-led humanitarian strategies developed in western context were being exported to the poor and third world countries. These humanitarian aid and relief interventions were seen as a panacea for the underdevelopment, poverty, backwardness and deprivation across globe, while seriously neglecting the inequalities and income gaps promoted by the exploitative and capitalistic world market and military system (Chandler 2001; Harvey 2005). The earlier non-political outlook of humanitarian organizations vanished and witnessed a drastic shift as the western states and donor agencies diverted huge funds and resources to such organizations to promote and safeguard their economic, political and cultural interests in the global arena and aid-recipient nations. The humanitarian programs, in reality, were tainted by the 'superpower geopolitics and were hugely politicized, disguised and strictly conditional (Vogel 1996; Leader & Macrae 2000; Curtis 2001). As discussed, with the excessive reliance on individualistic and so

called alternative grass-root models under the rubric of 'empowerment and participation, this non-state interference had little relevance to the actual felt-needs of the people. The mushrooming of NGOs and private organizations increasingly started to replace governmental institutions at the grass-root level that acted as an escape route for the state to shed its accountability and responsibility towards peoples' needs (Amin 2000; Qadeer 2005) Moreover, as the developing and underdeveloped states were being plunged into debt-crisis and Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), t welfare and social sectors started to collapse (*Ibid*) and thus making inevitable the coming of the neo-liberal 'messiah – NGOs, for the third world 'crisis'. The inequalities have only deepened, deprivation and suffering has exacerbated and the people's resources are being exploited and exchanged for dependency, poverty and hunger. These external humanitarian agencies also created tensions in the indigenous political systems, thus causing conflicts and division, and above all delegitimizing local state's structure under the garb of emancipation, capacity building and social engineering (Summerfield 1996; Sawdoski 1998; Zwi, Fustukian & Sethi 2002). It portrayed non-western states as incapable of self- governance and in dire need of external assistance. Besides the presence of humanitarian organization in the third world, the nature of humanitarian aid and interventions in the regions facing armed conflicts has been implicitly more exploitative and disempowering, diseased with ethnocentric politics. The following section analyse the role of humanitarian agencies in armed conflicts in the framework of power, dominance and creation of knowledge. The different players and factors – media, politics and propaganda, the west and humanitarian organizations take recourse to in promoting their models of intervention and knowledge, and eventually safeguarding their own interests. Contextualizing these debates of humanitarianism and international politics within the mandate of this dissertation, it becomes interesting rather imperative to review international policy, research and practice concerning children who are facing war and armed conflict.

4.4: Child Rights Activism: The Politics of Innocence

The role of organizations working in the third world conflict zones is pre-dominantly influenced by the western policy models and frameworks. There basic conceptualizations of children, their issues, as elaborated in previous chapters are too

simplistic, problematic and unrelated to the contexts in which such children live and confront adversity and contingencies of life. Such a policy approach undermines the cultural and local understandings and context specific socio-economic picture and above-all the structural determinants of the issues and problems for which they legitimize their presence and intervention.

The international aid organizations and other global child-rights organizations quite effectively use media – both national and international, to influence masses, in general, and mobilize donors, in particular. In the context of armed conflict they strategically exaggerate and mystify suffering and warn of dire predictions if their *messianic* interventions are not carried out (Rieff 1995: Billon 2000; Curtis 2001; Barakat, and Wardell 2002). In the case of children experiencing conflict, they are depicted as 'helpless victims of distress', who are mentally-ill, most of them being suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and above all who need a saviour in the form an external aid agencies or professionals (Summerfield 1996; Boyden 2006; Hart & Tyrer 2006). Their nexus with media further facilitates the promotion of their narratives and gives them a global reach to attract funds and grants from donors. Ironically, the media industry in the conflict situations is pre-occupied with the 'search for victims', where journalists are impatient to find 'a good' story, i.e. *a mass atrocity,* for media promotion of humanitarian cause. As Chandler (2001) argues :

> "Human rights NGOs have explained the civil conflicts as events in and of themselves, from which it can only be concluded that the people of these regions are uncivilized, prone to violent and savage ethnic passions, or at the very least easily manipulated by governmental propaganda because they lack independent critical faculty" (p691).

Thus, by dehumanizing the indigenous populations and communities and denigrating the local political structures, the external agencies legitimize the western activism by emphasizing the rhetoric of rights-based approach and 'best-interest' politics. The intense ethnocentric bias, de-contextualized problematization of issues and universalistic programs and polices get clearly reflected when we review and analyse the policy response towards children in armed conflict zones. The psycho-social work or mental health in conflict has seen an overwhelming focus of humanitarian aid interventions in the recent past (Boyden 2003). There has been redefinition of suffering and victimization of people facing conflict especially of children, into a

psychological condition and traumatisation, where the western psychosocial models are replicated. This creates inappropriate sick-roles and neglects the cultural and local understandings of loss, suffering and illness (Summerfield 1995; Boyden *Ibid*; Patel 2007). This individualistic and narrow approach sidelines people's own choices, traditions, communal and indigenous healing and support structures. The mental health problems are mystified and the role of western experts and psycho-medicine is aggrandized and assumed to be applicable universally across cultures and regions.

4.5: UNCRC and International Policy: Globalizing the Western Childhood

The 1989 United Nations Convention of Child Rights (UNCRC) has an overwhelming and overriding influence on the approaches, polices and methods of humanitarian organizations, both international and regional, working on child rights. The convention is the most important and influential legal and policy instrument for children in International Humanitarian Law (IHL). This meta-text has been uncritically adopted and ratified globally by the nation states and highly revered by the humanitarian agencies and child rights organizations especially working in the regions of armed conflict (Diaz 1997; Edson 1998). Besides, prior to this convention the international policy and intervention towards children confronting adversity or complex emergency was more in terms of 'short-lived schemes' and temporary interventions where children were designated as 'zones of peace' (Ibid). However, these interventions and schemes were of limited capacity and the relief offered was of temporary nature. Moreover, these programs were on decline (Zwi 1992) and catered partially to the superficial emergency needs of children. In fact, children were considered as 'low politics' (Edson *op.cit*) and were not a priority in the international policy and politics in the backdrop of post-Cold War era. Such interventions, moreover, were greatly determined and calibrated by the post-Cold War politics, where western and European states used humanitarian aid to further their own political and ideological agendas (Rosen 2007). The international policy and foreign politics of these states began to manipulate aid and use humanitarian programs to govern the receipt-states' political and regional behaviour much in congruence with the former's vested political and economic interests in the global arena. In relation to international policy for children before 1989, very few legal and policy instruments,

which were effective, existed. On November 29, 1985, the General Assembly of United Nations adopted UN Standard Minimum Rules for Administration of Juvenile Justice which is also called as 'Beijing Rules' (UNICEF 1994). After four years, the UN convention on the Rights of the Children (UNCRC) and UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (UNPJDL) were adopted in the same way, claiming to cater to the emerging children and juvenile concerns in conflict-zones and elsewhere.

4.6: Road to UNCRC

The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 effectively started the institutionalization and internationalization of human rights norms after the World War-II. Even in the non-liberal states the ratification of the Declaration assumed great pace in accordance with the pluralist tradition (Onda 1993). The global sensitization of nation-states and other state institutions regarding human rights somehow facilitated the regional human rights initiatives and movements. In 1960, the formation of Amnesty International and mobilization of other peace movement across regions regained the attention and focus of states towards human rights and that ultimately led to the creation of the International Bill on Human Rights which consisted of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1966 (Amnesty International 1999). These international legal instruments led to the spawning of regional and bilateral agreements and treaties that dealt specifically with children's rights. Consequently, it greatly initiated and facilitated the movement of international agencies and humanitarian policy groups towards the Convention on Child Rights of 1989 (Save the Children 1996; Edson 1998).

The 1959 Declaration of child Rights is considered as the source book for the 1989 Convention on Child Rights. Though, in the period with severe opposition form states like United States there had been hardly any substantial development in formulating international legal and policy instruments for children. The post-Cold War politics highly influenced the character of that opposition in particular from the US (Onda 1993; Amnesty International 1999). The source of opposition is seen as the conflict between the liberal capitalist and the communist socialist systems (Diaz 1997;

MacFarlane 1999) which during that period greatly slowed down the development of any international policy frameworks concerning children. But, after twenty years of US opposition was revoked in 1979 (Edson 1998), a new momentum was put behind the process of creating a global and universal framework for child rights. The ten year process of drafting the Convention on Child Rights began immediately. Interestingly, the Convention received quick and almost a global ratification except US and Somalia. The CRC was regarded as the global and universal child rights treaty for safeguarding, providing and protecting civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children (UNICEF 1994; Save the Children 1993). The attention to children facing complex emergency or armed conflict was emphasized. Though, CRC claimed to have transformed the child rights discourses and hence safeguarded the children's social, economic, cultural and political rights, but very little has changed on ground for the children of the developing and under-developed nations (Zwi 1992 & 1996; Edson 1998; Machel 2001; Boyden 2005). The children experiencing armed conflicts in diverse regions across globe are being overwhelmed with psycho-social and mental health programs (Summerfield 1995), where experts trained in western settings directly replicate their models of intervention while assuming universality in childhood, their rights and needs. These decontextualized notions are derived from the so called 'child rights source book' – the UNCRC. In fact, the convention acts as a meta-text for the international and humanitarian and child rights agencies where the self-conceived principle – *'the best interest of child'* is assumed to be universally applicable across diverse cultures and regions. As discussed, the trauma work and psychosocial projects saw intense spawning across regions of armed conflict (Save the Children 1993; UNICEF 1994 & 2011; Summerfiled 1995; UNHCR 1997; WHO 2002). Children in such contexts are seen as the most vulnerable and prone to traumatisation and distress of war. Depicting conflict as 'a mental health emergency', the children's mental health needs are given the primary priority in the humanitarian aid programs and interventions. Moreover, the ethnocentric biases (Edson 1998) and emphasis on the westernized notions of childhood are uncritically adopted in the policy, even that of the regional agencies and networks who have to calibrate their policies and interventions to this dominant paradigm in order to be viable for international grants and funding. The CRC became a conceptual parent of the other international and regional legal instruments and agreements concerning children. For

instance, in case of 'child-soldier crisis', the laws regulating the use of children in armed conflicts are informed by these global narratives of international policy, which sweepingly globalizing the western hegemonic notions about childhood, children's 'best-interests', needs and rights (Rosen 2005 & 2007).

When we analyse and assess the status of children experiencing armed conflict, a clear gap is visible between the rhetoric and reality of UNCRC. The promises and claims of acting as a custodian to children and their rights conceived in typically in line with neo-liberal and New World Order values of individuality, autonomy, personal independence and freedom, proved to be unreal and far from the ground-realities and contexts (Diaz 1997; Harvey 2005; Iqbal 2006). Keeping the impact of armed conflict on children in view, as discussed in detail in chapter 2, the UNCRC-based humanitarian policies and child rights-based activism seems to have failed to make any inroads (Edson *op. Cit;* Shobha 2001). Children across regions of armed conflict get killed, injured, orphaned or permanently disabled in the violence perpetrated by external, mostly-state led forces or by imperial western and European forces as in Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq, etc. Moreover, the deaths of children due to conflict-aggravated conditions like infectious diseases, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS (Zwi 1992; Iqbal 2006) and so on, have seriously questioned the biased and piece-meal humanitarian and international policy in such regions. The humanitarian aid and programs, pre-occupied with psychosocial and trauma work, rarely see the problem of children in a comprehensive and holistic sense. They fail to recognize the linkages, intersections and pathways between these diverse problems. By isolating and delinking the problems and issues of children from the structural and socio-economic factors, the dominant policy approach is to further isolate an individual problem and locate it in the child's own personal world or at maximum in its family or immediate environment. These organizations advocate and administer narrowly-conceived interventions. For instance, while condemning and discouraging all forms of participation of children in their local economic processes, they severely neglect that in developing and underdeveloped nations children are socialized to take part in the economic activity, much rooted in their cultural and situational realities (Boyden 1999; Tucker 2006). But by determining *'the best interest of child'* outside the context and realities, the aid organizations fail to integrate local understandings and meanings of childhood and children's role it the cultural, political and economic processes of

their communities. In another instance, the programs of 'peace-education' for communities, population and children in armed conflicts (Edson 1998; Perera 1999) is widely encouraged and claimed to be as the most comprehensive strategies for ensuring 'peace and conflict resolution' in fragile situations. But these programs are again based on the problematic premises that locate the understandings of peace, normalcy and security at an interpersonal or individual level, rather than considering these as socially constructed and as a socially embedded phenomenon. To ensure substantial impact of such activity, the peace education programs must be located in the socio-political and regional contexts and necessarily integrated with the indigenous and local mechanisms of conflict resolution and reconciliation in such communities. In these contexts replicating models of conflict resolution from one conflict to another is diseased with methodological, practical, ethical and utility problems (Zwi 1992; Boyden 1999; Shobha 2001; Hart & Tyrer 2006). In fact, the global grand narratives of peace, normalcy and security are forced on the diverse populations and cultures and in the name of such 'peace' initiatives hundreds of nationalities and indigenous communities across globe are suppressed, victimized and kept hostage, and made to become victims of genocide and ethnic cleansing (Shobha 2001; Murshed and Gates 2004; Sengupta 2006; Sonpar 2007; Roy 2008). However, such communities and populations have also challenged and contested such repressive and exploitative programs by gathering momentum through diverse peoples' movements and liberation struggles against the tyrant, imperial, neo-colonial regimes. The recent uprisings of 2011 in Middle-East and Arab world are quite relevant and important in that sense. More interestingly, the involvement of young people including children in demonstrations, protests and active confrontation with state-led forces has nullified the meta-narratives of state-perceived peace, normalcy and security (Rashid 2009; Navlakha 2010; Junaid 2010). Similarly, as mentioned in chapter 3, in Kashmir the participation of children as 'stone-pelters', made Kashmir conflict regain the attention of international community in the recent past. Likewise, in Syrian uprising of 2011 more than thirty child-protestors were killed by the state forces in a span of two months, while the total death toll reached 900 (Child Rights Information Network 2011).

In this way, the 1989 CRC, claimed to be a master piece to inform the international policy towards children particularly in armed-conflict situation, is a 'prime example

of the persistence of rhetoric versus reality in the Post-Cold War era' (Edson 1998). As has been argued, such grand and universal legislations or instruments, which have inherent ethnocentric biases, could not make a substantial inroad given the nature and extent of children's suffering in complex political emergencies. This systemic failure is credited to the negligence showed by child rights and humanitarian agencies towards understanding the local socio-economic and political situation and that towards contextualizing their programs and intervention in the local contexts and realities. Besides, ignoring the structural determinants of problems and regarding UNCRC as the policy source book for children has found little relevance in the lives of the affected populations in the armed conflicts. These policy models emphasize children's vulnerability and discredit their involvement as social and economic actors.

4.7: War, Children and Suffering: Socio-Cultural Dimensions

Children live and experience their childhood in congruence with their cultural, social and economic norms and systems that prevail in their communities. Their socialization with the customs, traditions and norms in a particular context defines their position and status in the community's social formations (Nandy 1987; James & Prout 1997). These communities have own context-specific, local and indigenous understandings and meanings of any phenomenon pervading their lives and social ecologies. Similarly, the notions of 'suffering', 'loss', 'pain' and 'health' are deeply embedded in the socio-cultural and politico-economic formations. Thus, in case of a community experiencing armed conflict, its responses to such situations are intensely defined by the prevailing social, cultural and local institutions and systems as mentioned earlier. However, these interpretations and meanings they attach to their suffering and adversity may not be congruent and compatible with the western interpretations of suffering and loss (Davis 1992). In fact, these are serious contradictions and conflicts between such universalistic notions of suffering and the local and indigenous interpretations of them. However, the humanitarian aid organizations and other international organizations fail, more often consciously, to integrate the cultural diversity and variance of the local communities (Prout 1989 & 2005).

Human history and memory has witnessed conflict and violence throughout. In other words, no era of human experience has been free from violence, killings and conflicts. Though', the nature, extent and distribution of conflicts and wars has tremendously changed (Macheal 200; Harbom & Wallensteen 2009). Not only that, the functions – economic, cultural and political, of wars and armed-conflicts have undergone a drastic change where its political economy has been remarkable and of utmost importance (Keen 1998).

Importantly, suffering is deeply embedded in the social structure and is at the centre of social order as people's collective experience and as a social phenomenon (Davis 1992). In these perspectives the notion of suffering as a consequence of armed conflict is 'normal' and much so when conflict and violence has been the part of the social experience and collective memory (Zwi et al 2002). Also, armed- conflict or violence is not the only source of suffering and stresses for human populations, but poverty, inequality and other forms of exploitation and victimization causes higher levels of miseries and pain for the people in the third world. Thus, it is the suffering and distress of war and conflict that is assumed to be discontinuous and different from those arising from various precarious and exploitative conditions (Curtis 2001; Billon 2000). Ironically, the humanitarian aid organizations strongly contest this argument, and play the rhetoric of 'human rights' and dehumanize war and all those involved or getting affected. These organizations through media promotion and campaigning blow it out of proportion and exaggerate the consequences of war mostly in terms of trauma and mental health disorders that throws the affected communities and social groups into extreme predicament. In such scenario there local meanings and notions of trauma and suffering severely contradict those of the western ethnocentric ones. The situation turns to be incomprehensible to them and their traditional, cultural and local recipes for coping and handling crises get collapsed (Summerfield 1996; Allott 2005; Hart & Tyrer 2006). In other words, they become victims and subjects of the mental health research endeavours and psycho-social traumatic programmes. These western debates about experience of violence and conflict commodify their suffering into a typical neo-liberal orientation, where the effects of war are seen as extreme violation of individual freedom and identity. The aid programmes target individuals and conceptualize their 'mental injury' as a derangement of autonomy and individualization (Ibid; Dawes & Donald 1994; Doty 2010). More importantly,

children facing adversity like armed conflicts have been of immense attention and importance to the child rights and aid agencies. Here again the overwhelming focus has been on the mental health research and practice (Boyden 1997 & 2003; James & Prout 1997; Prout 2005). More often, children's suffering is portrayed as 'condensed' in the psychological categorization like PTSD and it is the sector that attracts lots of aid and western mental health resources and experts.

Starting in the late 19th century and gaining global currency, there has been a tremendous growth of psycho-medical and psychological explanations of children's experiences of war or other complex emergencies (Machel 2001; Murray et al 2002; UNICEF 1997 & 2011). These westernized psycho-medical and bio-medical notions of mental health and wellbeing prevailed across international aid organization working in developing and third world nations. The mental health programmes mainstreamed the terms like 'trauma', 'stress' and psychological scars' and 'mental injuries', and created psychological categories to define an individual's mental state after exposure to adversity and emergency situation. The excessive focus on the individual pathology and administering 'counselling' as the sole and ultimate remedy, formed the core of the programmes of humanitarian aid organizations in the context of armed conflicts. Children in such circumstances become the primary targets for these individualistic interventions as they are conceptualized as the most vulnerable to trauma related illness and disorders. These western normative conceptualizations of childhood, as discussed in detail in pervious chapters, have become the source from where these policies emanate and that eventually shape the psychological and psychiatric programmes of aid organizations. Interestingly, PTSD is seen a global response to trauma (Dawes & Donald 1994; Green & Wessells 1997) and suffering, and it is this universal PTSD marker that is being exaggerated and mystified so much and so that it got reified into a *natural, normal and self-evident* accepted criteria to assess populations exposed to conflict situation or any traumatic events, The psychological help and mental aid are portrayed as the most pressing requirements of the local populations (WHO 2007; UNICEF 2011). Thus it legitimizes the entry of external aid organizations including western mental health professionals, experts and researchers. The conflict situation makes subjects available to them for mental health research and administering their psycho-medical interventions. It has been widely seen that schools and other educational institutions are primarily approached because

of the easy availability of school-pupils and young-people as research subjects (Rosen 2005; Patel et al 2007). In fact, war is depicted as the mental health emergency and where PTSD is described as a hidden epidemic capable of causing large scale pathology (UNICEF 2011). In a study conducted by MSF (2006) in the rural districts of Kashmir[2], the mental health aid, psychiatric help and counselling have been aggrandized as the primary and the most pressing needs of the people facing conflict. This study had quite narrowly used and described the notions of 'illness', 'ill-health' and 'suffering' as mere in terms psychological trauma, stress and mental depression. Ironically, the study itself demonstrated that in the local cultural perception 'counselling' did not exist. It showed that 68% of the respondents did not know what 'counselling' meant. Yet quite interestingly, the report recommends *counselling and psychological help* as the primary strategies to deal with the self-created 'mental health emergencies' in the region in lieu of armed conflict, and thus justifying their presence. Similarly, Action Aid International[3], in Kashmir has been working for seven to eight years and has been quite engrossed and involved in trauma and psychosocial work (Action Aid 2009). These two examples clearly depicts the nature and focus of international aid organizations in any conflict zone. In fact, the local and regional NGOs are only funded and their projects only accepted when the conceptualization and objectives of that activity are 'psycho-social' and 'trauma-related' *(Personal experience)*. Thus, working on mental health and providing psycho-social support seems to be the most attractive and fashionable modes of intervention and enforcing the foreign, un-related and irrelevant notions of wellbeing and suffering on the local victimized populations, and in reality to re-victimize them. Moreover, the media propaganda is used to give this view of mental emergency a global reach and warn the self-created stakeholders of a psychological fall-out of war, The western donors are increasingly becoming interested in such psychological or trauma work which has been termed by many an 'attractive and fashionable (Summerfield & Toser 1991).

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[2]   MSF started its work in Kashmir in 2000. Based in the summer capital Srinagar, it primary works on mental health and provides psychosocial   counseling and support services in selected districts of Kashmir – Kupwara, Budgam, Srinagar. It closes works with the government and integrates it counseling services in the public healthcare settings. (MSF 2006)

[3]   Action Aid International is Johannesburg-based international NGO that works across globe in numerous countries. Its primary goal and mission is to eradicate poverty. For details see: www.actionaid.org.

The 1996 estimates of UNICEF claim that 10 million children were traumatized by war in past ten years. In 2011, it estimates that 20% of world's adolescents have mental health or behavioural problems, describing that mental health problem in young as 'the present major public health challenge worldwide (UNICEF 2011). In the same breath, it advocates and prescribes that psycho-social trauma programs must form a cornerstone of the aid interventions in conflict zones. Thus, the conflict situation and wars, especially in the developing and poor nations, have attracted a large number of psycho-social projects that are sponsored by the major humanitarian aid organizations and child rights agencies and charities. These include MSF, Save the Children, UNICEF, UNHCR, Action Aid International, Christian Aid, WHO, European Community Humanitarian Organization (ECHO) and so on. For instance, in 2001 the ECHO was involved in trauma work with 15 major global NGOs, and since then its involvement in this area has doubled (Doty 2010). The huge number of mental health and psycho-social projects are approved and sponsored by major international aid organizations. It has been estimated that in conflict zones 60-70% of all aid programs are the projects related to mental health or trauma work (Summerfield 1995). However, the basic concepts and assumptions that underlie these mental health interventions have been seriously questioned and critiqued in the emerging literature in the field (Dawes & Donald 1994; Boyden 2000; Prout 2005; Sonpar 2007; Doty 2010). Particularly, the ethnographic research and evidence has showcased that how these problematic interventions interfere with and are in contradiction with the local cultures, perspectives and meanings of trauma and suffering. A brief discussion of the critique of the underlying conceptualizations of the aid programmes in conflict zones is provided here.

The excessive emphasis on the 'traumatisation' of war and projecting war as psycho-pathological emergency is seen as too problematic and narrow. Categorizing every individual member as per psychological ailment and having no empirical basis and evidence for this sweeping generalization, has raised serious methodological, ethical and relevance-related questions regarding the psychosocial and trauma projects. The chronic neglect of problems like poverty, deprivation and uneven development nullifying the pathologizing claims of aid agencies. In fact, these organizations are governed through a broader level politics that includes international capital, western interests and ethnocentric bias (Parekh 1997; Weiss 2001). The suffering of the

people is objectified and reduced to a technical problem, to which psycho-medical or psycho-social work is assumed to offer ultimate solutions. Hardly, there is any focus on the root-causes of conflicts, growing inequalities and created dependency and underdevelopment in these regions. The scarce attention is paid to development of primary health services and other public level services (Zwi. Fustukian & Sethi 2002). It has been seen that armed conflict and war tremendously increase infectious diseases, malnutrition, reproductive health ailments (WHO 2002; Gobarah et al 2004; Thoms & Ron 2007) and so on. Consequently, the higher infant mortality and morbidity rates in the regions of conflict significantly reflect that the pathology lies at a broader level of structures and institutions. The welfare services, health system, food security, water and sanitation get frequently collapsed and ignored in a conflict situation. Besides getting killed and injured directly, millions of children throughout the regions of conflict die of otherwise curable and preventive diseases like diarrhoea, respiratory infections and malnutrition (Zwi 1995; WHO 2002). Thus, the vicious circle of victimization, armed-conflict, poverty and ill-health is chronically neglected by the international agencies and aid organizations, and more often than not, this negligence is doubtlessly conscious and deliberate.

4.8: International Policy and Psycho-social Work: PTSD as the *Global* Response to War Trauma

When the western diagnostic systems and trauma models are replicated in non-western contexts, these hardly capture what local people or victims perceive of their suffering and trauma. The use of PTSD checklists and other technical guidelines to assess the mental health of populations is diseased with problems and loopholes (Maier 2005; Doty 2010) In a decontextualized sense, PTSD is a seen a ubiquitous and natural human response to stressful or adverse situation, neglecting the local significance and recipes of treatment and healing of the indigenous populations. As children constitute the primary 'forced' beneficiaries of these aid programs, they are seen as passive receptacles of traumatisation who are conceived to have more risks and are excessively prone to develop mental and emotional disorders in lieu of exposure to adversity (Dawes & Donald 1994). As widely debated in t chapter 2 and 3 of this dissertation, such conceptualizations of children and childhood seriously

contradict the anthropological research and interdisciplinary perspectives which regard children as active, resourceful and competent beings, who attach own meanings and interpretations of the situation besetting them, and who consciously take decisions that affect their survival and wellbeing. Particularly, in the contexts of armed conflict like that of Palestine, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, African regions and so on, children who actively confront the state-led armed forces and security personnel have more political consciousness and higher levels of self-esteem (Swartz & Levett 1989; Hein et al 1993; Hart & Tyrer 2006). Nonetheless, they also face emotional and psychological upheavals but the communal support and their identification with the people's movements and struggles enhances their reliance and coping (patel et al 2007). These complex factors that cut across social, cultural, economic and political domains of children, remain outside the purview of aid organizations. However, it is also emphasized that the argument is not to undermine the importance of mental health or psychological wellbeing in conflict situations. But the uncritical use of PTSD-like criteria to assess mental wellbeing, which often leads to over-diagnosis and exaggeration, is itself traumatic that in turn victimizes the affected populations. These approaches, as argued earlier, are coloured with individualization of pathology and neglect of social-cultural, economic and political and situational and spiritual dimensions of the problem. As Summerfield (1995) rightly says:

"... these people had other problems on their mind or did not see *talk therapy* (of counsellors) as a familiar and relevant service. I understand that some ... (refugees) were irritated by the activism of certain *foreign* researchers with PTSD checklists at a time when they were struggling to survive under violent siege." *(p14: emphasis and parenthesis mine).*

The population experiencing armed conflict or any other complex emergency have much bigger concerns and issues than psychological ones. There suffering and victimization have roots in the political structures rather than in their individual and immediate environments. Similarly, the solutions to their problems have structural determinants rather than exploring them with-in victim's own individuality and autonomy. Thus, in such scenario the narrowly conceived individual interventions and programmes may do more harm than good, besides raising many apprehensions and questions relevant to the political economy of humanitarianism and armed conflict. On similar lines, in a jail of Kashmir one of a young prisoner, who had been tortured severely by security agencies, related:

"Officers (referring to red cross officers and workers) come and visit us; give us bats, foot-balls, etc to play... when we have our limbs fractured and we pass blood with our urine because of the electric shocks given to our private parts. They in turn admonish us, waive their hands and disappear. Though, we relate to them our ordeal, our torture and suffering...but nothing happens till another team comes with new members and officers, but with same old stories." (Rashid 2009)

Though, it is not altogether denied that such populations don't have mental and psychological needs and pathology. But it must be rigorously acknowledged that from culture to culture, people have local traditions of healing and treatment that are relevant and tied up to their social, spiritual and cultural milieus (Davis 1992). The supernatural and spiritual forces in the cosmologies of different cultures shape the perceptions and interpretations of loss, suffering and pain that have both positive and negative functions in particular communities (Qvortrup 1991; Jenks 1996; Keen 1998). Hence, the so called logical, positivist and western explanations models routinely fail to grasp these cultural subtleties. In turn they locate the cause and put onus of a problem on individual victim itself, who are forced to take sick-roles that are incomprehensible and incompatible with their social relationships and local cultures. More important, the policy interventions of majority of international organizations discredit and ignore the consciousness and sensibilities of the indigenous communities to their political identities and their support to people's movements. In fact, in any conflict situation the identification or involvement of people with popular struggles and liberation movements is greatly valued and given high regards in their local contexts (Rosen 2005; Sengupta 2006; Sonpar 2007; Roy 2008). Similarly, the political consciousness of children and young people in armed conflicts has quite negatively been portrayed on the international humanitarian law and global narratives. However, the popular liberation struggles and movements for demanding right to self determination like in Palestine, Kashmir, Middle-East, African regions and so on, are witnessing unprecedented participation and involvement of children and youth (Reynolds 1996; Abdullah 2005; Patel et al 2005; Sonpar 2007; Rashid 2009; Junaid 2010). But, the dominant western discourses of child rights have demonized and condemned that participation with sweeping and universal generalizations without looking into the causality, contexts and circumstances. The demonized versions of 'child-soldiers crisis'(Rosen 2005), for

instance, has been globalized thorough international policy frameworks and aid agencies. Rather, the area has turned out to be excessively fashionable for donor agencies and partner NGOs that have created their own global market for humanitarianism. The following section discusses the case of chid soldiers and analyses the role of international policy frameworks in the globalization of childhood where 'politics of age-categories' is used to further their own political and ideological position.

4.9: Child Soldiers, International Policy and Politics of Age

The discourses and debates around the use of children in war or armed conflicts have an underlying and ingrained politics in them. This politics, in fact an element of the market-oriented and neo-liberal humanitarianism, concerns with the 'politics of age-categories' that shapes the conceptualization of 'childhood' in international policy frameworks (Reynolds 2005; Rosen 2005 & 2007). The 'age-categories' are used by international, regional or national actors, where the representations of childhood are political and hegemonic constructs that discount the local and complex understandings of children and childhood evidenced by ethnographic research. This cultural politics of childhood (Nancy and Sergeant 1998) has widely occupied the development of international humanitarian law and legal instruments for children particularly those experiencing armed conflict. The laws regulating the use of child-soldiers have been greatly influenced by the ideologies and political manipulation of the concept of childhood (Rosen 2007).

Humanitarian and human rights organizations advocate a strong ban on the use of recruitment of child soldiers in armed-conflicts. The dominant humanitarian and legal narratives define children as beginning of birth and ending straight at 18. This 'straight-18' position, having its origins in the UN Convention of Child Rights 1989, has been adopted uncritically by the International Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers[4] (Ibid). The major humanitarian and human rights agencies like Human

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[4]   The International Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers was formed in May 1998 by leading international human rights and humanitarian organizations. The International Secretariat of the Coalition has its headquarters in London. The International Secretariat works in collaboration with partner organizations in many regions of the world. For details see http://www.child-soldiers.org.

Rights Watch, ICRC, Save the Children Alliance, UNO, Amnesty International and so on serve on the steering committee for this Coalition. Among them ICRC has played the most influential and custodian role in shaping the legal and policy instruments concerning child-soldiers drawing mainly from its laws of war – International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The 1989 UNCRC and the 2000 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Children on the involvement of children in armed conflicts have been drafted and shaped on the similar lines. These instruments and conventions strongly advocate that the varied and competing definition of childhood be abandoned and a universal, global and standard definition be normalized and mainstreamed (Qvortrup 1994; Reynolds 1996; Boyden 2007; Rosen 2007). As earlier thoroughly discussed in chapter 3rd, such normative global generalizations of 'childhood' seriously contradict the anthropological research that showcases a multiplicity of childhood, each 'culturally codified and defined by age, ethnicity, gender, history, location and so forth' (Amit and Wulft 1995; Jenks 1996; Rosen 2007). There are antithetical conceptualizations of childhood in anthropological and dominant international policy thus widening the gap between policy interventions and their relevance for children and their communities in armed conflicts. Similarly, the use of child-soldiers mainly emerged from western normative notions of children and childhood. Participation of children and young people in armed conflicts and political struggles is generalized as a 'deviant product of adult abuses and victimization', neglecting the structural and political causes of such active participation and involvement (Honwana 2005; Junaid 2010; Navlakha 2010; Kak 2011). The military-life and childhood is seen as incompatible to each other and the helplessness of children is hugely amplified. By restraining and over-riding the local perspectives and cultural legitimacy of it, the international policy agencies enforce inappropriate solutions and programmes and divert attention from the boarder politics which is mainly implicit. Portraying the use of child-soldiers as an international crisis, the humanitarian and child rights organizations divert much of their resources and funds to 'reach' and 'assist' such children and ensure that the 'culprit' armed groups or communities, who recruit children as soldiers, are dealt seriously (Reynolds 2005; Rosen 2007) Most of the times these armed groups are non-state entities, 'unlawful', tribal (Sengupta 2006), indigenous communities having scant resources and without any formal structure and recognition from either the local states or international

community (Rosen *op. cit*). Consequently, the humanitarian agencies work with the local repressive states where the intervention may also include 'military humanitarianism' (Rieff 1994; Parekh 1997; Curtis 2001). Such humanitarian activism has widely been seen to have implicit political and economic agendas and the 'politics of age 'or 'child-soldier crises' is only used to facilitate that. This politics is also used in a way to suppress and delegitimize the people's liberation struggles and resistance across globe against the human rights violations and other forms of exploitation and victimization. In short, the language of humanitarianism and human rights has become the language of political and ideological discourses and transnational politics. As Voux (2006) argues:

> "...after 11 September 2001, Western security has come to dominate all other agendas, moving aid and humanitarianism even further towards the core of politics. The threat has been linked variously to Islamic peoples, unstable States, and poverty. In the eyes of politicians, humanitarianism has now become a means to another end (that of Western security), rather than an end in itself."
> *(p242)*

Ironically, in the name of 'war on global terror, and the regime-change initiatives and neo-imperial designs the US and its allies have perpetrated war crimes in the regions like Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon and so on. In 2009 the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces in Afghanistan have killed more than 150 children in air-strikes or ground operations. The total of 2400 civilians was killed in the same year (RAWA[5] 2010). The 2010 estimates show that in Iraq over 4000 civilians lost their lives. Since the invasion of Iraq by the US-led forces in 2003, the most conservative estimates show that more than 150 to 200 thousand people have been consumed by war (IFHS[6] 2008; Iraq Body Count[7] 2011). Likewise, millions of children have been the direct victims of the western imperial, hegemonic and neo-colonial aggression in Lebanon, Palestine, Libya, Syria, and in other regions of

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[5] Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan (RAWA) is the oldest political/social organization of Afghan women which claims to be struggling for peace, freedom, democracy and women's rights in fundamentalism-blighted Afghanistan since 1977. For details see: http://www.rawa.org/index.php

[6] Iraq Family Health Survey.

[7] Iraq Body Count (IBC) records the violent civilian deaths that have resulted from the 2003 military intervention in Iraq. Its public database includes deaths caused by US-led coalition forces and paramilitary or criminal attacks by others. For details see: http://www.iraqbodycount.org/.

conflict (BBC[8]; Haaretz[9]; Independent[10]; Al-Jazeera[11]; Ahmad 2000 cited in Berry *n.d)*. Besides, the armed conflicts in South Asian context have witnessed a large-scale killing, torture and incarceration of civilians, including huge number of children, perpetrated by the State-led forces. The conflicts in Sri Lanka, Kashmir, Pakistan, North-Eastern parts of India, Nepal and so on, are increasingly become complex and multi-dimensional. The influence of the international or western politics on the respective foreign and regional policies of these states has exacerbated the situation and made the conditions more fragile, giving rise to more tensions and conflicts (Iqbal & Sial 2007; Lieven 2011; ICPS 2011). The overwhelming presence of international humanitarian and aid agencies in the region seems to perform no role in building or working for sustainable solutions to the conflicts and animosities. Instead through their much hyped-up 'humanitarianism', notions are being created before the international community that 'something is been done' in such 'precarious' situations.

In fact these programs, as discussed above, are being used to further their own political and ideological agendas which generally remain quite hidden. Such an exploitative and hegemonic approach of these global power structures has led to exacerbation of the inequalities, deprivation and exploitation in the under-developed and developing nations. The conditions are being created that further escalate or give rise to new conflicts with-in the exploited-nations as a result of growing food crisis, loss of economic and natural resources, manufactured-animosity between tribes and groups and other socio-political breakdowns. In such a scenario, local and indigenous populations are plunged into whirlpool of victimizations from all-sides. Children and young people, especially, get caught in the vicious circle of poverty, deprivation and diseases. This structural violence meted out to children gets perpetuated across their generations through exploitative and repressive policy regimes and frameworks. The international policy and global humanitarian structure concerning children in armed conflicts is an important sub-system of this western hegemonic system which is chronically diseased with neo-liberal, capitalistic and ethnocentric politics.

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[8] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/middle_east/.

[9] http://www.haaretz.com/.

[10] http://www.independent.ie/world-news/middle-east.

[11] http://english.aljazeera.net/.

Chapter 5
Concluding Discussion

This analytical study has progressed through three main stages of analysis, which include: 1.) Identifying and reviewing the issues and experiencing of children in armed conflicts; 2.) Discussing the diverse debates and perspectives on childhood in domains of academia and international policy and research; and 3.) Reviewing and analysing the role of international child rights agencies and humanitarian aid organizations concerning children experiencing any conflict situation.

The present study has identified some of the interesting debates and themes in the area of children and armed conflict that need to be taken up for future research, and more importantly, that need to be contextualized in the local contexts and conflicts like that of Kashmir conflict.

Having identified the politics that underlies the approaches towards understanding children's issues in conflict situation, the present study has argued a revamp of the dominant perspectives in research and policy on childhood and children's issues in armed conflict contexts. These perspectives not only chronically neglect the broader socio-economic and socio-political determinants of the armed conflicts but devalue and demonize the local, cultural and indigenous ideas regarding children, their childhood and their exposure to any adversity or emergency. Moreover, the local meanings and constructions of pain and suffering being deeply embedded in the socio-cultural formations of a particular group find no place in the dominant policy and research domains vis-a-vis children in conflict situation. In fact, serious contradictions have emerged between the policy interventions of international humanitarian organizations and the local contexts in which children experience armed conflicts *(These contradictions were identified and discussed in detail in the previous chapter of this dissertation)*. The dominance of a *bio-medical-vulnerability* paradigm in the research, approach and policy of child-rights agencies and humanitarian organizations is a typical manifestation of the global hegemonic politics of western and European nations that underlies the academic and international domains of research, policy and practice. As argued in previous chapters, there lie numerous political agendas that shape the interventions and programmes regarding children experiencing armed conflicts and war. The research and policy interventions of

international agencies are used as ideological apparatus to enforce the western models, knowledge and agendas particularly in the developing and under-developed nations. Moreover, the post-cold War changes in humanitarianism have mediated a shift of focus from emergency aid to the 'long-term developmentalism'. It is conceived to be as an increasing involvement of NGOs and grass-roots organizations with a more extension of rights-based approach. Thus, the involvement of NGOs and other private agencies in policy formulations and decision-making has inclined social or humanitarian policies of nations towards liberal-market based models. Such a scenario has taken a shape of crisis in the developing and under-developed nations where populations experience poverty, hunger and disease. The situation further exacerbates in the contexts of armed conflicts which are much prevalent in the third world nations. There is a typical adherence to the neo-liberal, mechanistic and behaviourist ideals in conceptualizing the issues and concerns of populations, especially children, experiencing armed conflict and war. Such individualistic understandings and orientations in policy and practice of humanitarian organizations filters the social, cultural and context-specific realities that affected populations live with. In this way, the grand narratives like 'peace-making', 'empowerment', 'participation', 'capacity-building', 'stability' and 'mental development', which profusely dominate humanitarian discourses, remain alien, irrelevant and meaningless to real contexts of people.

As identified and discussed in the previous sections, the global economic and political transformations have greatly influenced research and policy of international humanitarian organizations and other regional or national agencies working in this field. Particularly, the overarching influence of neo-liberal policies and capitalistic agendas, mainly linked to the foreign policies of the dominant developed-nations, has been too important a factor in moulding and reorienting the humanitarian discourses across the globe. The powerful global institutions of the likes United Nations and other UN-led organizations are strategically used to globalize and propagate the positivist and universal notions regarding children and their issues in armed conflicts. Even the so called radical humanitarian organisations or child-rights agencies do not locate and study problems of conflict, violence, inequality or deprivation in an international context, which in reality lie in the broader structural relations of power and dependency.

Our analysis of the role of international child rights organizations and global humanitarian agencies quite significantly points towards their hidden ideological and ethnocentric agendas and interests. The analysis locates the related issues in the major global transformations at economic, political and cultural levels. The changing nature of the State and the shifts in the global economic and political processes has tremendously influenced the area of humanitarianism and the approaches of international organizations. The profound sway of the globally powerful agencies like International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Health Organization and United Nations Organization has been calibrating the ideas and policy approaches of the major international child rights and humanitarian agencies. These agencies, which include ICRC, Save the Children, Christian Aid, Action Aid International, Amnesty International and other UN-led organizations like UNICEF, UNHCR and so on, integrate with in their policies the western models of knowledge and practice which is simultaneously globalized and exported to third world or developing and poorer nations. Using the rhetoric of *'participation'*, *'empowerment'* and *'in the best interest of children'*, the international organizations mystify their policy interventions and portray them as the *'role-models'* and *'ideal-types'* humanitarian policy and practice. The UN-led organizations are found to be no different in this case. In fact, the United Nations sponsors, both financially and technically, thousands of such organizations and NGOs across globe. Quite interestingly, in the context of any complex emergency like armed conflict or war these western models of knowledge, practice and policy are enforced on the local and indigenous communities through international or regional NGOs, state functionaries and private agencies. As discussed earlier, the individualistic or narrow analysis of the issues of the affected populations experiencing conflict has led to the formulation of problematic interventions that prove to be superficial, hegemonic, and exploitative. Ironically, these aid interventions and programmes are coloured with the language of *humanity, morals* and *ethics*, which in fact chronically neglects the explicit socio-economic and socio-political determinants of the problems of such populations confronting war or any conflict situation. The structural formations and socio-economic inequalities that pervade such contexts are treated as the externalities of *'the main'* problem. This *'main'* problem is often defined in terms of mental health and psycho-pathological entities. As war or armed conflict is often described as a *'mental health emergency'*,

the international humanitarian organizations flood that area with mental health and trauma programmes which are basically de-contextualized replications from some foreign, unrelated and irrelevant context. Moreover, the state and regional functionaries are made to tailor their policy approaches and programmes on lines of these universal ideals and understandings of any problem, much in contrast to the regional, cultural and social sensitivities of the affected populations.

Lastly, the un-criticality in the approaches of the international child-rights agencies has led to the victimization of the children across armed conflicts. There has been a drastic shift of focus from *'attending broader structural determinants of children's issues and problems'* to *'considering their issues and problems as personal mal-adjustment and manifestations of individual pathology'*. Such an understanding has meant an overwhelming attention being paid to mental health and psycho-medicine in the context of armed conflicts. Both the *'problem'* and the *'its solutions'* are explored with the affected- individual The issues of poverty, deprivation, hunger and exploitation remain as externalities, which are claimed not to be in the domain or mandate of such policy interventions.

In the conclusion, the deconstruction of the grand narratives regarding children in conflict situation or war, as propagated by the international humanitarian organizations and child-rights groups, is quite essential to bring relevance into the international policies concerning those children. The research and policy affecting children in conflict zones must take into consideration the regional specificities, cultural sensitivities and social contexts that beset their social-ecologies and communities. It is quite essential to consider their childhood and related-issues as embedded into their socio-economic and politico-cultural milieus. The constructions of *'childhood'* differentially vary with children's body, space and time. Moreover, the notions of suffering, pain or anxiety must not be taken to be as universally similar, but these quite significantly vary across different cultures and regions. In fact, the notions of suffering are socially- and culturally constructed, much in congruence with specific needs and requirements of populations in a given situation. Thus, any policy intervention in a conflict zone must be contextualized in- and integrated with the indigenous local models and mechanisms of living in the affected- communities. This

requires not just cosmetic but thorough overhauling of policy instruments. Otherwise, these instruments will only act as palliatives to a chronic condition.

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Summary of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*

From the preamble:

Considering, that, in accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justices and peace in the world,

Recalling, that, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance,

Recognizing, the importance of international cooperation for improving the living conditions of children in every country, in particular to the developing countries,

The document is comprised of 41 articles. Civil, political, social and economic rights are mentioned. The following rights pledged by state parties are germane to this dissertation:

-- A child is under 18 years of age (Article 1).

-- The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration (Article 3).

-- The state shall undertake to implement the child's economic, social and cultural rights in the framework of international cooperation (Article 4).

-- The child has a right to life, survival and development (Article 6).

-- The child has a right to a family (Article 9).

-- the child has a right to freedom of expression (Article 11).

-- The child has the right to protection against unlawful interference/attacks on their family and home (Article 16).

-- The child should be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence (Article 19).

-- The child has a right to play and to participate in cultural life (Article 31).

-- The right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation (Article 32).

-- The physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of the child victim of armed conflicts (Article 39).

-- Nothing in this present Convention shall affect any provisions which are more conducive to the realization of the rights of the child and which may be contained in the law of the State Party (Article 41).

*Source: Reproduced in *In the Firing Line-War and Children's Rights*, Amnesty International 1999.

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