CHAPTER TEN

Violence, Childhood and the State: New Perspectives on Political Practice and Social Experience in the Twentieth Century

Nick Baron

Throughout the twentieth century, in the course of recurrent calamities occasioned by war, civil conflict and political, economic or social breakdown, often catalyzed by state policy and practice, children have borne the brunt of suffering. Yet, as many of the case studies in this book have shown, children have often been creative and resourceful in devising means of coping with the consequences of forced mobility, overcoming the experience of violent loss and improvising new roles and identities enabling them to survive and, at times, to find a new place in society. In this final chapter, I reiterate and draw together the main findings of the preceding case studies, as well as offering some general conclusions.

The present volume has aimed to develop and establish a new framework for the understanding of child displacement in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This framework directs attention to the dual nature of displacement as both state practice and social experience. It also highlights the conceptual and historical interrelations between displacement - as both practice and experience - and questions of ideology, spatiality, mobility, identity and selfhood. I hope that by demonstrating the analytical value of this framework, the case studies collectively have suggested not only new perspectives for future research into the history of childhood and the history of migration and mobility, but also new

ways of conceiving, investigating and understanding many other crucial themes in modern and contemporary history.

As noted in Chapter One, the significance of the book's conceptual approach, methods and analysis transcends its geographical and chronological parameters. The East European and Soviet experiments in state-building, population policy, social reconstruction and mass mobilization that we have examined during the first half of the twentieth century had powerful resonance throughout the second half of the century and beyond, with tragic consequences for countless millions of people.[1] By furnishing a new lens on these events and processes, the present volume also aspires to make a useful contribution to the growing critical scholarship seeking to deconstruct - or proposing to reconstruct - the entrenched nexus between states and the forces that impel and constrain human mobility and settlement.[2]

I am aware, of course, that in framing the volume to focus on this nexus between displacement and the modern state, on the displaced child as a site of state-building, I have not directed adequate attention to structures and forces that exist either at sub-state level or between and above states, such as economic globalization or transnational forms of political mobilization. To be sure, several of the chapters address the interactions and tensions between

---

[1] For synoptic histories of later twentieth century population displacement in its wider political, social and economic contexts, see: Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Richard Bessel and Claudia B. Haake (eds), *Removing Peoples: Forced Removal in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Panikos Panayi and Pippa Virdee (eds), *Refugees and the End of Empire. Imperial Collapse and Forced Migration in the Twentieth Century* (London: Palgrave, 2011), especially Part III; Dawn Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2010). The classic analysis is Aristide Zolberg, 'The Formation of New States as a Refugee-Generating Process', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 467 (1983), pp. 24–38. On the impact on children of radical state interventions, see Anita Chan, *Children of Mao. Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985); Rita Arditt, *Searching for Life. The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the Disappeared Children of Argentina* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). See also references in Chapter 1, fns. 65 and 66.

[2] For diverse critical studies of the interrelations between state power and displacement, see: Linda K. Kerber, 'The Stateless as the Citizen's Other: A View from the United States', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 112, No. 1 (2007), pp. 1–34; Nevzat Soguk, *States and Strangers: Refugees and Displacements of Statecraft* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Katy Long, 'Refugees, Repatriation and Liberal Citizenship', *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (2011), pp. 232–41; Saskia Sassen, 'The Repositioning of Citizenship and Alienage: Emergent Subjects and Spaces for Politics', in Kate Tunstall (ed.), *Displacement, Asylum, Migration. The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 2004* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 176-203; Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson, *Citizenship and Migration. Globalization and the Politics of Belonging* (London: Palgrave, 2000). See also references in Chapter 1, fn. 17.

'nationalizing' and 'internationalizing' forces, operating either across borders with regard to refugee children (White's and Zahra's chapters) or within borders (Kaznelson and Baron on the persistence of regional and local identities among Soviet deportees; Balkelis on the preservation of ethnic identities among exile communities). Yet while states and their exercise of government remain fundamental in shaping the lives and subjectivities of displaced children, we must recognize the need to address other variables if we are fully to grasp their diverse experiences and the contexts and conditioning factors of these experiences.[3]

The volume will have realized its aim if it provides a useful stimulus to further scholarship and a foundation for new studies. But new research needs also to look beyond the analytical, geographical and chronological frameworks of our studies to address themes that have not received adequate consideration here and, indeed, have been accorded very little attention at all in the existing scholarship on child displacement and displaced children, whether historical or contemporary in focus.[4] These themes include: questions of gender, sexuality and the body;[5] the role of parents or extended family and intergenerational relations;[6] leisure, culture and peer group relations;[7] longer-term historical change and

---

[3] For overview of these variables, see Heather Montgomery, *An Introduction to Childhood. Anthropological Perspectives on Children's Lives* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). For useful critical overviews of key themes in the history of childhood: Julia Grant, 'Children versus Childhood: Writing Children into the Historical Record, or Reflections on Paula Fass's *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society', History of Education Quarterly,* Vol. 45, No. 3 (2005), pp. 468-90; Paula S. Fass, *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World* (London: Routledge, 2013). Also see the references in Chapter 1, fn. 21.

[4] For this reason, most of the references in the subsequent footnotes are to scholarship in the history of childhood and children in general that does not focus on displacement.

[5] For a sociological treatment of these themes, see Alan Prout, *Body, Childhood and Society* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999). For historical treatments of gender and childhood, see Chapter 1, fn. 19.

[6] On the family, see for example Elliott West and Paul Petrik, *Small Worlds. Children and Adolescents in America, 1850-1950* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992), Part 4, 'Children and the Family'; David Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli (eds), *Family Life in the Long Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Kertzer and Barbagli (eds), *Family Life in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Paul Ginsborg, *Family Politics. Domestic Life, Devastation and Survival, 1900-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014). On generations, see for example Leena Alanen, 'Explorations in Generational Analysis', in Alanen and Berry Mayall (eds), *Conceptualising Child-Adult Relations* (London: Routledge-Falmer, 2001), pp. 11-22; June Edmonds and Bryan S. Turner, *Generations, Culture and Society* (London: Routledge, 2002); Jürgen Reulecke (ed.), *Generationalität und Lebensgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2003); Stephen Lovell (ed.), *Generations in Twentieth-Century Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Lovell, 'From genealogy to generation - The birth of cohort thinking in Russia', *Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History,* New Series, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2008), pp. 567–594.

transnational or cross-cultural comparisons;[8] and labour, consumption and the role of

economic structures and forces – including social class and globalization - in shaping

displaced children's lives and enabling or constraining their agency.[9] Historical studies of

child displacement and displaced children that are organized around or take fuller account of

these themes, in many cases requiring an enterprising and imaginative critical engagement

with sparse and oblique sources (especially if these are read to grasp not only adult

perceptions and practices but also children's perspectives and agency) will add needed detail

and nuance to our understanding.

<center>*******************</center>

The case studies presented here focused on lands of the former Russian empire – principally

on Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland - between 1915 and the early 1950s. In this

region, during four decades of world wars and conflict-ridden peace, the governments of new

post-imperial states, their populations fractured by class and ethnicity, strove for integrity,

security and sustainability through programmes of far-reaching political and social change.

All too often, enforced change generated sharper conflict and chaos. As future citizens of

these nascent states, children were at the heart of their transformational strategies.

---

[7] For example, West and Petrik, *Small Worlds*, Part 2, 'Children, Play and Society'; Catriona Kelly, *Children's Worlds. Growing up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), Chapter 11.
[8] For longer-term histories of childhood and children, see Chapter 1, fns. 5, 7, 9, 21 and 59. For transnational, cross-cultural and inter-regional comparative perspectives, see especially for example Heidi Morrison (ed.), *The Global History of Childhood Reader* (London: Routledge, 2012); Dirk Schuman (ed.), *Raising Citizens in the Century of the Child. The United States and German Central Europe in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010); West and Petrik, *Small Worlds*, Part 1, 'Cultural and Regional Variations'.
[9] On globalization, see for example, Peter N. Stearns, *Childhood in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Peter N. Stearns (ed.), Special issue 'Globalization and Childhood', *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Summer, 2005); Paula S. Fass, *Children of a New World. Society, Culture, and Globalization* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), especially Chapters 7-8. On child labour, see Kristoffel Lieten and Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk (eds), *Child Labour's Global Past, 1650-2000* (Peter Lang, 2011). For a compelling study of intersections between child displacement, sexuality, labour and transnational economies, see Julia O'Connell Davidson, *Children in the Global Sex Trade* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005). For an analysis of the interrelations among class, race, parent-child relations and notions of childhood, see Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods. Class, Race and Family Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003)

Children who had undergone displacement, many orphaned or cast adrift from their parents by war, civil strife or state interventions, played a defining role in the structural and symbolic development of many of these new or aspiring territorial entities. As Purs discussed in his chapter, Latvia in the interwar period represented an exception that proved this rule. There, refugee and orphaned children were consciously excluded from an emerging narrative of national rebirth that stressed a continuous and stable relationship between the national community and the land. Particularly after 1934, Latvian identity was predicated on historical rootedness in place, a deliberate denial of the lived experience of a majority of Latvians who had undergone displacement during the First World War and of the significance of refugeedom and repatriation for the republic's establishment of independence.[10]

All new East European states throughout these decades - including the Latvian interwar administrations, the Soviet regime and new post-Second World War communist governments in the region, as well as nationalist activists aspiring to self-administration or statehood (such as the Russian émigré elites in White's chapter or the Polish Jewish intelligentsia of Finder's essay) believed that by 'saving' their displaced children from the physical depredations and moral dangers of the 'street' they could demonstrate not only their organizational capacities but also their legitimate role as guardians of the nation. In the course of reclaiming these children – conceived and represented as valuable 'national property', as Zahra discussed in her chapter (see also the essays by White and Finder) - and of regulating their re-placement, though return to their 'natural' or adoptive families, fostering or institutionalization, these state and communities each also elaborated and established a normative socialization process.

By examining how both the Soviet regime and other East European governments, in the process of forming or re-forming themselves, acted towards displaced children, the

---

[10] See Aija Priedīte, 'Latvian Refugees and the Latvian Nation State during and after World War One', in Nick Baron and Peter Gatrell (eds), *Homelands: War, Population and Statehood in Eastern Europe and Russia, 1918-1924* (London: Anthem Press, 2004), pp. 35-52.

chapters in this book have offered new comparative perspectives on the emergent character of these state systems, conventionally distinguished from each other by their contrasting socialist or 'bourgeois' ideologies, their internationalist or nationalist visions, and their revolutionary or democratic conceptions of the state and state-society relations. In fact, the analyses presented here suggest that all twentieth century states, regardless of ideological colour, had much in common with regard to practices of government in general and perceptions and treatment of displaced children in particular. That is to say, all regarded displaced children as both opportunity and threat. Green, for example, notes the duality of Soviet perceptions of orphans during the war, as both innocent victims, to be rescued and rehabilitated, and agents of social disorder, to be punished or excluded. To be sure, a state might define some categories of displaced children as helpless and others as dangerous, or might place greater emphasis on their benign passivity or malevolent agency at different conjunctures - for example, the Soviet regime's policy towards kulak children evolved from active persecution to ambivalent re-integration, as discussed by Kaznelson and Baron. But at different times, and varying according to targeted group, all twentieth century states deployed a mix of strategies and solutions ranging from the coercive to the co-optive. As Zahra demonstrated in her chapter, liberal governments oriented towards welfare, as well as international agencies upholding universal rights, also undertook forcible removals or repatriations.[11]

Crucially, many of the chapters have considered displacement not only as a function or consequence of state policy but as a formative lived experience for the migrant subject. To this end, many of the authors have made substantial use of first-person testimonies, including children's diaries and adult memoirs of childhood, as well as oral histories, offering insight into the impact of displacement on children's lives after re-settlement or institutionalization.

---

[11] There is a large literature, for example, on British child migration schemes. For the most recent study, see Ellen Boucher, *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Margot Hillel and Shurlee Swain, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: Child Rescue Discourses, England, Canada and Australia, 1850–1915* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

In doing so, they have addressed important questions about the nature of memory, trauma and temporality, and the interrelation between narrative, subjectivities and constructions of the self. Kaznelson and Baron expressed ambivalence about the use of 'trauma' to explain disruptions in the memory of violence and displacement or to interpret the narrative ordering of memory. They did not, of course, deny that experiences of violence *may* have profoundly damaging consequences – for evidence of this, we need only refer to the testimony of a Polish Jewish social worker treating child Holocaust survivors in 1945 (cited in Finder's chapter):

> Deafened and blinded by the new surroundings, they often cried helplessly and pulled away from the arms that brought them caresses […] There were some who could walk around the edge of the room, clinging onto the wall with their little hands; the open space of even the smallest room was something perilous to them, an abyss or an ocean.

Rather, Kaznelson and Baron emphasized the need to analyse each individual case on its own terms, to the extent that historical sources permit us to do so, and to relate narratives of experience, memory and selfhood to their multiple discursive contexts in past and present.

It follows that we should seek to distinguish between the trauma 'victim' who suppresses, denies or distances the memory of earlier experiences (perhaps while 'reliving' the experience viscerally in ways they cannot communicate – like the children described above) and the resilient 'survivor' who remains silent as a positive 'coping' strategy or because of habituation – as well as to acknowledge the social dimensions of concepts such as 'victimhood'.[12] If modes of self-presentation, including speech, writing and affect, are shaped by social norms, we need to reflect on the extent to which silence or absence of overt emotion are socially-constituted and the extent to which they are psychologically determined (for discussion of silence, see Finder's essay)? We need to consider the role of gender in

---

[12] For discussion of the complex relationship between 'stress' and 'coping' among children who have experienced violence, that stresses that suffering is not an inevitable consequence of exposure to violence, see Ed Cairns, *Children and Political Violence* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), especially Chapter 2.

experience and in shaping memory practices (see the chapter by Kaznelson and Baron)? We also need to take account of age as a variable (see the discussion of Gabriels Matrosovs' memory narrative in Purs, also noted in Chapter One; considerations of displacement as 'adventure' in White and Balkelis; and the impact on children of the loss or death of a parent in Purs, White and others)? We must interrogate the interrelations among child agency, victimhood and trauma (White refers to Russian émigré observers in the early 1920s noting the 'unchildishness' [*nedetskost'*] of many refugee children who, in the adults' estimation, had matured too quickly as an outcome of their experiences)?[13] We need also to grapple with the interpretation of children's play in the midst or aftermath of violence (see White's and Finder's chapters) – is it to be understood as denial, avoidance or sublimation of subconscious trauma, as a sign of inner strength or as 'childish' unselfconsciousness?[14] We need to address the almost universal striving for education as a means of social and self-integration on the part of displaced and 'damaged' young people (see the chapters by Purs, White, Kaznelson and Baron, and Balkelis)? Explanation of these phenomena depends in part on the standpoint of the observer: as Kaznelson and Baron noted, some mental health specialists now insist on the need to interrogate 'trauma' as a specific social construct that may not have universal applicability. On the other hand, Finder demonstrated how Polish Jewish filmmakers deliberately excluded representations of trauma to create a positive stereotype of child survivors for the postwar community – we must recognize, then, that deliberate denial of trauma or victimhood needs to be situated and understood in its discursive context just as much as the assertion, appropriation or ascription of suffering.

---

[13] I also discuss this in Chapter 1. See also M. Jovanovíc, 'Accelerated maturity: Childhood in emigration (Russian children in the Balkans, 1920-1940)', in Slobodan Naumović and Miroslav Jovanović (eds), *Childhood in South East Europe: Historical Perspectives on Growing Up in the 19th and 20th Century* (Münster, Litverlag, 2004), pp. 199-214.

[14] See Merja Paksuniemia, Kaarina Määttä and Satu Uusiautti, 'Childhood in the shadow of war: filled with work and play', *Children's Geographies*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2015), pp. 114-27.

A core theme of the volume has been the role of space and place in children's experiences and in our conceptualization of displacement, both as practice and experience. The ambitious programmes of social reconstruction launched by East European states in the period examined here went hand-in-hand with extensive and penetrating spatial reconfiguration.[15] Authorities strove to 'place' their populations through redistributive interventions (which could range from coerced resettlement to placement in homes or adoptive families, from forced expulsions to refugee repatriation), as well as ensuring that everyone knew their proper 'place' by assigning social value to sites and spaces and by regulating mobility (as Purs noted, for example, many early twentieth century experts considered urban environments 'hazardous and corrupting' to children). Populations were categorized, sorted and separated into 'core' and 'marginal' groups, both discursively and through their physical redistribution. Several contributors to this volume have drawn an opposition, implicitly or explicitly, between, on the one hand, the 'street' as a space of social disorder, personal danger and loss, associated with the condition of itinerancy, displacement, refugeedom and exile, and, on the other, 'home' or 'homeland' as the conventional site of comfort, security and stability, associated with rootedness and belonging. Of course, this simple dichotomy did not always hold true. Conceptions both of 'street' and 'home' assumed different inflections at different times and places, when framed in different perspectives and by different interests, as our studies also demonstrate.

Viewed 'from below', by the child subjects, the opposition between movement and stasis had variable associations. As the authors here have emphasized, the experience of displacement was for most children one of intense and unremitting physical hardship and emotional suffering. However, displacement for some children could represent escape, excitement or opportunity. Flight from a homeland torn by conflict, or racked by famine or

---

[15] See Nick Baron and Peter Gatrell, 'Population Displacement, State-Building and Social Identity in the Lands of the Former Russian Empire, 1917-1923', *Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History,* New Series, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Winter 2003), pp. 51-100.

disease, as Purs, White and Qualls related, could for some refugee children represent a time of adventure or a period of relative security and respite. In any case, displacement is rarely a transition from a state of rootedness to one of unrelenting itinerancy. The essays by Kaznelson and Baron, Qualls and Balkelis all explored the experiences of children deported to new places of settlement, who were uprooted yet now all-too fixed in place. As exiles, they struggled to improvise new social and spatial identities in relation to their new homes, as well as to develop techniques for everyday survival and, in the longer term, for building new lives. Drawing on Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity, Qualls suggests that: 'The Soviet homes for Spanish children served as a "third space", both metaphorical and physical, situated between past and future, between two homelands, where new meanings, identities, behaviours, and cultures for the *niños* were enunciated, practised, and negotiated'.[16] The former kulak children whose testimonies were analysed by Kaznelson and Baron seem never to have reconciled themselves with the loss of their *rodina*, which continued to be a defining trope in their self-narration.[17] Balkelis notes, perhaps paradoxically, that the Lithuanian child deportees in Siberia achieved a degree of 'rootedness' thanks to a shared 'homeland nostalgia'. As Green and Zahra illustrated, re-placement (in these cases, by adoption or repatriation) brought its own risks and challenges for displaced children.

Viewed 'from above', by state agents, the contrast between a child situated 'in place' and 'out of place' carried a different but equally variable set of connotations. In many contexts, as we have seen, a settled family home was the normative site of belonging, and, for children, the primary and principal site of socialization. However, for transformational states,

---

[16] On Soviet international children's homes, see also Mariia Minina-Svetlanova, '"Dve rodiny est' u menia. O obe ia v serdtse khraniu .."': vospitatel'no-obrazovatel'nye praktiki v Ivanovskom Interdome' in Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova and Pavel Romanov (eds), *Sovetskaia Sotsial'naia Politika: stseny i deistvuiushchie litsa, 1940-1985* (Moscow: Variant, 2008), pp. 121-148, published in translation as '"Two Motherlands Are Mine, and I Hold Both Dear in My Heart": Upbringing and Education in the Ivanovo Interdom', *Russian Studies in History: A Journal of Translations,* Vol. 48, No. 4 (Spring 2010), pp. 74-96.
[17] See Andreea Deciu Ritivoi, *Yesterday's Self. Nostalgia and the Immigrant Identity* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), p. 117, cited in Chapter 1, fn. 38. See also Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

whether 'nationalizing' or 'revolutionizing', the parental home could in some circumstances constitute a symbol and site of stasis, regression or corruption. In such cases, children were to be re-placed, forcibly if necessary, by adoption or into institutional 'condensers' to be nurtured by the nation to become sound and healthy subjects. Latvian orphanages, as discussed by Purs, were charged with taking in unaccompanied child refugees and transforming them into productive and loyal citizens of the nation. The Stalinist regime placed orphaned 'children of enemies of the people' in children's homes, often expunging their original identities and assigning them new names, dates of birth and social origins (see Kaznelson and Baron; the chapters by Qualls and Green also include discussion of Soviet children's homes). During the Second World War, as Zahra describes, Nazi occupying administrations forcibly kidnapped selected children from their families for 'Germanization', usually through adoption.

Even when states promoting pronatalist policies valorized the nuclear family as the normative place of the child, the parental home was generally construed as a site of open public concern not an occluded private space. As discussed in Green's chapter, when Stalinist policy in the late 1930s reasserted the role of the family, it defined this institution as a constituent part of the wider community and means of social integration, not as an autonomous private unit. Similarly, it promoted adoption during and after the war as an act of patriotism and civic duty rather than personal fulfilment. Both Green and Zahra invoke notions of 'theft', when children were considered to have been removed from their 'proper' place to the 'wrong' family or 'wrong' national community. In such cases, national governments and activists, or families with the backing of courts, strove to reclaim and re-place the child 'correctly'. Invariably, the child's individual 'best interests' were deemed best met in the socially normative place: the 'biological' family or national community.[18]

---

[18] See also Michelle Mouton, 'Missing, Lost, and Displaced Children in Postwar Germany: the Great Struggle to Provide for the War's Youngest Victims', *Central European History,* Vol. 48 (2015), pp. 53-78.

The chapters by Purs, White and Zahra demonstrate how national governments in this period asserted their right to reclaim children also when they were thought to be at risk of 'denationalization' as a result of displacement across national borders; of loss of family; of the interventions of humanitarian agencies promoting internationalism; of the predatory interests of businessmen seeking to exploit children for labour; or of the assimilatory practices of other ethnic communities.[19] Balkelis notes in his essay how the deported Lithuanian communities in Siberian special settlements and labour camps strove to maintain the national identity of their children; Kaznelson and Baron discuss how exiled communities sustained collective memories of the lost homeland (*rodina*) that were then incorporated into the personal memory narratives even of those who had been infants at the time of deportation or had been born in exile.[20] After the Second World War, as Zahra points out, the 'denationalization' of children became internationally recognized, as a consequence of Nazi 'Germanization' actions in Eastern Europe, as an abuse of human rights and form of 'cultural genocide'. Humanitarian activists, even while professing individualist and internationalist values, by now (she writes) 'viewed the nation as an essential source of individual identity and agency'. Within the affirming and enabling framework of the nation, the family functioned as the 'very wellspring of individual identity and agency'.

Both conceptual confusion and institutional conflicts over different accounts of the normative place of the child, of the needs and interests of children 'out of place' and of related notions of children's rights of course persist to this day.[21] As White noted in her

---

[19] The fear of 'denationalization' could encompass loss of political identity when the state defined normative belonging in sociopolitical rather than ethnonational terms. Thus the Soviet government became deeply concerned that the large contingent of Soviet children who had been evacuated to Czechoslovakia in late 1921 to escape famine was being subjected to anti-Soviet propaganda and pressures, and took measures to repatriate the children, see Tat'iana Smirnova, 'O sud'be sovetskikh detei, evakuirovannykh v Chekhoslovakiiu v nachale 1920-kh godov', *Otechestvennaia istoriia,* No. 1 (2007), pp. 77–93.

[20] See also Mia Flores-Bórquez, 'Children of Protracted Exile: Where Do We Belong?', in Catherine Panter-Brick and Malcolm T. Smith (eds), *Abandoned Children* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 213-23.

[21] For legal perspectives on children's rights, see Michael Freeman, *The Rights and Wrongs of Children* (London: Pinter, 1983); Freeman and Philip Veerman (eds), *The Ideologies of Children's Rights* (Dordrecht:

chapter, the notion of universal children's rights that had evolved over preceding decades first found expression in the 'Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child', compiled by Eglantyne Jebb's Save the Children International Union in 1923 and adopted by the League of Nations in September 1924. This stated that 'mankind owes to the Child the best that it has to give' and must assist the child as a priority 'beyond and above all considerations of race, nationality, or creed.'[22] Yet this was not so much a declaration of children's autonomous rights as of adult obligations towards children, motivated by internationalist ideals. Children's rights were for the first time formally and separately acknowledged in the United Nations (UN) Declaration of the Rights of Children in 1959. This too was non-binding and still based on a conception of children as passive subjects, as the 'property' of the family, in primary place, and then of the nation-state - by mid-century, as Zahra argued in her chapter, the discourse of primary national identity and belonging, as the necessary condition for 'psychological normalcy', had trumped ideologies of internationalism.[23]

Thirty years later, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) of 1989 was the first international legal instrument that recognized children's agency and gave them a voice in the government of their own lives[24] However, the United States still refuses to ratify

---

Martinus Nijhoff, 1992); Freeman, *The Moral Status of Children. Essays on the Rights of the Child* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1997); Antonella Invernizzi and Jane Williams (eds), *The Human Rights of Children: From Visions to Implementation* (Farnham. Ashgate, 2011). For historical accounts, see Chapter 1, fn. 59.

[22] Dominique Marshall, 'The Construction of Children as an Object of International Relations: The Declaration of Children's Rights and the Child Welfare Committee, 1900-1924', *International Journal of Children's Rights*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1999), pp. 103-48. For an overview of the emergence of the concept of children's rights, see Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500. 2nd ed.* (London: Pearson, 2005), pp. 137-70. For the text of the Declaration, see http://www.un-documents.net/gdrc1924.htm [accessed 20 July 2015].

[23] At the same time, it is evident that pressures exerted by international organizations on states to recognise the rights of children independent of their nationality influenced the postwar development of West European social policies that granted 'equality of access to social welfare rights both to foreigners and [the] national population'. See Joëlle Droux, 'Migrant, apatrides, dénationalisés. Débats et projets transnationaux autour des nouvelles figures de l'enfance déplacée, 1890-1940', *RHEI. Revue d'histoire de l'enfance "irregulière"*, Vol. 14 (2012), pp. 45-63. See also Droux, 'From Inter-agency Competition to Transnational Cooperation: The ILO Contribution to Child Welfare Issues during the Interwar Years', in Sandrine Kott and Droux (eds), *Globalizing Social Rights. The International Labour Organization and Beyond* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 262-79.

[24] Anne Sinclair Taylor, 'The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Giving Children a Voice', in Anne Lewis, Geoff Lindsay (eds), *Researching Children's Perspectives* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), pp. 21-33. Michael Freeman proposes to view the UNCRC as 'a beginning rather than the final word on children's rights'. He notes that it pays too little attention to the girl child, to gay children, to indigenous children or to citizenship rights, and that its enforcement procedures are too weak. See Freeman, 'Children's Rights as

the 1989 Convention on the grounds that children's interests are best protected within and by

the family, not by an international statute that defines them as rights-bearing citizens equal to

adults; many other states have opted out of specific obligations; and many (if not most) states

do little to implement or enforce the law.[25] Different states' positions and practices with

regard to the UNCRC and the principle of children's agency reflect or consciously express, as

we have argued throughout this volume, their different conceptions of the actual or ideal

nature and scope of their own power and prerogative, the relationship between state and

society, and the relationship between the state and international regimes of governance, as

well as their own social and cultural norms - in particular, their normative conceptions of the

role and place of the child and the nature of childhood - and their particular constructions of

social identity, subjectivity and selfhood.[26]

The persisting nexus between state power and human mobilities, and the appalling

outcomes this generates for millions of children in the present day, mean that it is vital for

scholars to engage with child displacement as both state practice and social experience and

with displaced children as both social subjects and objects of social practice. We hope that the

framework proposed by this volume will encourage further research and facilitate a better

understanding of the structures and forces that create child displacement and condition the

children's experiences, as well as of the interrelations between their self-identities and their

---

Human Rights: Reading the UNCRC', in Jens Qvortrup, William A. Corsaro and Michael-Sebastian Honig (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies* (London: Palgrave, 2009), pp. 377-93. See also: Freeman, *Article 3: The Best Interests of the Child. A Commentary on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2007); Freeman (ed.), *Children's Rights: A Comparative Perspective* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1996); Invernizzi and Williams (eds), *The Human Rights of Children*.

[25] See: https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/MTDSG/Volume%20I/Chapter%20IV/iv-11.en.pdf [accessed 25 August 2015]. Somalia is the only other state not to have ratified the Convention. See also Bob Franklin (ed.), *The New Handbook of Children's Rights. Comparative Policy and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Natalie Hevener Kaufman and Irene Rizzini, 'Closing the Gap Between Rights and the Realities of Children's Lives', in Qvortrup, Corsaro and Honig (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies*, pp. 422-34.

[26] For scholarship on contemporary Russian principles, policies and practices with regard to displaced children that serves also to elucidate evolving post-Soviet Russian political, social and economic contexts, see Clementine K. Fujimura, *Russia's Abandoned Children. An Intimate Understanding* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005); Elena Khlinovskaya Rockhill, *Lost to the State. Family Discontinuity, Social Orphanhood and Residential Care in the Russian Far East* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010); Svetlana Stephenson, *Crossing the Line. Vagrancy, Homelessness and Social Displacement in Russia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

ascribed social roles. We also hope to have demonstrated that by studying displaced children in this framework it is possible to reveal important dimensions of historical and contemporary reality that, if we focussed only on adults, or if we adopted analytical perspectives that took no account of ideology, mobility, spatiality or subjectivity, we might fail to perceive.

To construct a complex and comprehensive account of all facets of the world of displaced children, sensitive to social, spatial, cultural and temporal difference, is a crucial intellectual objective in itself. It is also necessary and urgent for informing and influencing media representations, popular perceptions, political rhetoric and state interventions, all of which all too often ignore or deny and, in doing so, deepen the suffering of children in need.