

Conflict Theories in South Asia

In South Asia different people with different expertise have interpreted the Indo-Naga Conflict in their various ways. Though, the following definitions and understanding of conflict are applied to the Indo-Naga conflict, some of them could be applicable to other conflicts as well. Udayon Misra traced the Naga national movement from the historical and socio-cultural roots that could easily be claimed to be the most protracted armed conflict in the Indian sub-continent since independence. For, right from the beginning of the Naga struggle the Naga National Council (NNC), the political wing of the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) has been consistently maintaining that the Nagas form an independent nationality. The NNC claimed that, except for some 75 years or so of British control from 1880s onwards, the Nagas had never been subjugated or ruled by any other people and that they had never formed part of what today constitute the Indian Union. The historical roots cause of the Naga national movement is also shared by Lipi Ghosh.

Most movements and their supporters in North east view their own societies or motherland as the 'colony' of Delhi/India. They want to "de-colonize" their societies and their dream of de-colonisation situates them against the mighty Indian State. Chandrika Singh is of the opinion that the denial of the demand of a Sovereign Nagaland of the Nagas by the Government of India has led to the Indo-Naga armed conflict. In P.K. Nehru's thinking, basic cause of the Indo-Naga conflict is due to the sudden exposure of relatively primitive society to complexities of modern world, which they did not understand at all and from which they tried to protect themselves through their traditional and instinctive reaction of violence. The roots of Naga national movement for Maria Saifuddin Effendi should be viewed in two perspectives:

- i) Socio-cultural and religious differences between the Nagas and Indian; and,
- ii) The British policies of non-interference and isolation.

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In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru: "...As Indian independence gradually approached, some of these British officials and Christian missionaries induced them to think in terms of 'Naga Independence'. This had some effect on some sections of the Nagas." For Sahadevan, the source of conflict in Nagaland, among other, is rooted in what may be called 'feeling of betrayal' or the legacy of the colonial rule. For Sushil K. Pillai, the conflict in Nagaland is rooted not in the classic factors of deprivation or social injustice, but in the deep fear of the loss of both Ethnicity and Identity. Ajay Sahni, on the other hand, categorized the conflict as low intensity war defined as conflicts in which fatalities are over 100 but less than 1000 per annum.

Persons like Ved Marwah viewed the conflict from the Indian national security perspective as it is evident from his observation of the situation of Nagaland in recent years when he says it has been a matter of great concern for India's national security. Galtung suggest that "conventional conceptions of security, focusing on the security of the 'state' and freedom from the threat or use of force, have proved inadequate to address the diverse range of challenges faced by the world community at the dawn of the twenty-first century." Although what is actually considered a 'security' issues varies widely according to the approach and perspective taken, the fact that the concept of security used during the era of the Cold War is no longer sufficient for the world of today cannot reasonably be denied. Security should not be limited purely to military aspect alone, as has been done in the past, but must be extended to include economic, political, social, cultural and ecological factors as well. B.G. Verghese viewed the conflict from the material or developmental perspective. He had urged for the developmental aspect (Development of Infrastructural facilities) with human development, safeguarding the environment, raising the living standards and improving the quality of lives, employment generation and enhancing the security, taken together is not merely critically important in itself but central to the fulfillment of other aspiration.

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B.K. Roy Burman talked about Schizophrenic alienation, which is a pervasive reality almost all over the North East. The Government of India and the media used different terms to describe the Nagas political struggle for independence. The conflict has been referred to as law and order problems, and insurgency or secessionist movement. This is a particular dominating perception across South Asia. However, the Nagas political struggle has been often 'misunderstood and misquoted' by the Government of India and journalist writings, and 'the question of secession from India did not technically arise because the Nagas never thought in lines of being an Indian'.

Taking Kashmir as an example of conflicting interests between Pakistan and India, Diethelm Weldemann observed that Pakistan politicians and columnists sometimes seem to live in a world of their own perceptions, which is not always congruent with the reality. But at the same time the dominating Indian perception to assess the Kashmir question merely as a law and order problem or as unconstitutional attempt to secede from India, is explicitly narrow-minded, incorrect and full of grave consequences. The impression of the civil societies is that, it is true that the Naga question has always been perceived in the same fashion by the officials and the policy-makers of the Indian state for the last more than five decades.

Some people like Mr. K.P.S. Gill the 'super cop' and the publishers and editor of *Faultlines* and the founding President of the Institute for Conflict Management have dehumanized the Naga people by categorizing and branding the various Naga political organizations and the Naga resistance movement as 'Terrorist'. However, the attempt of the 'Institute for Conflict Management' to systematically and venomously distort the historical facts of the Naga people, suppressing the Naga people experiences and denying recognition of their rights and the struggle of the Naga people for Self-Determination has exposed itself as an instrument of neo-colonial imperialism and forces of political subjugation. And branding of a whole people is not only medieval but reflects the feudal thinking and approach of the institute. In contrast to the policy makers of the Institute,

former Army General, Shankar Roy Chaudhary realised that the Naga movement is not terrorism nor can it be equated as such. He said, "Military solution is not possible. We have realized it. It is the time for India and the Nagas to talk across the table."

Lt. General F.A. Vyas of the Indian army stated that, "Nagas insurgence never adopted terror tactics." The former Indian Security Commissioner, A. Murkot Ramunny, in his writing said, "The Nagas do not kill civilians." One of the earliest Indian Generals who recognized the Indo-Naga conflict as not of law and order problem but a political problem requiring political wisdom for a solution was General K.S. Thimmaya. Among the Indian politicians who recognize the Indo-Naga conflict as political issue are Jaya Prakash Narayan, Narasimha Rao, H.D. Deve Gowda, I.K. Gujral, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and Dr. Manmohan Singh etc. The military generals and the politicians who understands the issue as political one shows a paradigm shift of policy and understanding of the root cause and the issue of the conflict.

Protocol II of the 1949 Geneva Conventions defines an armed conflict as those conflicts "which take place in the territory of a High Contracting Party between its armed forces and dissident armed forces or other organized armed groups which, under responsible command, exercise such control over a part of its territory as to enable them to carry sustained and concerted military operations and to implement this Protocol." The NSCN termed the Indo-Naga conflict as an armed conflict within the meaning of the Geneva Conventions because the organization is a well disciplined national resistance with an armed wing, under responsible command, exercising control over all Naga areas between India and Burma, and it is able to "carry out sustained and concerted military

operations.” There are many other theories on conflict, but for the present endeavour the above mentioned theories may be sufficed due to the space and relevance.

Emergence of Conflict Transformation Theory

The Chapter intends to highlight the weaknesses of the traditional theories of Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution, and highlight the emergence of the Conflict Transformation Theory as an important shift from the conventional methods of conflict engagement. As such we shall use the term Conflict Transformation as an emerging distinctive theory as argued by Hugh Miall. Nevertheless, this new theory draws on many of the familiar concepts of conflict management and conflict resolution, and that it also rests on the same tradition of theorizing about conflict. It is best viewed not as a wholly new approach, but rather as a reconceptualisation of the field in order to make it more relevant for contemporary conflicts. The importance of this chapter lies in the fact that analytical and theoretical studies could contextually be done in the Naga situation by using various relevant conflict resolution/transformation theories.

Importantly, such analytical and theoretical studies such as this would be worthwhile if it could find a place in applying this research work in strengthening the hands of the conflicting parties in their search for an honourable and mutually acceptable political solution to the conflict. It would be advisable on our part to highlight the history of conflict resolution, early peace research, debate among theorists on the alternative approaches to conflict before we could venture into understanding the theory of conflict transformation and some important models of the conflict transformation. The objective is to contextualise these models and other available approaches in the Nagas and the Government of India's search of resolution of the political conflict. The subsequent section is based on secondary information available on the internet and journal. Adequate referencing is being done accordingly.

History of Conflict Resolution

As an academic discipline, conflict resolution a la Western culture is an outgrowth of democratic liberalism. Emerging from the 18th and 19th Centuries' discontent with Monarchies, democratic liberalism searched for an alternative ideology that would fulfill the aspirations of the emerging nation-states following the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Conflict resolution as a defined specialist field has come of age in the Post-Cold War era. The development of the field started to accelerate in the 1950s and 1960s, at the height of the Cold War, when the development of nuclear weapons and the conflict between the superpowers seemed to threaten human survival. A handful of people in North America and Europe began to establish research groups to develop new ideas, part of which derived from experience with conflict management in industrial relation and from community mediations. These people's efforts were not taken very seriously, but nevertheless, the new ideas attracted interest. The field began to grow and spread. Scholarly Journals in conflict resolution were created. Institutions to study the field were established.

By the 1980s, conflict resolution ideas were also increasingly making a difference in existing conflicts, such as in Northern Ireland, where groups inspired by the new ideas had set up Community-relations initiatives that were reaching across community divides. By the closing years of the Cold War, the climate for conflict resolution was changing radically, which had a huge impact on the field. As a result of improved relations between the superpowers and a sharp rise in the number of nation/ethnic and other types of conflicts, a climate arose in which the attention of scholars of international relations and comparative politics turned to exactly the type of conflict that had preoccupied the conflict resolution thinkers for many years. A richer

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cross-fertilization of ideas developed between conflict resolution and the traditional fields.