

## **Changing Perspectives on Peace Studies in South Asia**

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### **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.

**Key Words:** 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.

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

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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-tribals<sup>2</sup> 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*

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<sup>2</sup> Such terms as ‘tribe’ and ‘tribals’ are freely used in India without any of their necessarily pejorative meanings.

*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, Sanmilit Jatiya Abhiwartin (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 violence<sup>3</sup>.

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, *Athwass* (a Kashmiri word which means handshake or holding of hands as

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<sup>3</sup> For a review of these interventions, see Das (2013)

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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