Chapter I

Introduction

The present study is based in the backdrop of the ongoing State- Maoist conflict in the state of Chhattisgarh. In the milieu of the prolonged conflict, Chhattisgarh has emerged as the epicentre (Sundar 2011: 46; ACHR 2008: 38) and is known to be one of the most turbulent states in the current times. A large number of debates have been centring around this conflict and dominating this field of study. However, in the midst of conflict, Chhattisgarh has been narrowed down to a discourse and has been objectified suiting individual interests. It is now an entity characterised by presence of conflict and violence. These overarching debates and discourses over this conflict have often shifted the focus from the everyday life of the native population of the region, the adivasis who, in present day context, stand at the crossroads and lead a life deeply embroiled in this ongoing conflict. Focussing further, one finds a section of this population that has not been accorded a voice and have been silently bearing the brunt of this conflict, children. Drawing from here, I state that the study attempts to bring the focus back onto this hitherto ignored and less represented population of the region. Attempt is made to capture the dailiness and their everyday living experience in this ongoing conflict, by closely exploring the everyday life nuances, negotiations, adjustments and transformations taking place in the lives of children.

With this, one clarifies the positioning of the study, wherein it does not attempting to study the phenomenon of State- Maoist conflict and the debates and discourses centering around it per se but locates the study in this broad context and attempts to closely look at the existence of everyday life of children in this ongoing conflict and its areas of proliferation. The study looks at everyday not as an singular act but as a broad and overarching phenomenon which is common to the people, including children, and the space in which varied socio-cultural, economic and political relations are negotiated or contested on an everyday basis. In the process, it explores in totality the changes that have been wrought by the existing conflict and also the ways in which newer socio-cultural forms have emerged that help in the process of meaning making in the lives of the people affected by this adverse situation. It closely examines the various processes taking place in the lives of the people in the study area and thus, examines the existing
fissures alongwith the continuity that accompanies the everyday life. Therefore, it can be stated that the present study lays focus on the ruptured experiences of past and the everyday of the present and draws relation between the disruptions and the everyday life of children.

1. **Armed Conflicts: A Global Scenario**

Having stated the context of the present study, an attempt is now made to bring forth a macro perspective of armed conflicts across the globe. Armed conflict, as a phenomenon cannot be looked at in isolation as it is holistic in nature and encompasses an interplay of diverse factors ranging from the nature and characteristics of the actors involved in the conflict to its causes and consequences and its direct and indirect effects on the larger population living within it.

The global history has always been characterised by presence of conflicts of varied kinds at all times. The Cold War era that ended over two decades ago experienced a global confrontation between capitalism and communism. With the Malta Summit marking the end of Cold War in 1989, the antagonism between the East and West declined but the epicentre of conflicts found a base in the Third World nations where the wars no more erupted out of anti-colonial struggle or national liberation, etc. but internally out of the latent tensions and instabilities that went deep down the historical roots of persisting ethnic, religious, communal, linguistic asymmetries. Chari (2001: 10) calls these internal eruptions having a ‘decompression effect’ wherein these asymmetries lay dormant till the Cold War era and with its end there was a sudden eruption of internal conflicts within these third world nations that arose primarily out of ‘the plethora of ethno-nationalist, socio-economic and communal reasons’.

The post-Cold War era witnessed a continuation of some of the ideological conflicts like that in Afghanistan, some separatist conflicts like in Sri Lanka and Eritrea became stronger and there were renewed outbreaks in Mexico and ethnic and territorial conflicts in Yugoslavia (Stewart and Fitzgerald 2001: 1). A large number of African nations like Sierra Leone, Somalia, Congo and Rwanda were totally embroiled in armed conflict and resulted in long-existing civil wars in Ethiopia and Angola. The South Asian region too has decades’ long history of conflicts, in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, majorly intra-State in nature wherein a number of insurgencies have
affected its sub regions wherein besides the communal, ethnic sectarian conflicts, the existence of societal contradictions have led to newer conflicts based on class, class etc. (Chari 2001; Gould 2012; Kumaraswamy and Copland 2009; Sundar and Sundar 2014).

The global scenario even today continues to be embroiled in the situations of armed conflicts. In 2013, there were thirty three active conflicts in the world. Most of the state-based armed conflicts today are intra-state in nature that are fought between the government of a State and one or more non-state armed group over control of government power or a specific territory (Uppsala Conflict Data Program UCDP 2011)\(^1\).

Infact, the recent decades have been a witness to a significant rise in the number of violent armed confrontations and conflicts that include outright warfare, sporadic civil unrest and a large number of intra-state conflicts that mainly take place within the borders of a country, with the poorest members of society usually bearing the brunt.

1.1.  What is an Armed Conflict?

The International Humanitarian Law classifies armed conflict into two kinds, namely, *International Armed Conflicts* opposing two or more States and *Intra-State Armed Conflicts* between governmental forces and non-governmental armed groups, or between such groups only (ICRC 2008: 1). *Armed conflict* is a ‘contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory, where there is use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least twenty five battle-related deaths in one calendar year’ (UCDP\(^2\); Smith 2004).

The term *armed conflict* encompasses a broader range of circumstances and conditions than that of war. These range from that of violent political protest or insurgency, to violence enacted by trained and organised military units and to genocide (ibid). Armed conflicts are characterised by ‘an absence of heavy conventional weapons-or superpowers patrons as they are replaced by a typical low intensity conflict between governments and small, untrained rebel forces equipped with small arms and light weapons’ (Human Security Centre 2005: 5) as regards to high magnitude foreign intervention and technology adopted during wars (Stewart and Fitzgerald 2001: 3). Armed conflicts are also sporadic and not continuous in nature, erupting with varied

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\(^2\)Definition of Armed Conflict can be accessed from [http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/)
levels of violence at different times and sometimes ‘shifts from one community or issue to another’ (Chenoy and Chenoy 2010: 2) and sustained over a long period of time.

Interestingly, the contemporary times have witnessed a shift in the nature and causes of armed conflict across the globe. There has been a rise in the non-traditional security issues such as poverty, resource scarcity, environmental degradation, ethnic conflicts etc. that have led to alienation and ‘consequent receptiveness to armed challenges to the governments’ (Tan and Boutin 2001). The presence of Maoists insurgency that took place in Philippines, Peru, Nepal, India etc. is indicative of this continued presence of non-traditional security issues that has led to a persistent armed struggle. It is also argued that armed conflict is a ‘mechanism of social transformation that may originate either in competing claims over resources or power or in conflicting cultural or social values, and is often aggravated by low levels of human security’ (Boyden et. al. 2002: 7). In the larger context of the turbulent times being experienced by a number of nations across the world in the past and present, what emerges out is the violent manifestations of the conflict. The causes that lead to such violent phenomenon to erupt at the first place also need to be explored alongwith the consequences that follow the aftermath in order to get a holistic understanding of armed conflicts. We now lay focus on the paradigms of conflict by exploring the causes and consequences of it in the lives of many in today’s world.

1.2. Paradigms of Conflict: Exploring the Causes and Consequences

In the larger context of armed conflicts, the causes of conflict remain a debatable domain. Conflict is a complex phenomenon and to look at the causes and effects of this phenomenon with a single lens, is not sagacious. The causes of conflict and its outbreak are difficult to assess and understand. Smith (2004) states in this regard that one has to make ‘careful nuanced choices while stressing and trusting on to a particular factor as being the cause of conflict’. There is a web of interplay of forces that cause a conflict, and developing a theoretical explanation for it involves an analysis of diverse interactive variables and factors.

Despite of intra-State conflicts and civil war dominating the global scenario, the studies on conflict and its causes have mostly taken international conflicts into account. However, seminal work has been done in this field like that of Gurr (1970), Rapoport
(1989) and Horowitz (1985), the focus continued to be on international conflicts. However, it was since the times of Cold War that the focus shifted to intra-State conflicts and its causes were associated with factors like ethnicity, environment and other economic and political factors in nature (Smith 2004: 5). Drawing from some of these factors and others, varied paradigms can be explored to assess the causes of conflict. Some of them are briefly highlighted here.

Gurr (1970) has argued in lines of relative deprivation and states that conflict occurs out of the discrepancy between what people want (their valued outcome) and what they actually attain (value accruing capabilities). According to him, this contrast between the expected and actual access to prosperity and power is a crucial factor leading to conflict. He argues that “the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the ‘ought’ and the ‘is’ of collective value satisfaction and this disposes men to violence” (ibid: 23). On the other hand, existing insecurities in the social life also create conditions for conflict. Societal insecurities occur when people feel that their self and collective identity is at stake and is threatened. Arguing in these lines, Buzan (1991: 73) classifies societal insecurities under four major threats, physical threats (pain, injury, death), economic threats (seizure, destruction of property, denial to access to work and resources), threats to Rights (imprisonment, denial of civil liberties) and threats to position or status (demotion, public humiliation). As the society or individuals encounter these threats, conflicts emerge. In such situations, group identity allures many ordinary people for whom at that time, ‘assertion to group identity is attractive and emerges as the only thing that helps them to make sense of the prevailing situation’ (Smith 2004: 11).

Further, the denial of basic needs and collective identities becomes a source of ethnic and other forms of conflict. The Human Needs theorists argue that conflicts arise out of the unmet human needs (Burton 1998; Manfred 1991). However, human needs are often looked at as basic subsistence needs. Although there is no denial that there exists conflict over these basic subsistence needs too, but many conflict have their roots in the unmet human needs, such as protection, identity, recognition, participation, etc (see ibid: 44-45). These conflicts take a violent shape when ‘individuals or groups do not see an alternative to meet their need, or when they need understanding, respect and consideration for their needs’ (Danielsen 2005: 3). Under this paradigm, conflict is need
driven wherein a group’s need for collective identity, recognition, political participation, justice etc. all lead to conflicting situations. There could thus, prevail a collective feeling of relative deprivation and dissatisfaction of basic human needs. The role of State in such situations becomes utmost crucial. Many a times the State is criticised for resorting to suppressive measures. Proponents of Needs theory, have argued that ‘the intra-state conflict and identity-type conflict ‘cannot be resolved by suppressing them through military and other forms of coercive power of the state’ (as cited in Jeong and Michael 2008: 40). However, there has been proliferation of situations wherein State’s legitimacy is also questioned and fragmented or even collapsed through internal collective violence (Senghaas 1987: 6).

Sociologists like Coser (1956) argued that under certain conditions, conflict actually works towards social cohesion also. Therefore, conflict is a natural and necessary part of society. He states,

‘Groups require disharmony as well as harmony, disassociation as well as association; and conflict within them are by no means altogether disruptive factors...Far from being necessarily dysfunctional, a certain degree of conflict is an essential element in group formation and the persistence of group life

(Coser 1956: 31)

The Marxist paradigm of looking at the causes of conflict highlights the antagonistic relations and dialectic struggle between opposing classes and interest groups as the primary reason for conflicts. Conflict, according to this paradigm is rooted in class antagonism that results from historical conditions of production. It maintains that collective violence erupts from the economic and social inequality in the society which in turn is a result of the concentration of modes of production in a few hands. Thus, there exists a divide and hierarchy between the ‘haves’ and ‘haves-not’ dividing them on the basis of class. This class conflict is characterised by superimposition of economic and political interests of the masses. However, Max Weber later argued that conflict arises not just out of economy alone, but it is the State and economy that together create conditions of conflict. He further argued that class is a more complex phenomenon and that there are other add-on factors to it that contribute to social inequality, most notably power. The central concern of conflict, thus, is the unequal distribution of scarce resources and power, in terms of where power is located and who
uses it (and who does not)? Power, thus, plays a crucial role in guiding the society and the social relations and conflict emerging from it.

Drawing from these few paradigms of conflict it can be stated that the causes for these conflicts vary. Arguing specifically in context of intra-State conflicts, there is a strong presence of conflicting interests between the State and its own people characterized by strong resistance towards each other. State emerges as the most crucial factor in these situations and plays diverse roles in such situations, for example, that of instigating violence or curbing it using its own mechanisms. Lange (2010) has argued that in the situations of ‘domestic security’, State plays a role in two ways. Firstly, state instigates violence by adopting and implementing coercive or discriminatory policies (see for e.g. Scott 1998; Reno 1995), allowing the State officials to carry out exploitative practices, and resist strongly to any sort of opposition faced by any set of population. Secondly, State acts towards containing violence by stating certain rules of law and quelling violence before it gets beyond its own control. For example, arguing in context of insurgencies in developing nations, Goodwin (2001) has stated how resources like large well equipped military, strong bureaucratic organization (Fearon and Laitin 2003), tax revenue, etc. along with a strong and evenly distributed presence of the State in its territory all act as resources that help the State to effectively combat insurgencies and thus, contain violence. In order to maintain social order in the society and avoid situations leading to conflict, the role of the State thus, becomes crucial.

Interestingly, the current times of intra-state conflicts, have witnessed the prevalence of large scale political violence as a tool in order to curb or disturb the prevailing social order. Violent measures have been resorted to by both State and non-State actors. However, the use of political violence is criticized for being destructive, illegitimate and for creating disequilibrium in the social system and it is mostly disapproved by majority of people (Feierabend et. al. 1972). However, there are scholars who have also argued in favour of political violence emanating either from the government authority (incumbent) or from popular movements (insurgents) against the government (Perry 1975: 222). It is looked at as the seed for necessary revolutionary transformation of the human society and that it is needed as a response to the already existing state of disequilibrium (Fanon 1973; Sorel 1950; Johnson 1966). The manifestations of political violence in the contemporary times, have also been a much
debated issue in the academia wherein theorist have argued differently with regards to categorizing of what constitutes of political violence. For example, some have argued in favour of overt activities such as riots, strikes etc. as political violence (Feierabend et. al. 1972; Markus and Nesvold 1972), others argue in favour of covert attitudes like passive resistance, non-cooperation, threat of force etc. to be important elements of political violence (Galtung1969; Walter 1964) with few speaking in favour of extreme forms of violence like the armed struggles carried out by insurgents, guerilla war, rebellion etc. that involve actual physical destruction to people and property (Snyder and Tilly 1972; Einsinger 1973).

One can state that there are diverse range of factors which in the present times have led to large scale conflicts within nations. Arguing in context of present times, Smith (2004) states that situations like that of poor economic conditions, repressive political system, degradation of renewable resources and ethnic diversity etc. are some of the major causes of conflicts today. However, it can be argued that these listed causes like resource scarcity etc. do not stand alone but contribute significantly to the likelihood of violent conflict. For example, works that have identified and established a direct relation between conflict and factors like environmental degradation etc. have been challenged (see Gleditsch 1998; Lipschutz 1997) and argue that these are coupled with persistent economic, social and political crises and have thus, greatly contributed to the disintegration of public and social order. Boyden and Berry (2004: xi) argues that intra-state conflicts are also associated with ‘extreme inequality in distribution of resources, repressive and unjust state, lop-sided development, sectarian strife and other de-stabilizing forces’.

As it emerges from the above discussion, it can be stated that there exists a significant amount of literature that explores the various paradigms of causes of armed conflicts; however, the theoretical conclusions from it continue to be limited in scope. However, the literature plays a crucial role in bringing out the key issues pertaining to conflicts, for e.g. prevailing socio-economic and political conditions, issues of exploitation based in the basis of ethnicity, religion, caste, class, gender etc., deprivation of environmental resources etc. It further opens scope for exploring the prevailing conditions and the effects and consequences of armed conflict on the larger population living amidst situations of armed conflict.
It is the consequences of armed conflict that effect population at large. The manifestations of conflict like that of extreme forms of violence, displacement, economic vulnerabilities etc. all have direct and indirect effect on the people living in the midst of this situation. As argued earlier, intra-state conflicts create conflicting interests between government and its own people leading to direct vulnerability of the ordinary population or resistance and revolt emerging from them. However, any sort of conflict between State and non-state actors, or even the ordinary people, creates space for wide scale exploitation, suppression and underdevelopment. The effects of armed conflict are catastrophic and long term. Armed conflict, being local in nature, permeates deep into the entire fabric of a society, its institutions, political, socio-economic culture and not just cause psychological and emotional harm, but also ‘attacks the most fundamental conditions of sociality, thus, endangering social allegiances and confidence, and drastically reducing social interaction and trust amongst people’ (Boyden and Berry 2004: xiv). People caught in these adverse situations are mostly civilians. As argued by Hick (2001), that the changed nature of conflict in the present times is characterized for predominantly taking civilian lives leading to high levels of vulnerability. ‘The elimination or incapacitation of civilians through killings, torture and disappearances, forced migration, starvation and the destruction of social institutions, is the major feature of many struggles’ (Boyden et. al. 2002: 4). These internal conflicts are argued, to have strategy of converting civilian communities into battlegrounds in order to secure political control as well (De Waal 1997: 312-13; Kaldor 1997: 15).

As the conflict takes place around the civilians, in their lives, around their homes, they become more vulnerable. Out of the entire population of civilians facing the consequences of armed conflicts, one section of the population that silently bears its brunt and gets severely affected in the turmoil is children (see Boyden and Berry 2004; Hick 2001; Machel 2009; United Nations 2010; UNICEF 1996, 2005, 2013; Wall and Cook 2011). Armed conflict does not just lead to widespread deaths and displacement, but there prevails a continued feeling of despair, fear, economic insecurity, weakened social ties, undermining the capacity of a family to take care of its most vulnerable members, children. A large number of children across the globe get killed, maimed, suffer from psychological, physical and emotional effects (Machel 2001; Fisher 2002) and a large number of them grow deprived of basic requisites for development and well
- being, like education, health and other socio-economic opportunities (Boyden and Berry 2004; Onyango 1998; UNESCO 2010)

According to the United Nations, some twenty million people have been killed in over one fifty armed conflicts in developing countries since the Second World War, the majority being women and children (see Boyden et. al. 2002: 4; Hauchler and Kennedy 1994; Vickers 1993). According to UNICEF\(^3\), around one and a half billion children – two thirds of the world’s child population – live in the forty two countries affected by violent conflict between 2002 and 2006 and between 80% - 90% of those who die or get injured in conflicts are civilians – mostly children and their mothers. Out of the survivors of conflict, around one million children have been orphaned (Bellamy 2002) and twenty million have been displaced to refugee or internally displaced person’s camps (Machel 2001). Global figures brought out by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees state that children comprise of around 46 % of the total displaced population in the world (UNHCR 2012: 3). Children in situations of armed conflict are effected directly- due to living in war zones and participating in the conflict, and indirectly- ‘as a result of reduced capacities of the adults to protect children, societal dislocation and developmental support; deprivation and displacement’ (Williams and Drury 2011: 59).

The armed conflicts and intra-State conflicts in particular tend to make children more prone to taking up arms as well. As it is argued that these conflicts are fought with no heavy conventional weapons but with more easily available arms (Allen 2000: 8), even children are able to handle the light weapons in such conflicts. However, it needs to be stated that it is not just the use of non-conventional weapons and their easy availability that lead to child participation but also the ‘inability of the State to bolster education and other employment opportunities for the young people’ (Berry 2001: 94) thus, compelling them to participate in political violence (Lee 2009). For example, in context of the states in Africa (see for e.g. Richard 1996), it has been argued that crisis occurring in the State often leads to proliferation to participation of children in the armed conflict and this takes place not just due to the prevalence of the civil conflict but also due to the State’s inability to provide opportunities for development and survival.

There exists the phenomenon of ‘youth crisis’ (see McIntyre 2003; Ebo 2004) wherein children and young people are more vulnerable to recruitment as they now feel that becoming a member of the armed groups provides them with relatively more employment opportunity and protection (Boyden et. al. 2002; Honwana 1999: 5, Human Rights Watch 1994: 3; Images Asia 1997).

The contemporary armed conflicts that are characterized by sporadic violence, civil unrest, guerilla warfare etc. have included children in historically newer ways. Increased interests in researches and studies on children and armed conflict have also primarily highlighted a straight and simple binary wherein children are categorized as child victim and child soldier. This binary, however, tends to overlook the multifaceted ways in which children experience armed conflict, their positioning in the social space and how government and non-government organisations look at children in regards to their positioning amidst conflict.

Children growing amidst armed conflict, many a times, have not experienced a life outside that of the living within situations of civil war, guerrilla insurgency, militancy etc. Other than being directly affected by the conflict, a large number of children are affected in indirect ways. The experiences of the conflict, especially contemporary times, are always heart wrenching for children for whom often their world turns upside down with situations of ethnic cleansing, conflict induced displacement as refugees and internally displaced and separation from family etc. A number of them get killed in the process, not just by becoming pray to violence but also due to consequent effects too wherein a lot many of them get killed out of starvation or malnutrition, lack of clean water, sanitation and medical care etc. (UNICEF 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009). With conflict being omnipresent in the lives of such children, witnessing deaths, brutal incidents of violence etc. become a part of their everyday life and hence, they live in a continued state of fear, hardship and uncertainty.

The plight of children in India is no exception to that of children growing in situations of armed conflict across other nations. India also is a home to a large number of ongoing conflicts and therefore, children here live a life marked by continued sense of vulnerability, fear, risks and uncertainty. The following section highlights the situation of conflict in India and brings the focus onto the larger context of conflict being studied under the present study.
2. India: Exploring the Context of Conflict

India is often characterised as a tumultuous nation. In the global map of conflicts, it has had a complex history of protracted conflicts of varied kinds. On the Global Peace Index (GPI) of 2014, India ranks at number 143 out of a total of 162 countries in terms of relative peacefulness (Global Peace Index 2014: 6). Conflicts based on religion, class, caste, ethnicity, issues of autonomy and sub-nationalism and access to resources are some of the fault-lines which in varying dimensions feed into the cycle of conflicts in India. In the context of inter-state conflicts, India shares an international dispute with Pakistan and China. Conflict with Pakistan over Kashmir has flared up at intervals and has culminated to war between the two nations in the years 1948, 1965, 1971 and 1999. India and China also broke into a war in the year 1962.

However, in the context of intra-state conflict, India has had an on-going history of conflicts over territory, ethnic identity, claim for separate states by groups with specific ethnic and regional identity like in the North-Eastern States of India (see Burman 1989; Xaxa 2008; Fernandes 1999; Singh 2006; Prasenjit and Thomas 2006; Roy 2005) or conflicts between State and non-State actors like the Maoists (interchangeably naxals or naxalites). The central Indian tribal belt has been facing strong presence of this State-Maoist conflict for decades now. However, it is often argued that in the midst of this conflict, it is the local tribal population, the adivasis of the region who have been suffering the most (Guha 2007; Prasad 2010; ACHR 2006). However, in order to get a holistic understanding of this conflict, its various dimensions need to be explored and understood. The next section attempts to trace the trajectory of the Maoist movement in India and further highlights the political economy of the conflict in the present times.

2.1. The Journey of the ‘Red’: Tracing the trajectory of Maoists movement in India

The Maoists movement in India began in 1967 in a village called Naxalbari in West Bengal. It was an uprising, a rebellion response to feudalism, exploitation of the rural poor by landlords and the continued land-alienation. Deriving its name from the village of its inception, the rebels are often known as naxalites (interchangeably with naxals
and Maoists). The aim of movement was to usurp control through a typical agrarian-based movement. The naxals in India were highly inspired by Maoism in China.

In India, it was Charu Majumdar who articulated the Maoists philosophy in creating a revolution in Indian conditions and this led to the rural masses, turn into guerrilla rebels, rise against their suppressors and aim at confronting and overthrowing the Indian State which, they believe, served as a benefactor of the elites. The Indian radicals believed in ‘the physical annihilation of class enemies’ and hence, their annihilation programme targeted mainly the landlords and people in uniform like the police officers. There were brutal killings by the naxals and despite of it the movement enjoyed considerable popular support because of the ‘general disenchantment against the oppressive police force’ (Mazumdar 2008: xxxii). Though the movement was crushed by the State, it had already set in motion the struggle of the hitherto oppressed class of rural poor against feudalism, social humiliation and land alienation, and remained ‘unflinchingly inspirational’ for political mobilisation (Gudavarthy 2014: 3).

The Maoists in India aimed at overthrowing the State and establishing people’s democratic dictatorship not through parliamentary form of democracy but through armed struggle. The means to this end, as believed by them was only through protracted people’s war. The Maoists completely rejected the idea of parliamentary form of democracy and continue to call this form of governance as

‘An outright fraud framed in the deceptive name of ‘biggest democracy of the world’ whereas all the institutions like parliament, legislative council and executive councils (including so called panchayat raj) are thin cover for the autocratic rule representing the dictatorship of comprador bureaucratic and feudal classes subservient to imperialism.’

(Article 25 of the Programme of CPI [Maoist]4 as cited in Banerjee 2010: 331)

The Maoists in India continued to reject the democratic institutions like the parliament, legislative assemblies, panchayats and the entire electoral procedure as sham. They believed that masses of the country have only been disillusioned by the parliamentary democracy and hence they need to violently confront the oppressors-which in the present scenario are the State, exploitative officials, bureaucrats and

corporate houses etc. In order to condemn participation in democracy, they have continued adopting election boycott as a strategic slogan. They continue to mobilise people with a firm belief that a revolution, a people’s war based on armed struggle of the peasantry is what is essential to counter the repressive system of the State.

The Maoist movement was considered to be a major dividing line in the left politics in India, with the new forces of ‘bottom up activism, resorting to violence and linking the demands of the peasantry to a struggle for State power’ (Weil 2013: 178). By 1969 a split occurred in the CPI (Marxist) and the radical platform was adopted by the new formation, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI-ML). However, State continued to resort to its repressive measures to crush the movement further. Mass displacements were carried out by the police and paramilitary forces and strategic hamletting was done in order to isolate the Maoists of their popular rural bases. Efforts were made by the state to ameliorate the conditions of the poor and oppressed classes through introduction of land reforms etc. Coupled with this, there were internal factionalism and splits occurring within the party on ideological grounds. However, it was in the year 2004, ‘realising that the real strength lies in consolidation’ (Ramana 2011: 33), the two major factions in the Maoists, People’s War Group (PWG) and Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) reunited as Communist Party of India (Maoist). Commenting on the significance of this merger, the then General Secretary of CPI (Maoist) stated, ‘in our agenda for new democratic revolution, there are two aspects- the agrarian revolution and the fight for nationality…for this, unification of the two is needed. Our merger is a cue for such unification’\(^5\). The focus of the Maoists was now to establish guerrilla warfare and area- wise seizure of power that would result in creation of liberated zones wherein the Maoist would run their parallel government.

\(\text{Table 1: Naxalite groups between 1969 and the present}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Leaders</th>
<th>States under influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communist party of India (Marxist-leninist) [CPI (M-L)]</td>
<td>1969- 72</td>
<td>Charu Mazumdar</td>
<td>West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maoist Communist Centre (MCC)</td>
<td>1969- 2004</td>
<td>Kanai Chatterjee and Amulya Sen</td>
<td>Bihar, Jharkhand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CPI (M-L) People’s War | 1980-98 | Kondapalli Seetharamayya | Andhra Pradesh
CPI (M-L) Party Unity | 1982-98 | M. Appalasuri and Bhowani Roy Chowdhary | Bihar Jharkhand
CPI (M-L) People’s War Group (PWG) | 1998-2004 | Formed by the merger of People’s War and Party Unity | Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa
Communist Party of India (Maoist) | 2004-present | Formed by the merger of PWG and MCC | Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Maharashtra, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and others

Adopted from Ganguly and Fidler 2009: 129

In today’s context, the Maoists have established themselves as a strong force in the rural areas and especially in the tribal regions of the country. It is stated that what started as a localised uprising in a single town has now spread its influence in twelve states in India covering around one twenty five districts (Government of India 2008: 2). Large parts of the Maoist cadre have stabilised their foot, especially the forest covered regions wherein the tribal people have hitherto been exploited by the ‘local politician-contractor- local bureaucrat nexus’ (Chenoy and Chenoy 2010: 56). Maoists gained a stronghold in this thickly forested region of central Indian tribal belt that had been facing continued backwardness, poverty, marginalisation and land based alienation even after independence. The Maoist adopted the guerrilla strategy of warfare in these forests areas and spread in cadres in the States of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and present days Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.

Commenting on the competing perspectives on the issue of Maoists, Sundar (2011: 47) argues that there are primarily three dominant perspectives around it. Firstly, the security perspective that is held by the police and dominated by the Ministry of Home Affairs and looks at the Maoist conflict through the lens of law and order. Secondly, the development perspective, categorically brought out recently by the Government of India report on extremist affected areas stating that the primary reasons for the spread of Maoists is poverty, lack of development and primary services (see Government of India 2008). Thirdly, the revolutionary perspective held by the Maoists
themselves who believe that the movement is a product of structural violence that forces people to resist through armed struggle.

However, one argues that the idea that generally echoes is that the spread of the movement is the consequences of the State’s abdication of its fundamental developmental duties. The failure of the State machinery, lack of developmental initiatives, flawed policies and discrepancy in distribution of benefits etc. are argued to be some of the reasons for the growing clout of the Maoists in India (D’Mello 2010; Guha 2007; Pandita and Mishra 2010; Prasad 2010; Roy 2010; Sundar 2006{a}). Holding the failure of State as the prime reason for the birth of the movement and its continued growth over the years, D’Mello (ibid: 5) points out that Maoist movement in India is a ‘direct consequence of the tragedy of India ruled by her big bourgeoisie and governed by the party co-opted by that class-faction’. It is due to this reason, that the majority of regions where the Maoists enjoy a stronghold have little or no presence of State or state services are inadequate or non-existent (Sundar 2011).

2.2. Political Economy of the Conflict:

In the context of the tribal region being the stronghold of the Maoists, it can be argued that the claims of State’s repression are not made in vain. The tribal have hitherto been facing exploitation and alienation, and instead of making them partner in economic development, the State continued to exploit them. The Maoists have targeted this vacuum created due to poor and exploitative administration and development led alienation of the tribal people. They are continuously engaged in the process of mobilising people and undermining the authority of the Indian State and establishing a parallel form of government here. The Maoists have concentrated their activities in this region where there has been a conflict of interest between the natives of the region, i.e. the tribal and the outsiders like the forest officials, big corporate houses and others who have their economic interests in the region.

The tribal population of India has hitherto been the most backward and marginalised in the country and lag behind and are worse off than their other counterparts in the country on development indicators like that of literacy, access to basic amenities needed for survival (Guha 2007; Maharatna 2005). The tribal population in the central India ‘suffer from multi- faceted oppression and denial of justice, social, legal and political rights’ (Government of India 2008: 3). Thus, it is no coincidence that
the tribal belts of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, where the Maoists are most active in today’s time, are also among the lowest developed areas of the country (Sagar 2006). It is important to highlight here that the five of the highly conflict affected states have substantial mineral deposits and huge amounts of energy resources (The Economists 2007; see Government of India 2008). Being the natives of a region that is rich and abundant in mineral and natural resources, the population continues to be poor and backward and faces development led alienation and marginalisation. The phenomenon of continued massive transfer of forest and agricultural land for developing industries, mining, infrastructure facilities, minimal or no compensation to the affected population, is rampant in this belt.

The development activities in this tribal belt have, at best, been skeletal or mostly market- oriented serving to the benefits of private players and industrial houses rather than being people- centric and inclusive in nature that caters to the larger developmental demands of the local tribal people (Guha 2007; Sharan 2005; Rao et. al 2006). The tribal population living in this region depend on forest for their livelihood and sustainability. Their primary source of life and livelihood are the forests. Policies introduced by the independent Indian State were also exploitative in nature and led to more restrictions on the tribal people of this region to use the forest and other natural resources. For example the stringent forest laws disrupted the age old tribal-forest relationship and turned forests into prohibited areas for the tribal, thus, creating imbalances in their lives and livelihood. For instance, the Forest Policy of 1952 introduced by the Indian State made it categorically clear that the forests were to be maintained for vital industrial needs. National Forests, as categorised under the policy, would

‘Constitute the basis of India’s strength and wealth, for they comprise valuable timber bearing regions the produce of which is indispensable for defence communication and vital industries.’

(National Forest Policy 1952, Appendix III, No. 13)

Interestingly, the policy also maintained that wherever possible or required for maintenance of ecological security, these forests should be harvested for timber in order to meet the requirements of the industry. Thus, the Forest Policy set an industrial mode of forest use. A large number of natural forests were converted into plantation forests (Prasad 2010: 9). So the forest department focused more on exploitation of forest for timber for industrial use than on conserving it. The demand of industries for wood and
raw material were being catered to by exploiting these forests. To this, the National Tribal Policy of 2006 (as cited in EPW 2007: 3596) also acknowledged that,

‘Alienation of tribal land is the single most important cause of pauperisation of tribal...Of even greater concern is the fact that the lands lost are usually the most productive, leaving the tribal to cultivate poor quality land’

It further accepted that this tribal neglect has resulted to the insurgent groups gain mass support in the tribal areas (ibid). It is hence, believed that this development led alienation of tribal and the control of land by richer non-tribal from outside are the significant factors of the unrest (Subramaniam 2010). Therefore, the tribal communities are at the receiving end of this ‘growth-centric approach wherein they have contributed disproportionately more, and received disproportionately less from it’ (Dandekar and Gill 2014: 16). It is this nexus between underdevelopment, development led alienation and conflict that plays a crucial role in the Maoists gaining popular mass support in these areas. Arguing in similar lines, Jha (2010) states that ‘while the casualty link between underdevelopment and conflict remains to be fully explored, the sense of injustice and grievances can be appropriated for mobilization purposes and the increasing influence of Maoists is a testimony to this’.

The Maoists continue claiming to be fighting for tribal rights to jal, jungle aur zameen (water, forest and land) and in order to claim these rights they are organizing people for armed struggle. Maoists continue to enjoy popular support from the masses. It is believed that they have enjoyed this mass support out of their contribution towards the protection of poor tribal from exploitation and oppression and hence, people do profess respect for them and they are often considered more trustworthy than representatives of State that was a face of oppression (Balagopal 2006a; Gupta 2010)

In the current times, out of all the States facing this conflict, Chhattisgarh has emerged as most turbulent. Apart from being the abode for large tribal population Chhattisgarh is rich in terms of its forest and natural resources and it is these resources that have attracted much attention of the State and private players. On one hand, the conflict continues to be a contestation of power between the State and the Maoists and on the other, there also exists a fight over the control of the abundant resources of the region. This conflict existing currently in Chhattisgarh can also be looked at through this paradigm of resource abundance and its exploitation being a major factor to the
political- economy of the conflict (for similar e.g. also see e.g. Collier and Hoeffler 1998; Ross 1999).

One can argue in the lines of stating Chhattisgarh as being a resource cursed region facing the paradox of plenty that has an invert relationship between economic growth and natural resource wealth (see Auty 1993; Dandekar and Gill 2014: 17). Chhattisgarh has abundant natural resources like iron ore, coal, limestone, dolomite, bauxite, manganese, corundum, granite etc. and also abundant in forest produce and natural resources like teak, sal, bamboo, tamarind, tendu patta (*Diospyros melanoxylon*, leaves are used to make cigarettes), etc. Extensive mineral extraction, timber felling, and commercial agriculture have generated huge profits for the nexus of corporates-politicians- contractors and transporters. It is argued that in pursuit of growth for ‘growth’s sake’, the State supported inexorable force of the market continues to gain ground in this region (*ibid*). With big mining projects, there is little consideration for the local tribal population and their concerns and therefore, the tribal often resort to supporting the Maoists for their anti-mining rhetoric (Hoelscher et. al. 2012). This cycle of development led marginalisation leading to strengthening of Maoist support base and escalation of conflict highlights the prevailing situation in the region.

However, the larger picture of the conflict remains unchanged wherein violence is resorted to by both, State and Maoists. However, the ground reality continues to remain unchanged for the tribal population who continue to live their everyday life in this conflict zone. The natural owners of water, forests, land and other resources are not only deprived of their rights. The tribal population in Chhattisgarh continues to be caught midway between the State and the Maoist. They continue to suffer the consequences of economic deprivation, land- alienation, marginalisation and ecological damage. The conflict continues to be looked at as a law and order problem and the larger issues are compartmentalised into discourses wherein the conflict is reduced only to a State-Maoist struggle. For the *adivasis* of Chhattisgarh trapped in the crossfire between state forces and elusive Maoist guerillas, this conflict is a tragic reality of life. On one hand, the Maoists’ *modus operandi* has made even the tribal face their wrath and on the other hand, State’s role has always been repressive with state sponsored campaigns like Salwa Judum making the lives of the tribal even more vulnerable to Maoists reprisals. The tribal continue to stand at the crossroads today.
This population of tribal people also comprises of a large number of children who in a way either have given away their early childhood years to this conflict or continue to live in this ongoing situations of adversity, uncertainty, fear and vulnerability. Conflict and its manifestations continue to affect children who are silently bearing the brunt of it. The study here is an attempt to focus on those who are caught at the crossroads and whose everyday life continues to be embroiled in this conflict.

3. **Organisation of the Thesis**

The present study is divided in seven chapters. The first chapter introduces the study and sets in motion the larger context of the conflict by tracing the historical trajectory of the Maoist movement, the political economy of the conflict in tribal region with a focus on Chhattisgarh. It further briefly explores the consequences of the conflict on the local tribal population.

The second chapter is an attempt towards exploring and analysing the vast body of knowledge and literature in the field of children and armed conflict. It explores some of the theoretical standpoints that exist in this field of study and sets the approach of how the present study locates children.

The third chapter explores the state of Chhattisgarh. It highlights the history and historicity of resistance and rebellion in the State, followed by exploring how the Maoists gained inroads in the Dandakaranya region of central India, which is the present day hotbed of Maoist activities. It lays its focus on the district of Dantewada in Chhattisgarh, which was the area of study in the present work and is one of the most turbulent districts of the state. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of children of Dantewada and their present day situation.

The fourth chapter highlights the methodology adopted during the study and the methodological challenges faced by the researcher in the process of conducting it.

The fifth chapter draws from the fieldwork and highlights the everyday life of people in an erstwhile Salwa Judum camp in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh. It also briefly brings out a situational analysis of three other camps. The chapter primarily focuses on the everyday life of children in this camp exploring and analysing their everyday life here, their past lives back in the villages, their experiences of coming to
the camp, adjustments made and adaptations done to their present day camp life and the on-going challenges and insecurities faced by them in their everyday lives.

The sixth chapter explores children’s experiences of growing amidst the on-going conflict in the state of Chhattisgarh. It explores the past lived experiences of children like that of witnessing violence, experiencing displacement and separation from family etc. It further explores children’s agency in this conflict zone and their everyday social world which forms an integral part of their present lives, their social roles, interactions and other social relations emerging thereof.

The seventh chapter summarises and highlights the conclusions drawn from the present empirical study.