



Universiteit Leiden

Can Kashmiri Children speak?

Active and Involuntary Participation of Children in the Kashmir Conflict
in Comparison to the Palestinian Conflict

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Abstract

The recent revocation of the special status in the Indian constitution of Kashmir has once again drawn the situation in Kashmir into the international spotlight. The protracted nature of the seventy-year-long conflict and the struggle for self-determination of the Kashmiri bears resemblance to the strife between Israel and Palestine since the former's founding in 1948, though this conflict has garnered greater media attention. In both cases, the impact of seemingly endless conflict and violence has impacted the lives of generations of children. The ways in which children can, and do, influence these conflicts - actively and passively - remains a hitherto under-explored area in academia. The present investigation seeks to address this issue with reference to cultural productions in the form of graphic novels. By cross-examining against actual instances of children, who have become symbols for the respective struggles and an examination of the response by the relevant authorities, this paper teases out the importance of children to both cases. Taken together with the reception received locally, nationally and internationally, a fresh light is cast upon the role of children as symbols and agents in protracted conflicts.

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Abbreviations

APDP	Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons
IPTK	International People's Tribunal for Human Rights and Justice in Indian – administered Kashmir
J&K	Jammu and Kashmir
JKCCS	Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Educational Fund

Introduction

Malik Sajad's graphic novel *Munnu - A Boy from Kashmir* (2015) is a representation of everyday violence through the perception of a young boy growing up during critical years of the Kashmir conflict since the 1990s. This perception appears markedly different to the dominant media depiction of a bilateral conflict. Sajad, born in Srinagar, draws on his personal life in facing militarization and resistance. The graphic novel and its reception locally and internationally demonstrate the diverse perspectives of conflict through the lens of art. As the description is foremost about a boy's growing up years amidst every day, intimate situations with family and friends, Sajad portrays the non-spectacular perennial form of the Kashmir conflict from the perspective of a child's journey into adulthood.

The intergenerational impact of violence resulting from the conflict has rendered children most vulnerable. Although most scholars place focus on the influence of the conflict on the Kashmiri child, this analysis departs instead by examining the influence of children on the conflict. There are two dimensions how children engage with this situation - active and passive. Therefore, the question this thesis seeks to answer is: *To what extent, do "active" adolescent participation and "passive" unintentional involvement by children in the Kashmir conflict shape the national and international response?* Focusing on the post-2016 political conflict in Indian-administered Kashmir through the lens of art and the cross-referencing to the Palestine-Israel conflict, this thesis asks also: *What symbolisms do children in war situations pose?* The thesis concludes by questioning the perception of children in protracted war situations – whether in Kashmir or Palestine - and their possible influence on perceptions and political decision-making.

Human rights abuses and unresolved aspirations for national self-determination are long-standing issues in Kashmir. The recent revocation of Article 370 and Article 35a, taken without the consent of the Kashmiri people, has once again brought the 70-year-long conflict to the forefront of international media (*BBC NEWS* August 6, 2019). The decision by the Indian government has received considerable international attention, after having been previously insufficiently reported, with a concentration on bilateral 'spectacular' events (Singh and Jha 2017, 61). However, by comparison to other perennial conflicts, such as the Palestine-Israel conflict, this previous lack of media coverage on the situation in Kashmir needs to be examined against the context of its long-term violence. The environment of violence in Kashmir, even

before August 2019, includes different levels of state-organised violence, legislative, executive and judicial powers, resulting in the conditions being classified as a “structure of violence” (Majid and Amin 2016). Numerous scholars call the situation in Kashmir and Palestine occupational (Majid and Amin 2016) but internationally this remains disputed. The historical context of the conflicts is crucial for this classification. This thesis primarily introduces the Kashmir conflict and then concludes with a comparison to Palestine.

Kashmir - a perennial Conflict

The latest development in the conflict is perceived as “the most far-reaching political move” in its 70-year long history (*Al Jazeera and News Agencies* October 27, 2019). Current reports include cases of torture, indiscriminate and haphazard violence towards children (*BBC* September 23, 2019; *Euronews* September 3, 2019). The decision in August 2019 was followed by a shutdown of communication and curfew on the whole of Kashmir. The separation of the society of Kashmir from the outside world is characterised as a ‘collective punishment’ in reducing resistance to the revocation (*UN News* August 22, 2019). This communicational filter is critical due to the Indian government’s record of misleading international observers through media coverage. Notable examples include the alteration of reports on attacks by Pakistan as well as by rebellious Kashmiri groups (*The Washington Post* March 9, 2019). The communicational shutdown, the curfew, the physical violence and the resulting disregard of self-determination of the Kashmiri people are after all recognizable patterns in the history of the region of Kashmir.

Before the revocation, the government of J&K held autonomy over selected departments of administration, excluding defence, communication, and foreign affairs with a separate constitution and an individual flag (Constitution of India 2015; Instrument of Accession of Jammu and Kashmir State 1947). As the conflict emerged due to the separation and independence of the subcontinent following the collapse of British colonial rule, the conflict was primarily between India and Pakistan (Ganguly 1997, 8; Bose 2003, 2). The former princely state of J&K is significant for both countries, due to nationalist aspiration and territorial motivations (Ganguly 1997, 8). The Instrument of Accession that appointed J&K under the administration of India, signed by the Maharaja in 1947, included the condition for Kashmiris to ratify the accession when normality resumed (Ganguly 1997, 9).

Since the region was separated in 1949 into parts administered by India, Pakistan and China (Bose 2003, 2; Schofield 2003), the nuclear powers, India and Pakistan have had two wars over Kashmir (Ganguly 1997, 4). Violent separatist movements have existed since 1989 until today due to erosion of democratic provisions (Ganguly 1997, 1). The idea of the territory as an independent state has proven to be one of the most popular solutions among the Kashmiri population (Bradnock 2010). Kashmir is currently one of the most militarised zones globally with an estimated amount of 700 000 soldiers in 2016 employed for a population of 12, 55 Million (*The Guardian* November 8, 2016). There have been recurring summer protests since 2010, which result in violent yearly reprisals by Indian military forces (personal interview with Idrees Kanth 2019). Therefore, peace was never reached and the decision in August 2019, incorporating Kashmir entirely into the Indian constitution, has been neglecting the issue of the accession altogether (*BBC NEWS* August 6, 2019).

Methodology & Chapters

In this thesis, I am reading graphic novels alongside reports by international organisations, like the UN, media reports and academic literature on children in Kashmir as well as Palestine. By choosing graphic novels as the basis for the analysis, this thesis acknowledges the unique status of the combination of a visual-verbal medium and its “unique vantage point” (Prorokova and Tal 2018, 9). The graphic novel *Munnu - A Boy from Kashmir* (Sajad 2015) and the graphic novel *Palestine* (Sacco 2001) are central to the analysis and directly relate to the discussed topics of active and inactive involvement of children in the conflict. This combination aims to grasp the complex landscape of children’s perception of a perennial conflict.

The analysis of the images from the graphic novels as well as the exhibition is based on the method of iconology (Mitchell 1987). This methodology explores the variance between the image and the word - its discourse. Mitchell explores the imagery. He aims to show “how the notion of imagery serves as a kind of relay connecting theories of art, language, and the mind with conceptions of social, cultural, and political value” (Mitchell 1987, 2). With this lens, the graphic novels and the exhibition pieces introduced in this thesis it is possible to scrutinise the representation of those ideas and ideologies.

The Kashmir conflict in general but particularly the Indian-administered part of Kashmir, is a representational example for the filter and prioritisation of media coverage of the international community. With an ongoing conflict of 70 years, my direct surrounding, as well as the international media, appears to have paid attention mainly to spectacular, singular events throughout the perennial conflict. These perspectives lack the context of the conflict and therefore create a perspective that is problematic. Consequently, this thesis aims to include a greater variety of perspectives on the conflict, to understand the motivation of the Kashmiri but also to reflect on their mistreatment. In this analysis, militant groupings of children and their ideologies *azaadi* in Kashmir and *intifada* in Palestine are generalised due to limitations on the length of the thesis.

The thesis consists of four different chapters that introduce the theory, case studies and then the comparison of Kashmir and Palestine:

Following an introduction to subaltern studies perspective and the symbolism of children as the subaltern in war situations in the first chapter, the second chapter seeks to define the active involvement of children and subsequently relate the analysis to the Kashmir context. The symbolism of children as active participants in the conflict in Kashmir is based on the case study of Burhan Wani, who joined militancy at the age of 15. His case is set against the Indian counterinsurgency strategies. Concerning the counterinsurgency approach, a critical review of the narrative of terrorism by the Indian government is necessary. The relationship between the strategy published by the government and the experience and motivation of children to take part in the conflict is analysed through the lens of the graphic novel *Munnu, a Boy from Kashmir* (Sajad 2015).

The third chapter concentrates on the passive and unintended role of children in the conflict and aims to set them in relation to provisions of the Armed Forces Special Power Act. The AFSP is the policy foundation, which states the maintenance of public order by Indian Armed Forces in cases of extraordinary circumstances. The focus is mainly on the use of pellet guns by security forces and the case of Insha Malik in 2016 and other pellet gun victims before her. Again, Sajad's work shades the analysis with representations of their experiences in this conflict.

To analyse the Kashmir case against a more reported conflict, the fourth chapter sets Kashmir and Palestine in relation to the existing school of thought on symbolism of children in conflict situations. Those debates are set in comparison to the use of art in war and the expression of children through art in this context. The fourth chapter concludes with a comparison between the presented academic literature on symbolism of children and the case study of Palestine and Kashmir.

Years preceding Burhan Wani's death demonstrate a tendency towards "normality" (personal interview with Idrees Kanth 2019), despite the ongoing conflict. Since his killing, there has been an escalation of violence. Hence, this thesis focuses on this specific period of the Kashmir conflict. The cases of Burhan Wani and Insha Malik's symbolic value make them worthy examples of idolisation, to which their youth is crucial, as several academic works attest. Due to strong historical parallels in the two conflicts, the applicability of the hypothesis is tested against the Israel - Palestine conflict.

Chapter I: Subaltern Approach and Symbolism of Children

1.1. Subaltern Approach

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's work, 'Can the subaltern speak', is an analysis of previous works on the subaltern¹ and their usage of representational writing of subaltern groups (Spivak 1988). Although her work was conducted in the context of the early postcolonial area, there has been an ongoing discussion within academia on the question of representation in cultural politics. Some of the current discussions refocus her study to the representation of children and the perception of the academic portrayal as "orientalizing, exoticizing or appropriating childhood" (Plotz 1996, 140).

Spivak mainly emphasizes gender inequality and points out that academic work in its aim to represent the subaltern silences them. The academic work done about the subaltern is eventually limiting the agency of the subaltern itself (Spivak 1988). In the academic representation, not only individual agency is taken but also the collective agency of the subaltern sub-society (Spivak 1988, 72). This analysis aims to avoid representational portrayal of children as the subaltern. This is something the following investigation remains mindful of and, consequently, aims to provide a rounded and comprehensive source base from which to draw its conclusions. Spivak herself acknowledges that personal perception always interferes with the free interpretation of the motivation of the subaltern (Spivak 1988, 76).

In critically assessing the representation of any collective, she introduces the term "representative consciousness", which signifies the aspired portrait of reality sufficiently and subjectively (Spivak 1988, 70). She thematises a form of hierarchical thinking comparing western and non-western actors (Spivak 1998). This reflects on the involvement of the United Nations and the international media in reporting and disseminating information on children of Kashmir. The subaltern perspective emphasises the integration of the everyday ideology of the subaltern (Spivak 1988, 66). Thus, the choice of graphics and photography as primary sources for the evaluation of children's perspective is essential. With an emphasis on the willingness

¹ Mainly collections of essays by western scholars, that aim to represent the subaltern in western academia. See for example Foucault 1972, 134; Foucault 1977, 205-17.

of reception by the receiver (Kerner 2015), the informational flow is crucial for the implementation of the theory in the Kashmir and Palestinian conflict.

One of Spivak's main arguments is that structural circumstances create the surrounding in which the subaltern's perspective is not heard (Spivak 1988). These structural circumstances are foremost based on ideologies and history of the oppressing entity (Morris 2010, 7). Therefore, subalternity is a structural circumstance that limits the access of the subaltern to power rather than an individual identity (Morris 2010, 8). Concerning the present analysis, her theory functions as a guideline as she mainly emphasises the structural hindrances for subalterns to express their motivation and perception (Spivak 1988). In relation to the analysis of children's involvement in the Kashmir conflict, the criticism of representation is present. Children's representation is identity creation (Plotz 1996, 140). In the case of children in Kashmir, the structures of violence surrounding the children and multiple generations before them are what creates these circumstances for subalternity.

The interrelation between the representation of the subaltern and the acceptance of history as common sense, Spivak describes as "verbal slippage" (Spivak 1988, 69). In emphasising the importance of the analysis of the "silences of history", Spivak emphasises the importance to view the dominant historical narrative with a critical eye (Morris 2010, 2). The western approach creates the notion of the 'other' (Spivak 1988, 75). The definition of child in western language originates from the word *enfant* in French, which is originally from the Latin word *infans* which could be translated as speechless, therefore representationally offers insight into the children's position in western perception (Plotz 1996, 140). As western perception is often introduced as the international and global perception, their interpretation is often presumed as universal while ignoring the subaltern's perception of power and desire (Spivak 1988, 68). It is only possible for the subaltern to resist within the oppressing system, to choose a patriarchal discourse (Morris 2010, 6). In the case of children in Kashmir, however, the Kashmir conflict demonstrates that under the rule of the Indian government children can only act within the societal and environmental discourse they want to alter.

Furthermore, the conceptualisation of the "consciousness" (Spivak 1988, 90) is essential to the analysis of the children's identity torn between the two "roles" of victim and fighter. Spivak emphasises that the analysis of the identity and the underlying causes of decisions, that is to say - to make the subaltern speak and to hear it - requires a process of

“unlearning” the assumptions of the subaltern’s motivation (Spivak 1988, 91). Through this process, the study of the perception of the subaltern has to be liberated from presumptions and western ideals, the results of this paper demonstrate the benefits of doing so.

1.2. Symbolism of Children and their Relationship of Belonging

As the local and global community focused on a political solution to the conflict between India and Pakistan before August 2019 (Singh and Jha 2017, 61), scant attention has been paid to the role and the perspective of children regarding political action. This subaltern viewpoint is considered a new approach towards a deeper understanding of underlying causes and societal consequences of the conflict (Singh and Jha 2017). However, this study reveals the gap in literature and scholarly academic research of the internal motivation of the subaltern and the results of the national and international response in the Kashmir conflict.

Historically, children obtain strong symbolism in art, religion, and literature. There appear to be two main streams of ideology revolving around children. The first group of studies deals with the data collection and analysis of the psychological influence of traumatic experiences on children and their coping with the latter (see for example Basu and Dutta 2010). This group of scholars also focuses on the victimisation of children as inactive participants of conflicts. The first group is dominated by positivity and futuristic hopes attached to the child. The second group of symbols is dominated by the characterisation of children as strength, nationality, and agency. These approaches fail to demonstrate an interrelation between the different symbolisms of children. This thesis contributes to the second group while combining the two indicators.

In general, children are limited in their agency in Kashmir and other societies. In line with this, children appear to be underrepresented in international relations theory and academic works. This underrepresentation is consciously conducted based on the perceived “incompatibility of childhood and politics” (Kynsilehto 2007, 363). There has to be made a distinction however, between the reality of global politics and international relations academia (Brocklehurst 2006). Although children are reported on extensively in international media, it is arguably a difference of representation, as the direct agency of children is very limited in view of political influence, especially in influencing social practices (Brocklehurst 2006). The instrumentalization of children is to be viewed in line with the representation of children in the

media (Brocklehurst 2006). This victimisation of the child is the dominant image of children in society². With this portrayal, their agency is limited to raising awareness and fundraising campaigns (Carpenter 2006). This directly relates to the essential future symbolism. The notion of innocence is very problematic in view of children's agency (Brocklehurst 2006).

In general terms, the dominant symbolism of children revolves around the symbol of the future (Cirlot 2002, 45-46). The subject of the influence of globalization and the new global order on minorities has drawn considerable political and public attention to this interrelation. Numerous individuals see themselves confronted with the possibility of a redefinition of their identity and relationship of belonging (Girard and Grayson 2016). With a conflicting identity, children and young adults are continuously searching for identity and wish to set their role in society (Erikson 1968). In the case of the Kashmiri and Palestinian children, the 'future' symbolism creates a possible identity to adapt for children to be the hope of a country.

In contrast to the positive futuristic image, the child symbol is also set in contexts of combined notions of future, redemption (Stahl 1986, 83) and peace but also nationalism (Greenbaum, Veerman and Bacon-Schnoor 2006, 435). In combination, these two symbolic groups create the image of a nationalistic future. Nationalist future often goes hand in hand with violent actions, perceived necessary for peace. Therefore, the interrelation of children and national future creates a dissonance (Festinger 1957). The symbolism of the child as the future of society emphasizes the attraction of national and military deployment of children in a normative sense.

Competing aims for children's protection can result in risk-taking of individual children to protect another group or the "greater good" (Greenbaum, Veerman and Bacon-Schnoor 2006). One result is the conflict of global norms and the protection of the individual child against national interest. In the case of Kashmiri children, their active and passive involvement is tested based on their symbolic significance with a few on contradictions between global norms and national Indian interest.

² This has been explored by various scholars, for a recent example see Levy & Parker's *Children and War* (2000).

Chapter II: Active Involvement of Children in Kashmir

II.1. Defining Active Child Involvement

The portrayal in literature of symbols attached to the child shows ambivalence in view of the child's representation between the underrepresentation in international relations and the hope for the future, hope and strength. These conflicting symbols are tested through the analysis of the two different labels of involvement by children present³, active and inactive participation.

With the release of the Human Rights report in 2013 on India's Child Soldiers by the Asian Centre for Human Rights, the involvement of children in the Kashmir conflict gained international and national attention. With at least 5 000 children being actively involved in the conflict (Asian Centre for Human Rights 2013, 3) the discussion appears more pertinent than in other conflicts around the globe. However, a complete definition of active participation is lacking. Although the report pointed out specific military activities of the presence of children in the Kashmir Valley, the debate on active involvement has to be set out in the context of relevant literature for the present study.

The active involvement of children is defined in two different approaches in the Kashmiri context. These being "child soldiers" and so-called "children-in-conflict-with -law" (Rashid, Ramon and Zavirsek 2012, 630. The child soldier is defined to be "a child associated with an armed force or armed group" (UNICEF 2011). That active involvement of children mainly focusing on soldiery not only highlights the violent actions children participate in but also their belonging to a specific group or assembly with a common political or social goal. UNICEF names examples like "combatants, cooks, porters [and] messengers" (UNICEF 2011). These examples demonstrate that the involvement of a child does not necessarily directly relate to violent behaviour. The importance of the definition is placed on the orientation of the group the child is participating in.

Still, UNICEF's refrain from the use of the concept "child soldier" because of its military connotation ignores the variety of applications of active involvement of children in

³The utilised definition of a child used in this work can be found in Article 1, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN General Assembly 1989)

conflict situations (UNICEF 2011). Most of the recruited so-called “child soldiers” are found in organized crime and armed groups of terrorist organizations (Rosenblatt 1992). In recruiting children, groups can obtain certain advantages, such as them being easier to manipulate, therefore easier to lead, cheaper and high in numbers, as they are not officially recruited by the government (Vautravers 2008).

Another term used in the context of the Kashmir conflict is the so-called “children-in-conflict-with-law” (Rashid, Ramon and Zavirsek 2012, 630). In contrast to the definition of a child soldier, non-military and non-group related involvements are included in this categorisation. According to Rashid, Ramon and Zavirsek, one of the key distinctions is, that these children face detention, arrest or torture when “presented before courts of law or lodged in jails for their involvement in ‘militancy related’ or ‘anti national activities’” (2012, 630). In the context of the Kashmir conflict, this definition appears more applicable (Sajad 2015, 142).

The definition of active involvement of children in the Kashmir conflict is clearly a disputed one. For the ongoing analysis of this thesis, I include aspects of both classifications in the analysis of children’s influence on national and international reaction. On the one hand, given children’s own internal motivation to actively join the ongoing conflict, I elaborate on the intrinsic aspiration of those children’s choices and decision-making. Therefore, one of the main aspects of the definition of active involvement for this thesis is the proactive aspect of their participation in the conflict. On the other hand, the association towards a group or a movement plays an important role in the analysis of this intrinsic motivation. In view of Rashid, Ramon and Zavirsek’s aspect of the unlawfulness of children’s behaviour (2012), I place the focus on children as rebels and less on ‘child soldiers’ recruited by the Indian army.

II.2. Counterinsurgency in India

As the local government of J&K is incapable of halting the militancy on its own, the Indian government introduced measures of counterinsurgency. Although, there is a local surrender-cum-rehabilitation policy (*Kashmir Observer* February 6, 2019), the local government has further failed to achieve the reintegration of former militants. The counterinsurgency measures are mainly executed by the Special Task Force, which can be constituted by the local

government of every Indian state⁴. Introduced in 1994 in Kashmir they reportedly carry out torture and other human rights violations (APDP and JKCCS 2019, 15). Counterinsurgency measures in J&K caused at least 70 000 deaths during the conflict (*The Guardian* August 5, 2019) but this can only be an estimation due to the amount of unclassified violence.

Counterinsurgency measures conducted by the Indian government are present in different scenarios. Not only is the violent fight against rebels seen as a counterinsurgency strategy but also the deployment of developmental projects and democratic institutions. For instance, the Hill council of the Ladakh region in northern India are deployed with a ‘will to improve’ as well as a motivation to ‘contain political challenges’ (Bhan 2013, 16). Developmental support is part of India’s rhetoric and a form of neo-colonialism. The usage of that kind of measures implies the tactic of developmental support to minimize political dissent against the central government. However, in this analysis, the focus is mainly placed on direct counterinsurgency, in the form of military presence and measures to capture or kill insurgents.



Image 1

[Source: Sajad 2015, 169]

The children of Kashmir realise this ambiguity in developmental work in contrast to sovereign oppression (see image 1). The so-called “healing touch” of the government, through development projects, for example, is turned into the representational help for an individual,

⁴ Although, the central Indian government is only responsible for the communication, foreign affairs and defence of J&K, the Indian military force’s presence is dominant. The structure of the Indian army obtains a clear hierarchy, where different divisions are responsible for certain geographical territories. Furthermore, each division is accompanied by an intelligence force unit. For further information on the structure of the Indian army and the divisions attributed to Kashmir: Report of IPTK and APDP (2015, 10-15).

that is about to die. This offers insights into the irony of developmental aid offered by the Indian government towards the Kashmiri people given the universal situation they find themselves in; a situation that the Indian government imposed on them.

There are three different pillars the counterinsurgency strategy of India is based on with the operation Sadbhavana being one of the main ones:

II.2.1. Redirecting misguided fellow Indians

The first pillar is the identification of rebels as fellow misguided Indians, who must be persuaded of the right path (Rajagopalan 2008, 146). This approach was the basis for the ‘hearts and minds’ approach by the Indian government (Ministry of Defence of the Government of India 2013). With the development of the operation Sadbhavana, the Indian government offered insight into a dramatic shift in counterinsurgency, as previous operations were internationally criticised to be mindless and indiscriminate (Bhan 2013, 15). The evolution of the Sadbhavana counterinsurgency strategy followed a rather “liberal counterinsurgency doctrine”, which was accepted and recognised by the United States and Canada (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009). The process emphasised the insufficiency of violent force to tackle low-intensity conflicts or insurgencies led by citizens all over the globe (Slim 2004, 34). The operation Sadbhavana was development work that was used as a counterinsurgency strategy, as it was “hardly a neutral or altruistic undertaking” (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009, 21). However, the operation indicated a visible shift in the reduction of conventional warfare towards the world (Bhan 2013, 128). With the rebellion and the ongoing demand for freedom, this analysis argues that the identification of Kashmiris as Indians is problematic and is therefore contentious. As Indian security forces are using a high amount of violence towards the population of Kashmir, even the Indian perception of the affiliation is critical.

II.2.2. Moral and physical Dominance of Military and Security Forces

The two following measures can be viewed in combination, as they are intertwined. In following the strategy of a “dominant presence of military forces in the territory”, the Indian central government aims to achieve a “moral superiority of the security forces through presence and operation” (Rajagopalan 2008, 156). This dominance is aimed to be achieved through military intervention because the local government is unable to “control” rebellious behaviour themselves. To set those strategies into practice, the military imposed curfews and systematic violence on Kashmiris (Bhan 2013, 16). The execution of those counterinsurgency pillars was conducted in the form of operations by the military (Gauhar and Gowhar 2001). Those operations, however, often contrasted the values of the first pillar of counterinsurgency in their amount of violence and disrespect towards militants.

II.2.3. Isolation of Insurgents

Launched in 2017 Operation All Out was launched due to the uprising after the death of Burhan Wani and is one of the examples where the third pillar of the counterinsurgency measure conflicts with other aspects of the strategy. India’s counterinsurgency can be characterised as a conjunction between representational strategies to protect human rights, in the example of the ‘Goodwill Operation’, and militarism, in the example of operations like ‘Rakshak’ and ‘All out’ (Pedden 2012). Whenever confronted with reports like the Ministry of Women and Child Development report in 2011, highlighting violence towards children by security forces, the Indian government vehemently denies the allegations of violence towards children and refuses to take responsibility (Rashid, Ramon and Zavirsek 2012, 631).

The Indian government’s classification of the armed uprising in Kashmir carried out by militants as terrorism is problematic, due to the definition of terrorism being internationally disputed. The term ‘terrorist’ is highly politicised and often employed by a state to delegitimize its opponents (Behera 2016, 45). In labelling Kashmiri rebels as terrorists, the Indian government distracts the international community from its role as a legitimization of state terror. The controversy derives from the discussion of discrepancy of a single person representing a generalist idea while the perception of a terrorist is subjective. The perspective of terrorism emphasises the contradiction between the different pillars constituted by the Indian central government.

On the one hand, the government's main security concern is the external security threat by Pakistan since the state's independence (Rajagopalan 2008, 167). India's discourse in Kashmir is based on the narrative of its own legal, militaristic, and democratic policy-making in confrontation with the responsibility of Pakistan for violence and war (Lamb 2003). On the other hand, the internal threat of the rebellion is a perceived risk for Indian culture and identity. The rebellion by the militants against the policy of the Indian state and fuelled with the support of Pakistan is therefore seen as a fusion of the external threat and opposition to India's ideology. This combined threat "led to the conventional war bias in the counterinsurgency doctrine" (Rajagopalan 2008, 167) and an increasingly violent reaction to "terrorist actions". With the area of J&K being one of the most prominent areas of so-called terrorism (De Silva 2004, 86), the Indian government uses the narrative to attract local and international consent.

However, additional agendas motivate the Indian government for its strategy of the terrorism narrative. Some scholars argue that the terrorism narrative is utilized to redirect attention from social and economic policies and other internal problems (De Silva 2004, 91). With India's perception of Kashmir being a place of natural beauty that faces devastation "by decades of Islamic terrorism" (Bhan 2013, 10), the violent counterinsurgency measures are portrayed as protection of the valley and its society. Those strategies conducted by the government can be characterised as "population centric" and "enemy centric" (APDP and JKCCS 2019, 12). With the generalisation of terrorist behaviour with every sort of rebellion towards the central government seeks to legitimate its behaviour (U.S. Embassy New Delhi 2015).

In contrast to the narrative of the Indian government protecting the Kashmiri citizens, some scholars argue that the development of those "terroristic" ideas is due to the weakness of the political system in Kashmir as well as the central government of India (De Silva 2004, 99). De Silva argues that Muslims are mainly oriented towards a cooperation between Muslim states and started to radicalise in the 1980s. The Muslim "other" is narrated as a traitor to Indian sovereignty and as a threat, therefore, to be dealt with accordingly (Zia 2019, 776). In the Muslims search for belonging (Girard and Grayson 2016) the question of motivation must be taken into account. This aspect ties back to the external security threat of Pakistan and the possible orientation of these terrorists towards Pakistani ideology, which results in the narrative of resistance of Kashmir as "illegal and underwritten by Pakistan" (Zia 2019, 783). However,

the dominant call for *azaadi* limits this idea of external motivation⁵. Given the recent developments and the ongoing curfew imposed on the entire valley (personal interview with Idrees Kanth 2019), the aspect of the real battle in counterinsurgency being the “battle [...] for civilian support” (Sewall 2007, xxv) appears to have been lost in central Indian government’s mission in the Kashmir valley.

II.3. Burhan Wani and young ‘Freedom Fighters’

Burhan Wani, as one of the youngest militant leaders in Kashmir, is a unique case due to his media presence and his open and consistent opposition to Indian forces. His youth proved key to his popularity. The death of Burhan Wani is characterised by several Kashmiri scholars as a turning point in Kashmiri history (Shah 2018). Burhan Wani was the commander of the militant group ‘Hizb-ul-Mujahideen’ in Kashmir (Ray 2016). When he joined the militants, he was 15 years old (*BBC News* July 11, 2016). He reportedly joined the militants in reaction to the 120 killings due to protests in 2010 and due to personal abuse and humiliation (*The Guardian* November 8, 2016). Being openly accepting of his militant identity and therefore publicly challenging the Indian forces, he became one of the main faces of the rebellion (*BBC News* July 11, 2016). Throughout his active involvement in the conflict, he gained recognition and popularity. Subsequently, his death resulted in boosting his representational figure as a metaphor for the resistance in the Valley. Therefore, when he was shot at the age of 22 on July 8, 2016 (Shah 2018), his death resulted in several weeks of protest and violence with 68 dead civilians and 2000 injured protestors (Ray 2016).

⁵ *Azaadi* is in direct relation to the struggle of the Kashmiri. It’s literal translation comes close to “freedom, independence or liberty” (Zargar 2019). Not solely a political goal, but it carries a religious, cultural aspect that represents the identity of the Kashmiri population (personal interview with Idrees Kanth 2019).

Although 500 so-called child soldiers were recruited in ‘North East India and Jammu and Kashmir’ in 2013 for the Indian army (Asian Centre for Human Rights 2013, 3), Burhan Wani’s youth was an exceptional characteristic with which he was able to connect to the youth of Kashmir. The way he openly challenged the Indian government optimised his inspirational behaviour (Anuradha Bhasin 2016, 13). Young adults, experiencing indiscriminate violence in their everyday life from security forces, like curfews, riots and unannounced house searches (Sajad 2015, 32) were given a present alternative to accepting the violence.



Image 2

[Source: Sajad 2015, 4]

This stands in contrast to the ongoing debate of the influence on the resisting ideology by Pakistan. As seen in image 2, in the graphic novel by Malik Sajad, the recruitment of young militants to be trained in Pakistan is viewed in contradiction to the education of children in the Valley. Burhan Wani has problematized this contrast as he represents the politically educated youth that intentionally joins the resistance without the influence of Pakistan (Anuradha Bhasin 2016). His story, of a young boy that joined the militants due to his personal experience with the security forces and therefore in accordance with his own beliefs strengthened the agency and legitimacy of children’s active involvement.

Although some scholars argue that the geographical position of the valley between Pakistan and India and their values, religions, and ideologies is the basis for the rebellion (De Silva 2004, 100), other scholars argue that the main motivation for the rebellion thrives due to the suppression of the citizens in the valley. The motivational inspiration of some of those children is the adventure of joining the rebellion (Rashid, Ramon and Zavirsek 2012, 638) but primarily the motivation rears from the notion of being able to fight back against the security forces. Before Burhan Wani's involvement, militant leaders were losing credibility due to their interrelation and distance to society (see image 3). Therefore, in my understanding, his clear identification of concepts of 'occupation' and 'oppression' stand in a contrast to the hidden and disguised and indicate a change of relationship of belonging of youth leaders in the resistance.



Image 3
[Source: Sajad 2015, 177]



Image 4
[Source: Sajad 2015, 117]

This change in relationships of belonging is directly linked to the identity of the search for a relationship of belonging (Girard and Grayson 2016). Children are facing a conflicting relationship of belonging. On the one hand, Kashmiri's are unique in their cultural background and religion compared with the rest of the Indian population. The internal pressure to be part of the rebels in opposition to the identity they are being introduced to through the education system is palpable (see image 4). With the active participation in the conflict and the clear stance of joining the militants, they acquire an identity.

Due to the ongoing counterinsurgency measures, the Kashmiri's are confronted with a process of identity creation given the confrontation towards the Indian state. This confrontation created a stronger mobilization and galvanized the identity creation of young Kashmiri people. Therefore, the perceived homogeneity of the Kashmir people is one of the results of the Indian suppression and the actions towards the Kashmiri. This aspired homogeneity by the Indian government is present from an early age. In the form of strict control over the educational system and the value creation thereafter. The aspiration of the Indian forces is to minimize the resistance and individuality of the Kashmiri people and culture (see image 4). The metaphor of the deer in Sajad's novel demonstrates the indiscriminate violent behaviour through the Indian forces but also portrays the feeling of belonging of the Kashmiris.

II.4. Reaction of the local, national and international Community

II.4.1. International Response

As in 2016, the global media was focused on the US presidential elections, and consequently, the reporting on the happenings in Kashmir was rather limited (*The Guardian* November 8, 2016). However, the United Nations introduced a "commission of Inquiry (COI)" to "conduct a comprehensive independent international investigation into allegations of human rights violations in Kashmir" (*Al Jazeera* June 14, 2018). With this Committee of Information, the UN responded to the first report on Pakistan and Indian human rights violations in Kashmir in 2018 (*Al Jazeera News* June 14, 2018).

Prior to the revocation of the special status, the UN released a report on July 8, 2019 on Kashmir concerning human rights in the area (Human Rights Watch 2019). It stated that Kashmiri people are facing a constant threat of indiscriminate violence. The developing phases of torture dealt by the Indian government (APDP and JKCCS 2019) illustrated the normalization of torture and the structures of violence (Majid and Amin 2016). However, the international reaction to Burhan Wani's death and the national uprising were lacking coherence and compassion for the ongoing violence in the Kashmiri region and, therefore, a coordinated response was not forthcoming. The pressure to change aspects of the counterinsurgency strategy was limited and without consequence.

II.4.2. National Response

In direct reaction to Burhan Wani's death, counterinsurgency strategies were intensified. In reaction to the uprising after Burhan Wani's death, Indian security forces immediately responded with the use of lethal force (Anuradha Bhasin 2016, 12). Those reactions were seen in context with the ongoing violence in Kashmir (Bhan 2013). Following the Doctrine for sub-conventional operations launched in 2006, the demonstrations after Burhan's death changed the counterinsurgency strategy and were met with pellet guns and indiscriminate violence (Ray 2016). As the Chief Minister in power, Mehbooba Mufti, did not induce the decision ordered by the killing of the commander on the ground (Anuradha Bhasin 2016, 12), the systematic reliance on the individual temper of security forces is revealed.

The killing of Burhan Wani was conducted due to individual decisions and not based on the judicial system. This poorly reflects on the Indian control of their security forces and emphasizes the impunity of the security forces in their actions. Burhan's death resulted in a "reinvigorated popular revolt against India's domination over this disputed state" (*The Guardian* November 8, 2016). However, in less than four days, 50 people were killed. In response to Burhan Wani's death, the Indian press, under the central government's influence, published articles and reports aiming to conduct a "character assassination" (*The Asian* September 1, 2016). This assassination was focused on his violent and manipulative behaviour, to make the Indian population believe that again the Indian government saved the population in front of an internal threat.

II.4.3. Local Response

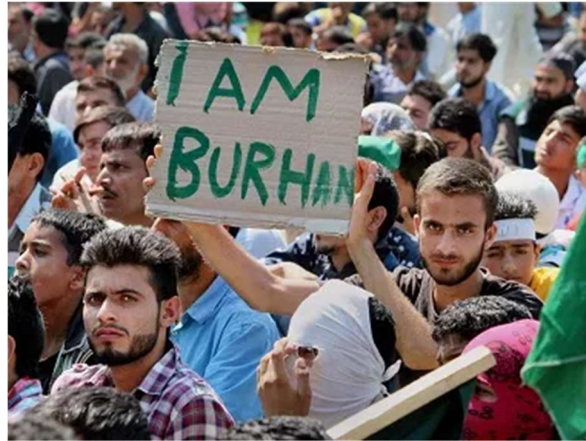


Image 5

[Source: *Firstpost* May 9, 2017]

Children and other protestors are facing the immunity of security forces, which results in an immense degree of violence without consequence (Duschinski et al. 2018). The protests, as a consequence of Burhan's death, were dominated by young Kashmiris demanding *azaadi* in representing anti-Indian propaganda. He changed the narrative of the militants and encouraged further resistance against the impunity of the security forces and other aspects of the counterinsurgency strategy.

It remains clear that Burhan Wani was mainly a symbolic figure for the resistance of the changing politically aware youth in Kashmir (see image 5). His violent death accelerated already ongoing changes and changed the discussion and protests within Kashmir from the demand for justice towards the call for *azaadi*, freedom for Kashmir (Anuradha Bhasin 2016, 12). The resuscitated discussion, based on human rights given the counterinsurgency strategy of the Indian government, has been going on since Burhan Wani's death.

Chapter III: Passive Involvement of Children in Kashmir

III.1. Defining Passive Child Involvement

Passive involvement of children is mainly focused on unintentional and spontaneous involvement of children in the conflict. However, measured on scale and impact, the everyday involvement of children in the resistance against Indian domination is considered inactive involvement of children throughout this research. Children create in their own “space of personal liberty” (Manecksha 2017, 45). As children are spending most of their days in closed rooms, the psychological consequences of this environment are crucial for the long-term development of children. These experiences result in long-term effects on language, temper and relationship behaviour (Manecksha 2017). As those forms of resistance are not partaking in organised groups, the so-called “everyday resistance” is considered an inactive involvement. That non-spectacular endurance is reflected in minor actions and stands in clear contrast to the open rebellion (Scott 1987). This enables children to anonymously take part in the resistance. According to Scott, this evasion of conformity enables long-lasting change as it is societal (1987).

III.2. The Armed Forces Special Power Act

The Indian government introduced the Indian Arms Act in 1959, intending to regulate violence and illegal weapon usage within their borders (Parliament of India 1959). Following the act, additional regulations were implemented to control the anti-occupational movement in Kashmir. This chapter focuses on the use of pellet guns by security forces on demonstrators and bystanders. The suffering of children can be also related to the justice system, more specifically the Juvenile Act 1986 that is present in Kashmir, whereas other states of India adopted a new amendment of the Act in 2000 (Rashid, Ramon and Zavirsek 2012, 631). This results in a lack of infrastructure (Rashid, Ramon and Zavirsek 2012, 642).

With Kashmir’s government enacting draconian law like the AFSPA also in combination with the Public Safety Act, the security agencies are enabled to act in impunity towards the Kashmiri people (Rashid, Ramon and Zavirsek 2012, 631). The AFSPA is classified as “legal cover” (IPTK and APDP 2015, 67) and reportedly creates conditions for systematic abuse and violent acts towards citizens (Committee on Amendments to Criminal

Law 2013). This impunity manifest in the spontaneous invasion of personal space and mistreatment of inhabitants (Manecksha 2017, 43; IPTK and APDP 2015, 10). In conducting sudden night raids and arrests, the torture is not solely physical but psychological. This torture goes from stigmatisation and lengthy unreasoned trails to imprisonment and incarceration (Rashid, Ramon and Zavirsek 2012, 634). The system of “command-and-control” of the army triggers illegal behaviour (IPTK and APDP 2015, 10).

This emergency law gives enables military forces the right to execute supreme control of the community (Amnesty International 1999). This results in military actors being able to carry out arrests or other seemingly unnecessary measures, including shooting or killing, an individual without cause. Any individual that has committed an identifiable offence or against whom there are justifiable grounds to suspect that he has committed or is about to commit a misdemeanour is liable to be subject to such treatment (Human Rights Watch 2006; Amnesty International 1999). The AFSPA, in declaring a special status to the entire region reinforces the impunity of the security forces in the area (Zia 2019, 779).

Indian Armed Security Forces are one the executors of Indian policies carried out in Kashmir. As they are directly linked to the central Indian government, the Armed Forces Special Power Act defines their duties and responsibilities. The policy enables security forces in the country and, in Indian-administered Kashmir, ‘necessary’ measures in case of any breaches of law and order (APDP and JKCCS 2019, 15). However, the exact conditions for those measures to come into effect are based on the executor’s personnel, in this case, the security forces individual perception of the situation. Subjective interpretations of this policy create “agents of violence in the larger occupational structure” (Majid and Amin 2016), which offers insight into the surrounding structures of violence in Kashmiri society. The citizens of Kashmir are in constant fear of violence and there is no existing government that guarantees them protection. Those structures consist of all parts of the Indian government, legislative, executive and judicial. This institutionalised abuse creates not only physical but foremost psychological consequences (Basu and Dutta 2010). Kashmiris live in a constant state of fear, which affects their everyday life.

III.3. The Use of Pellet Guns

Pellet guns are small air guns, which are used in numerous countries to injure individuals insignificantly to dissolve demonstrations. Pellet guns are mainly used for mass control, not for actual assassination (Khoja-Moolji 2018). The Indian government has used these weapons since 2010 to gain control over protests and manifestations (Barry 2016). Introduced as “crowd control”, the non-lethal weapons were introduced with an accompanying narrative. This narrative propagates the idea that they are a humane form of crowd control and do not produce life-threatening injuries (Singh 2016).

Although pellet guns are legally used in several countries, the measures of mass control and the existing intention to dissolve protests or group gatherings are questioned frequently in the case of the Indian security forces and police. There are multiple reported cases of lethal wounds to children, who are often inactive bystanders. Seventy percent of victims of pellet injuries who were admitted to Kashmiri hospital required a retinal intervention, which has meant that they have not been able to regain their eyesight (Ahmad 2016). Multiple scholars declare the use of those guns during demonstrations in Kashmir as contradictory to international laws like the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement officials and therefore a form of torture (Furtado 2016). The implementation of torture as a tactic of control during counterinsurgency is argued to have its origin in the colonial history of the country (APDP and JKCCS 2019, 24). In taking the right to maim the Kashmir people, the Indian government seeks to prove their indiscriminate rule and power over the Kashmiris. Through the use of non-lethal weapons on citizens, the occupational idea being one of the responses to resistance and defiance the Indian government appears to legitimize those structures of violence of the Kashmiri people. It is viewed as an adequate echo to the demand for freedom.

III.4. Cases of inactive Child Involvement

In the aftermath of Burhan Wani’s death, in combination with the longest curfew in Kashmiri history up until that point, 17 000 adults and children were injured in the first four months (*The Guardian* November 8, 2016). In the beginning, especially between July and November, every two hours a patient was admitted to the hospital with pellet gun injuries (*Greater Kashmir* September 1, 2016). Over six thousand people - including 782 eye injuries have been reported

since 2016 (Amnesty International 2017). As a result of those high numbers of injuries, the pellet gun victims became a symbol for the mass violence in Kashmir. Consequently, the term “mass blindings” was introduced in 2016 given the sheer number of people losing their sight (Barry 2016). The active aspect of the term “mass blinding” is present due to the role of Indian forces in their conscious decision of aiming at head-height and therefore invoking terror. When discussing the use of pellet guns cases of victims, violated by security forces under the so-called ‘black laws’, as Kashmiris refer to the AFSPA (Tisdall 2010), stand out due to their national and international reaction and their influence on the discussion in general.

The case of Insha Malik in 2016 was in direct relation to previous pellet gun victims. Nevertheless, she appears representational for a number of those victims. In 2016, Insha Malik was hit in the face with pellets that destroyed her right eye and injured the left eye in a high degree, that she lost the perception of light (Zia 2019, 774). The 14-year old was very studious and aimed to become a doctor one day. The attack on Insha took place during the aftermath of Burhan Wani’s death and the uprising in protest and rebellious actions in response to his killing. Although Insha is one of the eight hundred Kashmiris injured in the eyes or blinded by Indian troops (Zia 2019, 773), her face became a symbol of the mutilation carried out by the Indian forces (Kanjwal, Bhat and Zahra 2018; Misri 2019).

Religion and violence are two of the coping mechanisms of those tortured youths but also family members (Rashid, Ramon and Zavirsek 2012, 638). In the current situation, the violence directed towards the people in Kashmir seems to be expected to a certain degree by the Kashmiris (Zia 2019, 783). This expectation offers insight into the view of the Kashmiri people towards their situation. This mechanism makes it easier to be prepared and also to be able to react and psychologically process the indiscriminate violence, often described as an “indiscriminate” act of “madness” carried out by “violent beasts” (IPTK and APDP 2015, 67). A lot of these children, although facing serious injuries, are still strong-minded and believe strongly in the ideology of *azaadi* (Ahmad 2016).



Image 6
[Source: *BBC News* May 29, 2017]



Image 7
[Source: Naqshbandi 2016]

Some argue that being blinded for life is worse than being killed (Zia 2019, 775). For children, in particular, eyesight is essential to education, which will enable them to forge their future and a social network. Hindering these crucial aspects impacts the determination, self-reliance, and agency of these children. In attempting to break the rebellion from its core and its future (Zia 2019, 775), the government violates the right of Kashmiri children to determine their future (see image 6 and image 7) and renders them a desperate and dependent population. This dependency is in line with the argument put forward by scholars, that the logic behind the use of pellet guns and the non-utilisation of lethal weapons is the strategy of “will not to let die” (Puar 2017). With the government producing maimed bodies and imposing living death upon the people that are being blinded, the government takes on their dominance over people’s life and their presence to the level of choosing to let people live. In producing “bodies incapable of physical resistance” (Zia 2019, 773) security forces seem to be lowering the physical strength of the rebellion.

There is an ongoing discussion as to whether the maiming of those inactive and sometimes active participants of demonstrations is a conscious decision taken by the Indian government. Some onlookers argue that the training of security forces and the lethality of those “non-lethal” weapons are interrelated (Furtado 2016). Although the government instructed forces in Kashmir to shoot the pellet guns only below the waist, the injuries are a sign of indiscriminate firing (Nair 2016). With the direct relation of increased pellet gun victims and the surge in demonstrations and resistance against the Indian government, the decision made by individual soldiers to point the gun towards the eyes appears deliberate. This threat is extended fiercely towards the next generation of the valley. Therefore, the underlying occupational control of those anti-terrorist actions is focused on the future.

The symbolism of the use of pellet guns on children is underlined with the use towards other significant groups. Journalists are often targeted by pellets (Zia 2019, 782). Besides deterring them from reporting in the region, the government blinds the symbols of the information provision, representing the right of freedom of expression. The external world is receiving limited information about the situation in Kashmir and the Kashmiris lose their insights into the actual situation surrounding them.

Expert judgement of the pellet gun use in India differs. The actual utilisation of pellet guns as crowd control is also contested as certain experts reaffirm their design not to be for crowd control but animal hunting (*Time* September 6, 2018). With Kashmiri people being shot by guns designated for animals speaks to the symbolic value of the crowd control and the narrative of lethal “non-lethal” guns becomes apparent. The symbolism of animal characters is reflected in Sajad’s graphic novel through the depiction of Kashmiris as Hunguls, “Kashmir’s national animal” (Ghosal 2016). With Sajad portraying Kashmiris as endangered deers, he captures the governmental treatment and divesting identity measures that Kashmiris face every day (Sajad 2015). This symbolism also reflects on the way the Indian military forces treat the Kashmiris and how they perceive being treated.

The UN Basic principle on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials states “that law enforcement officials must apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force” (United Nations 1990). The Indian forces, however, are perceived to be acting under the additional aspect of “whenever the lawful use of force and firearms is unavoidable, law enforcement officials shall exercise restraint in such use and act in proportion

to the seriousness of the offense” (UN General Assembly 1990). Some argue that the pellet gun use by the Indian government is a “clear violation of human rights and humanitarian law” (Furtado 2016). Other scholars argue that the use of pellet guns and other different violent acts are aspects of the general “military occupation” (Zia 2019, 774) in the valley.

III.5. Reaction of the local, national and international Community

III.5.1. International Response

The first lethal victim since the introduction of pellet guns in 2010 was the young school child Irshad Ahmad Parray (Bukhari 2015). During the uprising following Ahmad Parray’s death, 120 people were killed (*Greater Kashmir* June 1, 2017). The incident drew additional international attention due to the prior order by the Indian government regarding non-lethal weapons. Some international human rights representatives argued for training and accountability of soldiers (*The Telegraph* August 31, 2010). The following years until 2016, however, the government’s use of pellet guns for mass control continued and peaked with the protests in the aftermath of the killing of the militant, Wani. The amendment in 2015, therefore, does respond to the international pressure for more training for security forces.

In 2016, in the aftermath of Burhan Wani’s death, the OHCHR released a report on the situation in Kashmir. This report was followed by several other human rights reports by the United Nations and other international humanitarian organisation. There was a recommendation issued by the IPTK and the APDP in 2015 to amend the Armed Forces Special Power Act (IPTK and APDP 2015, 124) but the Indian government did not react to this recommendation. Some organisations, like Amnesty International, have condemned pellet guns as “not non-lethal” but often international actors are reluctant to impose changes on the Indian government due to economic interrelations (Amnesty International 2017).

Even the statement of the Nobel prize-winning Indian economist Amartya Sen, that the reactions to the protests in Kashmir that resulted from the death of Burhan Wani were “the biggest blot on India’s democracy” (*India Today* July 18, 2016) did not result in the Indian government acknowledging its wrongdoings. The economist sees Kashmir as a part of India but still condemned the violent reaction by the government. In line with their narrative, pellet guns are portrayed as more humane than “getting hit by bullets” (Ahmad 2016). Independent

organisations, like the IPTK and APDP, have urged the international community to react, in the form of the inclusion of the Kashmir context of the application by the India government for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council even before the escalations of 2016 (IPTK and APDP 2015). Although the government was not considered for a permanent seat, India's economic importance triggered for them not to be excluded and given them the chance to apply for non-permanent membership for 2021-22 (*Economic Times* June 26, 2019).

III.5.2. National Response

After Burhan Wani's killing, an estimated eleven thousand people were injured in protests (OHCHR 2018). With so many people protesting, the Indian government was confronted with international condemnation. As the use of pellet guns is disputed and seen as a narrative that propagates the idea of the actual protection of security and the non-use of more fatal weapons, however, no significant action has been taken (personal interview with Idrees Kanth 2019). The use of pellet guns stands in contrast to the Indian narrative of the government and the country as being a liberal democracy while maintaining the violence like "killings, disappearances, incarceration, mass rapes, and blindings become possible without accountability" (Zia 2019, 776). With the government sending 3 eye specialists on the 14th of July, 5 days after Burhan Wani's death, to Kashmir from a Medical Institute in New Delhi, the central government used this representational gesture to offer an official reaction to the injured (Ahmad 2016). However, in sending this scarce amount of people, the irony and power of the Indian government in withholding their full force of expertise towards Kashmir, is evident. They acknowledge the suffering caused but do not appear to value it in the same way they would if the victims would have been Indian individuals hurt.

The Indian government avoided taking a stance on the discussion around the lethality of pellet guns until the 12th of July, after Burhan's death. International pressure forced them to make a statement. A spokesperson declared that the security forces "will have to persist with this necessary evil till we find a non-lethal alternative" (*The Guardian* November 8, 2016). As this statement was conducted by the Modi-supportive Kashmiri government officials, the statement is highly influenced by the Indian governmental line. The statement declares pellet guns as the lesser evil and presents the use of those so-called 'non-lethal guns' as the most humane measure that can be taken in the situation.

Being the executing force, Indian military is strongly opposed to the ban of pellets, as their usage “saves lives” (Ahmad 2016) as they are less dangerous than normal ammunition. In characterising the alternative as “non-lethal”, the current choice of pellet guns is indirectly characterised as lethal. The necessity of the use of these guns seems to be the sole and main reason for the Indian forces to stick to the usage of those means. Published pictures of injured children and other reports are perceived as a “fair price to pay for keeping Kashmir in check” (*The Guardian* November 8, 2016). Even the internal condemnation (*NDTV* August 22, 2016) of the violent counterinsurgency measures did not stop the government. Indian gun law is considered an already strict policy in comparison to other gun regulations. Despite the 2016 introduction of an ‘arms and ammunition safety training course’ (*The Economic Times* July 11, 2018), the perception of the legitimisation of the use of pellet guns is part of the training. The use of pellet guns has not been questioned by the Indian government, although internationally their implementation has been questioned and discussed repeatedly.

Although India refuses to let independent humanitarian institutions, like the UN Special Rapporteurs, conduct research in the Valley themselves, the government refuses to break the circle of reason about the untrue depiction of the pellet gun use in Kashmir (IPTK and APDP 2015). This use of the media is an aspect that is crucial for the Indian government in creating a narrative around its protective behaviour over the Kashmir valley in confrontation with militants influenced by Pakistan. The depiction of this pellet gun narrative is so strong, that a poll conducted in 2016 by the Indian government reached the result, that the majority of the population is in support for the usage of those measures and their idea of “harsh love” (*The Guardian* November 8, 2016).

III.5.3. Local Response

The Indian government managed to create a vicious circle by fuelling the media with anti-militant propaganda, which results in Indian society pressuring the Indian government to react forcefully to the ongoing rebellion in the Valley. This indicates the government conducting increasingly harsh counterinsurgency strategies that are accompanied by the media narrative as they report about the ‘terrorists’. Through the control of the media and other communication channels, the Indian government made the Kashmiri discussion an election matter. Therefore, even though the international pressure increases due to the ongoing blinding and maiming of

the Kashmiri community, the Indian population maintains a strong stance on the use of pellet guns in the fight against the rebels.

Resistance from society has been confronted with the degree of impunity of those armed forces (APDP and JKCCS 2019, 17). The report “Torture” by the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons and Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society emphasises the celebration of individual perpetrators, mostly from the security forces in conducting rape, torture and mass killings. Some of those individuals are praised and promoted to high governmental positions or other influential employments (Majid and Amin 2016). This development emphasises the structures of violence that are seemingly unbreakable due to the government’s position.

In creating a veneer of justice, the Indian government was considering changing, what is called to be one of the most controversial provisions of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), which regulates these forces in 2018 (*NDTV* October 30, 2018). As this change was also motivated by international pressure due to reporting about torture, rape, and killings of prisoners and other victims of security forces, it can be viewed as an attempt to ease international scrutiny of security forces in Kashmir. The latest update of the attempted change appears to be the possible removal of the clause of possible lethal consequences (*NDTV* October 30, 2018). Meanwhile, the total amount of 4 807 security force personnel that have been killed in J&K until the end of 2011 (Ministry of Home Affairs: Government of India 2012) is confronted with an inestimable number of victims, due to the high number of disappearances and numerous unknown graves and deaths (Majid and Amin 2016).

The previous two chapters found that art is a way to adapt perception of a conflict from a differentiated angle, that depicts the unspectacular, everyday experience of violence and offers conclusions of the symbolism of children. The following chapter aims to set the previous analysis of children’s perception in relation to another perennial conflict, the Palestine - Israel conflict.

Chapter IV: Communality or Contrast? Kashmir and Palestine

Sajad's graphic novel is an elaborate example of the alternative representation of the subaltern through word-graphic visualisation. By connecting visual and verbal accounts, his work reflects on subjects of everydayness, childhood, and conflict. This unique word-graphic interrelation (Prorokova and Tal 2018) concludes on the symbolism of children. In his depiction of everydayness in conflict situations, Sajad's character was inspired by Joe Sacco's work, another graphic novel author (Sajad 2015). The influence of Sacco on Sajad's work in Kashmir and their similarities in depicting the conflict from the perspective of visual-verbal personal experiences creates a useful link between the two works. Given the similarities between the two conflicts, the comparison between Kashmir and Israel is to be analysed to set the findings of symbolism of children in the broader context.

Joe Sacco, born in 1960 on Malta, won the American Book Award 1996 with his graphic novel *Palestine* (Edition Moderne n.d.). The graphic novel is based on Sacco's visit to Palestine in 1991-92. Concerning the representation of the subaltern (Spivak 1988), Sacco is presented to be addressing "misinterpretations and dehumanisation of [...] history" of the Palestinian population (Comment by Said in Sacco 2001, iii). His portrayal of Palestine emphasises the voice of the subaltern. In conducting numerous interviews throughout his stay, he enables the Palestinian agency. Although, since then "peace process" has been initiated and other "breakthroughs" were made, he emphasises the topicality of the comic in view of the current everyday experience of the population (Sacco 2001, vi).

IV.1. Palestine the Perennial Conflict

The conflict between Israel and Palestine goes back to the creation of the Israeli state in 1948. The territorial dispute between the allocated Jewish population and the residing Palestinian population has therefore been going on for about 70 years⁶. As the ideological roots of the conflict trace back to the origins of religious territorial distribution, the question of territorial rights is especially complicated. However in 1948, through an imbalance between the Zionist

⁶ For a detailed elaboration of the history of the region and the dispute between Israel and Palestine, see Filiu 2014.

army and the Palestinians, who were forcibly disarmed by the British colonial power years before, was a critical turn of the territorial fight (Caplan 2009). After Israel winning the battle, the Muslim Brotherhood decided to respond to the resulting occupation forty years later. The resistance, *intifada*, started in December 1987. With the rebellion mainly led by young Palestinians, the perception of impunity by the Israeli occupation forces was damaged (Sacco 2001, 191). However, despite the change of perception, the rebellion and its violent response by the Israeli government and army triggered an ongoing continual conflict context to the present day.

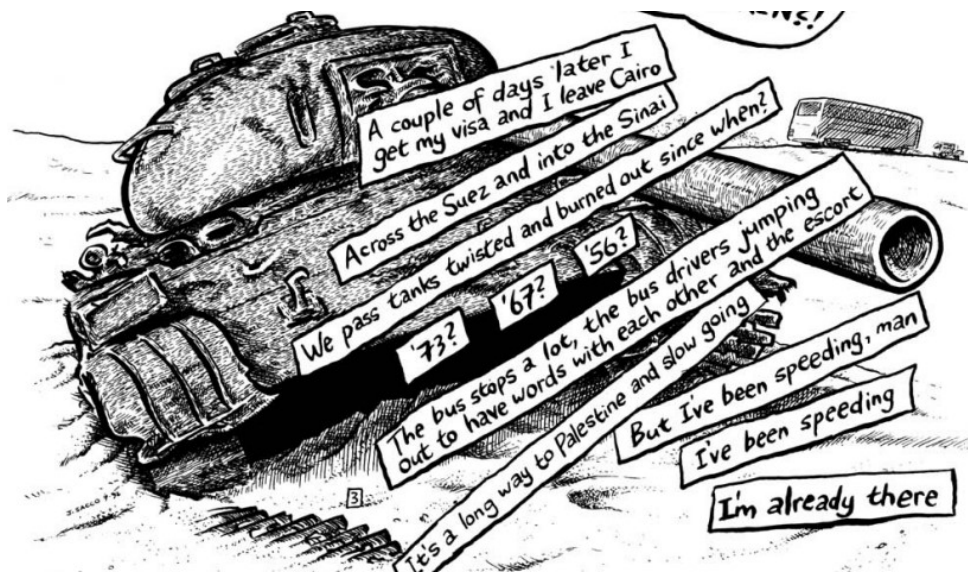


Image 8

[Source: Sacco 2001, 3]

Although throughout the conflict there have been peace attempts and moments of renewed hostility, these spectacular events are confronted with sustained violence, that the Palestinian population experiences under the rule of the Israeli government in Gaza. Similar to the Kashmir conflict, curfews, indiscriminate violence and impunity are some of the examples of the non-spectacular violence experienced by the subaltern, in this case the Palestinians. The non-spectacularity also includes control over every part of the occupied life. This ongoing conflict has affected multiple generations of young Palestinians and a similar repetitiveness of resistance and following violence creates numbness towards the conflict (see image 8). The tank Sacco approaches on the side of the road appears to be a regular, non-spectacular sight in the environment. It crosses his mind amongst other casual conversational aspects. There is

nothing spectacular about an instrument of war, with the stagnation and the perennial form of the conflict even the year the usage of the tank becomes irrelevant. As the visual depiction by Sacco covers the tank with everyday thoughts, the normality and integration of violence into anyone's life and environment become perceivable.

IV.2. Kashmiris 'azaadi' and the Palestinian 'intifada'

The former chief minister of Kashmir characterised the announcement of the Indian government's decision to revoke the special status of Kashmir in 2019 as a decision that turns India into an “occupational force in Jammu and Kashmir” (*The Guardian* August 5, 2019). This statement, however, implies that the occupation was commenced as a break from their special status. Many scholars argue that the behaviour of the Indian government in Kashmir before 2019 can be labelled an occupation. The ‘historical consciousness’ of the Kashmiri people (Kanth 2019, 16), of their continuous fight for freedom in face of losing their sovereignty in August 2019, can be viewed as the result of the suppression for nearly 70 years. In the desire of freeing the country, with the idea of “azaadi” (Kanth 2019, 20), the Kashmiri are facing a crisis of citizenship between their aspiration for a Kashmiri identity, which is confronted with the imposed Indian official citizenship.

In the graphic novel by Sajad, as well as Sacco's *Palestine*, the protagonists develop throughout the novel while experiencing more about their environment (Sajad 2015; Sacco 2001). The “Continued occupation” (Kanth 2019, 11) of the Indian government in Kashmir has been characterized not only by periodical curfews but a constant presence of security forces, which makes the Indian government omnipresent in the Kashmiris everyday life. There is an ongoing debate amongst scholars as to how and when the “idea of Kashmiryat”⁷ (Kanth 2019; Chandoke 2005) gained traction. In agreeing on the incomprehension by the Indian government towards the desire of Kashmir to regain sovereignty, scholars view the violent and forceful reaction of the Indian government to be the reason for the violent development of resistance by Kashmiri in pro-independence groups.

⁷ The term translates to Kashmir-ness and is often used in terms of militancy to express the desire of the ethnic community of Kashmir to be united in a national environment.

This historical consciousness is present in both conflicts due to their ongoing character as well as the discussion of human rights in relation to the implementation of counterinsurgency measures in both areas. Concerning the previously discussed structures of violence in Kashmir (Amin and Majid 2016), Nixon et al. describes the levels of military violence as ‘indiscriminate, multi-dimensional and recurrent’ in Palestine (1990). The environment the children of Kashmir and Palestine grow up in appears similar. The perennial nature of both conflicts directly affects the younger generation’s environment and experience.

With the normalisation of war in playing games that represent a violent threat, children integrated the ongoing violence around them into their personal life (see image 9). The absurd combination of the normality of playing a trick on their teachers and the replication of the clash of two countries threatening each other with “atom bombs” that threaten an immense amount of people illustrates this point. The informational exchange in both conflicts is filtered, resulting in misinformation for all actors. For children, the Margil war is perceived, as for many other Kashmiris as part of their history and therefore nothing out of the ordinary, with no reaction from the international community.



Image 9

[Sajad 2015, 147]

Both the call for *azaadi* and the term of the *intifada* are in direct relation to counterinsurgency measures and policies by the Indian and Israeli governments. The government's strategies appear similar (*AJ+* September 15, 2019). Next to the introduction of curfews in Palestine, in denying basic needs and education of the inhabitants represent one of the main counter activities against the militants and their communities (Usher 1991, 2) which is apparent throughout the history of Kashmir and in the current situation. Similar to the Kashmir conflict, the so-called “shoot to cripple” (Puar 2017, 129) hinders the uprising and confronts it with actual strategical physical damage. Other concrete aspects of common counterinsurgency strategies (Rajagopalan 2008) are present in both cases.

The isolation of individual so-called terrorists can be viewed as a common strategy. In the imagery of the terrorists, the collective group of Palestinians as well as Kashmiris are collectively punished for their own aspired *desire and power relation* (Spivak 1988). This collective punishment is present in the animalisation of prisoners and Palestinians (Sacco 2001, 92). The central government’s narrative is a dehumanising one; each government aims to create less societal resistance against occupational violence. With Sajad portraying Kashmiris as endangered deers and Sacco’s description of inhumane treatment of prisoners and families of rebels, psychological counterinsurgency by each government becomes apparent. In treating them like animals, the own perception of the subaltern is modified. This is especially critical given the two countries, Israel and India, being representational democracies of the liberal world (Sacco 2001, 95; Sajad 2015).



Image 10

[Source: Sacco 2001, 35]



Image 11

[Source: Sajad 2015, 7]

The humiliation and hope destruction is met by the impunity of soldiers in both conflicts. Conducting representational invasions of personal space and privacy, the army's omnipresence is part of the psychological occupation (see image 10). In combination with the limitation of basic human needs, the treatment of humans like animals can be replicated in their behaviour. The perception of the occupied is that the law of the military stands over any other convention, religion or national regulations (Sacco 2001, 163). Similar to the treatment in Kashmir, terrorism is invoked as justification for the government's violent behaviour before the international community. "Terrorist groupie!" (Image 11) makes the usage of the link clear (see Image 11). This behaviour offers insight into the personification and unreasonable use of the terroristic narrative by the Indian and Israeli military. In relating his personal experience to terrorist attacks, the strength and presence of the narrative for the international community are apparent.

Considering their motivation, however, differences are evident. In the exploration of children's motivation for resisting, the study of the Palestinian child offers an insight into what motivates them. The roots of the resistance in Palestine, in this case, derive from the positioning of the child in society (Habash 1990). Reflecting on this difference, Sajad expresses the wish to inform the local and regional audience about the situation in the Valley as much as the

international community (Ghosal 2016), which is in contrast to Sacco's aspiration to portray everyday experiences in Palestine for the international community.

In their active form of resistance, children in Palestine are stone-throwers, so-called Shubabs during demonstrations (Usher 1991). Active and inactive involvement by children is present in the conflict between Palestine and Israel. Children's intrinsic motivation for active involvement in the resistance in both countries is clear (see image 12). This motivation is contradictory to the symbolism of children. The victimisation of children and their portrayal externally motivated by imposed ideologies, ignores their ability to grasp their situation and their political awareness. Those children are confronted with the reaction of soldiers with weapons when facing stone-throwing children. Those reactions are only possible due to the combination of the terrorism narrative and dehumanization of the subaltern.



Image 12
[Source Sacco 2001, 196]

IV.3. Symbolism of Children in Palestine and Kashmir

IV.3.1. Hope



Image 13

[Source: Masood Hussein 2011]

The Kashmiri children's belief in *azaadi*, meaning freedom, while facing everyday violence, is exemplary of the aspiration of their country. The new generation of Kashmiris draw their inspiration from their personal struggle and are certain of the *azaadi* belief, like Burhan Wani. He amongst others acted without the influence of Pakistan or other external factors. In the case of Palestine, the children know the stones thrown will not break the occupation but these stones obtain symbolic value (Sacco 2001, 195). It represents their hope and aspiration for the cause and represent their enduring faith in their *desire and power* (Spivak 1988). This aspiration is depicted in the image by Hussein (see image 13). The dove, representing hope, floats above the structures of violence depicted through key aspects of the oppression and counterinsurgency measures. The seemingly endless usage of newspapers depicts the non-spectacularity of reporting of the perennial violence. This environment juxtaposes the clear sky and the small, cramped space of the family. This territorial sense of identity (Giel 1990) emphasises the cultural values and interests of the area into a separation of the dominant identity, the Indian and Israeli one. The child in the picture is the only one focusing directly on the beholder. With the child gazing at "nothing but bleak future" (Hussein et al. 2016, 3-4) the

hope for the future is directly tied to him. The child is the deliverer of the message of the painting: How can the world look away from such violence and suffering?

IV.3.2. Resistance

Children are used as symbols for violent behaviour from both sides of the conflict in the Kashmir conflict (Asian Centre for Human Rights 2013, 6). In comparison to the Palestine conflict however, the representational aspect appears in a differentiated form. In Palestine, children are “vehicles for social change” and a “binding factor” to the core of society, the families (Usher 1991, 3). Their active role is a reaction to the occupational forces in their environment. The active involvement of children, especially when used with an ideological purpose can be used for taking control over a population (Vautravers 2008, 102). Through the choice of involvement or the acceptance of their fate, children feel empowered to stand up for their beliefs and continue to resist (Habash 1990). In Palestine, the *intifada* has triggered a shift in traditional family structures (Usher 1991, 4) by increasing the agency of children involved in the conflict. However, in the case of Kashmir, the child is not assigned to this kind of social change and therefore is given less agency in terms of direct involvement in the conflict. The acknowledgement of the youth having an impact, especially in the case of Burhan Wani, however, shows that the politically educated youth in Kashmir is, similar to their Palestinian counterpart, a driving force of resistance.

IV.3.3. Future and past

Children's education is a representation of their future and agency thereof. In limiting their access to the information system by limiting courses taught or the imposition of curfews for them to not being able to attend school at all (personal interview with Idrees Kanth 2019), the oppressive actors make sure that, their future is limited. However, as mentioned prior, Kashmiri and Palestinian children possess political knowledge of the conflict. They are not only very highly politically educated and develop their political conviction (Sacco 2001, 48) but also are aware of their rights (See image 14).

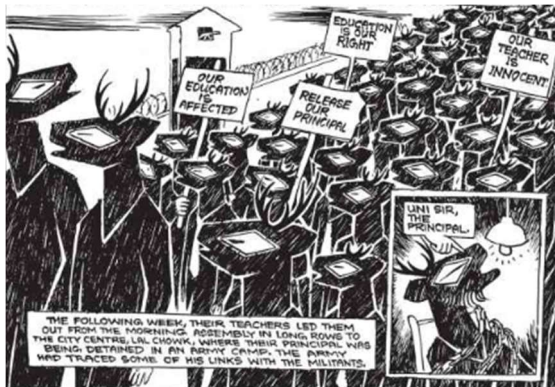


Image 14
[Sajad 2015, 7]

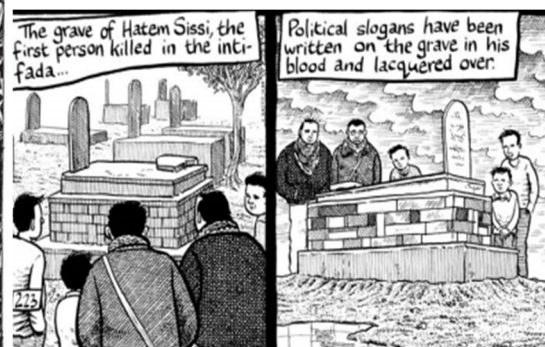


Image 15
[Source: Sacco 2001, 223]

Children's involvement is viewed as the interconnection of the future and the past of the conflict. With Insha Malik being an innocent, passive victim of the indiscriminate violence of the Indian military forces, her past as a normal child, experiencing everyday violence, transformed her future into a symbol of the generational struggle of the use of pellet guns. As a result of the death of 14-year-old Palestinian boy Hatem Sissi, one of the first victims of the first intifada, the rioting spread from Jabalya Camo to the whole of the Gaza Strip (Filiu 2014, 194). He became representational for the resistance against the oppression and the ongoing conflict (see image 15).

The slogans on his grave demonstrate his political symbolism of the resistance. His death is seen as representational for past victims of the intifada as he gave his life for the resistance. The combination of the current oppression through the lacquering of those slogans, however, is confronted with the visitation of his grave by Palestinians that attribute meaning to

the grave, to give them hope for the future. In his remembrance, society sees the remembrance of the strength of the people but also the sacrifices made for their ideologies. As they are willing to sacrifice their life for azaadi (personal interview with Idrees Kanth 2019).

With the former president of Israel saying: “We will do whatever can be done to bring peace for Israel and the Middle East and a better future for all our children” (Greenbaum, Veerman and Bacon-Schnoor 2006, 435) the clear stance of the protection of children and their future can be viewed as honourable. However, one should pay attention to the reference to “our” children. This notion emphasises the prioritization of children in conflict situations. Although that in general children’s agency is already considered low in politics (Brocklehurst 2006), there appears to be a hierarchy amongst children as well. This interconnection of children and nationality emphasises the symbolism of children as the future of the nation.

Through the lens of art, this comparison of everyday experience of children in a perennial conflict offered insights into the similarities of the symbolism of children in conflict situations. Although some symbols are contradictory amongst each other, a general conclusion about the diversification of the symbolism of children can be taken.

Conclusion

This thesis examines the portrayal of children in war situations and contextualises this in terms of their political significance and symbolism. By portraying the resistance of children and the general resistance of society in Kashmir as a “mere insurgency” (Chatterji 2010, 95), the Indian government can conduct intense militarised actions with limited international fallout. By referring issues related to spectacular and non-spectacular violence in the case of Kashmir and Palestine, this thesis identifies the occupational behavior of security forces and the Indian army (Mishra et al. 2010).

By analysing different cases of active and passive involvement of children, the thesis found that children of both Palestine and Kashmir are confirmed as subaltern actors (Spivak 1988). This is evident in their under-representation in academia and international relations (Brocklehurst 2006). Graphic novels, with their combined understanding of visuality and verballity, serve with their marginalisation as an entry point for the engagement of children’s everyday experience of non-spectacular violence. With the additional analysis of graphic novels and the Palestine and Kashmir conflict, this thesis further dealt with the direct influence on the conflict and the symbolism of resistance through active and passive involvement. Through their mental strength and ideology of resistance, children function as symbols for all actors of the discussed conflicts.

The direct influence of children on policies is mainly present in the active involvement of children in the conflict. With the change in counterinsurgency strategy, Burhan Wani’s death had a direct impact on the national response and less on the international. In contrast to the increased counterinsurgency measures, his iconic behaviour triggered a societal change for the youth as well as for the rest of Kashmir. The inactive involvement, like Insha Malik’s case, despite not having a direct influence on the national measures concerning pellet guns, non-governmental organisation’s attention has focused on pellet gun usage with increased pressure on the Indian government. However, the pressure is not met with real consequences due to economic and political interests held by India’s allies. Both involvements, nonetheless, impacted the Kashmiri as well as the Palestinian conflict through their symbolic agency.

This study contributes to the diversification of symbolism of children and the resulting agency given to those children. The violence directed towards children indicates their agency

and threat to the oppressing government. However, the interrelation between the two symbolism groups of futuristic hopes and strength, agency and nationality are fuelled with the self-determination of the child, which is a missed point in the dominant academic literature.

In the case of Burhan Wani, the hope, aspiration and mental strength symbolised by his figure for the Kashmiri population is confronted with the terrorism narrative of the Indian government. The force of this internationally recognised term offers insight into the agency of Burhan Wani as a young militant. Furthermore, the attempted character assassination (*The Asian* September 1, 2016) shows that the Indian government was very much aware of the young militant's influence. In the case of Insha Malik, the ideological aspect of the symbolism of children is rather subtle in comparison to the representational aspiration of the young girl. With the confrontation of her studious ambitions and the treatment of her like an animal, the narrative of the Indian government of them being humane towards the Kashmiris is confronted with the reality of this case.

The main body of academic literature fails to discuss the active involvement and ideological resistance of young Kashmiris and Palestinians. In children representing the ideologies of *azaadi* and *intifada*, a whole community is united behind those children. Their "representative consciousness" (Spivak 1988, 70) symbolises resistance, hope, the future in direct interrelation with the "historical consciousness" (Kanth 2019, 16) of their countries. With regard to the question of whether the involvement of children shapes the response to the conflict, my research found that children shape the response to the Kashmir conflict as well as the Palestinian conflict. The impunity of soldiers is met with the hope of children. It is not the actual resistance that holds the most agency but their representational value for their community.

In the direct comparison, Kashmir and Palestine, despite the attention to the revocation of Kashmir's special status, the conflict between Israel and Palestine has triggered a considerably higher amount of media coverage. This discrepancy is concerning due to the development of "hybrid warfare" (Prorokova and Tal 2018), which represents the development of elevated media usage in conflict situations. The influence on informational flows and the oppression of articulation of the Kashmiri by the Indian government is met only with a gradual shift from editorial work to actual reports by the international community due to the events in 2019.

On the societal level, children are given agency, especially in Palestine, and can become symbols of the conflict and trigger larger movements. The future generation of Kashmiri and Palestine has offered a clear stance on their political belonging. Although children's search for belonging in society is more difficult in a globalised world (Girard and Grayson 2016), this research concludes that children in perennial conflict situations acquire strong political knowledge that leads them to clear identity decisions. The structures of violence (Majid and Amin 2016) are confronted with a strong sense of belonging to the countries' future. This confrontation is a crucial distinction from the resistance and differentiates *azaadi* and *intifada* from other ongoing conflicts. As their psychological experiences have proven to be very different to that of adults (Basu and Dutta 2010, 1334) these insights should be included at the national and international level. I argue that this perspective needs to be considered in finding solutions for conflict situations. For further enlargements of this study, a more in-depth analysis of Kashmir and Palestine should be conducted with careful attention to the nature and use of internal governmental documents. Furthermore, the symbolism of children in war situations should be conducted in other cases of perennial conflict to ensure the general validity of the conclusions in this thesis.

At the outset of this investigation, the objective of shedding new light on the importance of children as symbols and agents of the conflicts in Kashmir and Palestine was laid out. From the evidence examined here - in the graphic novels, personal testimonies and media reportage - it becomes clear that Kashmiri can speak where their experience of their community's struggle with the Indian authorities is concerned. Not only have children in Kashmir and Palestine become symbols of their respective struggles, they have, by their actions, become important agents of resistance. Whilst there is more work to be done in examining the extent to which they contribute to the direction of these struggles, we may reasonably conclude that their omission from previous studies is indeed an error that should be corrected in future works.

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