



Cultures of Governance
and Conflict Resolution
in Europe and India



Milestone 2: Mid-term conference

Milestone achieved April 2012(M16) in fulfillment of requirements of the FP7 project, Cultures of Governance and Conflict Resolution in Europe and India (CORE)

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Acknowledgement

With the Mid-term conference, held at Malaviya Centre for Peace Research, Banaras Hindu University on March 19, 2012, the CORE project achieved its second milestone. The Conference, attended by a large number of participants and representatives from academia, civil society organizations; governmental institutions and the European Union, explored and discussed the important role of governance in the resolution of conflicts in India and Europe. The conference proved to be an excellent opportunity for the project to disseminate its preliminary results and to engage with important stakeholders, most notably government representatives and representatives from civil society. It was also important for evaluating the relevance of the research performed up until the time of the conference in light of feedback from prominent external academics and representatives from civil society organisations.

This Milestone report includes the accounts from the Mid-term conference and shall be an important component in the continuation of the project in terms of evaluating its preliminary results and guide the direction of its forthcoming research.

Agenda

09.30 Welcome ceremony and introduction

- Priyankar Upadhayaya, Banaras Hindu University (CORE project)
- Angela Liberatore, European Commission
- J. Peter Burgess, Peace Research Institute Oslo (CORE project)

09.45 Reflections on conflict resolution and governance from the CORE project

- J. Peter Burgess, Peace Research Institute Oslo (CORE project), Chair
- Oliver Richmond, University of St. Andrews (CORE project)
- Sumona DasGupta, Society for Participatory Research in South Asia (CORE project)
- Ranabir Samaddar, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CORE project)
- Amit Prakash, Jawaharlal Nehru University (CORE project)

11.30 Discussants

- Prof. Surendra Munshi, Indian Institute of Management
- George Mathew, Institute of Social Sciences
- Prof. Chandrakala Padia, Faculty of Social Science, Banaras Hindu University

12.30 Lunch

13.30 Conversation with Civil Society on the role of governance in conflict resolution

- Anjoo Sharan, Banaras Hindu University (CORE project), Chair
- Navnita Behera, University of Delhi (CORE project)
- Jagdeep Chhokar, Association for Democratic Reforms
- Peter Ronald DeSouza, Indian Institute of Advanced Study

14.45 Tea Break

15.00 Comments and observations

- J. Peter Burgess (CORE project), Chair
- Philipp Oliver Gross, EU Delegation to India, European External Action Service
- Roger MacGinty, University of St. Andrews (CORE project)
- Kristoffer Liden, Peace Research Institute Oslo (CORE project)

16.30 Conclusions

17.00 End

Introduction¹

The CORE project was presented as one of true international cooperation. So far it is the only EU-funded project that was created out of a mutual interest of both Indian and European institutions. Thus, diversity is its richness, but also its challenge, which needs to be permanently addressed and not ignored.

Yet, beyond the obvious differences between Europe and India, many commonalities were mentioned, among which we can find:

- Both societies are living examples of multicultural democracies with democratic polities with internal diversities,
- Societies in both countries have learned tough lessons from violent war and justice,
- Both polities still continue to experience conflicts. However, these conflicts are not necessarily negative, because there is no progress without conflict,
- The historical relation between the two regions during the Colonial period and the Independence process.

However, the need for a common conceptual language to talk about culture was emphasized. Which possess the problem in locating responsibility, (i.e. who is doing the talking and on whose behalf?). The anthropological definition of culture has led to some disagreement. In Western academic discourse culture is over-emphasized or detached from the interpretations of those who are active participants of the conflict. Thus, we need to use the local people's definition of culture. This represents a challenge, of course, because local thinking will be always diverse but it is impossible to contribute to peace without understanding local thinking.

The introductory remarks were concluded with the reminder that research is only a tool for finding the best means for establishing peace. It does not bring peace alone. Peace is a continuous and every-day process. Here education is very important but one must be aware of not falling into the "entitlement syndrome", which consists of granting degrees without the proper educational foundations. Moreover, the question of the educational system creating competitive individuals instead of peace-building citizens should also be opened for discussion.

Reflections on conflict resolution and governance from the CORE project

The chair started by stating that the purpose of this conference is to present the mid-term assessment of the results achieved in this project milestone. The involved partners have already mapped the conflicts in both regions. In the following months CORE is ought to revise the strategies used to deal with conflict in order to understand their underlying rationalities and learn from them. In addition, the project should look at the role of identity and culture at the local level as well as identify the role of minority groups and their agency.

By doing so the project aims to develop a common language of conflict resolution/transformation which will facilitate the mutual understanding between India and Europe in terms of governance and

¹ Contributors to the report: Kati Richter, Luis Perez Torner, Elida Kristin Undrum Jacobsen, Janel Galvanek, Anna Bernhard

conflict resolution. In addition it will document lessons learned on how to understand and find ways to deal with conflict.

Another justification of CORE rests in the need to fill the theoretical gaps of the governance paradigms in contemporary western political science that represent underlying narratives related to power and legitimacy. The first one, discussed particularly during the 1960-70 decade presented the local political agency as one in a conflicting relationship. The institutions that tended to emerge from nation building processes were repressive. The state was seen as a kind of criminal, which the rich and powerful used to support their financial or military ambition. Local agencies tend to be conceptualized as involved in a race for power, so the institutions themselves – depending on who wins the race - really are instable and fragile.

By the late 1990's, this later discourse started reflecting on how power was mitigated, bringing forth the externalization of “state-building” and a clear understanding of the core functions of the state: to produce security and enable access to market. Years after, a broader narrative emerged with the inclusion of the “peace-building” paradigm, which represents a change in the assumptions surrounding any peace-process: “If we want to achieve peace, we need state order”. With the global governance framework a normative phase started that aimed at drawing consented global and regional norms of human rights, democratisation, political space for non-governmental organizations, etc., In other words, liberal peace building.

These two external paradigms (state-building and peace-building) both hold that governance and conflict resolution were coming from the outside and offered a very crude understanding of how states are formed and what 'conflict transformation' means. Examples of these narratives could be found at the global level within the UN system and its working papers: local agencies tended to be conceptualised from outside, so they were perceived as unstable and the response to that was more externally driven state-building.

Clearly, this narrative did not include a cultural dimension of agency in the state-building process, thus making them inadequate for analysing the role of the local agencies of governance and conflict resolution. Moreover, they could not explain how conflict resolution is achieved or sought after on ground level. This is the debate that compelled CORE to try to point out what's missing in this triangle and to find a way of understanding the local agencies that engage in the peace discourse. The project hence wanted to explore: what happens during state building at the local level, what happens at the international level? How do governance and reconciliation work together? Moreover, in face of the lack of theoretical tools there is the need to develop a new conceptual language that describes the vast range of local actors, peace initiatives, identity issues, different cultural settings, post-colonial settings, etc., all influencing peace formation on the local level. The project is trying to put these old paradigms upside down and discover how rules are constructed from the inside.

The project was also presented as an opportunity to revisit the previous work done by the team members and to explore governance from a cultural perspective. Yet, when thinking about governance in India, there is only 'governance of conflict' to be found. There is no other one. At least in the case of governance experiences in North East India it has to be pointed out that, initially not much theoretical attention was given to certain formulations. North East India is usually seen as a symbol of turbulence, the exception to the peaceful democratic India. The region is full of what would be contradictions to a democratic regime, (e.g. resources and security affairs are handled in the most centralized manner) and we can find all types of conflicts: ethnic, territorial or border disputes, as well as disputes over land and resources. This democracy theatre of exception shifts continuously from one side of the Indian

subcontinent to the other. Sometimes the focus is on Kashmir, which then becomes the exception. It would therefore be interesting to see how these perceptions of exception shift from here to there. However, there are provisional lessons to be learned: The conflicts have settled down in North East India, governments have succeeded in bringing down the acuteness of the conflicts. It can also be seen that certain rationalities (how to solve and approach conflict, etc.) have settled the conflicts. But there is still the need of a greater analytical understanding of what the substance of state-building is.

This has led to a reflection on violence and politics as some people feel that violence is the only way of solving conflicts. But if the statement is true and that only through the means of war and the language of violent conflicts change can happen, we can obviously see that politics has no chance. Politics has become “in-politics”. Thus, if we study governance, it does not mean that it is assumed that conflict will go away, but rather it implies seeking how politics will have a chance to come back into the picture (as an alternative to violent conflict). Thus how can the stakeholders realize that it is not possible to achieve the appropriate ends through the means that are chosen?

One response to this dilemma was the assertion that social governance implies a discourse of security. The idea of producing a subject that would be free and liberalized, but secure at the same time, is the clue to the success of bringing back politics. The intellectual challenge lays in finding the minor voices of state (re)formation that are able to think of other ways of making political societies, and to see them return. This approach would be a much more events-centered one and it would present an interesting line of research which could be a comparison ground for all the case studies i.e. what are these voices in state formation?

The link between governance and conflict was also discussed. The project members affirmed that violent conflict is not caused by any single factor, but by many structural ones. Therefore setting norms on how to wage conflict in a more civilized manner becomes important. Elimination of conflict is not possible, but it can be engaged constructively and get away from violence and destruction. Every society has its own ways of mediating conflict thus, it might be useful to develop a conflict checklist depending on the conflicts that gets contextualized according to the particular conflict areas. Thus, there is a need for a “conflict sensitive lens” to look at/understand governance at a local level.

With this in mind, a “Contextualised conflict check list” with reference to Kashmir’s local elections in which over 80% of the people voted totally without intimidation, would start with the yawning gap between rhetoric and implementation. Although this happens in every state, the specificities of Kashmir are that there is already a pre-existing narrative of alienation and grievances, which makes the gap even more severe. The question was raised of what the government could have been done before the elections in order to avoid this gap. Some sort of preparation would have been indicated. If a checklist had been foreseen, mistakes would likely have been avoided. Important questions that can be raised are: One might have considered, for example, how an outreach could have reached every village. Or, how the media could have been engaged so that unrealistic expectations are not perpetuated in the public. These mistakes fed into the already existing grievances.

Besides this, both Kashmir and North East have created an economy of conflict. When looking into these conflict zones, where governance is understood as the set of initiatives implemented by the government, we see a shrinking space for civil society actors, or neutralization by Governmental organization and NGO's or has been co-opted by global agencies. Several actors in both areas want to keep these conflicts alive. How to ensure that they don't scuttle the process towards peace? Until multi-stakeholder discourses are not taken seriously, how can initiatives like this be successful?

When the leadership shifted after the elections in Kashmir, former military actors also became involved in power holding positions. It was recalled that if this new process were not to succeed, the lives of them would be endangered, because already they are seen to have betrayed the cause. The re-integration of ex-combatants/militants into the society, it was suggested, has never been taken seriously by the government of India. This is perceived as a missed opportunity, since in principle multi-stakeholder communication with a gender scope is the condition for re-building trust. Service-deliverability is the main way of seeing the extent of how governments are able to create a sense of security (especially, the safety of life) in the local population. Security, it was asserted, should secure life and not be an additional threat to life. Following the principle of a conflict-sensitive lense would have the effect of avoiding many unintended consequences.

The case of Bihar was regarded as different. Here the question about sovereignty was not considered as important as the resistance against state power, emerging contests over social injustice, recognition, and welfare redistribution issues. Natural resource exploitation also plays a significant role in the conflict dynamics of the regions like Jharkhand and Bihar have been consistently mined throughout history shaping the current conflict dynamics.

In addition to these issues it was asserted, there are actors and institutions which are encouraging conflicts, and both of them creating a set of procedures and interest which influence the conflict. There are, it was reminded, at least 5-7 actors at the Panchayat level: State, societal actors such as Politicians, political activists, NGOs, etc. and non-societal actors (Naxals). There are very important links between all these actors that account for the political economy of the conflict. There has been an expansion of the conventional field of action of the stake-holders, which create an overlapping of interests and foster competition. An example of this can be found in the Naxals trying to influence Panchayats in order to gain access to central government resources through institutional means rather than through battles. The so-called Non-Government Organizations have developed their own agendas, and they are political as well.

Discussants

A comment was made on the need to rethink the meaning of core-terms in all social sciences: conflict resolution, democracy and politics were also presented. It was suggested that we have reached a stage where globally these terms need to be reconsidered. While democracies themselves challenge other political regimes, democracy has been challenged all over the world. The occupy Wall Street movement in New York, the protests in Italy, Spain and Greece, and the Anna Hazzare protest in India, are contestations against the democratically elected governments. Thus, we start to see situations where we need to think beyond democracy as democratic people.

According to one discussant, “politics” has been defined in a distorted manner, especially in global discourse. The commonplace remark, “I don't dirty my hands by engaging in politics” (see Max Weber 'Politics as vocation) politics is understood as using violence for political ends. According the discussant this needs to be changed, rejected in a very basic manner. Instead politics should be understood as “service for the common good”.

One discussant pointed out the “governance” understood as “violent means by governments” needs to be rejected as well, instead, we need to ask ourselves: how governance is to be understood? Some of the answers can be found within the rich (Indian) tradition, particularly in one of the maximums of

Kautilya: “In the welfare of the subjects lies the welfare of the king. He may conquer the world, but if has not paid attention to the welfare of his subjects, his kingdom is in danger”.

The differentiation of “conflict” should, according to one discussant, also be discussed. There is no progress without conflict, but we need to differentiate between destructive and constructive conflict, even though this difference is difficult to determine. It could be argued that anything that promotes conflict, but promotes the welfare of all, could be regarded as constructive. This is contestable but it could be a good starting point.

On the relation between the local and the global, the discussant underlined that we are all natives in our countries of origin, but that there was a time when all of us were natives, and not part of the colonizing world. Now the world is full of natives, but at the same time all these natives are caught up in a process of globalization. Now we exposed to the views of other natives. As an answer to the question of how we should take care of the problems that are there in the world, the discussant responded that we should reflect on our nativity in order that we can find a common way of working. We need, in other words, to make ourselves clear by understanding each other.

The discussant suggested that the expression “Gandhi killed Osama bin Laden” provides an interesting lesson regarding the kind of brutal killing that took place in Pakistan last year, and the fact that there was no reaction from the Islamic world. There was a concern with dignity, not with brutality. A very new chapter in world history has begun with Muslims realizing they can ask for dignity in a non-violent way.

Another discussant made an observation related to the way conflict arises. Basic conflict arises, he asserted, because the primordial loyalty is been hampered. From there, the conflict begins. How to solve and handle it in a context of diversity? This challenge is the reason for the need for institutions to bring peace. It was asked whether we need an instrumentality to foster peace. If so, this would mean a local government which is closer to the people.

It was asserted that the problem, on the other hand, is the political economy of violence. In Kashmir for example, many thousand people lost their lives because there are Western interests that wanted to perpetuate violence. The spoilers of peace are those with vested interests – arms dealers that supply to Indian army in Kashmir (and armed groups in Pakistan) – political economy, corporate interests. It was mentioned that the trillions of dollars per year spent on arms and ammunitions in India raises the question of what the corporations involved would do without profits if there would be peace?

Against this scenario, it was asserted that true education and information sharing, and the creation of bases of knowledge basis in these societies are the only way to bring peace. This can be done in practice with democracy, participation and people expressing their opinions. In this sense, India has the institution of the Gram Sabha (village assembly) as a means of direct democracy, where people can meet every month, at least 4 times a year. The discussant reminded that there is representative democracy as well where more than 3 million people, more than 1 million women, are elected. All these possibilities exist, both legal and constitutional, the discussant pointed out that they are not implement because politicians don’t want to share/give away their power. There is the example of Jarkhand, where it took 33 years for these local elections to happen.

The discussant pointed out that 90 % voting took place in the villages of Kashmir where citizens participated despite threats, because they understand that for peace and development there is only one instrument: Democracy. However, the discussant clarified, this democracy on ground level is a paper

democracy. The government, which has promised to “train” people, has not fulfilled this promise.

As the discussant argued, if power is given to the people, there will be less conflict. It is, he reminded, the politicians who are at the core of the problem. They do not want to give up their power. Hence political will is lacking in many parts of India.

An example was given in which a woman fighting against the coal mining companies was killed because she was supposed not to have a voice to speak for the poor, having not been formally elected. Since 1933 more than 400 men and women lost their lives because they actively participated in elections. This year, 25 men and women were killed during the Panchayat elections.

It was asked why such violence takes place at all. The response was the nexus between politicians and local economy (land owners, etc.), the role of the “Takela” or the middle men, the corporate sector, and other actors not interested in the people, but in the resources in the villages and in the forests, where people struggle to live. It was said that these are the issues one needs to take seriously and that they need a strong political will, which sadly currently is missing.

- *Lunch*

Conversation with Civil Society on the role of governance in conflict resolution

At the beginning of the next session members of civil society organizations were invited to share their experiences with agencies of governance. A distinguished panel was then invited to respond and give individual comments.

(Input from the Civil Society)

The first speakers referred to the need to redefine democracy as it is currently applied referring to how it fails to provide justice and making the remark that without justice there can be no peace. Peace without justice was thereby defined as the culture of silence with impunity. This paved the way for a different debate on the role of global values and agencies. It was said that according to this debate, there is a belief in global values, while global thinking at the same times is ignoring the local people. The point was made that people's understanding of conflict and justice is different from the perceptions held by “bigger” actors (views from the World Bank, for example). The necessity to understand the local thinking and to better include ordinary people in the global agenda was therefore emphasized. It was mentioned that people in the remote villages, in areas where conflicts are taking place and among the poor are to a greater extent talking about how to make their voices heard. An example was made with the net-working meetings taking place in Manipur. The speakers also pointed out that the new Dalit movements of the poor now possess a broader unity giving the example with poor people from every pressured community argue for unity foremost on the anti-racism day on the 21st June. It was also said that many poor people are facing a lot of problems through the application of new liberal policies.

The village economy has been damaged and this provides a common ground for poor people to unite and thereby overcome all the other differences they may have.

The next comment came from representatives from a local NGO working with women in prostitution and girls trapped in human trafficking in Varanasi. The economical and caste scope of this phenomenon was particularly emphasized by the commentators who argued that 94% of the women who are victims to trafficking in Varanasi are Dalits (or OBC's) and usually come from extremely impoverished backgrounds. It was also said that despite 700 documented cases of trafficking of young girls the families directly affected rarely report to the police. The fact that the victim seemed to lack faith in getting justice was described as very troublesome and that this might lead to a situation where people lose faith in critical state institutions such as the justice and police authorities. It was argued that some parts of the Civil Society want to protect poor people but the government will not allow them. There is thus a limited voice for the independent civil society and heavy bureaucracy makes the process of filing a protest difficult. An example was made that a few years ago everyone could launch a protest at the district level, now they are only allowed to protest outside of the city centre.

It was further mentioned that the questions raised above once again bring up the need to redefine democracy claiming that if there is no justice how can democracy be achieved? It was further argued that the current system is too corporate-centered. A democracy needs to be people-centred and talks about democracy are meaningless when people's basic needs are not satisfied.

The next input was related to the violence and the economic exploitation suffered by women in the Indian State of Uttar Pradesh and how this became a strong pulling factor for them becoming agents of peace. The lesson learnt was that injustice has become the reason for the emergence of a new culture of peace. It was argued that it was the violence these women were exposed to, particularly in the household that made them peace and change makers.

This was followed by the questioning of the very meaning of the term Civil Society. Several questions were raised regarding this whether they should refer to the institutional or be defined by the organizational structures? Or if it shall refer to the people operating on the ground or the people that organize spontaneously (such as the Occupy Wall Street movement)? Other suggestions such as defining civil society in terms of NGO's was mentioned or if one also should include the women protesting against liquor as part of civil society.

It was argued that there is a shrinking space for the conventional civil society at the same time as there is an opening of new political space that includes the growing role of corporate citizenship, private citizens and social entrepreneurship. It was highlighted that this can be seen as a dual process that opens many research fields to be explored.

Another set of comments were shared regarding the "westernisation" of Indian culture or in other words the shift in paradigms of what quality governance and politics should be. It was mentioned that the mandate of governance changed from the "health of a nation" to "wealth of a nation" and that this would make one think about how the political powers in a democracy are exercised. In the actual situation the people are forced to vote for bad governments and this accounts for the lack of willingness to participate in this exercise. In light of this, the standard response is education, yet it was pointed out that it is important to remember that it was the highly qualified scientists and political professionals that brought the potential destruction of the entire earth.

(Responses and comments from the panel)

Responding to the queries about an operative definition of civil society, the panel stated that civil society could be defined as the series of organized initiatives, practices and responses to deal with problems in society. It was argued that what is accomplished by civil society or not has to do more with democratic spaces and how they are exercised by the civil society itself. The panel acknowledged that civil society is usually defined in parallel with NGO`s because it is the natural main candidate. It was however clarified that this is certainly not the only applicable definition of civil society. Besides those organized in an around institutions, there are other responses societies emphasize in order to address internal conflicts.

It was also advised not to have an *a priori* assumption that all civil society actors are necessarily good despite the often perceived notion of civil society to have noble objections. There is hence a need to take into account what was labeled as the “other” side of civil society in peacebuilding. The case of Kashmir was mentioned as an example that after two decades of work from civil society witnessed the existence of both kinds of actors, including some working to perpetuate the conflict. Moreover, it was argued that the same example indicates that the scope of action of civil society is not limited only to dialogue. This since it was the civil society that provided teaching in schools during the escalation of violence in 2010.

The second round of responses from the panel acknowledged that in conflict resolution theory there is a certain sanitary process that would exclude several narratives and stories. It was argued that the critique of the spread of technology could certainly take the peace researcher “out of its comfort zone” as it would force them to engage in a larger frame of analysis. (The example, of the 800,000 weavers who have been displaced by the use of machines was given as an example). Thus, a research project like CORE must look for new ways of incorporating these experiences i.e. construct a model were multiple epistemologies can be involved. It was then highlighted that the question should be what kind of instruments do one conceptualize which will allow the project to follow these objectives?

It was also mentioned that it is important to locate the project in a global perspective and in situation of transformation, at least in the case of India. It was argued that the project would be brought to injustice if specific studies were presented as if they are only talking about specific problems. Hence, the project needs to seriously deal with the topic of co-option and ask questions such as: how does this particular conflict process work? How does one make the so far invisible visible (trafficked women, domestic violence, the Dalit struggle, minorities fighting against forms of racism).

Regarding the need of political accountability for a democratic regime to be deemed as such “politics” was presented as the key for understanding conflict, whether as a cause or as a possible mitigator. It was stated that politics is the dynamics of power and that it is relevant to ask the question about who has the power to make decisions that affects the lives of people? The case of India was taken as an example where civil society for several years pushed for a law that would allow the people to know if political candidates had criminal cases pending against them during the elections. When this was achieved it was discovered that the number of nominees with criminal cases was on the rise. The commentators elaborated on this saying that the reason for this could be that in India voter`s choices are pre-constrained by the choices of the political parties that nominate the candidates. It was argued that for contesting elections one need the nomination of the party according to what was defined as “winability” reasons which in a democracy reflects deficit for the electorate. It was stated that this is a common phenomenon, namely that parties are undemocratic in the way they function and this is a contributor to conflict in Indian society.

The panel concluded by recognizing that there are multiple challenges that are brought up by the CORE project, not the least how to frame an increasingly dynamic civil society and what it actually entails. The panel in particular highlighted a few questions that should be of extra concern:

- What is included in the *researchability* of the government initiatives?
- Which of the government and non-governmental initiatives can be included as conflict resolution initiatives?
- Which of the government and non-governmental initiatives are part of what was is called everyday governance?
- How the cases can be presented in a holistic way?
- Are the actors in civil society biased to the social world (are they self-centered, or mixed)?
- Can civil society be studies apart from market and government?

Final Comments and observations

The final session started with a presentation of the priorities of the European Union (EU) and fields of collaboration with India. While economic development and the fight against terrorism remain the top priorities for the EU and the areas in which it engages with India, other observations about the challenges in India can be made:

1. Internal conflicts (armed insurgencies) – constitute a big challenge for India in terms of security;
2. The challenges imposed by modernity in regard of the events of the last 20 years;
3. Implementation of the rule of law, (minorities, women, children, the poor, etc) on the local level.

In regard of global security it was mentioned that the EU member states spends a lot of time to find a common position on what actually needs to be done. It was mentioned that the December 2010 Summit joint declaration between the EU and India on international terrorism marked a step away from talking only about trade and market in their mutual relations.

Speaking about Conflict Resolution policies it was mentioned that the approach used by the EU combines military, diplomatic and civil society oriented strategies. The more than 20 crisis management missions around the world were mentioned as an example of this strategy. The missions most relevant for India are EUPOL in Afghanistan, which promotes police training, and the EUNAVFOR mission combating piracy outside Somalia in the Indian sea. The latter was used as an example of a comprehensive EU approach towards a regional (the Horn of Africa) conflict resolution approach.

Regarding international cooperation with India three active projects were mentioned:

- 1) Counter-terrorism: bringing together people from the EU with practitioners from India in a seminar looking at issues about mutual assistance and information sharing;
- 2) The Annual human rights and security dialogue, and;
- 3) Development cooperation projects in Chattisgarh and Rajasthan to strengthen local governance.

The EU presentation concluded clarifying the areas in which they are not involved in cooperation with India:

- The Kashmir issue in which they do not mediate because it is part of India's internal affairs (however, the EU encourages dialog between countries although once a year an EU fact-finding group goes to Jammu/Kashmir to observe);
- The Jharkhand-Bihar region which is only monitored, but without any action taken and;
- An EU project on child-marriage awareness operating in India, but it does not reflect any type of official stand towards this.

The subsequent reflection made by the panelists particularly discussed the term “agency” and its deceiving effect on the people's and academics imaginations. It was argued that agency seems to be restricted only to the big actors and the high profile peace negotiations. It was said that media is partly responsible for this misunderstanding as it privileges information in the shape of scandal or catastrophe giving it the terrible ability to stress periods of disharmony.

Instead agency is part of every-day diplomacy, every-day peace. The commentators illustrated this by

bringing the case of Northern Ireland to attention saying it showed that common people could become expert diplomats, by navigating their way around conflicts. These navigations included inter-communal marriage, setting up businesses together, and the “whatever you say, say nothing” technique etc. It was emphasized that this every day, neighbourhood diplomacy is the one we urgently need to examine. It may not be as appealing as the great diplomacy where there are power point presentations, breakout sessions, trips abroad, photo sessions, etc. Yet, it was argued, if this is not examined properly one face the risk of falling for the fallacy of the expertise. In other words to place a lot of faith in “Peace-building experts” while leaving the Civil Society unskilled and vulnerable to co-option.

Another critical remark made was that a very peculiar notion of development has been privileged that now tries to equal consumerism with peace. It was said that this argument is based on a rather lazy notion that development leads to peace. It was also mentioned that there is a shaking of confidence for major international organizations which are interested in peace-creating, and that there's a reassessment of the premises on which many interventions have been built. Some of the events that have brought the debate to the table were the global financial crisis with the following demands of other states to get access to the top table, and the 'Arab Spring'. Regarding this it was said that the EU has a very good story to tell, but the EU project is very complex and just in its infancy. Then the ongoing ever present tension between national governments and their aims and the multinational aims of the European Union was mentioned as one of the hurdles as an actor on the international peacebuilding scene. In spite of this, however, it was argued that there have been very successful enterprises carried out by the EU. One that was mentioned was the EU monitory mission in Georgia (EUMM) implemented from the end of the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008. It was brought up as a very good example on how a modest and fairly small civilian mission can be successful in a highly militarized context.

It was also said that India possesses a large capacity to absorb conflict due to its size and huge population. Unless there's a new war with Pakistan, it was argued that the conflicts that concern India today are not existential in terms of the states survival. It was emphasized that India may survive a significant amount of conflict, due to its large military, and the country is even expecting an 18 % increase of military expenses in the next years.

The final presentation of the conference shared reflections on the focus on local agency and the potential of local actors of addressing problems which state-building paradigm has not been able to do. It was highlighted that the civil society discourse encapsulates the role of the government's as one of oppression and that the people play the positive role. Nevertheless, it was made clear that one has to remember that there are also other stories. Such as situations when Government governance” transform conflict into a peaceful direction. It was said that civil society is not able to build peace without the government. Internal relation between governance and the people was particularly highlighted and education was given as the primary example. It was said that the lack of conflict-sensitivity, which is related to sources of power and financial interest, will be very hard to change only through normative civilian engagement. One alternative that might follow if governance does not change is that governance would simply establish space for these local actors. However, when for example, as in Nepal, local actors receives governmental funding, new clashes and dependencies may arise. It was concluded that there are no easy answers to this question as there will always be the risk of co-option of civil society.



Conference hall, Banaras Hindu University²



Conference delegates³



CORE project team and members from Banaras Hindu University⁴

² Pictures taken by Phra Panuwat Udchai official photographer at MCRP, BHU

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