

Peace and Conflict Studies in South Asia

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Abstract

The western claims on democratic peace were further weakened by the failure of international community to pre-empt the genocidal civil war in Rwanda and the acrimonious interventions in the Middle East. Even the doctrine of human security came under criticism in the postcolonial parlance as a new western ploy to re-colonize the Third World. Several South Asian scholars sought transnational partnership to explore a whole range of cross border challenges including the non-traditional threats to peace and security. The expanded template included such wide range of issues including climate change, environmental degradation and resource depletion, spread of diseases and crimes natural disasters, irregular migration, food shortages, piracy and smuggling, drug trafficking, and other forms of transnational crimes. As such, the paper explores the trajectory of South Asian discourses on peace analyzing the vital role of the traditional image of care, tolerance and interreligious coexistence. As well as regional legacies of reconciliation and multicultural peace which holds the promise to serve as practical resources for community-based peace building.

Keywords: Peacemaking, conflict resolution, human rights, global governance, local communities

Introduction

In recent decades, peace and conflict studies have begun to take roots as a significant interdisciplinary site of teaching and research. It has proliferated globally in its various rubric ranging from peace research, peace studies, conflict resolution, conflict management and conflict transformation among others. In South Asia too, the academic programs

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that teach about and research peace are rapidly gaining a foothold. More and more universities and colleges in the region have set up independent departments and Centres dedicated to peace studies. It is a befitting recognition to the perennially growing template enriched by scholars and philosophers both in the north and the south.

However, the fledgling field of peace and conflict is beset with a range of contestations and criticisms. There are issues about its overwhelming and often schematized research agenda, the domination of positivists and heavily quantified and empirical methodology, uncritical stance towards terminology and the disconnection between research and action. One of the lingering challenges of teaching or researching peace and conflict in South Asian has been the enduring shadow of western perspectives, which tend to relegate indigenous discourses and frameworks. In fact, the most of the pedagogic approaches in the region have imitated, evolved and intersected around western perspectives often reflecting their conceptual trajectories as well as faultlines (Upadhyaya, 2013). There are of course some notable countercurrents and alternative perspectives in South Asian scholarship, which have critiqued the Western-inspired notions of peace, often with a postcolonial bent (Samaddar, 2009).

The truth is that despite its widespread appeal, the term peace defies a consensual understanding. There are substantive and interpretive variance in terms of its anthropological underpinnings and underlying philosophies and also regarding its preferred values and methodologies. While statist discourses, embedded in the dominant sway of power and authority, defined peace as the absence of inter-state wars; civil society perspectives critiqued it as a negative approach to peace. Drawing from Gandhi, Johan Galtung (1969, 1975) described 'positive peace' as the negation of both direct and indirect violence and conceptualized structural violence as the lead leitmotif of peace building. The dominant strand of peace research, conflating peace as a natural counterpart of conflict, in course, prevailed over more variegated and locally interpreted narratives of peacebuilding. However, the dichotomy of positive/negative peace (Lawler, 2008) has been lately challenged along with the relationship of the peace researcher to the object of his analysis (Jutila et al., 2008).

The reductionist and universalistic approaches emerging from the west, and its influential institutions, were also challenged from varied angles of postmodern, post-colonial and feminist perspectives. The new generation scholars especially from the revisionist and critical schools (Lederach 1995, 2005; Sammadar 2005; Mac Ginty 2003; Richmond 2006, Dietrich 2008, Ramsbotham et al. 2011) emphasize the importance of local culture and trans-cultural tools in conflict-sensitive areas.

These critical currents expanded the peace discourse by bringing on board the hitherto neglected issues of rights and justice in peace pedagogy and research activities. Peace is thus construed as a diverse and relational phenomenon, which must accommodate the images and efforts from diverse cultures as well as from the subaltern and marginal strata of the society. Rather than a coherent set of ideas, peace can be understood as contextually situated. Notions and concepts of peace and conflict, the ways peace is understood and experienced and the ways conflicts are taking place or being solved, vary from region to region, from culture to culture, and from society to society. A critical reflexivity in academic pursuits, thus, calls for dismissing the idea of scholarly experts being the solely privileged knowers of the field (Tickner, 2005). Accordingly, a growing number of voices/scholars demanded the opening up of the field to the grassroots (Lederach 1995; Darby and Mac Ginty 2008; Ramsbotham et al. 2011). Peace activists and scholars from the South have questioned the conventional knowledge and solutions, prescribed from 'above' seeking inclusion of rights and justice in peace pedagogy and research agenda.

The neo-liberal and post-liberal/global governance approaches also lack the conceptual insights to address the generic causes of non-traditional security threats like the upsurge of ethnic conflicts, terrorism, migrations and refugee flow, crimes and health hazards, gender and environmental security etc. The western claims on democratic peace were further weakened by the failure of international community to pre-empt the genocidal civil war in Rwanda and the acrimonious interventions in the Middle East. Even the doctrine of human security came under criticism in the postcolonial parlance as a new western ploy to re-colonize the Third World.

These transformative currents heralded a 'post bipolar renaissance' and opened up interdisciplinary spaces to raise alternate visions of peace and non-violence. Several South Asian scholars sought transnational partnership to explore a whole range of cross border challenges including the non-traditional threats to peace and security. The expanded template included such wide range of issues including climate change, environmental degradation and resource depletion, spread of diseases and crimes natural disasters, irregular migration, food shortages, piracy and smuggling, drug trafficking, and other forms of transnational crimes.

The rise of critical peace studies during this phase saw greater emphasis on the hitherto side-lined issues of human rights, justice and gender (Samaddar, 2004) which sought to transform emphasis from conflict management to peace, from national security to human security, and suggested that a sustainable peace process must draw on the predicates of rights, justice, and democracy. It also highlights experiences of women as agents and visionaries of peace in South Asia and redefines peace as a quest for women to transform their position in society by ending the repression across the lines of caste, class, and gender. Many of these new writings interrogated the lineage of human rights to reveal how people's struggle against specific forms of institutionalized violence takes the form of calls for 'peace'. Increasing numbers of South Asian peace researchers are emphasizing the generic links between the denial of basic human needs, exclusion and oppression as generic causes of violent conflict. Likewise, the non-military threats transcending national borders are increasingly seen as a greater challenge to peace and stability than the conventional threats of interstate wars and conflicts.

Similarly, many regional writings in recent times have emphasized the pitfalls of applying western values of human security and humanitarian intervention in the southern hemisphere. Highlighting the west-centric orientation of the human security discourse, Amitav Acharya (2001) suggests a culturally sensitive set of Asian values to guide the discourse. Priyanka Upadhyaya (2004) has analyzed the third world anxieties over the way human security doctrine might provide grounds for politically motivated humanitarian intervention. The pedagogies of peace and conflict resolution in the region were nurtured in large part within the broader

discipline of international relations sharing the brunt of hegemonic west-centric approaches. However lately there is a growing recognition that the indigenous approaches of peace-making have far greater chances of success as compared to the template style international peace interventions effectuated through liberal or democratic peace. Such respect for plural visions could open up non-hegemonic spaces to interrogate the schematized understanding of South Asia, which defies specificities, as well as the diversities of the region.

For instance, the umbilical links between conflict, development and environment has begun to receive greater scholarly attention in regional discourses. There are perceptive writings on how unmanaged conflicts lead to severe development consequences, destroying resources, infrastructure, human lives; and how the scarcity of renewable resources, often a consequence of unbridled development, might produce irregular migration, ethnic clashes and insurgency. Similarly growing scholarly attention is being accorded to gender-related structural violence and the role of women in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. Defying the narrow confines of the statist notion of security, these new writings are unraveling everyday insecurities faced by South Asian women.

Peacebuilding in new millennium

The tumultuous developments of nineties caught South Asian leaders and intellectuals largely unawares. The decline of nonalignment amidst the emergence of a unipolar world along with the rising scale of internal conflicts and other non-traditional security threats altered the peace and security imperatives in South Asia which served long decades of the cold war. This historic transference demanded alternative paradigms of peace specially to meet the post-bipolar challenges in the southern hemisphere. However, the protagonist of international peace in India and other South Asian countries largely remained indifferent. Seemingly they were far too engaged in dealing with internal turmoil, which often triggered regional upheavals and conflicts. No doubt, a small band of intellectuals and authors did offer worthy critique of how western discourses, realist and liberal, failed to address the conflict realities in the southern hemisphere. But their discontent did not lead to any concerted movement or school, to generate alternate values and methodologies for peacebuilding.

The transformative post bipolar shifts, however, impacted variedly on regional perspectives. Like elsewhere, it expanded the scope of peace building through the inclusion of the issues of justice and structural violence. The strivings to include traditionally precluded voices from the ‘peripheries’ within the epistemological and discursive frame of peace pedagogy and research has been an achievement of this era. In the similar vein, a significant number of studies illustrated the issues of human security and feminist perspectives especially around the South Asian conflict experiences. Many of these critical commentaries are recognized globally as they showcase the transformative potentials of women in peace politics. The recent peace literature is also enriched by several innovative studies around Gandhi’s visions and their relevance in the globalized world. Gandhi’s non-violent activism has inspired a range of ideas, action and protests. It is instructive to begin with an examination of how the non-violent activism based on satyagraha, *swaraj* and *sarvodaya* was carried out in post-Gandhi India and the world at large. Contributors from across the globe have explored whether the Gandhian visions of non-violent activism can realistically provide alternative visions of peacebuilding in today’s world. The continued sway of Gandhi has, in fact, opened up the debate whether the application of non-violence was abandoned justly, or whether there is merit in resurrecting their principles for contemporary conflicts.

In the seventies, Jaiprakash led a non-violent movement, mostly involving youth, to transform society through *lokniti* (peoples’ participation) rather than *rajniti* (political power). But Jayaprakash’s vision and his nonviolent protest movement, seeking ‘total revolution’, petered out amid acrimony, chaos, and state repression. Unlike Jayaprakash’s movement, the Chipko Movement (the act of hugging trees to protect them from falling) represents a remarkable success story of non-violent activism which in course inspired many similar protests to advocate for and support people-sensitive policies based on values of justice and ecology. The Chipko protests, led in the seventies by Sunderlal Bahuguna, achieved a major victory in 1980 with a 15-year ban on tree cutting in the Himalayan forests of Uttaranchal. The *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (Save the Narmada Movement), opposing the construction of a huge dam on the Narmada River, is yet another example of civil disobedience. The two main

protagonists, Medha Patkar and Baba Amte, follow the Gandhian critique of modern development projects and insist that the state cannot ignore the basic needs of its marginalised population.

The inadequacy of top-down peacebuilding efforts to deal with the complex, culture-sensitive requirements of local peacebuilding has opened up possibilities for working out innovative strategies to achieve peace around the Gandhian vision of non-violent activism. There is a growing recognition that indigenous approaches of peacemaking have far greater chances of success as compared to template-style international peace interventions. This in turn shifts the emphasis from state-centric conflict resolution to non-state actors. Foremost of these is the role of civil society in the peacebuilding process. Studies demonstrate that the existence of social networks of civic engagement across communal lines is the key to prevent violence. Similarly, recognition of the importance of cultural dimensions and multi-religious synergy may also imperceptibly contribute to the peacebuilding process in urban centres where the episodes of communal and ethnic violence occur with greater frequency.

It is indeed important for the current generation of scholars to critically interrogate the realist assumption that non-violence does not work in the practical realm and is perhaps even antithetical to conflict resolution. The continued influence of Gandhi has, in fact, opened up the debate whether the application of non-violence was abandoned justly or whether there is merit in resurrecting its principles for contemporary conflicts. It will be a challenge for peace studies to conceptualize practical methods of non-violent activism, among policymakers, as an alternative to neo-realism. The need is to explore various tactics of active non-violence and the political dividends they accrue, drawing lessons from the success stories and the failures. Gene Sharp's 146 techniques of non-violent action, known as Civil Based Defense (CBD), to cope with social injustice and external aggression might be instructive in this regard. The non-violent protest led by Anna Hazare should also be an instructive case in point. The perceptive criticisms of realism would not help much unless the pragmatic prospects of non-violent vision are demonstrated at policy level. It is imperative therefore to evolve a composite template for the study of

non-violent actions and their political dynamics. It should go beyond the well-known examples of the Indian independence and American civil rights movements to include the overthrow of President Marcos in the Philippines, as well as peaceful protests in Eastern Europe, and in the democratic churning of Arab spring in more recent times.

We should aim to assess the viability of these ideas in contemporary public policy, exploring ongoing discussions of the utility and applicability of non-violence and peacebuilding, and the key questions that arise from these debates. Will nonviolent stances encourage the avoidance of war? Can visions of nonviolent action constrain recalcitrant states from violating internationally accepted norms? Could non-violent techniques pre-empt a conquering state from reaping the dividends of victory? How does nonviolent activism contribute to social justice and the defense of human rights?

Way forward

The South Asian discourses on peace have been less focused on the rich streams of pacifism and the ethics of accommodation in Indian heritage. Not many writings of this era emphasize the vital role of the traditional image of care, tolerance and interreligious coexistence. Regional legacies of reconciliation and multicultural peace may also serve as practical resources for community-based peace building. Similarly, we could examine afresh about the applicability of successful narratives and models of peace building at domestic and even local, regional levels. It is possible to draw lessons from the domestic analogies to evaluate anew the relationship between local, domestic and regional peace building on the one hand and peace building on the global stage on the other. The innovative expansion of pedagogic and research activities within the ambit of peace studies however requires a transformative uplift of this traditionally neglected field. Mostly it has been studied as an extension of the state centric discourses of international relations or taught as a sub-field in law, philosophy and religion. This academic approach would neither allow interdisciplinary explorations nor would this include the recent conflict transformation trajectories like problem solving workshops, public diplomacy mediation, consultation, dialogue groups, networking etc.

Although South Asia's modern history is marked by violent events and conflicts (wars, terrorism, insurgencies, communal violence etc.) the region has also seen an incredible amount of peace events and movements, and has given visible testimony to viable and variable cultures of peace. In recent years new forms of nonviolent resistance and new movements for social justice and peace have been growing throughout the region, e.g. civil society movements challenging the political order of non-democratic regimes, socio-environmental groups opposing state-led liberal development projects, marginalized indigenous/subaltern people who currently face struggles against the ever-increasing encroachment and usurpation of their land and natural resources by settlers, prospectors, private industries, multinational companies and the state – to mention but a few examples.

The truth is that the South Asian academia, despite being rich in normative ideas on peace and conflict resolution, has not been sufficiently forthcoming in promoting study and research in the area. It is only recently that a handful of universities in the region have initiated teaching and research programs/Centres with a holistic focus on peace and conflict resolution. However, most of these institutions are languishing in the absence of resources both intellectually and materially. Unsurprisingly the South Asian academic institutions are lagging behind then their northern counterparts in drawing indigenous pedagogies and analytical tools. This is a result not only of paucity of information and research on the subject, but also due to the fact that the disciplinary boundaries of Peace and Conflict Studies are epistemologically so constituted as to largely preclude voices from the marginalized southern hemisphere. The net result is a substantial epistemological and discursive gap in academic literature on peace work in South Asia.

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Changing Perspectives on Peace Studies in South Asia

Samir Kumar Das*

Abstract

Peace Studies in South Asia as a discipline continues to be dominated by Security Studies where peace is considered as only an outcome of the balance of power between the parties involved in conflicts. Every such outcome for obvious reasons is contingent, because the balance that is achieved may be disturbed or even set aside once any of the parties has its reasons to do so. A party might in such cases think that it gains by being engaged in conflict or even simply allowing it to continue, instead of working for peace. Peace thus conceived as a strategic balance of power is precarious and constantly threatened by the spectre of conflict and war. A large part of the established academia in South Asia continues to be influenced by studies of this genre.

Keywords: Peace studies, South Asia, conflict resolution, justice, democracy

Introduction: Three Generations of Peace Studies in South Asia

Peace Studies in South Asia as a discipline continues to be dominated by Security Studies where peace is considered as only an outcome of the balance of power between the parties involved in conflicts. Every such outcome for obvious reasons is contingent, for, the balance that is achieved may be disturbed or even set aside once any of the parties has its reasons to do so. A party might in such cases think that it gains by being engaged in conflict or even simply allowing it to continue, instead of working for peace. Peace thus conceived as a strategic balance of power is precarious and constantly threatened by the spectre of conflict and war. A large part of the established academia in South Asia continues to be influenced by studies of this genre.

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Since the beginning of the new millennium, a new generation of studies conducted mostly in the conflict areas of South Asia – particularly in India – seems to have marked a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of Peace Studies (Samaddar ed. 2004; Das, 2005; Banerjee ed. 2008; Singh ed. 2009). Peace, according to this new paradigm, is sought to be understood independently of its opposite i.e., conflict – not so much as absence or deferral of conflict by obtaining an albeit contingent balance of power, but its pre-emption and in cases where complete pre-emption is not possible, at least their resolution – both pre-emption and resolution in a way that simultaneously establishes such universal principles as rights, justice and democracy. The parties involved in the conflict may not necessarily develop a stake in the resolution of conflicts that also establishes at the same time such universal principles. Viewed in this light, peace has many stakeholders and collaterals and its constituency is not necessarily limited only to those who are directly involved in the conflicts. The second generation of studies draws liberally from the indigenous sources, existing traditions and practices, Indian Philosophy and in more recent years from the writings of Gandhi who would have preferred sufferance of conflict and war to settlement of conflicts through what he considers as ‘immoral’ means (Upadhyaya, 2009).

The third generation of studies unlike the second views peace - not so much as the establishment of certain absolute and universal principles like rights, justice and democracy characteristic of the liberal understanding of peace - which it critiques as too apolitical and utopian to find its way in real life situations – but essentially as an *engagement* aimed not only at addressing conflicts but also at negotiating its way through a variety of often conflicting traditions and understandings of peace. At one level, this generation of studies points out how the liberal peace paradigm otherwise unknown to many of the societies of South Asia is sought to be imposed by a variety of international and global multilateral agencies on these societies as part of their great power game. This dimension encourages one to study in greater detail such issues as the intricacies of the politics of aid and assistance, role of multinational peace force, various non-governmental and human rights organizations and peace audit mechanisms etc. It is argued that in the name of providing aid and

assistance, these organizations often interfere with the domestic and sovereign domain of the less powerful countries. At another level, the third generation also keeps itself open to the infinitely multifarious possibilities of peace and peace traditions existing in these societies, seeks to restore them and brings them to bear on our understanding of peace[s]. What is called engagement thus reflects on the hybrid nature of peace and indeed the concept of 'hybridity' is now being deployed to understand the hugely complex and multifarious possibilities of peace across the conflict regions. We will have occasion to dwell on this in somewhat greater detail in the following pages. Instead of absolutizing the values that are expected to inform conflict resolution and peacemaking as per the second generation of studies, the third generation looks upon the values as 'concrete universals' that are far from being given, but are constantly articulated and shaped through various kinds of engagements and interactions (Das, 2008).

Peace, according to the third generation of studies, is therefore contextual and specific to the circumstances and there is no one golden rule of conflict resolution. The history of conflict resolution on the other hand has been one of constant and tireless experimentation with various traditions and tools evolved since the time the necessity of resolving conflicts was felt. The reason is simple: a method that has evidently worked in one society at one particular point of time may not be as much successful – if at all - in another society or even in the same society anytime later. While no two conflicts across the world are identical, the methods of their resolution are bound to be different. This chapter will make an attempt at drawing some broad generalizations particularly from the recent past history of peace in India. It is obvious that we need to understand the nature of conflicts in the first place in order to resolve them. The following questions therefore become relevant:

- What is 'liberal peace building' and what are its problems particularly in context of the countries of South Asia?
- Assuming that liberal peace remains insensitive to the varied and complex nature of conflicts by offering one universal solution to all of them, one is naturally confronted with the question: Are all conflicts

of the same kind? How do we distinguish between various kinds of conflict?

- What does one mean by ‘conflict resolution’? How is the concept distinguishable from such - adjacent yet necessarily distinct - concepts like ‘conflict management’, ‘conflict settlement’ or now-fashionable ‘conflict transformation’ etc?
- Does the nature of conflict remain the same over time? How does one account for the morphology of conflict? The year 1945 - marking both the end of World War II and the beginning of Cold War – is usually considered as the watershed in the history of conflict and conflict resolution. Now that the world has entered the post-Cold War era in the 1990s, what are the characteristic features of conflicts of the present era and in what way are they distinct from those of the Cold War era or even the ones preceding it?
- What are the various methods of conflict resolution that are in circulation today?
- Now that the States all over the world are seen to be staging an ‘exit’ in some respects thanks to globalization, do the non-state actors find a greater space to play their role in peace politics?

Accordingly, our discussion revolves around these six bulleted questions. While international community is still driven by the paradigm of liberal peace, yet to understand that no two conflicts are the same notwithstanding their family resemblance and thinks in terms of a common solution applicable to all situations, a brief conceptual introduction by way of explaining the varieties of conflicts calling for diverse remedies and methods may be in order.

Liberal Peace and its Critique

‘Liberal Peace’, as we have already pointed out, has become the new buzzword of our time. Many an international, regional and multilateral body starting from the UN to the most local of them seeks to promote it across the world particularly in areas marked by both ‘durable disorder’ and the existence of ‘failed states’. While prolonged poverty, hunger and war have taken a toll on these countries, these bodies are expected to help rebuild states literally like the proverbial phoenix so that these states are

able to re-establish their control over the society through internal pacification and govern them. The immediate problem in such States as Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sudan, Somalia or Rwanda, for instance, is to put an end to warlordism and gang war, disarm the ethnic militias with contesting claim to statehood and consolidate the control of the central authority across the territory. Peace building for all practical purposes, according to this line argument, has become synonymous with state building.

Besides, poverty alleviation and removal of hunger in vast part of the world, as we have already indicated, has become another important challenge. Poverty and hunger continue to be one of the major challenges insofar as most of the developing world has been severely hit by the ongoing global economic meltdown, shrinking economic opportunities, currency devaluation and job loss, climate change, alarmingly expanding desertification, resource crisis and so forth. Such multilateral agencies as International Monetary Fund and World Bank still insist that the challenge can be met only through ever firmer integration of these economies with the world market. Development through free market has become the new mantra of peace.

While State and market are regarded as the two key instruments of liberal peace building, not all states in the world are equally competent to perform the job. While free market is regarded as a passport to the free world, the *ideal* state that can bring peace is believed to be one which has the capacity to govern by way of re-establishing its monopoly over the instruments of violence and is democratic at the same time. The argument is somewhat paradoxical. In Western Europe, as Charles Tilly (1975) reminds us, it was possible for the State to bring about peace through internal pacification of the society because of its high capacity aided by the freedom it had enjoyed from the obligation of being democratic. While the two tasks of State building and democratization were historically distinct and spaced out over a prolonged period of time, today we live in an age of democracy and the States are called upon to become democratic while building themselves. The States in Western Europe could establish their control over the society through ruthless suppression of the rights and claims to justice and democracy during the time of the emergence of

modern states. Ironically, multinational military forces now have become the new sword arm of democracy and they are sent with rising frequency for ensuring peaceful conduct of ‘democratic’ elections and oversee their democratic transition.

Liberal peace faces criticisms today - not because of its failure in establishing peace in conflict-ridden countries on an enduring basis - which is otherwise very apparent. Human casualties and loss of property are countless and continue unabated in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq, where sizeable multinational forces are still in operation. The disengagement from these countries turns out to be more difficult than what was anticipated. First of all, liberal peace subscribes to only one kind of peace that is taken as ‘liberal’ and is sought to be imposed on the societies unfamiliar with it. The cultural ambience is different. Peace process brokered between the Garo insurgent organization and the Indian State of Meghalaya is not said to have been built on consensus insofar as the non-tribals² living in the area were excluded from the process and were never consulted. Peace that is not built on consensus is unlikely to be of durable nature.

Liberal peace refuses to accept that peace is of many kinds and the so-called ‘conflict societies’, too, have their own traditions and histories of peace and the hegemony of liberal peace is established only at the cost of immobilizing and relegating these traditions and histories into utter insignificance (Das, 2006). We have to acknowledge that there are many *peaces* and liberal peace is only one of them. In the words of Oliver Richmond:

“We cannot take the paradoxical position that peace is a ‘brand’ and the components of liberal peace are labels that can be marketed, and that local ownership is about consuming these different conceptual agendas within the liberal peace framework, if there is no demand in the ground (Richmond, 2008).”

The Goba system of Ladakh (a subregion in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir) died out and neither was the new system institutionalized. In Leh - the headquarters of Ladakh - the traditional system is termed as the Goba system (an assembly of five to seven elders) which looked into dispute resolution as it is preferred that disputes are

settled within the village itself rather than taking it to courts for a simple reason that judicial process takes 3-4 years for the matter to be decided upon and in close knit communities the preference is to settle the matter at home and community level. On the other hand, the newly introduced democratically elected Panchayats are not conceived as dispute-settlement mechanisms and in the absence of any such institution people are either forced to live with conflicts taking a toll on their everyday life or to take them to law courts which is both expensive and time-consuming. As a corollary to it, liberal peace has a tendency of rolling many conflicts into one mega-conflict and leaving the others unresolved – if not unaddressed. One common complaint that various cross-sections of the people of Ladakh made is that their demands get overwhelmed and bypassed by the crisis in Kashmir that attracts wider international attention and media coverage and the Government does not seem to pay heed to their demands unlike those of the people living in the Valley.

Secondly, liberal peace building, as we have already noted, turns into an enterprise of State building. The problem arises when state building is tied to the specific outcome of a democratic state. Even that incompatibility is not a principal one - democracy is clearly possible after violent conflict. However, it is also found to be empirically correct that processes of democratization especially in ethnically, linguistically, religiously, ideologically or otherwise diverse, and potentially divided, societies, are prone to conflict escalation. Similarly, it is now being increasingly realized that democracy in such societies requires a range of special institutional safeguards to prevent the emergence of conditions in which divisions within society (for example between different ethnic, religious, or socio-economic groups and classes) gain a salient discriminatory dimension and eventually facilitate the rise of violence as a means of realizing group interests. Democracies might end up in destabilizing the body politic unless subjected to normative and institutional checks – a point reminded to us long back by Alexis de Tocqueville.

Typology of Conflicts

Since methods of conflict resolution are bound to vary in keeping with the changing nature of conflicts waiting for resolution, a brief

reference to the typology of conflicts may not be out of place here – although in real-life cases conflicts cut across the sharp division between the given types and are likely to be of mixed and overlapping nature. At an elementary level, one can see that conflict between two or more individuals is different from that between two or more groups. Conflict between individuals is likely to be more easily solved than the latter. The task becomes even easier if the individuals involved in conflict belong to the same group. The command of the group often works wonder in resolving conflicts of this nature. The command of the group however loses its strength if there are subgroups within the group and if such subgroups are seen to fight between themselves.

Thus, to cite an instance, the Central Government of India led by the then Prime Minister V. P. Singh expressed its intent of implementing the Mandal Commission report in 1989. The Commission set up in 1980 was asked to determine the criteria on the basis of which backwardness could be measured, prepare a list of the backward classes and make recommendations for their social and economic amelioration. Violence erupted immediately after the Government expressed its intent and first case of self-immolation in protest against the report was reported in 1990. The students belonging to the Forward Castes felt alarmed at the Government declaration and feared that the extension of the ambit of reservation of seats in educational institutions and posts in Government offices would further shrink their opportunities. The violence that almost divided the Hindus between the Backward and the Forward Classes across India in the late 1980s and the early 1990s on the Mandal issue slowly subsided only in the wake of the large-scale communal violence taking place in the aftermath of the demolition of the historic Babari Masjid on 6 December 1992. Mandal and Masjid had had the mutually opposite effects on the state of social solidarity and intercommunity relations in India.

Lewis Coser (1958) makes a distinction between conflicts that (threaten to) disintegrate the society at large and conflicts that do not. As we have already noted, some conflicts may even be encouraged (like conflict between individuals belonging to the same group) in order that neither group involved in a conflict is able to take a hardened position

that eventually becomes too difficult to resolve and threatens to destabilize the entire society. For obvious limitations of space, our discussion proposes to remain confined to the first variety rather than the second because of their larger social and political implications.

Thus, such conflicts as those between ethnicities, classes, generations or even nations are illustrative of the second type. Contemporary evidences however point out that conflicts between ethnic groups based primarily on perceived blood ties often prove to be more difficult to resolve than class conflicts and situation really turns worse when ethnic conflicts tend to coincide with class conflicts. The *adivasis* (literally the original inhabitants) for example, are not only ethnically different from the Varna-Hindus, but are reported to bear the brunt of poverty and homelessness induced by the commissioning of development projects in what once used to be their habitat – disproportionately more than their share in India's total population - compared to their Varna-Hindu counterpart. According to an estimate made earlier, 70 percent of those who get displaced by the development projects belong to the weaker sections including the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes of the society. Poverty and homelessness on the other hand are rightly considered as a measure of their poor class status. A report prepared by the Expert Group to the Planning commission of India in 2008, for example, highlights the connection between ethnicity, economic backwardness and Maoist violence in parts of Central India in the following terms: “The main support for the Naxalite movement comes from *dalits* and *adivasis*” (Expert group, 2004).

Besides, it is also important to make a distinction between conflict of interests and conflict of values - although in real-life situations there are considerable overlaps between them. In a parliamentary democracy like the one we have in India; political parties have conflicting interests. Thus, to cite a very recent example, some of the parties like the Indian National Congress (INC) welcome the foreign direct investment (FDI) in retail trade while there are others like the Trinamul Congress (TMC) and Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) etc which are vociferously opposed to it. The ruling TMC-Government in West Bengal has recently staged its exit from the UPA II coalition Government at the Centre on this

issue. Notwithstanding such differences, all parties operating within the framework of our parliamentary democracy first of all promise to abide by its rules and values and keep faith in its institutions with the effect that they take part in elections periodically held to select peoples' representatives. Rules and values serve as a framework within which conflicting parties agree to operate and it becomes easier to get them around a negotiating table and reach an agreement. By contrast there are some radical groups and parties (Communist Party of India-Maoist being an example) that do not look upon parliamentary democracy as a value in itself. They continue to stay away from its ambit and *normally* do not take part in elections, although there are newspaper reports that they try to exercise their influence on people's choices, the contesting candidates through various means (force and coercion being one of them) and thereby the outcome of elections. It is obvious that the more there is such agreement on rules, values and institutions, the easier will be the process of conflict resolution. The reverse is also true. It becomes difficult – if not impossible – to communicate with the parties that are ideologically opposed to elections and do not take part in them - excepting of course under special circumstances through the interlocutors and their close confidants. But then the interlocutors and close confidants often push their own agenda and develop a vested a vested interest in the continuation of the conflict rather than solving them. We will return to this question a little later.

The United Liberation front of Assam (ULFA) – the largest insurgent group operating in Assam - was born in 1979 with the objective of establishing what it describes as 'Sovereign, Socialist and Independent Assam'. Although peace talks were initiated since the days when it shot into prominence in the early 1990s, the top leadership has consistently refrained from joining such talks till today with the effect that the organization is now divided between the pro-talks and anti-talks factions headed by Arabinda Rajkhowa and Paresh Barua respectively. While at one level the latter faction has stayed away, at other mediations in various forms by such groups as Peoples' Consultative Group, Sanmilitjatiya Abhiwartaan (Joint National Convention) and North East peoples' Initiative (NEPI) etc and by such eminent personalities as Indira Raisom Goswami and Hiren Gohain have been going on since the early 1990s albeit with

varying degree of success. The ULFA experience is illustrative of how negotiation with the insurgent groups becomes difficult due to the fundamental disagreement that sets them apart from the State.

Changing Nature of Conflicts

As we have already noted, conflicts do not remain the same and change over time. The same conflict undergoes often unanticipated transformation as much as newer and hitherto unknown conflicts surface calling for newer solutions. The old conflicts often disappear instead of being resolved. In their career, conflicts more often than not disappear than get resolved. A recent study conducted by the Chennai-based Centre for Security Analysis (CSA) concludes that conflicts develop over time in a way that the 'causes' originally triggering them are forgotten after a while and newer 'causes' are requisitioned in order that the conflicts subsequently sustain themselves. Thus, to cite an example from the recent past history of Assam, violence against the illegally settled foreigners during the Assam movement (1979-1985) eventually turned against the Hindi-speaking settlers in the early 1990s – who by all accounts are expected to be Indians. Understanding the morphology of conflicts is therefore important for designing the methods of their resolution.

In the international landscape, however, the eclipse of Cold War between the USA and the erstwhile USSR as two superpowers is also believed to have marked the beginning of some newer forms of conflicts as much as newer methods of their resolution. Nuclear wars or for that matter wars threatening to turn into them seem almost avoidable today. The real threat comes from the growing number and ferocity of internal wars being fought in vast parts particularly of Asia, Africa and Latin America on an everyday basis. More than two-third of violent conflicts today falls under this category. States have killed their own citizens more than their enemies. As Cold War came to an end and the threat of nuclear wars becomes distant for reasons not unknown to us, local wars fought within nations, localities and regions are taking their toll on us. Groups and communities, hitherto lying dormant under strong States or under the threat of local wars eventually spiralling into full scale nuclear war, are up in arms on the basis of their ethnic and religious identities or various other forms of affiliation and are settling their scores by spilling each

other's blood. Millions are displaced from their homes and are constantly on the move. The states and other political agencies are found to be increasingly inadequate to meet this threat. Simple military solutions - whether by state or other multilateral institutions, have already turned ineffective - at times counterproductive. With the proliferation of cheap and light weaponry across the globe, none of us feels safe and secure. While we are facing newer threats, our responses bear the legacy of Cold War. Newer threats call for newer responses. The following paragraphs note some new trends in the evolution of conflicts particularly since the early 1990s :

1. When the Cold War ended in 1990, the number of active armed conflicts stood at 38, the greatest number reached at any time since the end of World War II. Today, internal conflicts tend to outweigh external conflicts with of course examples of overlaps between them. Of the 136 civil wars fought since 1940, according to an estimate made in 2012, 74 aimed at gaining control of the state and 62 at separation. Interestingly, since the end of the Cold War, about half of the internal wars fought for control of the state ended in negotiated settlements and some measure of power sharing with the existing regimes while in most others, regimes won. A third of the wars of separation ended in agreements that recognized regional autonomy, another third were defeated, and the others were stalemated.
2. There has been a growing trend towards increasing democratization – partly induced by the fatigue effect of authoritarian regimes existing particularly during the Cold War. It is, for example, detected that the longer a figure like Ben-Ali, Mubarak, Saleh, or Gaddafi is in power, the more likely he is to be challenged and ousted. While there is no easy way to measure rise and fall of popular mood, it is possible to draw such correlation only in rough terms. Much of what has happened in the name of 'Arab Spring' in recent times whether in Egypt, Tunisia or in Syria and other countries has to do with the growing disenchantment with authoritarian regimes directly sponsored and patronized by the superpowers during Cold War.
3. The collapse of Communist Party rule in seven Eastern European states from 1989 to 1992, beginning with regime change in Poland,

serves as the most recent analogy of why the end of Cold War results in regime changes and the violence associated with them.

Management, Transformation, Settlement and Resolution of Conflicts

There is hardly any point of agreement - whether amongst the scholars or amongst the activists - on what resolution of conflict entails. While such terms as conflict 'management', 'transformation', 'settlement' and 'resolution' are widely used as synonyms, it is important for us to emphasize the finer distinctions among them. For instance, 'conflict management' refers essentially to a specific kind of work, like engaging in mediation by those who have the expertise in handling them in a way that eventually results in the disappearance of conflict. Conflict management has already turned into a specialists' job – now that both the incidence and intensity of conflicts have increased exponentially since the eclipse of Cold War. Much of the literature on conflict resolution is concentrated on how the conflicting parties may be persuaded to participate in talks and listen to each other, the size and shape of the table (the colonial rulers in India for example had a preference for roundtable with all stakeholders sitting around it while tables with rectangular shape are considered to be exclusionary) necessary for holding such talks, how the first move may be made to break the ice, the precise moment that makes the conflicting parties enter the negotiation process etc. A number of conflict management manuals elaborately laying down such rituals and protocols of management are in circulation as much as there are institutions of and for conflict management across the world. Conflict management has by now become a separate field of specialization and profession. Thus State-initiated development is considered as the means through which the bane of insurgency and violence is sought to be trumped particularly in Maoist-affected areas of Jangalmahal in West Bengal or Dantewada in Chattisgarh – both in India. Often the managers refuse to remain mute facilitators and are seen to dictate terms necessary for ending conflict and often exercise power compelling the parties to accept them. Conflict management may call for the intervention of both State and non-State actors as third party. As we will have occasion to see, the role of non-state actors in managing conflicts can hardly be exaggerated in the present context.

On the other hand, conflict transformation as an approach can apply to all stages of conflict, and encompasses relatively constructive ways of converting and transforming conflicts - 'from harmful conflicts to less harmful or productive one' and maintaining secure and equitable relations amongst the conflicting parties. Not all conflicts are harmful to the society – at least not to the same degree - as we have already pointed out. Conflict transformation, viewed in this light, can serve as a strategy of conflict management insofar as the managers of conflict may find it judicious to often encourage intra-group conflicts as a counterweight to intergroup ones. The colonial policy of 'divide-and-rule' serves only as an example in this context. The policy was aimed primarily at keeping the colonized masses perennially divided so that they were unable to pose a concerted challenge to the colonial rule. The Mandal-Masjid switchover, cited above, provides yet another example of how conflict within a community almost overnight changed into a conflict between communities.

The reverse is also true. The recent past history of ethnic conflicts in India is replete with examples of how intergroup conflict is eventually converted into intra-group conflict. Thus, to cite an instance, in 1993, severe conflict broke out in the hills of Manipur in India between the Nagas and the Kukis resulting in heavy loss of life and population displacement on both sides. Many Kukis evicted as a result of the clash took shelter in the district of Churachandpur in Manipur and the local Paites – widely considered as a subgroup of the Kukis - felt threatened by the possible impact of this sudden influx on their demographic status, language and culture. Kukis and the Paites are otherwise regarded as cognates to each other. Yet, Manipur was a standing witness to one of the worst ever orgies of ethnic strife and violence between them from June 1997 to October 1998. According to the Manipur Government's official record, the clash claimed the lives of 352 persons, injured 136 and reduced 4670 houses to ashes. Independent sources however revealed that over 50 villages were destroyed and some 13,000 people displaced. The violence refused to stop till the church brokered a ceasefire in October 1998. The violence that remained confined to the Nagas and the Kukis turned into a more intense internecine warfare between two cognate groups of the Kukis and the Paites.

Conflict settlement refers to ways of settling or ending conflicts that entail joint efforts to reach mutually acceptable agreements between the conflicting parties, most importantly without the mediation of any third party. Unlike in third party intervention, the duty of settling conflicts rests with the conflicting parties themselves as much as outside intervention is considered as unwelcome. India insists that the problem of Kashmir is an Indo-Pak problem to be settled bilaterally by them – without any outside intervention - while Pakistan is known to have internationalized the issue on several occasions by raising it to international forums and even in the United Nations. Since the settlement is expected to be reached without any outside intervention and is the outcome of an agreement of the conflicting parties themselves, conflict settlement is likely to bring about more durable peace than what conflict management is supposed to lead to.

Finally, conflict resolution is the act of settling and ending conflicts by addressing the issues that trigger them and in ways that are not only considered as mutually acceptable to the conflicting parties but also help establish such universal values as rights, justice, democracy etc. Conflict settlement – though durable - does not have the obligation of adhering to these principles. In other words, both the solutions which are sought, and the means through which they are sought are judged against the criteria of being *against* violence, dominance, oppression, and exploitation, and *for* the satisfaction of human needs for security, identity, self-determination and quality of life for all people. Satisfaction of human needs is thought to be inversely proportional to the conflagration of conflicts. As Johan Galtung observes:

“The idea that however much collective actors are capable of realizing abstract goals, ultimately, sooner or later the failure to satisfy basic human needs will generate forces –popular movements that is – that will threaten even the most beautiful construction in social-political architectonics. Hence, it is important to conceive of human needs in such a way that their non-satisfaction, both from empirical experience and from more general and theoretical points of view, will with very high likelihood lead to such movements.

The needs may for some time be suppressed, the movements may for some time be repressed, but sooner or later the forces will be there (Galtung, 1958)."

The values that are supposed to guide the processes of conflict resolution are neither given nor unalterable. Values do change – not of course as fast as the role of third parties. Defined thus, conflict resolution is to be distinguished from both conflict management and conflict settlement. For one thing, conflict management aims not so much at solving issues underlying the conflicts, but at psyching the parties into believing in and accepting the terms of ending the conflict suggested by the conflict managers. The practice of conflict management aims at utilizing knowledge of psychological and other social processes to maximize the positive potential inherent in a conflict and to prevent its destructive consequences. The methods of conflict management are therefore different from those of conflict resolution. Conflict management depends on a vast repertoire of techniques necessary for influencing the minds of the conflicting parties. That is why, such instrumentalities as talks, negotiations and observance of diplomatic rituals and protocols etc acquire importance. Influencing the minds of conflicting parties can occur without necessarily solving the outstanding issues that are said to have set the conflict in motion in the first place.

For another, conflict resolution is also to be distinguished from conflict settlement. Two parties can mutually settle a conflict that otherwise sets them apart in a way that may be beneficial for them but only to the detriment of the society at large and does not help restore the universal values that human societies have been cherishing for ages. Gandhi would have rather preferred to let conflicts continue – than addressing them - through morally unacceptable means. Unfortunately, observance of morals does not necessarily guarantee peace. Peace achieved through management or even mutual settlement may in fact be a stumbling block to the establishment of the principles of rights, justice and democracy. I describe it not as peace - but as *peace impasse* for it turns out to be an obstacle to the realization of universal human values.

Gandhi was certainly not alone in making such an advocacy. The moral and practical issues related to dealing with various kinds of conflicts

were widely discussed, emphasizing the importance of reasoning. For example, Immanuel Kant wrote about perpetual peace resulting from states being constitutional republics and John Stuart Mill wrote about the value of liberty and the free discussion of ideas. Gandhi, drawing from his Hindu traditions and other influences, however developed a powerful strategy of popular civil disobedience, which he called Satyagraha, the search for truth. Gandhi, after his legal studies in London, went to South Africa where, in the early 1890s, he began experimenting with different nonviolent ways to counter the severe discrimination imposed upon Indians living in South Africa. The nonviolent strategies, he developed, were influential for the strategies that the African National Congress (ANC) adopted later in its struggle against apartheid or racial discrimination on the basis of the colour of skin. The strategies of nonviolent struggle and associated negotiations were further developed in the civil rights struggles in the United States during the 1960s.

The critics of liberal peace, however, prefer to look upon the so-called universal values as a contested terrain in which various understandings and traditions of peace fight against each other for registering its presence while resolving conflicts. What is called 'peace' is not only pitted against conflict, but against various *other* understandings and traditions peace. The critics while appreciating the presence of many peaces actually point to its problematic character. Conflict resolution, according to them, demands that peace as value is established only as one that is irreducibly plural and hybrid in its essence.

Methods of Conflict Resolution

Conflicts are sought to be resolved at multiple levels depending on where they occur – starting from the UN being the highest body to the nuclear family being the most primary unit where parents prevail upon the siblings and seek to address the conflicts amongst them in a just and fair manner. It is stressed that UN peacekeeping has become a necessary element for the intrastate conflict resolution process. Since middle of 1988, there has been a great expansion in the number of UN peacekeeping forces. From 1948 to 1978, only 13 peacekeeping forces were set up and in the following ten-year period, no new forces were established. However,

since 1988 the number has increased significantly. From May 1988 to October 1993, a further 20 forces were created. As of February 2007, the number of UN peacekeeping operations had reached 61 and involved 80,094 military personnel and civilian police. On the other hand, with the growing awareness of child rights all around the world, the probability of parents prevailing over their siblings has gone down significantly. State laws are very stringent in this respect. Methods therefore vary depending on the agency that is involved in conflict resolution.

The State as an agent of conflict resolution continues to play a significant role even at a time when it supposedly makes an 'exit'. To cite an example, a variety of approaches has been tried by South Asian governments to counter terrorism. Even a cursory review of these approaches in the South Asian and global context suggests that using the armed forces or local militias has not been especially effective in combating terrorism. Strengthening police forces or conducting negotiations to induce insurgents to join the political mainstream appears to be more effective approaches. Such instruments as Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) as per the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, formation of states, recognition of customary laws and traditional institutions, protection of tribal land, language and culture etc have been in use particularly since the time the Constitution came into force. Economic incentives or development programmes can be useful complements to this political accommodation approach. Regional cooperation initiatives, which have been underutilized so far, are likely to be very important in countering violence.

As one approaches conflicts in order to solve them, one follows either of the two perspectives or as in most cases a combination of them: redistributive and integrative. While in the former, the objective is to transfer resources - over which conflict takes place - in a way that satisfies both the conflicting parties; in the second conflicts are resolved in a way so that it becomes possible for the conflicting parties to live together within the same society on the basis of some form of agreement on a given body of social norms and values. Satisfaction over particular redistribution may be extremely temporary. The same conflict may relapse after a while on the same issue or may even lead to some other type of

conflict between the same conflicting parties. Satisfaction therefore is issue-based and short-lived. On the other hand, integration being based on values is likely to have a durable impact on society and reduce the conflictual potential. Thus to cite an instance, the poor may think that poverty they are subjected to is an insult to human dignity while the rich may think that their riches are a recognition of the merit they have compared to that of the poor; but both the rich and the poor may share an agreement that this should not be a ground for either of them to commit violence or organize revolution and it is only the parliament as the supreme body of peoples' representatives that has the authority to take appropriate steps and bridge the distance between them. The agreement on the value that violence in itself is bad under all circumstances and all conflicts are potentially resolvable within the ambit of popularly elected bodies is what encourages them to resolve any conflict between them through non-violent means.

There is no golden rule of value integration. Value integration is a historical process and attempts at promoting and inculcating values of their choice by patriarchs, emperors and nation-states had become not only unsuccessful but often counter-productive. Families, schools and peer groups etc play a very important role in resolving conflicts based on value integration. On the other hand, several redistributive methods have widely been in use – three of which deserve a mention at this point:

1. The win-lose method is all too common. If, for example, the nature of resources is such that they are indivisible and cannot be distributed amongst the conflicting parties (like two children conflicting over the ownership of a football, which loses its utility the moment it is cut into two halves), what one party gains, the other loses. We have also to assume in this case that resources are given and cannot be expanded at least within the time frame within which the conflict is sought to be resolved. The method in this case is thus to force either of them to accept a solution. Sometimes, this is done through socially acceptable mechanisms such as majority vote, the authority of the leader, or the determination of a judge etc. Sometimes, it involves secret strategies, threat, innuendo or whatever to make the end acceptable. The ends justify the means.

2. The case of two children conflicting over the ownership of the same football may also be addressed by way of denying it to both of them. This is an example of lose-lose method where both take the negative satisfaction that the other could not get away with the resources. Neither side is aware that by confronting the conflict fully and cooperatively they might have created a more satisfying solution; the utility of the football could be realized. Or the parties may realistically use this approach to divide limited resources between themselves in case it is possible to divide them.
3. The win-win method is a conscious and systematic attempt at maximizing the goals of both parties through collaborative problem solving. The conflict is seen as a problem to be solved rather than a war to be won. The parties work toward common goals, i.e., ones that can only be attained by both parties pulling together. Thus to continue with the same example, the two children may decide to divide the time for which they can keep the football in one's possession. To cite another instance, there is one view that tends to suggest that the conflict between India and Pakistan may be approached by starting to address only those issues that can be resolved in a way that is mutually beneficial to both of them. The strategists point to the Indus Treaty providing for sharing of the water of the river Indus between the two countries which till date has worked well – notwithstanding a series of other issues that have led to war.

The Role of Non-State Actors

Such universal values as rights, justice and democracy are left to the sovereign States for their protection particularly since the emergence for modern state in the seventeenth century. While the very 'universality' of these so-called universal values is now under a cloud, the states are no longer looked upon as the *only* agency – let alone an agency entrusted with the additional obligation of defending and protecting these values. For instance, states are no longer viewed as the sovereign agency free to decide on the homeland demands, rights of the indigenous people to land and justice and albeit their claim to ever depleting resources and environmental protection etc. State actions on these matters are subjected to stringent social, international and global audit.

Such values as rights, justice and democracy are no longer confined to the ambit of the so-called 'democratic' institutions of the state already in place. Non-state institutions are seen to be playing an increasingly important role and these institutions - as the great liberal philosophers would have us believe - are required to keep the state under a leash as an antidote to its authoritarianism – certainly not to replace it. We have already pointed out that Gandhi's is essentially a value-based approach to conflict resolution in which resolution of conflict is considered as much important as their resolution in morally rightful ways. In his scheme of conflict resolution, state is required to play a minimum role – if possible, no role at all. Moral means and reduction of dependence on the State as the agent of conflict resolution have been the two running threads of Gandhian perspective on conflict resolution. There have been examples of eminent Gandhians staging an exit from the process of mediation and conflict resolution on the ground that they do not often morally approve of the means through which conflicts are proposed to be resolved. What follows is an inventory of non-state interventions in the recent past history of India particularly during communal riots and violence³.

First of all, in times of heightened ethnic and intercommunity conflicts it is mostly the women who are seen to cross the lines. They do it all on their own with third party intervention just to make it possible for them and their families to live and survive at a time when life becomes impossible. In fact, *Athwas* (a Kashmiri word which means handshake or holding of hands as an extension of solidarity or trust) is the name of an initiative conceptualized at the Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP) roundtable held in 2000 that brought together women from Kashmiri Pundit, Muslim and Sikh communities for the first time in almost a decade since the conflict in its renewed form broke out in the Valley. Its main objective is to familiarize them with 'contrasting realities and narratives', they hold and harbour toward each other and this is expected to ensure transparency in their dealings with others and dissolve the boundaries. Such interventions by women in conflict situations are by no means unique to Kashmir. One wonders whether such processes can survive the violence and the heightened nature of hatred that accompanies it. During the Gujarat violence (2002), the doors of Gandhi's Sabarmati

Ashram were closed apparently on the apprehension that there might be attacks on it. One recalls Gandhi walking alone on the riot-ravaged streets of Kolkata in the wake of Partition (1947) and the riots following it - standing firm against any kind of communal violence and hatred. Today violence between communities is also marked by a certain disintegration of civil society institutions and initiatives.

Secondly, we may refer to what is called the 'Khopade pattern' named after the famous police officer – Suresh Khopade who introduced it in Bhiwandi – a medium-sized town of Maharashtra visited by frequent cycles of communal violence till the early 1990s. The idea is to establish *mohalla* (or neighbourhood) committees consisting of an equal number of members drawn from each of the conflicting communities, headed preferably by a police officer and to ensure that they regularly meet and discuss issues amongst themselves without divulging its content to the outsiders. The model worked wonders. While neighbouring Mumbai is a standing witness to the worst ever orgy of communal violence in 1992-93, Bhiwandi was evidently spared of it. The role of the police was minimal – to ensure that these processes are in place and active even during the riots so that civic ties cutting across the communal boundaries do not collapse during communal violence as it happened during the Gujarat carnage.

Thirdly, there have been *secular* experiments with mitigating conflicts and violence by non-State actors without third party mediation. These experiments may be secular in either of the two ways: One, when the members of one community come to the rescue of another in a particular locality or neighbourhood at a time when both of them are otherwise involved in a fierce conflict between them. Such examples of Hindus protecting mosques and Muslims protecting temples of their respective neighbours within the same locality are by no means rare. Sometimes political parties are instrumental in cross-mobilizing people to stop violence and arson during communal riots. The 'Tram Workers' Union affiliated to the Communist Party of India (CPI) for example while deploying their cadres followed the same logic during the 'Great Calcutta killing' of 16 August 1946 with the expectation that members of the same religious community are unlikely to attack each other. Two, the joint resistance by

the Hindus and the Muslims (or whatever be the rivalling communities) form resistance groups and committees together on their own and seek to mitigate conflicts. Such groups and committees can function effectively to the extent that their members are able to transcend their narrow ethnic and communal interests.

Besides organized interventions, there are many unorganized interventions, which because of their unorganized nature escape our notice. In this connection, we may refer to the individual interventions as an example. We have already referred to the example of Gandhi standing firm during post-Partition riots. Since these interventions are made essentially by individuals, they are vulnerable to reprisals from the communities in conflict. In course of communal riots, these individuals play a great role in conflict mitigation albeit at great personal risk. The presence of non-state actors is no guarantee that they necessarily work for value integration and help in creating a space for effective engagement amongst contesting notions and varieties of peace traditions. Post-liberal peace is certainly a big haul and we require perhaps a million more experiments with tools and methods of conflict resolution and peacemaking before we are able to announce in definite terms what constitutes peace and how it is made.

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Footnotes

- 1 Such terms as 'tribe' and 'tribals' are freely used in India without any of their necessarily pejorative meanings.
2. For a review of these interventions, see Das (2013)

Exploring Sustainable Peace in Meghalaya

Ajay Kumar Yadav*

Abstract

This paper emphasizes on issues relating to ethnic disaffection and cultures of governance employed in conflict resolution in Meghalaya. The local political culture offers a range of norms for dialogue and negotiation towards building peace in the region applied especially during rehabilitation process of the surrendered insurgents, their success in procuring a workable and positive peace has been rather inadequate. As a result, minority groups in the state of Meghalaya continue to nurture security anxieties in their own hometowns amidst sporadic episodes of insurgency. The research team observed a strong local need to move away from short term pacification efforts, achieved through monetary compensations, in favour of a comprehensive approach towards rehabilitation schemes and the implementation of development schemes applied as part of the peacebuilding strategy.

Keywords: Sustainable peace, governance, political culture, insurgency, violence

Introduction: Governance in Meghalaya

Meghalaya (meaning “Abode of Clouds”) is one of the smallest states within the union of India, which gained statehood in the aftermath of a series of political assertions by the tribal inhabitants of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo hills. Following India’s independence, some sections of the tribal populations in Meghalaya protested against their inclusion in

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Greater Assam (a neighbouring state) and considered the accession instrument to be an act of force (Karlsson, 2011). This, in turn, paved the way for a wave of ethnic mobilization that resulted quite often in fierce power struggles instead of integration (Baruah, 2004). Politics became an instrument of assertion for the newly educated tribal elites that used an ethnicity-oriented discourse to assert their demand for autonomy and to resist the sway of hegemonic administration by Assam's non-tribal elite. This was followed by an intense agitation campaign against the Union Government motivated to limit the power of "other" Assamese ethnic elite.

The Eastern Indian Tribal Union formed in 1955, renamed as the All-Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC), routed the Congress party in the 1967 elections clearing the way for a new province. The Centre, fearing the onset of insurgency on the Naga and Mizo pattern, subsequently conceded to the creation of a new province (Chaube, 1973). Amidst this tug-of-war, came the North-East Reorganization Act calling for the creation of the Meghalaya State in December 1971. Many locals (Khasi, Garo and Jaintia) saw this as a "Christmas gift", hoping to take on higher positions, previously occupied by the non-tribal (especially Bengali and Assamese) in the government. The Sixth schedule of the Constitution, that provides a range of schemes while legally constraining the influence of the central government over the affairs of the Hill States of the northeast, is perhaps the most noteworthy governance feature in Meghalaya. These provisions largely draw on the age-old rationale of frontier administration predicated on the syndrome of nationalization-securitization and the development modernization continuum that traditionally served as the key for the prevention and resolution of conflicts in the northeast.¹ These interrelated elements embedded in the colonial history of the region have provided a context to state policies and conditioned the way state agencies relate to each other and with stakeholders operating on different governance levels.

The British colonial legacy in Khasi, Garo and Jaintia Hills endowed this region with a range of socio-economic and political features distinguishing it *vis-a-vis* other northeastern states. The vast natural resources in this hilly region encouraged the British to set up their administrative capital in Shillong- then a part of East Bengal. In order to consolidate their institutional sway over the local inhabitants and the migrant

population, the British supplemented the traditional governance system in this backward region with the trappings of a modern bureaucratic colonial state. This system of governance continued even after the formation of the state of Meghalaya. One of the striking features of Meghalaya, the multi layered governance system, can be termed as a blend of modern democratic structure and traditional structure. This unique feature consists of the three-layered governing bodies- the State along with the Central government, the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) and, the traditional institutions. Among these, the traditional institutions existed long before the advent of the British. However, it was the British who modified and codified the traditional institutions and brought in Christianity and education in the hills. On the other hand, Autonomous District Council or the ADCs under the jurisdiction of the sixth schedule came into being in the year 1952. The ADCs were formed as a response to the demand of the tribal people for autonomy that would preserve the very essence of tribal identity (Gassah, 1998). Since its inception, ADCs were vested with immense powers that entitled them to 'make laws in respect of allotment, occupation and use of land, management of unreserved forests, the use of water course of irrigation, the regulation of shifting cultivation, establishment of town and village committee, civil administration in villages, town police, the appointment and succession of Chiefs and Headmen, inheritance of property, social customs and some areas of judicial administration' (Ray, 1998). However, the wide powers entitled to the ADCs somehow undermined the powers of the traditional institutions. With the 1959 Act regarding the appointment and succession of chiefs and headmen, the confrontation between the ADCs and the traditional institutions have aggravated from time to time. In the Khasi Hills, to be more specified in Shillong, the inherent conflict between the Khasi Hill Autonomous District Council (KHADC) and The Traditional Institutions (better known as the Durbars) has prominently reflected in the succession of Syiemship, the highest post in the durbar. The overlapping jurisdiction of powers that allows the KHADC to intervene in the succession of the syiemship has been opposed vehemently by the Durbar who feels subdued under it. Other than this, the lack of financial assistance provided to the traditional institutions has been seen as a contentious issue between the two opposing parties which eventually led to the

traditional institutions demanding for financial autonomy from the Central government. Looking critically into the workings of the ADCs in Meghalaya, till date the ADCs have not fulfilled its responsibilities giving space for more lapses. This led to the traditional institutions taking advantage of these lapses as seen in the issuing of trading licenses to the non-tribals (Baruah, 2004). The traditional institutions are not entitled to issue licenses as it comes under the jurisdiction of the ADCs. According to Prof. A.K. Baruah, the semi democratic status of the Traditional institutions along with the inability of the ADCs in carrying out its responsibilities properly, had led to the overlapping loyalties causing underlying conflict between the two governing systems. The reluctance of the traditional institutions to mold itself to the democratic mindset especially with the kinship bond being the essence of Khasi tribal society has led to a range of differences in governance matters causing a deficit in the governance system.² This overlapping loyalty has further accentuated the lack of coordination between the KHADC and the Durbars especially at the time of conflict.

Along with these two governance layers, the conflict between the State government and the ADC has also been viewed as a contentious issue in the governance system. As said before, the ADCs were created to carve a separate autonomy for the hill states. However, with the emergence of the new state of Meghalaya, the continuation of the ADCs seemed meaningless. Yet the ADCs continued to function as a separate entity. Though basically the state does not have any provision to interfere in the matters of the ADCs, but at time of financial allocation or getting approval for any bill, the ADCs are completely subdued under the authority of the State government. This often led to inherent conflict between the ADCs and the State government especially if both the entities are occupied by different political parties. And therefore, the lack of coordination and sense of mistrust defined the relation between the ADCs and the State government. The lack of cordialness started to emerge especially after the transfer of most of subjects under ADCs (such as the primary school education) to the state government as the anomalies perpetuated by the ADCs were reported (Jyrwa, 1998).

With 70.3% of the population practicing Christianity, Meghalaya is one of three Indian states which have a Christian majority. The Christian

Church, branded as the second pacification column of the British, had nurtured a significant number of western educated tribal people who filled in the emerging government jobs and consolidated the edifice of state and its political economy. The missionary education created a new elite stakeholder group, especially among Khasis that had distinct aspirations and world views, and in many ways, different, in content and form, from indigenous elites (Nepram, 2006).

The inclusion of disparate and traditionally differentiated tribal groups in the single unified state of Meghalaya posed manifold challenges. In order to adjust diverse local cultures to a uniform system of administration, the new state had to deal with the challenge of historic disparities nurtured by the British Raj. For instance, the Khasis, traditionally having greater privilege over the Garos readily found space and importance in the nascent government circuits and moved rapidly up the socio-economic ladder to establish their presence in the Meghalayan society. During the British era, Shillong (a Khasi inhabited area) was the capital of the North East. Due to the British influence, the Khasis was quick to gain expertise in all fields of governance. Since they had access to education, the Khasis fast learnt the ropes of the politics of governance that helped them occupy British administrative posts. For the Garos, the picture was completely different. Due to poor inaccessibility to the Garo Hills, development in the Garo regions was slow in comparison to the Khasi hills. This discrepancy that led to the Khasis occupying major chunk of power in Meghalayan governance system, leaving the Garos with minimal power and facilities resulted in a strong feeling of relations discrimination among the Garos.

Actors, layers and networks

The current governance system in the state of Meghalaya can be broadly divided into four inter-connected layers, clustered around two major categories (Fig. 1). The official category comprises of the formal Union-State apparatus, and the Autonomous District Councils (one each for the major tribes in the State) that have judicial and legislative powers over the common tribal law and the traditional authorities. The “unofficial” layer includes the influence and the de-facto power exercised by specific

civil society organizations for bridging the gap between the State and the local population, especially in terms of opinion mobilization on security related issues, resources and tax distribution etc. It also includes the grey, yet institutionalized, layer of insurgency politics (to be described later in details).

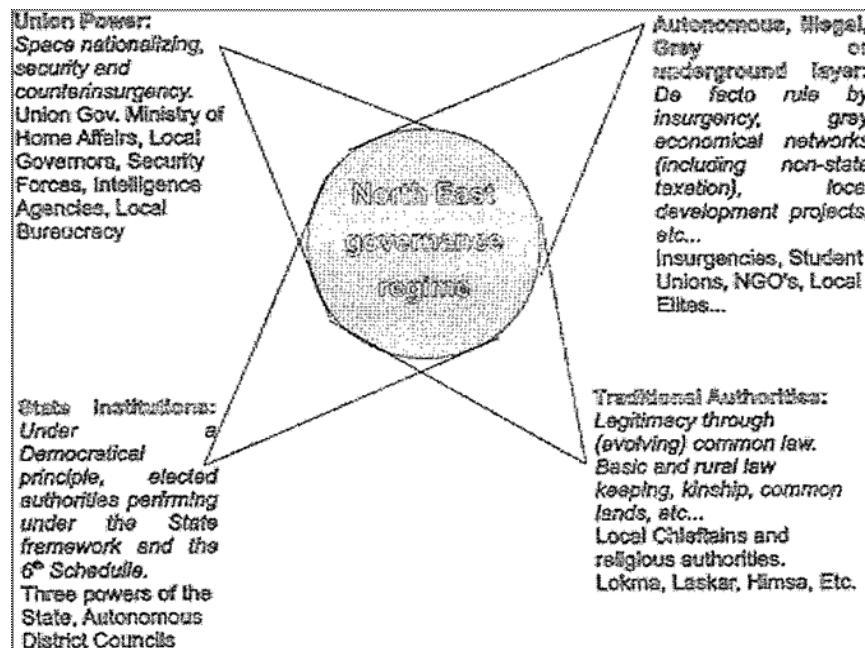


Figure 1: North-East Governance Regime

The above-illustrated complex web of governance having significant overlaps of jurisdiction and power among formal and informal layers are ostensibly a part of the “check and balance” system. However, in practical terms, the practical distribution of power is largely molded by the changing political importance of stakeholders. For instance regarding issues relating to the local rules or the exploitation of natural resources, it is the State agencies, the ADC and the traditional authorities that generally assumed a greater share of responsibility than the Union government.³ However, the Union government does enjoy the prerogative of managing and negotiating insurgency issues (through the office of the Governor, “DONER” or Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, the

Home Ministry and its subsidiary agencies). In fact, both the central government and the armed outfits tend to prevent the state government from intervening in peace negotiations that are related to state boundaries or autonomies. However, in the case of counter-insurgency, state government agencies are the first port of call for tactical operations.

The ADC serves as the key actor in inter-se conflicts between tribal and non-tribal groups and provides the much-needed civic space in Meghalaya. Legislations, drafted by the ADCs, have shaped the current distribution scheme and thus limiting the access of non-tribal actors into both political and social spheres.⁴ The drafting of legislations to reform and ‘modernize’ tribal laws leading to the progressive reduction of decision making powers among ground-level traditional authorities (for e.g. “Nokmas” among Garo communities) and in the “definition of a new criteria for ethnic membership in the 21st century” are instructive instances in this regard. However, some groups believe that the re-allocation of central government funds to the Meghalaya State Government, in the B0’s, restricted the scope of the ADC influence.⁵

Maintaining traditional peacebuilding roles within current socio-economic contexts pose a challenge for the traditional authorities whose sphere of influence on the local population is directly determined by the extent of state presence in areas under its jurisdiction. In a remote location, less mediated by the State agencies, for instance, the political space controlled by “Nokma” could be rather large despite its meager resources. In addition, the overlapping powers between formal and informal layers and the ensuing legal loopholes in government decision-making procedures, further adds to the scope for local actors to find more space and important roles in local affairs (Kumar, 2004). Traditional authorities also continue to maintain their spheres of influence on the local population since specific local “procedures” (government and nongovernment) require prior approvals from traditional authorities (for instance, citizen registration documents required by ADCs).

It is important to note that the traditional institution of Garos, known as “*Laska*,” or the “Judge”, elected by a group of villages, is directly involved in peace and justice issues in the state. Earlier, the Laskar was

the first contact point in tribal quest for peace and justice at the community level, especially regarding offenses that did not fall under the Indian Penal Code. The recent justice and law enforcement reforms undertaken by the state have undermined this traditional institution which provided the layer of third circuit judges.

Civil society in Meghalaya, organized traditionally along the lines of ethnicity and religion also serves informally to facilitate governance and conflict resolution issues. Many such organizations were encouraged by the British to serve as sites of informal discussions and mediation among contending groups. Various Student's Unions and Church Forums (United Churches Peace Forum, Shillong Khasi Jaintia Church Leaders' Forum, Meghalaya Baptist Convention) offered platforms for this purpose. The civil society involvement provided extensive networks and communication channels across several layers of governance, often engaging high profile politicians, local businessman and individuals in-hiding. For instance, the Christian church played an important role in promoting negotiated settlements of the state-insurgency dispute and the Student's Unions were instrumental in diffusing tensions in the Garo-Rabha clashes in 2010.⁶ Also, Women organizations like the Mother's Union worked towards ensuring peace in the Garo Hills. Along with the Garo Baptist Church, the Mother's Union played a crucial role in bringing peace in the hills at the time of crisis in the Garo Hills in the year 2003.

Besides the groups based on ethnic or religious beliefs, new civil society initiatives and actors have lately emerged around such concerns such as human rights, gender equality and inter-ethnic justice. These new actors have questioned the "traditional" expressions of political agitations and lobbying imposed by Student's Unions and mass-oriented politics (Srikanth, 2005). However, they are facing massive resistance from tribal hardliners who refuse to take public debate away from ethnic-oriented discourses. The hard liners question civil society's right to exist on grounds that a non-tribal has no right to political agitations in tribal dominated spaces (Baruah, 2007).

Embedded conflict scenarios

While the colonial legacy seems to provide a background of the way borders were drawn and conflicts generated in Indian northeast, many

conflict scenarios are due to the political predicates and processes of 'post-colonial' governance imperatives. For instance, the northeast has largely been construed through the matrix of India's strategic interests, which regarded the region as buffer zones often ignoring the regional imperatives of its inhabitants.

The British used the notion of 'North-Eastern Frontier' as they conquered the region, on the Burmese border, towards at the end of the nineteenth century. These regions, regarded as backward and even primitive with respect to the rich local oral traditions, were administered as a territorial appendage rather than integral administrative units (Nepram, 2006). Major socio-political changes were introduced amongst the tribal population under the banner of modernization and development, overlooking the ethnic and culturally complex identities. The quest of quick development attracted huge influx of migrant labourers, thus disturbing the demographic and ethnic balance of tribal areas. Since the concept of private property was relatively unknown, the land speculation caused by migration started impacting the local economic dynamics (Baruah, 2006), causing a shift from simple productive activities towards more lucrative activities, like tea, extractive industries such as oil, mining and forest exploitation.

In order to ease the local fears of being reduced to a minority in their own territory, the Union government established a set of restrictions against uncontrolled (unofficial) immigration. However, the "Inner-line" system, along with India's partition in 1947, and the definition of a legal border for the region, further contributed to political anxieties in the northeast. A range of conflict provoking structural conditions came to the forefront; such as dependency on external aid, the extractive economy, competition among inter-ethnic elite, resource allocation, lack of local identification with the national development vision, non-tribal targeted ethnocentric politics, exclusionary political discourse, uneven and deficitarian democracy and armed struggle.

Conflict map of Meghalaya

Given the above context and developments over the past years, it is not surprising that the episodes of violence are multi-faceted. A

cross-factual analysis of insurgency in the State reveals that insurgency dynamics are closely related to the extractive industry and the ethno-demographic tension in the State (See. Fig. 2).



Figure 2: Map elaborated by Luis Perez Torner.
For reference only. Some locations might change

The Meghalaya state is rich in minerals, like coal and uranium. These minerals comprise the primary export product of the state. Due to the lack of regulatory framework for the extractive industry, illegal mining is rampant, making it more vulnerable to extortion than other industries or even the service economy (Baruah, 2006). In the service sector and the tourism industry, profit margins are reduced due to instances of violence which in turn pushes entrepreneurs to re-locate economic activities to more peaceful environments. Instead, the mining industry becomes an easy target for extortion/unofficial taxation since it is located in remote areas and cannot be re-located, regardless of socio-political developments. The impact of these extractive activities, like coal and limestone (*in "green" in the above map*) and uranium (*in "yellow" in the map above*) leads to (i) degradation of the environment and displacement of the population (accompanied with social unrest); and (ii) concentration of capital in a few hands with parallel exploitation of manual labour which is easily framed by an anti-neocolonialist discourse to protect the local legacy. Interpretation regarding the second marked line (*in "Blue" in the map*), is the grievances

that are perceived as unattended and the sense of insecurity regarding ethnic groups in conflict. Natural resource being a private property had been kept out of the purview of the state authority. And due to this, the two competing ethnics consider the allocation of rights and resources as a zero-sum game in which the loss of one is the gain of the other. The modality in which the state allocates rights and resources often undermines their confidence in the State and justifies their security organizations. This in turn gets “mirrored” in the armed confrontation scenarios from the other side. For example, the ethnic armed groups of both the Khasi (HLNC) and Garo (ANVC and GLNA) are involved in seeking authorization over the resource area especially in case of coal mining belt in the Garo and Jaintia hills. This territorial occupation of these armed groups acts as an easy means for carrying out extortion activities. (*in “red” and “yellow” respectively, in the map*).

Ethnic Tensions

The tendency of glorification of one’s own ethnic culture often described as ethnocentrism could be discerned in Meghalaya since very onset of the British Raj. However, its fierceness was first noticed in 1979 when a solitary incident of beheading of the idol Goddess Kali in Shillong allegedly by a Khasi unleashed a massive riot against the Bengali community in Meghalaya leading eventually to the demand of ethnic cleansing in Khasi hills. The incident was fueled by the “Durbars” like Laitmukhrah, whose orders prompted the tribal population to resort to violence. The Khasi hills soon became the epicenter of jingoism which resulted in two people getting killed and, as the newspapers called it, a “trail of human woes” (*The Shillong Times*, 1979). While the army was brought in to restore law and order, the seeds of ethnic hatred had been sown among the Khasis.

Ethnic cleansing took a more aggressive form during the 1987 and 1992 -1993 riots when Nepali and Marwari and Bihari communities were targeted. It is interesting to note that despite the Khasi Student’s Union (KSU), along with Federation of Khasi Jaintia and Garo People, being instrumental in the displacements of non-tribal people from their homes, a section of the Khasi people, who were against such violence, condemned these activities. However, the clan-based nature of the

community hampered individual Khasis from helping non-tribals. In fact, a large section of the non-tribal population had to flee from Meghalaya, abandoning their lands that later got occupied by the Khasi rioters.

The Khasi dominated hills were not the only regions in the State that came under the wrath of ethnic riots. In 1987, a major riot took place in the Garo Hills wherein non-tribals (Hindus and Muslims) were targeted. This violence, believed to be triggered by a Muslim boy's comments on a Garo girl, resulted in the death of 50 persons. Though the conflict was resolved through the mediation of religious leaders, both tribal and non-tribal, non-tribals continue to have a sense of insecurity and fear.⁷ The non-tribals of the Garo Hills, likewise in the Khasi Hills, are similarly deprived of basic rights (of buying land, doing business, protesting, etc.) and facilities and often have to obey conditions laid down by the Garo mafia before they start any activity in the area.

Alongside the dominant tribal-nontribal conflict, the discourse on Garo-Khasi conflict has also been a cause of concern. Even though the conflict has remained mostly dormant, it has often shown the potential to escalate into a violent confrontation. The general impression is that while the Khasi people have been more assertive, the Garos have suffered as underdogs and that more resources have poured into the Khasi Hills, while the justifiable development demands of Garo Hills have been overlooked. With political and administrative powers concentrated in the hands of the Khasis, Garos complain of an increasing sense of alienation that they frequently express through their demands for a separate *Garoland* (Sangma, 2008). Despite higher job reservation quotas for Garos, a sense of deprivation prevails in the popular image of the community.

The ethnic disaffection between the Khasis and the Garos has spilled *over* in sporadic outburst of violent conflicts. In 2003, the Khasis 'stretched their assertiveness to kill three Garo students in Shillong.'⁸ In 2005, the Khasi Students Union demand of reorganization of the Meghalaya Board of School Education was vehemently opposed by the Khasi leadership, leading to the escalation of the usually subdued Khasi-Garo conflict. Various Garo organizations alleged this to be another instance of Khasi hegemony. The Garo Students Union, along with other

organizations, launched a protest movement against the “bifurcation” (Karlsson, 2011) of the Meghalaya Board of School Education. During one such protest in Tura and Williamnagar on 30 September, 2005, the police and paramilitary forces opened fire against students, killing four students (including two minors) and injuring hundreds. This event, popularly known as “Bloody Friday”, cast doubts on the neutrality of state machineries and believed that that they favoured the Khasis. As a result, the demand for separate Garoland increased in intensity and became the main concern of the Garo Students Union.

In addition, discourses against the *Dekhars* or outsiders still persist in Meghalaya. Although sporadic incidents are rare, the non-tribals are insecure and are in constant fear of being ousted from their homes. The non-tribals claim that since the riots (that happened during 1979, 1987, 1992-93) the demographic equation of the state has changed and that their population decreases each year by 2%.⁹ The non-tribals lack adequate access to basic rights in the Khasi hills, be it education, jobs or engagement in local political processes. Besides the legal constraints, drafted by ADCs to secure the dominance of local tribal groups, non-reserved job posts are also intercepted through unofficial means, even in high profile government agencies.¹⁰ Moreover, the riots of 1979 set a precedence of restrictions on the right to publicly express one’s religion, like confining non-tribal processions (Hindu, Muslim) to only specific areas of Shillong, while Christians are permitted take out walking processions.

Immigration of the Bangladeshi nationals, working as laborers in agriculture or the mining industry, adds on to the existing difficulties that non-tribal face. The KSU keeps a vigilance especially on the Bangladeshi people¹¹ and has presented to the government the three main ways to address the immigration issue:

- i. **Three -tier ID:** In this system, the denizens (non tribals of Meghalaya) are to be accorded with citizenship by keeping 1971 as the bench mark for their settlement in Meghalaya. This system said to be asserted into three categories. They are: Permanent (who had lived in Meghalaya from a long time), Semi-Permanent (who came to Meghalaya during 1971) and Temporary (basically daily wagers who are recruited on contractual basis). This system is on the verge of implementation.

- ii. **Inner line permit:** This system entitles Indian citizens to travel to prohibited areas of the north east of India for a certain valid period. At present, this system is applicable only in Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur. With the growing concern over the rising influx of illegal migrants, KSU has demanded for its implementation in Meghalaya too. However, the government is yet to take decision on its implementation.
- iii. **Work Permit:** In this system, as per the Interstate Migrant Workmen Act 1979,¹² migrant employees working on contractual basis in Meghalaya are required to produce a valid document stating their duration period in the state. Though KSU has been vocal in its implementation, the government has shown less concern over it. While the Government is reviewing and better articulating the “Three-tier ID” and the “Inner line permit” systems, they are on the verge of implementing the “Work Permit” system. This phenomenon of illegal immigration also influences the tribal imaginaries and their expectations on representative democracy, so the issuing of voter ID’s is still a contentious issue in Meghalaya.

Insurgency Layers

Although Meghalaya is considered peaceful than its neighbours, it has a history of conflicts, homegrown insurgencies and processes of peace enforcing and/or peacebuilding. Some of these ongoing conflicts and corresponding efforts of conflict resolution and dialogues, especially concerning the *A'chik Liberation Matgrik Army* (ALMA), and its successor the *A'chik National Volunteers Council* (ANVC), may help us in evaluating various aspects of peace in a state that claims its establishment through “non-violent means”.

The porous frontiers of Meghalaya with Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal always had the potential for encouraging anti-immigration tirades. These dynamics finally spilled over the state borders and led to a multi-ethnic Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council (HALC) being floated in the late 1980's. Inter-tribal antagonisms between Garos and Khasi-Jaintias eventually led to a division of the HALC outfit into two factions: The (Khasi-Jaintia) Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) and

the (Garo) A'tchik Liberation Matgrik Army (ALMA) in 1992. The anti-immigration agenda of HNLC soon acquired violent language, with the Khasi Student's Union being the most influential non-government body in the Khasi Hill Districts to spearhead the movement. This outfit remains dormant and the government has not reached any formal peace arrangement with them. On the other hand, the ALMA remained active from 1994 to 2004 and conducted low-intensity guerrilla warfare in the surroundings of three Garo Districts. The recent emergence of a new militant outfit, the *Garo National Liberation Army* (GNLA), its banning by the Union Government under the *Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act* on 1 February 2012, and the subsequent debate on modalities for dealing with this group, have provided an interesting background for analysis of the dominant discourse, expectations and (meta) narratives of ALMA and HNLC.

The ALMA processes

The ALMA or A'chik Liberation Matgrik Army carried out an abducting/extortion campaign, without prior political agitation, against the Union Government. The campaign was specifically, but not solely, directed against the Coal India Company, which was then promoting massive -scale exploitation of the state's mineral resources. It also targeted small entrepreneurs, demanding a "Tax for the Sons of the Soil". They also entered into a flexible networking collaboration with stronger regional outfits such as the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-IM (NSCN) for training and weapon support in exchange for a maximum of 70% share of profits from robbing banks and ransom demands.¹³ Although relatively small, the ALMA insurgency managed to ward off attempts to industrialize mineral extraction in the Garo Hills. Investors, vital for the region's development, fled and the potential for employment reduced. This hampered the direct economic interests of the local Garo population which expressed its concerns and brought across its voices through the Christian church. This led to the formation of a Peace Committee comprising four members of the Garo Baptist Church (GBCH), including L.D. Shira, a prominent humanist working for the preservation of the Garo language and culture. It also helped in including ALMA in the tripartite talks with the Union and State

Governments.¹⁴ The GBCH strategy was two-fold. On one hand, it mobilized public opinion against the insurgency by organizing Peace Rallies in Tura and other locations in the Garo Hills; on the other, as negotiations drew close, they contacted their underground leadership by letters delivered through multiple couriers and by holding secret talks in the jungle.¹⁵ It is important to mention that the Union government acknowledged and approved of this method. Simultaneously, the State government, acting through the Director General of Police (DGP) ventured into the intelligence and counter-insurgency activities in order to reduce the operative space of the insurgent group. In 1993, it started allocating INR 10,000 among villagers for securing the “villagers’ cooperation”.¹⁶

Financial motivation was also used to facilitate the implementation of the two-stage pacification agreement. Firstly, ALMA leaders would get INR 30,000 as advance compensation before they officially surrendered to the State Police (presenting themselves in military uniform and with weapons). On surrender, each insurgent would get INR 75,000 plus other cash money for each weapon surrendered.¹⁷ The ALMA officially surrendered in October 25, 1994. The last part of the Peace Accord included in an armistice wherein the State of Meghalaya would remove the charges levied against them. This was not implemented completely since the leader of the outfit, Jerome Momin, was accused of criminal charges related to networking activities undertaken in Assam. This has been considered the main reason for the failure of the peace-process in becoming a long or at least mid-term peace strategy.¹⁸ Momin swore that he would float a new insurgency outfit on breaking out of prison. In December 1995, four months after his interesting escape from the Shillong District Jail, Momin floated the A'tchik National Volunteers Council (ANVC) with the help of the NSCN - IM.

ANVC Peace Process

Jerome Momin's history surrounded his figure and the outfit with an aura of myth and glamour. Yet, it took almost four years of killings, abductions, and extortion campaigns for the outfit to articulate a clear political manifesto. It wasn't until 5 May 1999 that the ANVC submitted its demands to Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, then the Prime Minister of India.

The core demand of the Council was the creation of a State, specifically for the Garos, through an amendment of the North-East Areas (Reorganization) Act of 1971. Another demand was the recognition of the Garos living in various parts of Assam as a Scheduled Tribe. This would alter their status and entitle them to benefits extended to other scheduled tribes. In order to justify their demand for inclusion, into the Garo Hills, of Goalpara and Kamrup areas in Assam which have a predominant Garo population, the ANVC referred to the linguistic and identity criteria (Marak, 2005:100); a criterion that the Indian Government recognized in the State (Reorganization) Commission Report (1955) as a valid reason for reorganization of States and re-adjustment of boundaries. The memorandum added that it would have been possible to preserve ethnic identity only through the establishment of a separate state for each tribe.

This set of demands is said to have set into motion, official mechanisms aimed at declaring the ANVC as “unlawful”. In November 2000, both the Garo insurgent group and the HNLC urban guerrilla were banned by the Union Government under the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967. This ban came into force after ANVC had clearly stated its demand for separate Garoland. Before then, ANVC was working as an armed outfit, involved in abductions and extortions. These extortions were collected daily from the business community in the name of ‘Fund Collection’. ANVC was also involved in the circulation of fake currency. Security and geopolitical concerns also pushed the Union Government to broaden the legal scope that could be used against these outfits.

Although both academics and security officials acknowledge that not more than three hundred cadres were operating under the flag of the Atchik National Volunteers Council, the importance of containing the armed group comes from a bigger security and geo-political dictum that worked against the net-working dynamics in the region. It is believed that the initial growth of ANVC was due to the assistance it received from NSCN-IM and a slow subsequent shift of alliances towards the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), and the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). The alliance shift was primarily due to ANVC’s territorial

dominance *over* the Assam-Bangladesh corridor that stretches through the South and East Garo Hills and the West Khasi Hills that permitted it to have a better bargaining power in procuring weapons, training and funds.

Some characteristic features of the ANVC peace negotiation process differed from the ALMA peace process, for e.g. ANVC's appeal among the local population was much stronger and the outfit leadership was also reluctant to hold talks with a government considered to be untrustworthy. The peace effort too had a broader scope for stakeholders. The GBCH was compelled by the State government (Hussain, n.d.) to act as a key interlocutor for bringing the rebels to hold talks with the central government. However, in this process efforts were directed towards soldiers rather than the leadership¹⁹ Another important motivation towards the agreement came from a once- rebel turned mainstream politician, Mr. Zoramthanga, the Mizoram Chief Minister, who offered his support for exploratory talks with ANVC in Bangkok in April 2003.

A second element of this peace process was the deliberate effort of the negotiating parties to address the cross-boundary networks and dynamics of the Garo insurgency and the widening of the territorial scope related to it. Four elements support the above effort: i) ANVC incorporated, in their list of demands, the inclusion of Garo dominated communities of Goalpara and Kamrup, located in neighbouring Assam and the Nongkhlaw region, into the Khasi Hills; ii) for the first time, the Union Government agreed to hold talks, either within the Indian national borders or abroad, as well as provide support for related logistics (the first round of talks with Zoramthanga and the Indian Intelligence Bureau Chief, K.P. Singh, was held in Bangkok, Thailand); iii) the influence of the GBCH on the Bangladeshi Garo community represented a major asset during the negotiation since many insurgents wanted to take advantage of a more peaceful environment on the other side of the border. This influence finally proved fruitful in facilitating GBCH contact with insurgents in a private house in Bangladesh²⁰; iv) the negotiation approach of the Union Government was coordinated by the Bangladesh military and police against these outfits operating in their country and profiting from the tactical predominance generated by outfit network disruption. This disruption

was caused by the “Operation All Clear” of Bhutanese army flushing out the outfits operating in its territory on December 2003.

Provisions of the Peace Accord with ANVC

- The ceasefire deal is for a period of six months, renewable thereafter;
- Both the ANVC and the security would stop operations against each other;
- ANVC to stop violence and unlawful activities like extortion, killing, abduction and intimidation and not to carry weapons in public;
- The ANVC cadres would be housed in two designated camps along with their arms and the security forces would regulate their movement. They would have to move outside their camps accompanied by police guards, at least one of which would be from the Meghalaya Police. The settlements would be placed in Samanda, East Garo Hills; and in Chokpot, West Khasi Hills. Later, a new location was provided in the Allotgre Hostel near Tura, West Garo Hills. *(This point throws light on a fundamental element of the peace-building strategy deemed hereafter as ‘Rehabilitation Schemes’)*
- A joint monitoring group headed by Joint Secretary (North East) in MHA has been established to oversee the implementation of the ceasefire deal.
- The group would have representatives from the Meghalaya Government, the ANVC and different federal security agencies.
- A ceasefire-monitoring cell has been set up at the Coal India Complex at Araimile in Tura, headquarters of the West Garo Hills district.

Rehabilitation schemes

Ever since the Government of India started applying negotiation and peace accords as a peace-building mechanism to halt the insurgency dynamics in the India’s North East (INE), different rehabilitation schemes have been adopted - and adapted - to bring rebel cadres back into the ‘mainstream society’ and to incorporate some insurgency sections into the democratic electoral political process (Baruah,2006: 100). Various rehabilitation camps have been established under the administration of the Union government through the Ministry of Home Affairs; the State

government through the State Police; and the Army through one of its regional divisions.²¹ This created a heterogeneous regime of practices anchored in the economic field of government schemes for the surrendered cadres and their leadership. However, effectiveness of these schemes is still debated.

The rehabilitation process starts when a cadre surrenders before the police or a central government agency. Successively, there is an evaluation stage in which the rehabilitation scheme is decided and can broadly be described thus: (i) a committee of eight members from the intelligence and security committees investigates rehabilitation candidates on a case-by-case basis; (ii) the State police then conducts research on the credentials of the candidates (home address, references of family and relatives, etc.); (iii) the scope and spectrum of the rehabilitation scheme is then decided (ibid).

During rehabilitation, Surrendered Cadres (SC) is provided with pocket money and vocational training so that they can better re-integrate in civic life. Their movements, however, are limited and monitored by security forces (most SC decided to stay on in camps so as not to lose the rehabilitation money). There are cases in which persons with the most advance military training are integrated into the army or the paramilitary forces²² or are used as guides for further operations.²³

The performance and development of the “rehabilitated” cadres is monitored and tracked for a period of up to 10 years. Once rehabilitated, their citizenship right is completely restored. It was not clear whether they had the right to go abroad. The most important profiles in the outfits (i.e., leaders, chairmen, treasurers, or members of the politburo) do not go through the same rehabilitation schemes as the rest of the insurgents. They are allowed to go back into public life and start businesses (private or government contracts) with the funds allocated for their specific rehabilitation scheme.²⁴ Another exception is the married persons who are permitted to stay with their families in their villages.²⁵

In the case of ANVC, though exact facts and figures about its surrendered cadres are not available, it was roughly estimated (by S.G. Momin, SP of the West Garo Hills during ANVC process) that 12-15

cadres of the ANVC had surrendered. Initially, the surrendered cadres were placed in the designated camps in Samada and Chokpot region of the Garo Hills. These surrendered cadres received a remuneration of Rs. 2000 per month. According to S.G. Momin, the surrendered cadres who stayed in these camps belonged to the poor community, who were devoid of the basic amenities. These camps turned out to be their homes where they received daily food and other facilities. However, with ceasefire taking place between ANVC and the Government of India (every 6 months), the rehabilitation scheme was not effective to a great extent. This scheme of the government had generated a lot of insecurity among the SCs which made them maintain ties with other armed organizations. The possession of arms among the cadres was a proof of this insecurity. And with promises (such as promise of vocational training and jobs) not being fulfilled, many cadres left the camps to continue with their unlawful activities. As a result, the cadres who left the camps stopped receiving their monthly payment. At present, these rehabilitation camps are non - functional. Although the Church played a major role in bringing the parties together for peace talks, religious services and counseling is not part of the official rehabilitation strategy (the GBCH claims that this is due to lack of interest of the religious organizations to further get involved into this type of politics)²⁶. However, some local churches including the Garo Baptist Church provided occasional service in the camps on special dates.

It is important to understand and recognize the origins and the nature of resources used on counter insurgency operations and rehabilitation activities. “Source Money” is provided by the central government to fund both ground counter insurgency operations, intelligence payrolls, open and uncovered negotiations and financing the rehabilitation of surrendered cadres. This money is usually unaccountable and considered part of a lost fund, thus creating an economic interest in prolonging the conflict for continuing to secure the existence of the above schemes.²⁷

Moreover, there are certain basic limitations, such as the economization of the rehabilitation process, that set forth a new set of complications since it becomes challenging to compete against the insurgent life-style on monetary grounds. This pushes the SC to look for alternative sources of income, which usually fall back into the illegal activities. For

example, with the ANVC process being unsuccessful in terms of long-lasting peace, the SCs returned back to their illegal activities. This was because of the monetary benefits in insurgency being more alluring than the rehabilitation scheme of the Government. Therefore, there is no doubt in insurgency being a well-paid business. There were allegations about previously “ceased-fire- cadres” undertaking, once again, extortion drives against the local coal extractors. Like, the ex-SCs were involved in extortions from the coal contractors is said to be a rumour. These allegations remained as rumours as there was fear of reprisals.²⁸ The interactions with the local population clarified that due to the fear of retaliation by the insurgent groups on the business community, the extortion activities are said to be a rumour.

Finally, the preeminence of the economic share in the rehabilitation process eclipsed other aspects necessary for its success. The local population “is not happy with them being on the rehabilitation camps (Samanda [EGH], Chokpot [WKH] and Allotgre Hostel [Tural]), because by staying there and mingling with the local population they can influence the younger generations with narratives of easy money and power.”²⁹

Assessment of the agreement

Although the negotiation process with ANVC had a higher profile than the previous one, i.e., the ALMA, the results of the ALMA peace process were more modest. The ANVC could not reach an internal consensus prior to the negotiation and this eventually led to a split in the outfit. Chairman Dilash Marak and Commander-in-Chief Jerome Momin were in fact absent at the time of the agreement. The splinter group led by them decided to remain underground in the East Garo Hills and the West Khasi Hills. Those, in the so-called “pro-talks” faction, represented by General Secretary Wanding K. Marak along with five other members, agreed in New Delhi, on 23 July 2004 on a cease-fire agreement (described by some key stakeholders as merely a truce)³⁰ with the Government of India for a period of six months. Since then, the cease-fire has been periodically renewed. Most talks were related to development and the perceived inequalities between the Garos and the Khasis as beneficiaries of State services. Yet, the marginal participation of the State government³¹

underscored the faultlines of the federal balance regarding peace and security issues between the Union and State Governments. Finally, the multiple extensions of the past seven-year ceasefire reveal the limitations of consensus- building among parties and the significant setbacks caused by changes in government administration.

Despite addressing the Joint Monitoring Group, the peace process seemed far away from success. The government resisted ANVC's refusal to drop its demand for the creation of a Union Government funded Garo Autonomous Territorial Council that had stronger power and role in implementing development schemes than the actual Autonomous District Councils and its demand of 'de-proscription'³², prior to its surrendering of arms (Dash, n.d.). Processes get more complicated since the incoming governments do not really follow up peacebuilding processes that were initiated by the outgoing governments.

A major challenge on the path for peace in western Meghalaya is the power vacuum generated, in the Garo Hill Districts, due to the demobilization of a part of ANVC. The years following the ceasefire between the Government and the insurgency, witnessed a mushrooming of amorphous outfits such as the United Achik National Front (UANF), Liberation Achik Elite Force (LAEF), United Achik Liberation Front (UALF), Achik National Liberation Front (ANLF), Hajong United Liberation Army (HULA) and Retrieval Indigenous Unified Front (RIUF) and the Garo National Liberation Army (GLNA). These outfits, while trying to control the former ANVC territory and extortion networks, stepped on the toes of bigger regional outfits such as the United Front of Assam and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland to replace the latter's tactical arrangement with the Garo insurgency and secure their cross-border movement to Bangladesh.

Truce erosion and the rise of GNLA

In early 2012, ANVC started splitting up. During the field-work, confidential information was provided regarding a possible division among the members of the ANVC. These rumors were confirmed in late march when the news of the split finally reached the media (The Shillong Times, 2012). The official version of this states that the reason for the rupture

laid on the contents of the negotiation process, which has its core issue is the creation of a Garo Autonomous Council. Yet, it would be wrong to deem the partition as a result of ideological differences. A provisional, and thus likely to be modified, evaluation of this would point out the inter-group competition that had set into motion during the peace-negotiations of 2004. During this time, it was acknowledged, “that the Suspension of Operations agreement was signed between the State, Central Government and the ANVC without realizing the fact that there was an armed group within the ANVC working independently” (Shillong Times, 2012). The fact that the new faction, labeled ANVC-B, immediately looked for their own negotiation process with a separate truce agenda reinforces the idea of *bargaining insurgencies*.

On the other hand, among the splinter groups that appeared after the ANVC peace process in 2004, the most relevant for analyzing the insurgency layer in Meghalaya, both because of its consolidation as the most trained and violent outfit in the State and its strong relationship with the State security infrastructure, is the Garo National Liberation Army. According to intelligence data, a former Deputy Superintendent of Police, Meghalaya, Pakchara R. Sangma alias Champion R. Sangma, floated this outfit after deserting the Police force. Sangma had gone “missing” for several months until it was discovered, in March 2010, that he was leading the GNLA. He issued a press statement ‘confirming’ his position as the “chairman” of the GNLA with Schan D. Shira, former ANVC ‘area Commander’ for the East Garo Hills, as the ‘Commander-in-Chief’. The cadre base of the outfit mainly comprises deserters from ANVC, LAEF and NDFB (Pradhan, n.d.) and has been often reported on charges of extortion, abducting, killing (including traditional authorities) and detonating a bomb blast in the Garo capital of Tura on October 9, 2010.

The outfit was initially regarded only as a criminal organization, a statement supported by the lack of a political manifesto from the GNLA. However, in December 12, 2010, the Meghalaya CM Mukul Sangma invited the group for “talks to facilitate their surrender” to which its chairman declared that he would only consider going into talks if the Union Government requested. The Indian government stands differed and after years of talks between the two levels of the State, the group was

declared a ‘Terrorist organization’³³ on February 1, 2012. It is important to mention that notwithstanding the implementation of the federal ‘‘Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act,’’ the Union Government refrains to use its security forces in counter-insurgency operations in the State of Meghalaya (The Hindu, 2012). According to military sources, the implementation of the federal Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act does not ensure the implementation of COIN operations in the conflicting states. Without this act also, COIN operations are carried out in the conflicting states. Depending upon the impact of the conflict, the Centre in accordance with the State government uses its central forces in counter insurgency operations. In case of Meghalaya, despite the implementation of this act, it is the state police who are in charge of counter insurgency operations. The central forces are not used in Meghalaya as the magnitude of the conflict is much less in respect to other north eastern states.

At present, it seems that the frontal approach used against the GNLA will again be complemented by an economic motivation. The latest tool added to the counter- insurgency strategy has been a ransom mechanism sponsored by the State police (The Shillong Times, 2012) in exchange for 1) the capture of information that led to the arrest of the GNLA leaderships; or 2) information that leads to the securing of illegal weapons.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

A first approach to Meghalaya’s state architecture, comprising multiple governance levels, designed to bring the government closer to the ground and institutionalizing the common law, might project the idea of a democratic government adapting its institutions to the cultural context of governance. However, the existence of these varieties of layers should not be paralleled with bottom-up governance. The normalization of the conflicts, and the generation of economic interests in prolonging insurgency are driven by the monetarization of counter-insurgency strategies. This has established a corporatist logic to the governability in Meghalaya since the latter relies on a permanent negotiation among state policy makers, elites, opinion leaders and rebel leadership whose agreements are expected to spill-over to the rest of the population. This reflects in a democracy

deficit both in the Federal-State government and the citizen-state relations in which the civil society has to permanently struggle to keep spaces for dialogue open.

Furthermore, overlapping loyalties in the INE impose a multi-factual logic to the conflicts in the region. This creates a barrier to approach the insurgency issue without addressing the competing relation between government agencies in field such as border definition or assignment of ethnic schedule quotas; or to understand the fragmentary dynamics generated by the trend of celebrating tailored-suit peace agreements along with the following war-tug dispensation. This same complexity accounts for the lack of political space for negotiation, among warring parties and obstacles, and the formulation of long-lasting commitments.

The rehabilitation schemes should be fostered under a more holistic and civic approach. There is an urgent need to address the multi-dimensional nature of humans and that their recognition is not always achieved by monetary allocations. In this sense, an effective result-oriented education program and proper counseling can bring much more success than hardline security and surveillance. As reflected in the case of ANVC SCs, who being dissatisfied with the rehabilitation scheme, left the camp to join the monetary benefited insurgency. Moreover, the lack of professional training had left the SCs without any future job security.

Either the official and unofficial discourse of development or the lack of it is the greatest challenge to sustainable peace.³⁴ The faultlines of the institutional architecture, the prevalence of insurgency, which should be regarded as a continuum rather than intermittent episodes of insurgent uprising, also breeds from extra- institutional aspects. Every day practices within the peace-building institutions, such as the lack of socio-professional mobility of security force personnel, the endemic corruption of the institutions which hold and drain the development funds provided by the Government of India, the local rationale of bringing all into ethnic zero-sum games, the “electoralization” of the peace process and the developmental activities, and the persistence of some civil-society segments to use power and agitation politics to pursue their own agenda. This has greatly reduced the pacification scope to the immediate and apparently

neutral economic sphere which itself generates more competence as mistrust among the concerned agencies, thus reinforcing the vicious cycle.

The peace-building strategy often appears to be directionless and unaccounted allocation of funds to the region could prove to be self-stultifying. Development schemes should be implemented in areas where they are lacking and must be implemented under a peace-building dictum that seeks to improve governance (e.g., communication facilities in isolated communities, bringing the positive presence of the State in areas where it's needed, rehabilitation of the exhausted post-mining environment, etc). In spite of not being addressed in this paper, the “great” State policies, such as the “Look-East” policy, should find the balance between these concerns and the economic logic that is its primary engine. Another concern should be the visible “dead end” that one reaches once regional integration projects meet the deep-rooted ethnocentric reality of the INE.

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Footnotes

1. Sixth Schedule, a policy of the Colonial British, was an effort to create a protective layer for 'aborigines', practicing their customary traditions. This slowly transformed into the protection of ethnic identity of the modern state of Meghalaya. This transformation is reflected in the Constitution of India where provision for the ethnic population has been accorded through

Sixth Schedule. The sixth schedule functions through ADCs who are in charge of protecting and empowering these ethnically vulnerable races.

2. With the kinship bond being stronger in the traditional Khasi society, the simmering conflict between the tribals and the non-tribals had escalated during the ethnic riots as the Durbars supported the atrocities perpetuated against the non-tribals.
3. There have been cases, however, in which the Union Government has been pushed through the Judiciary to intervene in these areas (i.e. Falling Trees Resolution 1996).
4. See Meghalaya Transfer Act of 1972 and the Meghalaya Benami Transaction Prohibition Bill
5. Confidential Source. Office of the Presidency of the Garo Student Union. Tura. Meghalaya.
6. Speculation exists concerning the operative nexus between the influential Student's Unions and the armed groups. For example, it is believed that the Garo Students Union was not only involved in "tax" issues of GNLA but that one of its functionaries was GNLA's secretary. See "NGO-Politico-Ultras Nexus comes to fore" article in the Shillong Times, January 5, 2012; see also <http://theshillongtimes.com/2012/01/05/ngo-politico-ultras-nexus-comes-to-fore/> and v
7. Uday Narayan Mali, Poojari of the Hindu community in Tura, interviewed at the Durga Temple, Tura, 7 February 2012.
8. Interview with Apurba K Baruah, 1 February 2012
9. Manas Choudhuri, Founder/ Chief Editor of *The Shillong Times*. Interview held in Shillong on 7 February 2012
10. During his tenure as Education Minister, Manas Choudhuri had appointed three non-tribals as teachers in the colleges in Shillong. Certain sections of Khasi people along with KSU launched a protest against these recruitments. This protest movement forced the government to stop the induction of the non-tribals for the referred posts.
11. Hamlet Dohling, Public relations secretary of the Khasi Student Union. Interview held in Shillong on 6 February 2012.
12. "KSU: Show Work Permits or Leave Megha/aya", <http://www.northeasttoday.in/our-states/meghalaya/ksu-show-work-permits-or-leave-megha/ayal>, April 08, 2012.
13. Skylance G. Momin. Superintendent of Police, Tura, 1999 -2005, Interview at the Garo Autonomous Council Office, Tura, West Garo Hills, 9 February 2012.

14. Confidential Source. Interview at the Office of the Presidency of the Garo Baptist Convention, Tura, West Garo Hills, 8 February 2012
15. Confidential Source. Office of the Presidency of the Garo Baptist Convention, Tura, West Garo Hills, 8 February 2012
16. Skylance G. Momin. *Op. Cit.*
17. *ibid*
18. Confidential Source. Office of the Presidency of the Garo Baptist Convention, Tura, West Garo Hills, 8 February 2012
19. Confidential Source. Office of the Garo Baptist Convention Presidency. Tura. West Garo Hills. 8 February 2011.
20. *ibid*
21. Confidential Source. Indian Army. Office of the Counter-insurgency unit. Interview realized during a Seminar on Conflict Studies, Guwahati University. Guwahati, Assam.
22. Confidential Source. Indian Army. Office of the Counter-insurgency unit. Interview realized during a Seminar on Conflict Studies, Guwahati University. Guwahati, Assam. 2 February 2012
23. Skylance G. Momin. *Op. Cit.*
24. *ibid*
25. *ibid*
26. Confidential Source. Office of the Garo Baptist Convention Presidency. Tura. West Garo Hills. 8 February 2011.
27. Interview with Apurba K. Baruah. Guwahati University. Guwahati, Assam. 1 February 2012
28. Confidential Source. Office of the Garo Baptist Convention Presidency. Tura. West Garo Hills. 8 February 2011.
29. *ibid*
30. Skylance G. Momin. *Op. Cit.*
31. Confidential Source. Office of the Garo Baptist Convention Presidency. Tura. West Garo Hills. 8 February 2011.
32. The Union Government extended the Ban over the ANVC and the HNLC in 9 November 2006.
33. The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act was reformed in 2008 to match India's commitment in the War against Terrorism.
34. Sharma Commission mentioned in its report of 1995 the lack of development as the main cause for the insurgency in the State.

Taliban in Afghanistan and Its Implications on Pakistan

Priyanka Singh*

Abstract

After 20 years of war, the Taliban has swept to victory in Afghanistan and have outlasted one more superpower. The Taliban's return to rule brings an end to almost 20 years of the presence of a US-led coalition's presence in the country. Taliban's rule certainly will have consequences that will go well beyond the country's immediate borders. Pakistan, undoubtedly, would be the most affected country with the passage of power into the hands of the Taliban. This paper is an attempt to analyze the impact of the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan and its implications on Pakistan.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Taliban, security, refugees

Introduction

Afghanistan has a tumultuous history of uprisings against the government, guerilla warfare, and foreign occupation dating back to the 19th century. The US's withdrawal, from Afghanistan in August 2021 and the Taliban's rolling into Kabul, much earlier than estimated by most intelligence agencies was a frightening shift. Afghan government figures, the media, and security experts blamed the United States for running away from its responsibility and betraying the Afghan people, leaving them exposed to Taliban atrocities. Taliban's rule in Afghanistan no doubt accompanied itself with uncertainty and fear causing tens of thousands of Afghans to flee, often by taking desperate measures. The disturbing images of people clinging to the hulking aircraft even as it left the ground and running alongside the U.S. military planes on the runway and falling off the aircraft in mid-air to their deaths reflect the horrendous state of

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affair. Afghanistan is today engulfed with sadness, panic and uncertainty. Although the Taliban promised peace at home, a softer, smoother and inclusive government but their history of violence and repression and the present surreal state of affairs have some other stories to tell.

Taliban's rule poses immediate threats to Afghans' civil and political rights enshrined in the constitution created by the U.S.-backed government (Maizland, 2021). As per a report by Human Rights Watch 2021, the Taliban have instilled fear among women and girls by searching out high-profile women, denying women freedom of movement outside their homes, imposing compulsory dress codes, severely curtailing access to employment and education, and restricting the right to peaceful assembly. This state of affair was not a surprise because when last time the group was in power from 1996 to 2001, they first appeared as the *messiah* who vowed to fight corruption and improve security and promised to take Afghanistan out of all the trouble and they became popular too but eventually, they turned Afghanistan practically into a pariah state.

Taliban's Six-Year Rule

The Taliban, or "students" in the Pashto language, emerged in the early 1990s in northern Pakistan following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. It is believed that the predominantly Pashtun movement first appeared in religious seminaries - mostly paid for by money from Saudi Arabia - which preached a hardline form of Sunni Islam (Rivlin, 2021). The promise made by the Taliban - in Pashtun areas straddling Pakistan and Afghanistan - was to restore peace and security and enforce their own austere version of Sharia, or Islamic law, once in power. Afghans, weary of the Mujahideen's excesses and infighting after the Soviets were driven out, generally welcomed the Taliban when they first appeared on the scene. Their early popularity was largely due to their success in stamping out corruption, curbing lawlessness and making the roads and the areas under their control safe for commerce to flourish (*The Week*, 25 August 2021). Eventually, Taliban took over Kabul on September 27, 1996, and followed that up with the murder of former president Najibullah in a gruesome public hanging (Human Rights Watch, 2005). By 1998, they had taken control of almost all of the country (*BBC News* 18 August 2021).

From 1996 to September 2001, the Taliban ruled, largely isolated from the international community due to their brutal treatment of Afghans. They imposed a harsh interpretation of Sharia law - such as public executions of convicted murderers and adulterers, and amputations for those found guilty of theft. They were accused of various human rights and cultural abuses. Men were required to grow beards and women had to wear the all-covering burka. They banned television, music and cinema, and disapproved of girls aged 10 and over going to school. In fact women were banned from almost all public spaces. They brutally executed political opponents, massacred religious and ethnic minorities such as the Hazaras and provided grant safe haven to al-Qaida (Agrawal, 2021). Their cultural abuses were also obnoxious. One notorious example was in 2001, when the Taliban went ahead with the destruction of the famous Bamiyan Buddha statues in central Afghanistan, despite international outrage.

The attention of the world was drawn to the Taliban in Afghanistan in the wake of the 11 September 2001 World Trade Center attacks in New York. The Taliban were accused of providing a sanctuary for the prime suspects - Osama Bin Laden and his al-Qaeda movement. The 9/11 attacks brought the global war against terror right into the heart of Afghanistan. On October 7, 2001, a US-led military coalition launched attacks in Afghanistan, and by the first week of December, the Taliban regime had collapsed. However, the group's then-leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, and other senior figures, including Bin Laden, evaded capture despite one of the largest manhunts in the world (*BBC News*, 18 August 2021).

Twenty Years of War in Afghanistan

In December 2001 an interim government under Hamid Karzai was set up in Kabul which was later ratified by a Loya Jirga (a traditional assembly of Afghan leaders). But the Taliban's deadly attacks continued to take place. In 2003, amid increased violence, NATO takes over security in Kabul (*PBS News hour* 30 August 2021). In 2009, President Barack Obama's "troop surge" helped push back the Taliban but it was not long term. In 2014, at the end of what was the bloodiest year since 2001, NATO's international forces ended their combat mission, leaving

responsibility for security to the Afghan army. That gave the Taliban momentum and they seized more territory (*BBC News* 30 August 2021). The Taliban have operated as an insurgent force, attempting to expel NATO forces from Afghanistan and defeat the democratically elected Afghan government. Peace talks between the US and the Taliban started tentatively, with the Afghan government pretty much uninvolved, and the agreement on a withdrawal came in February 2020 in Qatar. The US-Taliban deal did not stop the Taliban attacks - they switched their focus instead to Afghan security forces and civilians, and targeted assassinations. Their areas of control grew (*BBC News*, 30 August 2021) and on August 15, 2021 Taliban took over Kabul.

The world was numb with the reality that the Taliban have returned to Afghanistan after 20 years of war. The Taliban and its supporters started celebrations at the moment. Many feared persecution and punishment for siding with foreign forces. While the Taliban spoke of “general amnesty” and said all are “forgiven”, and assured the safety of all Afghans and that they should not leave the country, the videos that circulated on social media told a different story. Taliban’s takeover of course is going to have a catastrophic effect not only on the Afghan citizens but also the neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan. With the Taliban coming into power in Afghanistan, Pakistan bears a big responsibility for Afghanistan’s fate.

Pakistan and Afghanistan Relations

Afghanistan and Pakistan have a unique kind of relationship. They share geostrategic, ethnic, cultural and religious bonds. They are significant trading partners. In fact, in a televised speech on October 3, 2011 the former Afghan leader Hamid Karzai once described the two countries as “inseparable brothers” primarily due to the shared religious and ethnic connections. Although their direct relations are apparent from 1947 when Pakistan came into being, the border that they share known as Durand Line, which is 2,400-kilometer (1,500-mile) long border was drawn in the 19th century when the British dominated South Asia. Thus, the cultural and ethnic mix between the two dates back to the British period. Both the countries have faced many highs and lows in their relations.

Being close neighbours Pakistan always had a high stake in each and every happening in Afghanistan. Pakistan has a history of military support for different factions within Afghanistan, extending at least as far back as the early 1970s. During the 1980s, Pakistan, which was host to more than two million Afghan refugees, was the most significant front-line state serving as a secure base for the mujahidin fighting against the Soviet intervention. Pakistan also served, in the 1980s, as a U.S. stalking horse. The United States through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), granted Pakistan wide discretion in channelling some U.S.\$2-3 billion worth of covert assistance to the mujahidin, training over 80,000 of them (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Even after the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989, serving and former Pakistani military officers continued to provide training and advisory services in training camps within Afghanistan and eventually to Taliban forces in combat. Throughout the war against the communist government and Soviet forces in Afghanistan, Pakistan asserted a mix of internal and external concerns (Human Rights Watch, 2005).

Pakistan views its security interests in Afghanistan predominantly through the prism of its regional rival and neighbour India. To avoid an encirclement scenario in which India's influence extends from Pakistan's eastern to western borders, Islamabad has sought to develop "strategic depth" in Afghanistan by backing friendly governments in Kabul. Pakistan always sought a secure Afghan frontier permitting the concentration of Pakistani forces on the Indian frontier and economic advantages through stronger political and economic links to Central Asia (Threlkeld and Easterly, 2021). Pakistani support for Pashtun parties in Afghanistan helped solidify the position of Pashtuns in Pakistan's military and civilian elites. In addition, Pakistan promoted the emergence of a government in Afghanistan that would reduce Pakistan's own vulnerability to internal unrest by helping to contain the nationalist aspirations of tribes whose territories straddle the Pakistani-Afghan border (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

The strategic interest of Pakistan has many times suffered blow also because of the boundary dispute between them. Durand line has always been the bone of contention between them. Pakistan has sought to quell local support for Afghanistan's ambitions of redrawing the Durand

line but it has not been successful in that and the problem continued to persist. When the Taliban came into power in 1996, they maintained close ties with the Pakistan government but they refused to recognize Durand Line as an international border, arguing that there should be no borders between Muslim countries (Roashan, 2001). This approach deteriorated the relations between them.

The 9/11 attacks changed the relationship between Pakistan and the Taliban as Islamabad decided to side with the West in its war on terror. When Hamid Karzaibecame the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2004, he also refused to recognize the Durand Line. He described it as “a line of hatred that raised a wall between two brothers” (Harrison, 2009). Because of the failure to recognize the border, there has been unchecked and frequent transshipment of men and materiel.

Pakistan has many a times asserted that there had been cases of cross-border attacks by Afghanistan-based PakistaniTaliban militants on Pakistani security forces’ posts. These militants were part of the Taliban factions that fled to Afghanistan’s border provinces, in the face of military operations and their attacks contributed to the deterioration in bilateral relations (Javaid and Meer, 2018). Before the Taliban took power in Afghanistan on August 15, the two neighbouring countries regularly traded accusations, blaming the other for turning a blind eye to militants operating along the porous frontier. There have been reports that the upsurge in the TTP’s terrorist violence in Pakistan has coincided with the Afghan Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan in August.

Taliban in Power: Opportunities and Challenges for Pakistan

For very long it has nurtured the Taliban as a proxy to exert its influence over Afghanistan but since the ignominious collapse of Afghanistan’s Western-backed regime and Taliban’s takeover in Afghanistan, Pakistan has oscillated uncomfortably between relief and anxiety. At present, Pakistan views the Taliban victory in Afghanistan as a strategic win, even at the risk of emboldening other extremist groups in the region (Findlay and Bokhari, 2021). It is an open secret that Pakistan’s powerful deep state has for decades quietly backed the Taliban. There is little doubt that many Afghans who initially joined the movement were educated in madrassas (religious schools) in Pakistan.

After the 9/11 attacks that were planned in Afghanistan, Pakistan positioned itself as an ally of the US in the so-called “war on terror”. But at the same time, parts of the country’s military and intelligence establishment, maintained links with Islamist groups in Afghanistan like the Taliban. Many senior Taliban leaders reportedly took refuge in the Pakistani city of Quetta, from where they guided the Taliban and provided significant material and logistical support (Landale, 2021). The extent and duration of Pakistan’s support for the Taliban are disputed. Pakistan was also one of only three countries, along with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which recognized the Taliban when they were in power in Afghanistan. It was also the last country to break diplomatic ties with the group.

In more than 40 years of civil strife, war and instability in Afghanistan, Pakistan has often pursued their own strategic interests by manipulating the Afghan political field, even at the expense of peace in the country. A day after the Taliban took over Kabul the Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan said that the Taliban are “breaking the chains of slavery,” (*Dawn* 16 August 2021). Pakistan’s military and civilian leaders have been desperately trying to convince the world that the Taliban are a newer, more moderate version of the Islamist militant group that ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001.

Downplaying international fears about the egregiousness of Taliban rule, Pakistani leaders have claimed that the Taliban are, this time, open to sharing power and protecting basic human rights- if only the international community would give them time and money before judging their record on human rights and governance (Shah, 2021). Since Pakistan’s government continues its feverish diplomatic efforts to convince the international community of the group’s newly found moderation. Even so, its bid to legitimize the Taliban’s usurpation of state power in Afghanistan may be undermined by the Taliban’s intransigence. Pakistan’s historic support for the Taliban does not, however, mean that it should become complacent about Taliban’s rule. Pakistan should not forget that it has suffered hugely over the years at the hands of Islamist terror groups launching attacks over the border from Afghanistan. Taliban’s being in power gives Pakistan the feeling of victory, but along with that it should

be concerned about the fact that this regime would embolden the Pakistani Taliban to stage more attacks in Pakistan along with Afghanistan (Ahmed, 2021).

Pakistan has a huge interest if it ensures that the new government in Kabul cracks down on groups like Al Qaeda and the local Islamic State offshoot - ISIS-K because, at one point, the Taliban threatened to destabilize Pakistan from areas they controlled in the north-west. One of the most high-profile and internationally condemned of all Pakistani Taliban attacks took place in October 2012, when schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai was shot on her way home in the town of Mingora. A major military offensive two years later following the Peshawar school massacre greatly reduced the group's influence in Pakistan but there are reports that TTP has never been out of the north-west region despite many counter-terror operations by the Pakistani military.

While there are fears of a further escalation in terrorist violence and a rising concern in Pakistan as the Taliban offensive across Afghanistan has resulted in a mass release of prisoners, including senior leaders of the TTP, the real challenge lies in the persisting shades of religious extremism which have the potential to complicate Pakistan's security and political landscape. There is no doubt over the fact that the Afghan situation will have multiple implications for Pakistan in terms of insecurity and militancy, cross-border terrorism, refugees' influx, and economic instability, sovereignty geopolitical dynamics, connectivity and trade.

Pakistan has fenced off most of its border with Afghanistan, but these TTP elements could still pose a significant challenge to the Pakistani state, particularly in the districts of the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The Afghan Taliban have more than once affirmed that Afghan soil will not be used for activities against any other country by foreign militants, but they have shown a reluctance to take a clear position on the TTP issue, while also airing concerns on the fencing of the Afghanistan–Pakistan border. As the new Taliban regime faces political and economic isolation from much of the world, its dependence upon Pakistan will increase even further, giving Pakistan even greater leverage on the TTP issue (Karim, 2021). Certainly, the Taliban's dominance in

Afghanistan has given Pakistan a geopolitical edge over India in the broader Central Asian region. A stable Afghanistan could become a strategic conduit between Pakistan and the Central Asian republics and help Pakistan realize its geo-economic ambitions in the region. Yet, for this to happen, the Taliban must reach a political consensus with other Afghan stakeholders. Barring a political agreement, peace and stability will remain elusive, and the country's potential to develop into an economic and energy corridor linking South Asia with Central Asia will never be realized.

Although Pakistan has repeatedly denied that it was the architect of the Taliban enterprise, their bonhomie has been a secret affair. It is because of their friendly ties that the security situation in Pakistan is still fragile. Despite the military's claim that the region had been cleared of militants, South Waziristan still sees sporadic attacks, mainly targeting Pakistani security forces. Pakistan has blamed TTP for most of the attacks (Ahmed 2021). TTP has carried out a number of major terror attacks across Pakistan and has reportedly been using Afghan soil to plot terrorist attacks in this country (*The Hindu*, August 23, 2021). According to a report prepared for the United Nations Security Council in July, the TTP has about 6,000 trained fighters on the Afghan side of the border and the Afghan Taliban despite their distrust carry on with relations mainly as before (Iqbal 2021). Pakistan's national security adviser Moeed Yusuf in a Press conference remarked that "militants along the border were exploiting the fluid situation in Afghanistan to target Pakistani troops" (Ahmed 2021). That means Pakistan has an interest in the Taliban acting firmly and not allowing Afghanistan to descend into an ungoverned space.

Refugee Crisis

The other great concern of Pakistan is the refugee crisis. Being the closest neighbouring country, Pakistan remains the main hub for people fleeing Afghanistan. The country already has about three million Afghan refugees from previous wars and, with its ravaged economy, it cannot afford to support any more (*Aljazeera*, 2 September 2021). There had been many reported instances when the Pakistani government campaign to systematically expel Afghan refugees. There have been reports of increasing abuse of refugees by the police of Pakistan (Human Rights Watch 2015).

The major issue of concern for the international community is that these helpless refugees cannot seek any legal help to avert these abuses. Pakistan is not a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees/ 1967 Protocol and has also not enacted any national legislation for the protection of refugees nor established procedures to determine the refugee status of persons who are seeking international protection within its territory.

In the absence of any national refugee legal framework, refugees are treated in accordance with the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946. UNHCR conducts refugee status determination under its mandate (Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees adopted by the General Assembly Resolution 428 (V) of 14 December 1950) and on behalf of the Government of Pakistan in accordance with the 1993 Cooperation Agreement between the Government of Pakistan and UNHCR. Pakistan generally accepts UNHCR decisions to grant refugee status and allows asylum-seekers (who are still undergoing the procedure) as well as recognized refugees to remain in Pakistan. Pakistani authorities have time and again stated that the country already houses one of the world's largest populations of refugees and now it cannot accommodate more refugees resulting into violation of the rights of refugees.

Pakistan's High Commissioner to the UK, Moazzam Ahmad Khan, told the BBC Today programme: "We don't really have the capacity to take more refugees in and that's why we're suggesting - and requesting - that let's sit down together and work on the possibility of avoiding that eventuality" (*BBC News* September 3, 2021). Afghan refugees are not seen in a good light in Pakistan not only because they pose a burden on the government but also because of security issues. The link of the 2014 terrorist attack in the school in Peshawar in which more than 100 schoolchildren were dead was traced to Afghanistan. Since then, refugees are viewed as terrorists. They are subjected to routine harassment, including the solicitation of bribes (Amnesty International, 2016). The severity of the situation can be traced from the statement made by Lt. Gen. Faiz Hameed, Pakistan's powerful intelligence chief. He listed terrorism and refugees among Pakistan's top concerns (Rehman 2021).

Pakistan not being the signatory of the Refugee Convention has also resulted in the lack of basic amenities for the Afghan refugees who are living in Pakistan for several decades. They often face discrimination, they have not been able to access formal education opportunities, open a bank account, work, buy a property and have even been denied access to healthcare. They are often portrayed in Pakistan's news media as drug peddlers and criminals and increasingly terrorists. Harassment and exploitation on the part of law enforcement agencies is a product of underlying perceptions of Afghans as violent, dangerous and suspicious. Refugees are therefore viewed as an alleged threat to the security of the nation-state. This makes an entire community, including refugee children, at risk of state harassment.

This skepticism had left Afghan refugees in a state of uncertainty. Though Pakistan's law allows those born there to get citizenship, the claims of Afghan children are generally not recognized. Imran Khan pledged to recognize their citizenship after he became prime minister in 2018, but he backed off following a backlash from politicians and the country's powerful military (Rehman 2021). This sorry state of affairs is adding on the sorrows of Afghan refugees. They have no place to live. They are not safe in their own country and they are viewed as threat in the neighbouring countries. The Taliban's vengeful ways add to the risks. This is an issue of great concern. Pakistan with its limited resources cannot accommodate such a large chunk of population as refugees in its territory. This issue to need to get resolved taking into consideration the humanitarian grounds and protecting the lives of people and for that the international community must support Pakistan in their hosting of this population, pushing to ensure rights are both upheld and extended.

Conclusion

The return of the Taliban in Afghanistan is viewed by Pakistan as its victory. But Pakistan's have to understand the fact that any humanitarian crisis and a socio-economic collapse in Afghanistan will not only be an existential threat for Afghans but also for the region and international security at large. An unstable and violence-prone Afghanistan will certainly encourage violent radical and extremist narratives and movements in

Pakistan which will not be easy to deal with. Taliban's rule has increased the confidence of religious groups and encouraged the madrassah generations and Pakistan's religious landscape is fertile for radical ideologies. The Taliban will surely want to consolidate their rule and they will exploit it to the maximum extent. Thus, Pakistan should avoid giving the impression that the "triumph of Taliban was its own victory" as it has few options at this front including dealing with the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. At this juncture, there are no easy options for Pakistan, but its decisions will have consequences on regional peace and global geopolitics and any misstep by Pakistan will end up in real tragedy not only for itself but also for the world at large.

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Sufi Path of Intercommunity Peacebuilding in India

*Mohit Awasthi**

Abstract

India is a multicultural society that celebrates diversity and also confronts inter-community conflict. Sometimes the inter-community conflict leads to violence, lynchings, looting, mass murders, and communal riots. The study focuses on the Sufi tradition's principles, values, and teachings, which extremely effectively reduce inter-community conflict and promote social peace and harmony. The article explores different aspects of the Sufi tradition in India to promote interfaith dialogue, such as developing communication with local people in their native languages, respecting each culture and lifestyle, and providing a shared space for dialogue, gathering celebration, and mingling. It can help to reduce inter-community conflict. It is a qualitative study based on secondary sources such as textbooks, journal articles, encyclopedia articles, and content from the Internet.

Keyword: Multiculturalism, interfaith dialogue, peacebuilding, Sufism, harmony

Introduction

India is one of the world's most plural societies, with religious, caste, language, and cultural heterogeneity. Its cultural diversity has a particular perfume of compositeness as if it were a thread connecting several flowers while each culture has its history. Historically, India was ruled by many dynasties and populated by a varied range of ethnic groups (Dinkar, 1956). Schedule tribes, caste hierarchy, religious diversity, and other facets of Indian society all have different goals and aspirations in

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life, which leads to conflict between individuals, communities, and the Indian state (Parekh, 2007).

Inter-communal strife between Hindus and Muslims is a reality that predates India's independence, resulting in the division of the country into Pakistan, a Muslim homeland, and secular India. At the time of independence, India's constitution established freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and promotion of religion as one of the citizen's fundamental rights. In India, it sparked identity politics and paved the door for self-expression, which sometimes takes the wrong path of enmity with other social groups. Even though India is a secular country, fundamentalist forces restrict inter-community connections and spread misleading information about one another, generating a communal conflict and posing a challenge to India's peace and development efforts.

Several factors contribute to inter-community conflict in India, one of which is the consequence of the divide and rule strategy applied by British rulers, which resulted in division and numerous communal massacres. Religious identities; social-psychological perspective in which social status enables prejudice against the 'other'; economic reasons; and the interrelationship between electoral politics and communal violence are some of the different perspectives on the origins of inter-community conflict in India. After independence, communal politics and hate politics became entrenched in practically every part of Indian society. Most of these politics are founded on lies and false propaganda to achieve their interests (primarily economic and political) of instilling hatred between communities. A blame game between communities arose from time to time, which resulted in a chain reaction of hate in society. Nowadays, communal politicians are promoting stereotypes, fueling prejudices, and provoking fundamentalists against each other communities in the name of protecting religion. Hindu communal politicians are doing so to revive the so-called golden age of Hinduism and save religion, and fundamentalist forces in Islam observe Hindus as a dominant enemy.

Communally oriented politicians trapped some stereotyped and prejudiced people and posed a challenge for society. The lack of patience and blind following without having actual knowledge too has become a

problem in society. The fake news often results in hate against each other, mob lynching, Intercommunity conflict, and communal riots. The intercommunity conflict has been very challenging for peace and development in Indian society; therefore, it is a need of the hour to learn from that section of the society with rich principles, norms, and values, and promotion of these can be widely helpful for the society. India has a long history of universalism and humanitarian values, sufficient to establish harmony and brotherhood in the community. It is the birthplace of Buddhism and Jainism. The Bhakti movement began with religious reform and where Sufism gained widespread acceptance in medieval society. The article explores the Sufi Path in India and attempts to identify Sufi principles, norms, and values that people might use for peace between communities. This study focuses on the Sufi principles and humanitarian values preached by Sufi saints, who have stressed the necessity of a society-wide tradition of universal love and peace. It also discussed the role of Sufism in promoting interfaith dialogue and the importance of local culture in intercommunity ties. It is a qualitative study that relies on secondary sources, including textbooks, journal articles, encyclopedia articles, and Internet content—these materials aided in conducting a qualitative examination of the issues at hand.

Sufism

Sufism is an Islamic mysticism (Knysh, 2019) and believes that the revelations received from God are divine inspiration within the heart. The Sufis have the highest morality who behave according to the need of time and never limit themselves in rituals and customs; their religion is the love for humanity and not to hurt anyone's feelings (Khanam, 2009). It loves to dance, music, and other ways which promote natural beauty and the essence of life (Khan, 2010; Khanam, 2009). It follows the Shrine tradition where everyone can visit without discrimination of caste, class, creed, and culture, which was never praised by fundamentalist some sections of Islam and denied Sufism. It believed in union with God through different means and preferred self-wanted poverty (*faqir*), freedom from worldly desires, and preferred the journey of self-realization (Chittick, 2000). Sufism believed in the connection of heart to heart and did not appreciate the secessionist approach of grouping to communicate and

connect with the people. It gives equal opportunity to everyone to be generous and kind. It teaches us that the vibration of the pure heart cannot be suppressed or delimited, and its impact is everlasting. By practicing it, anyone can achieve the position of superpower, full of human values and emotions, which has respect for everyone.

Sufi Principles

In the book, *Faslul- Kitab*, Shaikh Muhammad Parsa, a friend and biographer of Shah Naqshband, said that the Sufi principles propagated by Saint Abdul Khaliq al Ghujdawani, one of the greatest Sufi Masters of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order, were embraced and hailed by all Sufi orders as the way of truth and loyalty (Gupta, 2004). These principles are helpful in society with a vision of the righteousness of the people.

The first one is *Hoshdar Dam* (Conscious Breathing), which means the true seeker should always be alert that God is present with every breath. It means one should ensure that they do not indulge in any wrongdoing because God is watching them every moment.

The second principle is *Nazar bar Kadam* (Watch your step), which means one should not do anything that may drag him down or obstruct spiritual progress. Thus, the step moved forward should be clear so that there could not be ego dominance on their progress.

The third principle is *Safar dar Watan* (Journey Homeward). The seeker must move from the material world to the spiritual world to achieve godly characteristics; movement from worldly desires and human weaknesses is necessary.

The fourth principle is *Khilawatdar Anjuman* (Solitude in the Crowd), in which *Khilawat* means Seclusion, which is of two types. One type of Seclusion is *external Seclusion* that requires the seeker should be away from the people and spend his time in the commemoration of God. In contrast, another type of Seclusion is *internal Seclusion* which means one should constantly have his mind attuned to the Almighty whether he is amidst of crowd, walking, or doing anything else.

The fifth principle is *Yad Kard* (Essential Remembrance), which means by continuous engagement in reciting the '*Japa*,' the seeker will

start feeling the presence of the Almighty in his heart which will explore love for all and can help in promoting brotherhood in the society.

The sixth principle is *Baj Ghas* (Returning) which means to return to the origin. However, in practice, it refers to the developments during internal practice when the seeker may come across different experiences such as the sighting of light, activation of mystique centers, acquisition of miraculous power, and these experiences may often result in the downfall of the seeker due to arousal of ego. Therefore, Sufi masters recommended the seeker keep praying to the almighty at intervals because he is the only objective of the seeker. That may give strength to the seeker to be happy in every condition; it will foster the value of satisfaction and respect for others in the seeker's heart.

The seventh principle is *Nigab Dast* (Attentiveness) which means the seeker should always watch their internal condition so that no doubt or ill-thought ever arises. They constantly keep on remembering the Almighty.

The eighth principle is *Yad Dast* (Recollection) which means continuous remembrance. It means that the seeker becomes so appropriate that the remembrance continues in the heart effortlessly on its own. Their activities become positive, strengthening the relationship with the whole society because they understood that God created all, so all are equal.

Muhammad Baha'uddin Shah Naqshband propagated the other three principles. One of them is *Waqo of Zamani* (Awareness of time), which means the seeker must watch that the time at his grasp is spent in the commemoration of the Almighty give his very best to make progress on the path of spirituality. The seeker must report their actions and deeds, and for the wrongdoings, they should seek God's forgiveness. The second one is *Waqo of Adadi* (Awareness of Numbers) means one should, while holding the breath, recite the name of God, feeling his presence in the heart in odd numbers. It also means that the Almighty is one, and he likes oneness. The last one is *Wako of Kulbi* (Awareness of the Heart) suggests that with the motivation not to divert their heart, the seeker should always have an eye on their heart so that his attention is always toward the Divine Presence.

With the analysis of all these principles, it is clear that Sufis consider that self-experience is the knowledge of the truth, so one should rely on his own experience. To increase their experience, people should follow some sound principles in life, and by practicing accordingly, people can attain the highest goal in their life, which would be best for them and society. After following these principles, the follower will not fight for material needs and will be active to achieve the best qualities that are very useful to live a happy and peaceful life-like quality of patience, satisfaction, respect for equality, and understanding the importance of time and progress in life. These principles show the way of universal love and promoting love for every creature of God. To counter the inter-community hate, people can follow them in their life which will assist them in achieving mental peace too.

Sufi Saints'Life: Promotion of Humanitarian Values

The Sufi saints emphasized empathy, kindness, and service to humanity and regarded these values as the surest means of earning divine elegance (James Fadiman and Robert Frager, 1997). One can learn from Sufi saints the way to serve humanity. Sufi saints lived their life in such a way that is meaningful for ordinary people. Sufi saints set up their hospices in between the settlement of the poor people and led a simple life, and spoke local dialect to make communication easy so that they could share the joys and grief of ordinary people. (Momin, 2006; Nizami, 1961).

Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, a great saint of the Chisti order in India, had established his hospice amid poor people and always worked for the well-being of the depressed people. He had a forgiving nature and showed love and regard to all, irrespective of caste, creed, or religion (Sharib, 2006). Khwaja Gareeb Nawaz's (d. 1236 AD) thought that the highest and most inspiring form of devotion to God is to redress the wretchedness of depressed people to fulfill their needs and give them the courage to lead a life in a respected manner (Nizami, 1961). It is a guiding thought for us to understand the significance of the life of ordinary people. Furthermore, how one should behave with them so that happiness could prevail.

A Sufi saint Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagauri (d. 1274 AD), lived with his wife in a small village and led his life as a simple peasant; he owned a

cow he milked and always milked refused to accept any gift or grant of land from the authority. He was very caring and not in favor of the life of any creature on the earth; therefore, he adopted the path of having vegetarian food and always communicated with the local people in their dialect to make a genuine connection with local society (Momin, 2006). One can learn from him that giving importance to local culture and local people's lifestyle could be very helpful in preserving and promoting harmony in the society.

Another saint of Chistisilsila Shaikh Nizamuddin Awliya (d. 1325 AD), suggested that the lower self of a person should be in control to lead a happy life (Zafffer, 2012), and evil cannot get countered by sin but with tolerance, mercy, and compassion (Momin, 2006). This thought of Nizamuddin Awliya is constructive in understanding the importance of humanity and empathy in society and by following it, a demon can be a human being.

Sufism and Interfaith Dialogue

Many Sufi saints promote amity and goodness among individuals and different ethnic and religious communities continually dialogue with the people without discrimination based on caste, creed, culture, and religion. They tried to create a better understanding among their followers about other cultures and communities too. Sufi saints were conscious of the importance of life on the earth, and they worked to dilute the hate from the hearts of their followers. For example, Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shankar (d.1265 AD) refused to take a knife when someone presented it to him and replied that I am here 'to knit not to cut' therefore you should give me a needle, not a knife. One other saint Shaikh Nizamuddin also showed respect to individuals, followers of other religions, and a distinct way of worship. Once, someone asked Shaikh Nizamuddin what would be the destiny of a Hindu who believes in the unity of God and the foresightedness of Muhammad, but in front of Muslims, he does not reveal his true faith? In his reply, the Shaikh said that it depends upon God, not on us, because his interaction rests with God and the God may penalize him or excuse him as He wishes (Nizami, 1991). In such a way, he diluted the misleading energy consciously and gave a message that God knows everything and everyone has the right to faith and opinion, so there is no need to fight in the name of God and religion.

Sufi saints preached among Hindus, too, which impacts the willing conversion of Hindus to the fold of Islam (Arnold, 1913; Schimmel, 1994). Some saints preferred direct conversion, while many of them did not insist on the conversion of Hindus before admitting them to the circle of disciples. In Deccan, Shah Miranji Shamsul- Ushshaq (d. 1499 AD) welcomed many Hindu people and individuals from other faiths into their inner circle of adepts (Eaton, 1978). The Lingayat community formed a significant component of the outer ring of disciples and devotees of the Sufis of Bijapur and Lingayat priests preside, annual' urs ceremony of Shah Ahmad Wali in Bidar (Sherwani, 1953).

Some Sufi saints displayed distinguished compassion and promoted vegetarianism, a distinct feature of the significant Hindu community in North India. Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti preferred vegetarian food, and his leading disciple Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagauripractised vegetarianism and prohibited cooking meat for his' urs celebration (khanam, 2009). Not only this, in the 16th century, a Sufi saint of Gulbarga named Shah Ruknuddin Tola announced that anybody who wished to visit his grave for offering *Fatiba* should abstain from meat the day before the visit, which can be still observed. Thus, Sufi saints respected value of non-violence and had empathy for every creature on the earth.

The list of saints is so long whose followers in Hindu and Muslim communities and whose teachings and thoughts highly impacted the development of interfaith dialogue and understanding between different communities. Sufi teachings, like there are so many paths which lead to the God and in number, these are as many as the particles of sand; not to fight but follow that in which a person believe; respect the lifestyle and culture of others; respect everyone's right to equality are useful in interfaith dialogue. Based on these teachings, one can deal with orthodox people who always fight on God's name and numbers and believe that his faith and religion are superior to others.

Sufi tradition and the Local Culture

To develop intercultural understanding, necessary to respect local symbols, culture, and language so that local people can absorb new ideas and understand meaningful thoughts. Sufi practitioners followed this path

and got recognition in the society. Many Sufi saints respect indigenous cultural, religious, and literary traditions and employ idioms and metaphors, to express themselves, spread their teachings, and enhance and deepen their own spiritual experiences. Significantly, a few Sufis used religious symbols, imagery, metaphors, and mythology of Hindus to describe the nature of divine and mystic experience. For example, in the Deccan, Burhanuddin Janam (d. 1582 AD) used Sanskrit terms to express Sufi concepts, like he described God as Shuddha Bramha (Pure being) and the phenomenal world Maya, both are derivated from Hindu tradition (Eaton, 1978). Shah Fazl-e-Rahman Gunj Moradabadi (d.1895 AD) explained the meaning of the Quran in local dialect for the benefit of his pupils, and he represented God as Parmeshwar, Maha Ishwar, Manmohan, and Maha Thakur in Hindu language and mythology (Moradabadi, 1990).

In Northern India, Sufi saints, like Shaikh Hamiduddin, Shaikh Burhanuddin Gharib Shaikh Fariduddin, Shaikh Sharafuddin Bu Ali Qalandar, Shaikh Nizamuddin Awliya, Shaikh Sharafuddin Yahya Maneri, Shaikh Ashraf Jahangir Semnani, Sayyid Muhammad Gesudaraz, and many more communicated with the people in the local dialect in Hindawi which was understood and spoken by the local people from both communities (Hindus and Muslims particularly). Shaikh Nizamuddin and Khwaja Banda Nawaj complimented composition in the Hindawi tongue at musical assemblies (*sama*). Sufi poets Madho Lal Husain (d. 1593 AD), Bulle Shah (d. 1752 AD), and his contemporary Hashim Shah of Amritsar used the tale of Heer Ranjha and Sohni Mahiwal for the articulation of mystic thought in Punjabi and Sindhi (Schimmel, 1975; Ramkrishna,1938). Amir Khushrau, a disciple of Shaikh Nizamuddin Awliya, brought a synthesis of Persian and Indian Musical tradition, and he invented several musical modes (*raga*) and *kebayal* (Momin, 2006) and also known as the father of Qawwali (Qureshi,1985) which is widely listening in the Indian subcontinent. Indian cinema made it famous, and it gives immense pleasure and happiness to listen to Sufi songs and music. It got a broad audience from every part of India.

Sufi Shrines: A Commonplace

Visiting the khanqah of Sufi saints by different communities has been familiar from the initial days of Sufism. These places were the center

of Intercultural gathering, inter-religious dialogue, and understanding where people from different cultures and Hindu yogis used to visit. For example, many Hindu saints used to visit the khanqah of Baba Farid to pay their respect to him, where Baba Farid used to welcome heartily and converse with them in the local dialect. Nowadays, Sufi shrines have been providing a shared space for intercultural gathering and celebrating festivals in which there is no discrimination, equal opportunity for all. There are equal rights (men and women) to pray and pay their homage to the deity at many dargahs and community eating during the Urs' of the saint in which people from different communities participated. Celebration of the 'Urs of Khawaja Bandnawaz, Gulbarga begins by jointly placing a bouquet on the mausoleum dome by a Hindu and a Muslim (Sherwani, 1953). Also, people from both communities celebrate Diwali (a Hindu festival) at the Dargah of Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti. Diwali and Basant Panchami (both) at Khwaja Nizamuddin Awliya, Delhi and Holi, a celebration of colors marked at Dewa Sharif Dargah (Dargah of a Sufi saint Haji Waris Ali), Barabanki every year till today (my observation at sites).

Conclusion

For intercommunity peace, it is necessary to respect local symbols, each culture, and dialect so that local people can absorb new ideas and understand meaningful thoughts. Sufism is mysticism; it is full of universalism and has some norms, values, and principles. Those norms, values, and principles can guide human beings to live their lives peacefully with humanity. Followers of the Sufi tenets will not fight for material needs. They will live a peaceful, happy life with love, patience, satisfaction, respect for equality, and understanding the importance of time and progress in life. These principles show the path of universalism. Understanding the lifestyle of Sufi saints; their thoughts about diversity, brotherhood, humanity could be much helpful in defeating the anti-peace forces of the society. Sufi values like unconditional service to ordinary people, renunciation, meditation, remembrance of God every moment, belief in unity, the practice of non-violence, tolerance, respect of differences, acceptance of differences, recognition of distinctness, empathy, dialogue in the local dialect, respect the lifestyles of local people and so on could

be beneficial against the inter-community conflict and useful in peacebuilding. Community leaders and individuals should promote these principles and values in society to help them understand themselves, the meaning and goal of their life, and the purpose of the community.

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