

**Tribhuvan University**

**Restaging of State Terror and Atrocities in Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone***

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## Restaging of State Terror and Atrocities in Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone*

### **Abstract**

*This research paper analyses how government restages the state terror and atrocities in A Long Way Gone written by Ishmael Beah. Beah faced the dark face of the government during wartime when he was only thirteen years old. Being a part of a war at thirteen makes no good for children. Many children became combat at the age of thirteen which became the reason of destroy their future. Government plays the role in recruiting children in such civil war though that is illegal according to human rights. This research paper has shown the dark side of the government in wartime and the obstacles where many children had to sacrifice their childhood at the time. This research paper reveals the issue of the futility of the war where the strong party of the state misused their power over innocent civilians and especially the children who are under age for taking part in such a vulgar civil war. Ishmael Beah mentioned that recruiting children as a soldier to defeat the war is useless. Here I have examined the text in the light of Giorgio Agamben's stasis (civil war as a paradigm), which helps me to explain how the government easily creat the condition in the state by changing the law of the state where citizen's life turned into the pain and sorrow. Emanuel Levinas's concept of face-to-face relation (coined in the text Totality and Infinity (1969), has helped me to relate the events where people forget their responsibility to others because of the bad effect of the war which took place in the state after wrong decision-making of the government. Sidonie Smith's "Autobiographical subjectivity" is the only way to express the experience of the victim through writing. So, through the help of autobiographical subjectivity, Ishmael Beah expressed his war experience where he worked as great combat of his troops and in the end he got nothing.*

**Keywords:** Child Soldier, Restaging War, Terror, Memory, Separation

This research paper explores the restaging of state terror and atrocities in *A Long Way Gone*. It's a memoir of a young child soldier. Ishmael Beah is the author and narrator of the memoir. He had to be a militant which was not his will, but the government forcefully imposed on him. Beah suffers a lot in the quest for safety and basic needs. Beah shows how the war destroys not only the current environment but also damages the future of many young children as well. Beah portrays that war makes the people of the city separate from their families. Children were supposed not only to separate from their families but they departed from their childhood too. People are suffering from mental, and physical torcher. Especially, children, are dependent on adult and parents who loves them most because children rely on care, love, and attention. Children are known as a group of people who do not have enough knowledge to think or take decisions properly. Children are attached to their parents where they can feel a safe zone. But at the time of the war, their attachment is disrupted. Not only children but also women, old people, and the sick are the weakest group of people who technically depend on the mature and strong people in their life. Hundreds of thousands of children die during wartime. Girls became the victim of rape and murder. Girls suffer from sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS and psychological impacts. War brings nothing good for innocent civilians, war destroys the life of civilians.

Ishmael Beah was born on 23 November 1980. He is known as a Sierra Leonean author and human rights activist who rose to fame with his acclaimed memoir, *A Long Way Gone*. The civil war started in Sierra Leone in 1991. Rebels ruined every place in Sierra Leone. Beah belongs to Mogbwemo, which is located in the Southern province of Sierra Leone. Beah was forcibly separated from his family. Because of the civil war, Beah had to leave his hometown and spent months with

other boys in search of a safe place to stay. He became a child soldier at the age of thirteen forcefully. Beah fought for almost three years from the government army before being rescued by UNICEF. Beah fought against the rebels who introduced themselves as a fighter of freedom. Due to the violence, Beah made his way to Freetown with the help of UNICEF in 1997. And then found his way to New York City. Beah attended the United Nations International School. Beah graduated from Oberlin College in Political. The Sierra Leone Civil War is known as the armed conflict of the Western African country of Sierra Leone which takes place from 1991 to 2002. The war began on March 23, 1991. Still the Civil War of Sierra Leone is known as one of the bloodiest in Africa resulting in more than fifty thousand people dead and half a million being displaced in a nation of four million people. The conflict was particularly violent and long because both the RUF and the Sierra Leone government were often funded by “blood diamonds” mined with slave labor.

Beah was just twelve years old boy while war touched him. He was too young to understand conflict or war and terror. At the age of twelve, school bag changes into machine guns, and books change into ammunition. Government is not correct every time. When we hear the news about war and terror, all blame goes to the revolution parties. We never claim that government is the reason behind such activities because the government is the group of people who control and make decisions for a country. We as a citizen of the country have faith in our government. We are the ones who choose them for the betterment of our country. They are known as the father of the house, who are always ready to protect their children from every small to the big problem. We trust that the people playing a role in government will help us when we (society and country) get into trouble. However, the government is not always correct though they are protective. Sometimes the government has to make the wrong

decision to protect its citizen from problems, which may not suitable for the people. They make the wrong decision in the name of protecting society or the country. Which will become the reason for restaging the atrocities in the country. Especially in wartime, they fail to fulfill their duties. Sometimes they change the rules which are made by the law and order of the nation to control the crimes. It is said that the state can change the judicial order if the state is challenged or threatened. They can change the juridical order to protect the people from the war but the government restages the atrocities by recruiting the child soldier into the war which became a futility of war. Especially, old, sick people, women, and children are presented in a vulnerable condition. When government changes the juridical rules of the nation, they do not care about the consequence of the decision. During the war times, the government only focuses on how to handle their enemies and how to get victory over the war. But old, sick people, women, and children are the easiest and most vulnerable group of people who have to be the victim of such war. Women are raped and killed. Children have to join the armed force though they are not mentally and physically mature enough. Government and rebels target children because they are the very most specific group which helps them to lead and command more quickly than adults. We are living in a modern society where childhood is associated with innocence, weakness, and dependence on parents or adult guidance. But the text shows that the government used to recruit children because children are a very easy group of people who are very active, sharp in mind, and easy to hide themselves from danger in small places. The main thing is they don't need to pay them back for their work.

This research paper explores how the government restages the atrocities and terror in the name of protecting and the war is not good for the health of the state or country because it is futile. And how it imposes its rules over innocent children during

the war. War never brings happiness to the country it brings destruction to the country economically and physically and mentally. We can find many examples of the war where the city had to lose its reality. Especially children became the victims of the war where they struggle for their identity the most. Children have been given the only option to join the armed group for their survival. Human life became hell while they suffer from different challenges that war brings in their life. The protagonist of the memoir shows how he became a cruel heartless, ruthless soldier when he was only thirteen years old. Beah represents all of the children of the world who never wanted to be a part of the war as combat. With the help of the memoir, Beah shows the world that participating in a war as a child soldier is unpleasant. Every process of selection has its own rules and regulations. While talking about recruiting soldiers in the context of Sierra Leone soldiers should have to forget their real identity. In the process of recruitment, children have to forget themselves first. Children's memories are rubbed from their life by intoxicating them with drugs and ammunition. Children are associated with drugs and driven by the war films to manipulate them so easily which helps child soldiers to copy the moves and techniques for the battle. Beah says he does not remember how many people he killed during his time in the Sierra Leone government army. "We are dangerous, and brainwashed to kill" (135)

In *A Long Way Gone*, the major character suffers from different circumstances from the loss of childhood and family. The main character suffers because of the wrong decision of the government and the memories where he forcefully accepted the new identity as combat. And promote him to kill innocent people in the state. Thirteen years boy is always ready to kill and capture the ammunition. This clearly shows how an innocent boy became an inhuman and irresponsible person. Beah suffers from many obstacles that war brings into his life.

Beah remembers how the civil war put him into a situation where he became cruel in circumstances that are not favorable for anyone to survive. Beah killed many innocent people when he was out of his control but in reality, he is not a killer. He does not do anything deliberately but he killed and rubbed people to survive. Now, participating in such a brutal war experience he can not live a happy life. So, to address the above-mentioned problems to be solved by using Giorgio Agamben Stasis as a theoretical perspective, the research argues that the main character in the memoir *A Long Way Gone* suffers due to the weakness of the government and war which is futile. Ishmael Beah's childhood vanished and had to separate from his family. He took part in armed troops due to the fear of losing his last hope of staying in a safe place.

*A long way gone* encapsulates the pathos of the war. War always brings destruction to the country and sorrows in people's lives. The text critiques the war, bringing the narrator's experiences who participated in the war as a child soldier. Children are the most vulnerable group in the war. Their unawareness and innocence are manipulated and maneuvered to benefit those in power. The text presents evidence of how children are used in war by indoctrination and brainwashing to install terror and violence in their minds. Children remain indifferent because of their lack of knowledge about war. However, those in power take profit from their inability to differentiate between right and wrong.

Ishmael Beach's *A Long Way Gone* blends fact and fiction together to tell the compelling story of a man who matures in war. Irina Kyulanova, one of the renowned critics and writers, finds Beah's novel similar to Bernard Ashley's novel for young adults *Little Soldier*. He explored the reality of child soldiers in Serra Leon. Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone* blends fact and fiction together to tell the compelling story of a man who matures in war. Irina Kyulanova maintains that the memoir shows the



"rite of passage of maturity" and Beah's involvement in war "accelerate the transition from childhood to adulthood" (28). Irina Kyulanova asserts:

Both *A Long Way Gone* and *Little Soldier* represent and test a common social assumption that war can serve as a rite of passage to maturity and can accelerate the transition from childhood to adulthood. Both texts reflect the existing link between war and coming of age in the public consciousness".

(28)

But recruiting child soldiers became a very normal thing in war. They were not well knowledgeable about what is the exact meaning of war first. But for their life, they have to accept the government's order that goes to the frontline for battle. Especially, a child is separate from their fundamental right and forced to serve as a militant. The war washed out the Sierra Leon not only the country but also the innocent child. Beah is one of the examples of a war victim. War affects him from the inner side of his body. He became a ruthless and fearless soldier at the age of twelve, which taught him to act like a mature person. He can decide on his own. The criticism of Kyulanova helps to explore how war gives a lesson to a child becoming a man.

Glasgow's ideas present a new idea about the text blending of fact and fiction. Glasgow states, "mix of fiction, nonfiction, and memoir provides multiple perspectives on child soldiering from the time of their recruitment, through their brainwashing to fight and kill, to their rehabilitation or reintegration process should they survive the ordeal" (70). Glasgow's argument enlightens about the multiple perspectives bestowed by fiction, nonfiction, and memoir. Child soldiering remains to be a pivotal issue to date. The prohibition of the use of children in war has not seen fruition. Around the world, children of different ages are left with no choice but to join the militia, either the rebel or the government. "Both sides of war depended on

child soldiers to accomplish their mission for power over the people" (68). Multiple perspectives mean more than one way to look at the same thing. The use of child soldiers is a significant issue in present times, but adequate discussion is not met.

If you do not want to fight or help, that is fine. But you will not have rations and will not stay in this village. You are free to leave because we only want people here who can help cook, prepare ammunition, and fight. There are enough women to run the kitchen, so we need the help of able boys and man to fight with these rebels.(106)

Boys from the village have no choice except to join the army force. If they step back from the decision of the government, they have to leave that place. And if they leave the place, they will be killed by the rebels who are camping outside the village.

Citizens are not allowed to stay in the village if they deny the order made by the lieutenant. That shows the government is fragile, and it fails to fulfill its duty.

Because the government does not have the authority to force people to join the troops if they are not young enough, joining the force is not an easy job. Being a part of the war as a soldier means you have to sacrifice yourself for the sake of the nation. Where never have the turning point to return to your home.

Similarly, another critique, Jopin Nyman also compares Beah's novel with Ashley's *Little Sister* and Keitetsi's *Child Soldier*, where Nyman compares the survival of the main character and focuses on how a child is used in war. Nyman suggests that relocating the child soldiers could overcome through the war. Jopin Nyman writes:

Recent years have shown an increasing number of representations of African child soldiers in fiction and in life writing, as can be seen in such text as Bernard Ashle's *Fictional Little Sister* (1999), China Keitetsi's *Child Soldier*

(2004) and Ismael Beah's controversial *A Long Way Gone: Memoir of a Boy Soldier* (2007). Such narratives tend to emphasize the survival of their protagonist by relocating them in new social and cultural settings far away from homes embedded in violent conflicts and ethnic hatred. In so doing these texts are also narratives of exorcism and purification that seek to remold and educate the traumatized child in order to relocate it in new worlds. As one of the most prominent examples on this transition, Ismael Beah's memoir places its narrator in discourses of violence, trauma and globalization in order to construct a subject ready to enter Western modernity and "America", thus transnationalizing his identifications. (215)

Here we can see that Nyman explores how the soldier survives by relocating them to different places, but they were still attached to their violence. Because when they are located in different places from their homes, they were physically separated from that place or war but mentally not. Their body was not in the condition to think correctly because of ammunition and cocaine. Ammunition controlled their mind and body strength strongly. It is tough to forget everything so quickly. They tried very hard to forget all the terror and start a new life, but they could not. Their past haunts them every day and night. Their horror memories never set them free. So even though they are situated in a new society with new values, they cannot match themselves though they tried their best. Their anger hyper-controls their body. They could not think emotionally. Their only aim is to kill more enemies and get ammunition to intoxicate them.

In the same manner, Diedre L. Badejo expresses the autobiographical touch in *A Long Way Gone*. His main claim is that not only Ismael but thousands of other child soldiers were forced to fight for their lives. He says:

Ishmael has since said that during his time with the government soldiers, starting at the age of 13, he had killed more people than he could count. The child soldiers, including Ishmael, were kept high on marijuana and cocaine to numb them to killing. After three years of this hell, The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) rescued Ishmael. While he was at UNICEF center for child soldiers, he struggled with depression and other mental problems, resulting from all the brutalities he had witnessed and performed. Ishmael had been conditioned to feel that violence and brutality were normal and that people on the other side of the conflict were enemies to be hated and killed.

(58)

Badejo expresses how child soldiers were intoxicated by marijuana and cocaine to kill their enemies quickly. When Beah was near 13, he killed more enemies than he could count. He was holding Ak-47 to wash out people from the way that the government itself provided. Though the child soldiers, including Ishmael Beah rescued by UNICEF, they missed their squad, ammunition, and the jungle where they stay all day and night. Their memories hunted them every day while they were in the UNICEF center because they are the eyes witness of the violence and the brutality. Though they tried not to remember their past it hunts them again and again.

Furthermore, some critics argue that *A Long way Gone* depicts illustrates the historical realities of contemporary Africa. James Thorsen maintains that the book instills evokes "outrage, sadness, and pain when reading about the exploitation of child soldiers" in addition to "hope, humanity, bravery..." (91). Similarly, Joan Hopes takes the memoir as a journey of an ordinary boy who becomes a ruthless soldier, ultimately triumphing over the terrible experiences. He argues "The memoir not only highlights the complexity of human nature under stress but also adds an important

voice to political and policy discussion on the effects of war on children" (90).

According to Joan Hopes, the memoir paints the baffling human nature amalgamating political and policy discussions regarding the use of child soldiers in war. Moreover, he asserts, "Although many of the details in the memoir are horrific, Beach helps the reader through it by maintaining the tone of a storyteller somewhat distanced from what has happened. Through many of Beach's memories including tragedy, personal loss, and extreme violence, he lets the facts speak for themselves." (91) The memoir's horrific portrayals initially disturb the readers; however, the neutrality of the narrator compensates it. Facts speak for themselves in the memoir, according to hope. The subject's ability to overcome the terrible experiences stands out in the novel.

In this way, the above-mentioned critics discuss child soldier, the effect of war on children, the journey from childhood to adulthood, etc. Some critique argues that this memoir accelerates the main character Beach from child to adult. Some critics said this memoir illustrates the historical realities of Africa. But it is a new finding from others that explains the futility of war and the bad practice of recruitment of child soldiers which is conducted by the government. The author has presented himself as a child soldier who fought for the government. He expressed how he works as a child soldier, and deals with everyday challenges. How government involves in such a vulnerable act where children lose their memory. The government of the nation is known as the protector of the nation but in wartime government could not give justice to the children, women, old and sick people. Children are not safe, and they are a victim of war. Avoid being killed and keep themselves safe from the war they have to be ready to fight. Being a part of the war cost so high for children. Children are manipulated by what they lost in the war. Every recruitment has its motto that they have to win the enemies at any cost. Which leads them to the dark consequences. In

the process of the recruitment of the soldier, the government vanished all the memory that they had. And they intoxicated the soldier by providing them ammunition, drugs, and so on. Child soldiers are not fighting against their enemies but also fighting within themselves. There is a war in their inner life. They are fighting every day with their identity which the government stole from them. Child soldiers are guided by the government after they are brainwashed. Beah struggles in remembering his past because his memories were played by the government when he joined the armed force. Child soldiers are having problems remembering who they are actually. Every day is filled with very dangerous challenges. His all-old memories and transfers aggressive thoughts into his mind. Not only Beah but all child soldiers who have to survive at the camp, guided by the so-called government. Without his real identity, he was surviving at that camp. It is challenging for Beah to remember his childhood memory. He tried several times to remember who he was and where his family was, but his head hurt very badly every time he failed to remember. Joining the armed force was not his choice, he is a boy who loved to dance and learn rap music in his childhood. He explains his all experience through this memoir to help other people to understand how hard his life was as a militant. Because still thousands of children are serving as soldiers in armed conflicts around the world. These boys and girls, some as young as 8 years old, serve in government forces and armed opposition groups. They may fight on the front lines, participate in suicide missions, and act as spies, messengers, or lookouts. Girls may be forced into sexual slavery. Many are abducted or recruited by force, while others join out of desperation, believing that armed groups offer their best chance for survival. Which only destroys their life and departs from the family and society. Victims of such war have no normal life to live. War makes their life more complicated and fragile.

This research paper argues war is fragile and the government is also the reason for bringing suffering and sorrow to innocent people and taking advantage of the innocent children of the state. The government damaged the future of many children by forcing them to join the armed conflict like civil war for their benefit is wrong. Beah expressed his journey of combat which clearly shows the wrong practice of recruiting children in war and the misery of daily life routine in the camp. Not only Ismael Beah but all of the child soldiers who had no choice to reject the proposal of going to the armed force their life became aimless and useless. Because at the war they are living different life which is a huge difference from outside the camp. They learn nothing from the war only killing innocent people as many as they can at the time and looting ammunition and drugs for power. Which is a wrong practice for a child. So, war is not a good thing for everyone it is only good for the people who are in high command. and at the end of the war people who are the victim of war will get nothing to accept hatred from their own society even from their own families. Many innocent children became orphans and homeless because of the war. So, war brings destruction to the state where many people lose their originality and get nothing that's why war is fragile. To prove my argument, I will talk about some ideas from George Agamben's Stasis Theory, Emanuel Levinas's concept of face-to-face relation (coined in text *Totality and Infinity* (1969), and Sidonie Smith's Autobiographical subjectivity. Their theories helped me to examine the lines which clearly show the failure of government.

In the theory, Stasis Giorgio Agamben mentioned that the concept of "the theory of civil war is completely lacking... because of the increasing popularity of the concept of revolution (16)". George Agamben brings the reference of classical Greece, which dismissed the existence of a political 'substance' and receipted politics

as a 'field traversed by the tensional currents of politicization and depoliticization '.

Agamben asserts that:

Not taking part in the civil war amounts to being expelled from the *polis* and confined to the *oikos*, to losing citizenship by being reduced to the unpolitical condition of a private person. Obviously, this does not mean that the Greeks considered civil war to be a public good, but rather that the *stasis* functions as a reactant which reveals the political element in the extreme instance as a threshold of politicization that determines for itself the political or unpolitical character of a certain being. (17)

Agamben expresses that at the time of civil war an individual who is not taking part in the war should be restricted from the state and will lose citizenship. The government politicized the unpolitical space of the family in the state. When the family encounters by the political area of the city again and again at that moment stasis exists as the threshold of politicization. Which creates difficulties in civilians' lives. Family members departed from the family and take part in the war under the command of the government. People face trust issues with each other. Because of the lack of trust people forget their responsibility to others. When the family gets involved in the politics of the state, a family has to sacrifice their member by sending their male member of the family for the battle. Life in the city became miserable to survive. Human life became aimless there is no certainty of life. If any family disobeys the government then they should have to face the penalty of losing their citizenship.

Similarly, the lieutenant politicized the crisis in the city which is clearly shown in the memoir. The unpolitical area of the family is encountered by the political area of the city which is civil war. Citizens of the state are questioned about their nationality, their identity. If citizens disobey the order of the government, they



have to lose their citizenship. Government makes rules for the public good, but in this case, they make rules against the civilian. Government is the only institution that has the power to protect the identity of every citizen of the city. If the government make rules for its citizen then they are bound to follow the rules and orders. Fear of losing their citizenship people have to accept the decision which is against human rights sometimes. When the city change its order then innocent people became the victim of its consequences. People have to live their life in fear and have no liberty at all. Therefore Beah along with other children who are lived in Yele attached to every decision of the city. The government indirectly forces people to join the armed conflict which makes their life worthless, heartless, and cruel. One has to kill another for their survival. Engaging in killing games teaches an innocent child to get more anger and force them to involve in more crime. Many children have been involved in war activities because they had no choice. Many girls are used as a spy and in many places they have been used as sex slaves. Children are involved in different activities that circumstances force them to do. Children are only thirteen years old and they are in the learning phase of their age and they learn how to live their lives by killing others because of war. But the government does not concern about the safety of those girls and boys while they take part in the war. There is no good point in involving in a war where citizens are not safe to live. Government should give more attention to the comfort of its people's lives. But during wartime children are separated from their parents and suffer every day of their life in the search of food and shelter. When the state of exception appears in the city, the life of citizens faces the brutality of the government where no one has any right to go against the order.

Therefore, the memoir explained how war victims tried to forget the pain and sorrow by engaging with daily work in Yele but they could not able to control their

fear where many are dead and they walked over those dead bodies. Victims of war are not able to express their happiness under the shadow of the bad experience of war. During the tense period of the time, Yele was the only place where people do not need to worry about the war. The main character of the memoir Beah is one of the victims of war and he went all along with the war experience. Beah is one of the victims of the civil war where he separated from his parents and started to live in Yele. Every single day of Yele makes him better detached from the war. But one day the lieutenant announces to the villagers that the rebels are waiting to destroy their village. The lieutenant says "They won't give up until they capture this village. They want our food and ammunition" (106). The Lieutenant interferes with the villagers and convinced them that they are in the Yele because of rebellions and they are the reason for losing their family. The lieutenant indirectly forced people to join the army. Yele is no longer the safest place now. Yele is threatened by the civil war and it does not have enough manpower to protect Yele so at this point state of exception appears as the new law where the lieutenant can change the juridical order according to the needs of the city. The lieutenant exaggerates the condition of the war and indirectly threatens the citizens that they should take part in the civil war for protecting themselves and take revenge on their families. Which is not the level of the government. The lieutenant says:

If you do not want to fight or help, that is fine. But you will not give rations and will not stay in this village. You are free to leave because we only want people here who can help cook, prepare ammunition, and fight. There are enough women to run the kitchen, so we need the help of able boys and men to fight these rebels. This is your time to revenge the death of your families and to make sure more children do not lose their families. (106)

The current situation of the state dismissed the existence of a political 'substance and receipted politics as a 'field traversed by the tensional currents of politicization and depoliticization. The government itself makes a rule against the rule. People who wanted to live there they have to follow the command of the lieutenant. Forcing the civilians to join the army though they are not mature enough mentally and physically, is not legal. But here unpolitical space of the family is encountered by the political space of the city. Now technically family became part of a war where they have to accept any activities that are happening in their surrounding. The above lines clearly show that the lieutenant wants people for the battle which means he wants only males from the city who can join battle filed. The lieutenant has no mercy for children, weak citizens, and women he only cares about male power who can fight. This shows that civilians have no choice to deny the offer of lieutenant if they have to live alive or stay in Yele. According to the lieutenant if civilians cop up with his order only then they can live in Yele otherwise they have to leave the place and lose their residence forever. To maintain their place in the city civilians chose battle rather than leave the place. Many innocent children became victims of the war and lose their childhood in the bloodiest game of war because of the wrong decision of the government. The government used to play with the emotion of the boys to manipulate them and help child soldiers to give strength. This is how government start to create terror in the children's life. Government is a guideline for child soldiers in the war.

George Agamben, in his investigation of the state of exception it clearly said that the state of exception constitutes, "point of imbalance between public law and political fact." The term state of exception was coined by Carl Schmitt in his book *Politische Theologie* (1922). State of exception is not a kind of social law. It appears

when juridical order is suspended in itself. State of exception is not legal form but it appears as legal if the juridical order is suspended due to an emergency or serious crisis threatening the state. "If law employs the exception that is the suspension of law itself". When the state of exception comes in first, it abandons the living being to law. Such suspension affects human living. The lieutenant has to decide the law because the state of exception is the only way to go through the war. Though the state of exception is not legal, it can be legal if an emergency or serious crisis threatens the state.

We can see in Beah's life that before the war touched him, he was some kind of naughty boy, but he loved rap music. He was interested in Shakespeare's play. Sometimes he recites the monologue from Julia Caesar in front of the old citizen of his village (Mogbwemo). But when war took place in his town, it creates 'the imbalance between public law and the political fact' which cause Beah to be separated from his family. He struggled every day and night to survive from war. Many days and nights passed without connecting with human beings. Walking all night and day alone in the jungle drives him crazy. All the time, he tried not to think about what he had seen in the way. He fights with his thought. The more he thinks about his thought more days become longer for him. He was afraid to sleep at night because if he sleeps his suppressed thought will appear in his dream. He was suffering from trauma. In many places, he faced brutal images of war. Walking over the dead bodies to make the path makes him drive his crazy. After many problems and pain Beah succeeded to reach Yele. The scenario of the place was different from other villages. Children are playing outside of their houses without fear. Some teenagers are dancing. Not a single drop of worry was seen on their faces. The armies of Yele are in a position to protect their people from their enemies. This picture shows good

governing. But suddenly, the perfect village has to accept the bitter truth of the war. The situation of the village has changed suddenly. The peace of the Yele faded away. The government of Yele has to give more effort to survive the war. Because the rebel has more empowerment to trounce any war, the people from Yele do not have enough empowerment to defeat rebels. Now, to fight against rebel government needs more army but how can they manage to arrange more armies at that time. So, the lieutenant has only option to create an army force by collecting boys from the town. While selecting the armies, there is no age boundary. They are short of an army, so they involve many children who are below fifteen. Here we can examine that the situation creates a "point of imbalance between public law and political fact". If the lieutenant goes through the law that under fifteen years a child cannot participate in the war as a child soldier, he will not get any troops in an emergency time. So, he does not care about the age frame to make his troops. Here lieutenant applies the state of exception. State of exception is not a legal law but, in this situation, state of exception appears as a legal form of law. Because the government has been threatened by the civil war. It is mentioned in Agamben's state of exception that if some serious crisis threatens the juridic order, then politics can be depoliticized. This means, that to come back from the worse time, the lieutenant orders the civilian that every boy of the town have to participate in the war as a soldier which is not legal. For the betterment of the town, he only needs soldiers, no matter how old they are. The lieutenant mentioned that they have enough men to run the kitchen, so they only need male power to carry the gun and go to the battlefield. The Lieutenant selects every boy who was still under the age of fifteen. It creates such a condition that if anyone denies his command, then they had to leave the place. Suppose the citizen does not want to help the government, then they are free to leave the place. This shows how the lieutenant politicized the

situation by creating such conditions for the people though involving children as a child soldier is a crime. When a child joins the armed force, he or she has to forget their childhood. At the age of thirteen, they have many dreams, make new friends, play new games, eat sweets, cuddle in their mother's lap, play video games, have good health, have a good education, etc. Basically, childhood is known as innocent, weak who are guided by adults and parents. And soldier represents the strong, powerful, and mature who makes the decision, and is known as the protector. But when the worst thing happens in their surroundings, affects very badly to the child. Even war pushed them into a dark place where they could not think properly. Their all desires go in the vein. children will be mentally and physically disturbed, which damages their future as well. When civil war takes place in the city, it not only damaged the city's economy but also destroys every human being's life and especially the child, they are very critical issues in every war. Where they separate not only from the home and family but form their real identity and childhood memory too, which make their life very difficult to survive. Children join the armed force for two conditions: to get revenge on their families and the second is to unbalance between political and social correlations in society. It only happens when war takes place in the city. Some children are ready to be child soldiers to get revenge on their families. Some choose this as the only way to protect themselves from the war. Sometimes they may influence by whatever happens in their surroundings.

Fiona Ang in Article 38 maintains the importance of child rights who are categorized into different groups according to their different age group. State parties should give more attention to the protection of children while state parties are recruiting. Fiona Ang explains more about recruitment, hostilities, and safety of children where the state party has a responsibility to look after it. Furthermore, there

are two different ways of participation in such armed conflict the first is direct participation which is dangerous enough though “it implies direct casual relationship between the activity engaged in and the harm done to the enemy at the time and the place where the activity takes place.”<sup>36</sup>. The second is indirect participation, it is more danger as direct participation because in indirect participation no one will introduce as a combatant and they spy in different places so some involvement of a child in hostilities develops suspicion and affects wide spear so it became more dangerous to all children. Article 38 maintains the child rights and officially written in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) declared that "States Parties should take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take part in hostilities"<sup>44</sup>. It is officially declared that under the age of fifteen have the right not to involve in any hostility. “State Parties are under the obligation to provide the broadest possible protection of the right of the child applicable to them 19”. Children under the age of fifteen years use hostility is known as crime. They should not carry arms, not allow to wear the uniform of any combative group. They should not perpetuate the violence. But in reality, there are 300000 child soldiers under the age of fifteen involved in hostilities throughout the world. Jo De Berry argues that “the phenomenon of child soldiers is thus in inextricably linked to a crisis of the state” (93). The state was short of armies and it only needs the strong support of a boy who can fight so the lieutenant only wants a boy to recruit the army. “we need the help of able boys and men to fight” the lieutenant, again and again, manipulates the boys by reminding them “this is your time to revenge the death of your families and to make sure more children do not lose their families”<sup>106</sup>. But in Bea's context, it doesn't apply. Rebels are fighting against the corrupt government because the government misused its power against the civilians. Here the government

is not able to manage the balance between “public law and political fact”. People only want a good government that not only thinks about themselves but all. People try to protest against the wrong people who don't deserve to be in that position and who use their power for the benefit of themselves only. To get benefit from society, people who are known as governing, create a situation where people suffer a lot. To fight back against corrupt people from the country, civilians have to take the steps, which lead to the civil war. Rebels are not only the reasons for civil war, but the wrong system and corrupt government are the reason for the civil war. Civil war occurs when indifference takes place between the state and civilians.

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Furthermore, there are some lines in the memoir which show the futility of war and the activities of the government help me to prove how the government restaging the atrocities and the war is not fruitful for all and it brings disaster into human beings. when Beah joins the army camp, he changes from a naughty boy to a cruel military. At the time of training, the government provided ammunition for the



boys, which helped them forget all of their good memories. They were getting more energy and active while they were intoxicated. Beah has shared his first war expression as a child soldier. Beah was very much scared of the sound of killing. But when he saw his friend Musa who was covered with blood, he became angry.

My face, my hands, my shirts, and my guns were covered with blood. I raised my gun and pulled the trigger, and I killed a man. Suddenly, as if someone was shooting them inside my brain, all the massacres I had seen since the day I was touched by war began flashing in my head. Every time I stopped shooting to change magazines and saw my two young lifeless friends, I angrily pointed my gun into the swamp and killed more people. I shoot everything that moved. (119)

The above lines show how an innocent child became a ruthless soldier. He is very much angry with anything he shoots everything which is moving in the surrounding. A boy who is in his twelve years is trained to carry a gun with him and has a responsibility to kill his enemies. Every dead body was covered with blood which shows the bloodiest picture of war. The deadly scene of Beah's friends' gives him more anger toward the enemies and became passionate to kill their enemies. Beah mentioned that he even cannot hold himself for a second to kill a man while reloading his magazines. His anger forces him to kill everyone who is the reason for his friend's life. We can see that one small mistake of the government effect a lot in the state. Also, these lines show how a young boy shows his anger toward the enemies. It describes he is covered in blood and killed without taking a pause. He shoots everything at unwanted movement, "I shoot everything that moved." Beah loses his consciousness, and he cannot control himself, which makes him more aggressive in his behavior. The situation generates conflict in Beah and fights within.

Likewise, the lieutenant teaches child soldiers to kill the enemy by providing them with the prisoner, where soldiers have to kill the rebel within a minimum time. "We were supposed to slice their throats on the corporal's command the person whose prisoner died quickest would win the contest" (124). He was not thinking about what is he doing. What kind of contest is this? He just follows the command of the lieutenant without thinking much. The rebels are the same group as Beah. The captain of the rebel teaches them the same thing as government teaches. "We fought for the RUF; the army is the enemy. We fought for freedom, and the army killed my family and destroyed my village. I kill any of those army bastards every time I get a chance to do so" (134). During the training time, they also thought that whatever they lose; their family, relatives, friends, the peace of mind is all because of the government. They planted the seed of revenge into those innocent boys. They killed people as much as they could in the name of taking revenge on their families. The head of the parties manipulates boys emotionally by representing the reason for losing their family in the war. The government assured that soldiers killed their enemies for the betterment of the country. But the government does not concern with the safety of the children. Every soldier is functioning with the help of drugs and ammunition. They are always ready to kill anybody. Even they are unknown of their identities. They forget their real life. "The villages that we captured and turned into our bases as we went along and the forests that we slept in became my home. My squad was my family, my gun was my provider and protector, and my rule was to kill or be killed" (128). There is no pity for anyone. At that stage, Beah's childhood had gone without his knowing. The jungle became his home and the squad became the family for every child soldier.

Similarly, Beah along with the child soldiers became very angry whenever

they look at the rebels at the time of the raid. Because Beah had faced a lot of horror images which was done by the rebels. He thought that the rebels are the reason for the death of his family. He cannot wait to kill the rebels. “Whenever I looked at the rebels during the raids, I got angrier, because they looked like the rebels who played cards in the ruins of the village where I has lost my family. So when the lieutenant gave orders, I shot as many as I could” (122). The above lines clearly show how government miseducates the child soldiers in the name of taking revenge on their families and the protection of the nation. Because war takes place when there is unbalance between “public law and political fact”. The lieutenant plays with the child soldiers and the civilians emotionally and gives them the hope that they will do whatever they have to protect the civilians. “We” – the lieutenant pointed to us - “are here to protect you and will do all we can to make sure nothing happens to you”.

(123) Similarly, the lieutenant convinces the child soldiers as well as the civilians that “our job is a serious one and we have the most capable soldiers, who will do anything to defend this country. We are not like the rebels, those riffraffs who kill people for no reason. We kill them for the good and betterment of this country. So respect all these men” (123). The Lieutenant’s speech sounds like the combination of instilling in the civilians that what they were doing was right and boosting the child soldiers as well. The lieutenant plays with the emotion of the civilians by showing their concerns and ordering the civilians to respect the soldiers. Also motivates the child soldier that they are not the same as the rebels because they do not kill the people without any reason. The child soldiers always talk about war and the techniques of killing the enemies. In the middle of the movie, soldiers go to the battlefield and return after an hour at the camp and continue their movie. They cannot relay the situation whether they are living in the real world or anywhere else. Every day and night passed doing

their job. Beah says, “it was as if nothing existed outside our reality”. Beah doesn’t want to stay in a decent society he only wants war, and fight in his life. Beah does not want to think about anything else except war, guns, ammunition, and killing skills. Terror takes a place in his head which do not allow him to depart from it. It is all because of the corrupt government. Participating in armed conflict is more horrible than we think. The state was short of armies and it only needs the strong support of a boy who can fight so the lieutenant only wants a boy to recruit the army. “we need the help of able boys and men to fight” the lieutenant, again and again, manipulates the boys by reminding them “this is your time to revenge the death of your families and to make sure more children do not lose their families”.(106)

Ross Haer in her article demonstrates that “the use of children in conflict is a horrible example of the deteriorating standards of human rights”(83). She explains how children find themselves in an “unsanctioned position between childhood and adulthood” in wartime. Children are no longer innocent though they are still a child because they performed adult tasks but physically and psychologically, they are not mature enough to take responsibility for themselves.

Similarly, Emanuel Levinas, in *Ethics and Infinity* answered the responsibility for the other where he mentioned that every human is responsible for the other because they have face-to-face relations. The face is the only way which maintains our responsibility toward the other. Everything that happens in our life depends upon our faces, “responsibility for what is not my deed, or for what does not even matter to me; or which precisely does matter to me, is met by me as face” (95). According to Levinas, the face is just naked skin, but the parts of the face: eyes, a chin, nose, a forehead are the subject of the face that makes a person responsible to others in society because “face is straightaway ethical” (85). Only remembering the color of an

eye does not mean the person is having a social relationship with others. "The best way encountering the other is not even to notice the color of his eyes! When one observes the color of the eyes one is not in social relationship with the other" (85). Rebels killed all of the people who were different from their squats. They were separated from the social relationship. If I turn myself toward the other as an object then only that can help me to describe others. But in war, people deny to adhere to their responsibility. "Since I am responsible even for the other's responsibility" (99). But war fails people to act ethically. When RUF caught up a blind no one could dare to help him, they were listening to him from the bushes. "He cried out loudly and screamed that he was blind. No one dared to go out and help him" (25). They forget the responsibility to others. "Responsibility is what is incumbent on me exclusively, and what, humanly, I cannot refuse" (101). Responsibility is a great thing that is very hard to cope with during the pandemic period of civil war. People who live in society have a responsibility toward others that is bound to them and cannot be refused by anybody. But here in the memoir human forget their responsibility because of the civil war. People are not helping the victims, they observe the situation by standing in front of the violence. People became helpless. Levinas argues that human being has face-to-face relation, but in wartime, people forget it. While an old man was running from his town rebel able to catch him and show their anger towards that old man. Rebels thought they are killing people for the freedom of their town and were angry with the civilians that they are not supporting rebels in what they have been doing. An old man calls for help but nobody was there for help "His lips trembled, but he couldn't get a word out. The rebel pulled the trigger, and like lightning, I saw the spark of fire that came from the muzzle. I turned my face to the ground" (33). Beah reached the condition where if he wanted to help that old man he could not so he remained silent

but “it is very difficult to be silent in someone's presence” (88).

After walking for days and nights, when Beah with his friend reach the abandoned village because of their hunger they become a thief. "He was about five years old and was enjoying the corn that he held in both hands, taking turns biting each ear. We didn't say a word or even look at each other. Rather, we rushed on the boy at the same time, and before he knew what was happening, we had taken the corm from him" (30). This situation happened in wartime. One has to be afraid of another. Because of the lack of responsibility. “Since the other looks at me, I am responsible for him, without even having taken responsibilities in his regard; his responsibility is incumbent on me” (96). While the boys are stealing the corn from the boy, his parents could not stop them because they feared that if they would quarrel with the gang, they will kill their son and themselves.

According to Sidonie Smith, there are major five ways to understand the complexity of autobiographical subjectivity. They are as follows memory, experience identity, embodiment, and agency. First memory; “The writer of autobiography depends on access to memory to tell a retrospective narrative of the past and to situate the present within that experiential history”. Ishmael Beah writes *A Long Way Gone* through his memory where he worked as a combatant who suffers a lot in war. Being a part of the war as a child soldier and facing the brutality of the war makes his memoir more realistic. Beah writes the memoir after being rescued by UNICEF but time and again his bad memories hunted him. He writes this memoir after the war ended. He remembers his memory where his life had faced the brutality of the war. His memory gives more meaning to his past. “The remembering subject actively creates the meaning of the past in the act of remembering”. As Daniel L. Schacter has suggested, "[M]emories are records of how we have experienced events, not replicas

of the events themselves" (16). Beah has expressed the events of war where his life went through the cruel killing of people and destroying the villages. The second is the experience which is merely interpretation it gives the reader a better insight into how his/her experience has shaped them as a person. *A Long Way Gone* it's a memoir of a child soldier who has served on the government side during the civil war. He has experience of the fight at the war where many people were separated from their families and lost family members as well. He is the eyewitness of the war which gives first-hand facts and is authentic to believe for all. The third is identity, it is very conflicting. It goes along with race, gender, nationality, and sexuality, among others. Beah belongs to the black race and children too. Being black his voice reached all over the world. His race gives him the platform to express his experience in the world. The fourth is embodiment. "There must be a body that perceives and internalizes the images, sensations, and experiences of the external world" (37). Beah's body has the experience which became the source of the autobiographical subject to his memoir. And the fifth one is agency; it is always influenced. A person's identity, experience, and memories all influence agency of that person – reflecting from the start a particular set of ideas and beliefs that they have come to harbor and that influence their day-to-day thoughts and actions. Without these subjectivities, no one can share his/her experience with the world. Through the help of an autobiographical subject, Beah expresses his story to the world. The writer, Beah expresses his real experience through his memoir. He included all of his war experiences and how he survived, killed the people, stole the food from villagers, and how people treated them in society. He expresses each and everything he went through. Whatever I have mentioned in the previous section, these all are represented through the help of autobiographical subjectivity. It is the only way to express history

throughout the world.

*A long Way Gone* is the memory of the experience that Beah went through. Hence, he not only remembers the memory but blends politics in it too. He presents anti-war sentiments bringing forth the reference of his experience as a child soldier. The memory is embodied too. His body becomes the witness to the bloody violence he went through and somewhat gives him identity too. Being the victim of war, his voice is heard worldwide because he has the agency to speak. He is the war victim, which bestows him the authority to speak over the matter.

This thesis concludes that war affects a lot in human beings. The protagonist and the writer of the memoir transparently show how the government restaging the atrocities and war in the state by changing the judicial orders. The government also takes a part in destroying the nation in the name of protection. The protagonist is the eyewitness to the war and terror. War not only took child soldiers' childhood but that war experience infects their lives which still causes great pain and sadness. Still, the government is not taking serious attention to the issue of child rights during wartime. They have been recruiting more children for a war to make their group stronger. Especially the children who have to be separated from their families and society. Government should give more attention to child recruitment which is not good for the nation as well. Because at the time of war, many innocent people have to follow the rules and regulations which may go against their human rights. The government keeps silent at the time of the pandemic situation of the nation which leads civilians to face the brutality and suffer from the pain and sorrow. The main character of this memoir shows how war is futility and the face of the government which has the responsibility to protect its civilians from every obstacle of the nation. War is not just a fight between state and civilians but it is the fight between innocent children and their



future. Leading civil war not just brings destruction to the nation but also pushes children's bright future into a dark place.

Beah has represented a voice of all child soldiers in the whole world who had to be a part of civil war as combat by force or by other reasons. Children have been used in such wars as messengers, spies, and soldiers from the very beginning of time. Still, the government does not give proper attention to the issue of child soldiers, and it makes their life vulnerable and complicated. This study found that the recruitment of children as combatants for political benefit does not make any good to individuals and nations. While Beah serves in combat at the age of twelve, he separates from his family it was all because of the civil war. And child soldiers are brutally used in such war. Children might get trauma, suffer from nightmares, migration, and sexual abuse, and depart from the purest memories of their childhood which is useless. Today many children became homeless, every day faces challenges to survive in society. These kinds of situations seat war between people and society which is not good for society and the nation. Recruiting children for war is futile it never gives good results in the end. It only destroys the nation and innocent civilians.

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