

# M A Gandhian and Peace Studies

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester

### 4008 Understanding Conflict: Basic Theories

**Dr Ambikesh Kumar Tripathi**

Assistant Professor

Gandhian and Peace Studies

Mahatma Gandhi Central University

Motihari, Bihar

### Understanding Conflict: Socio-Economic Perspective

Apart from security perspective there are few more approaches to explain and understand the armed conflicts, socio-economic perspective is one of

them. The basic argument of this perspective is, because of 'equality does not equally access' so there is 'inequality among equals' and such socio-economic inequality leads the insurgencies because such deficit creates frustration among deprived and people compel to be violent to get their due rights. Socio-economic perspective argues that by winning the hearts and minds of the population in armed conflict prone region through confidence building measures can control the intensity of armed violence and restore the law and peace.

Winning hearts and minds, through creating the just and inclusive social and economic order, is a concept occasionally expressed in the resolution of war, insurgency, and other conflicts, in which one side seeks to prevail not by the use of

superior force, but by making emotional or intellectual appeals to sway supporters of the other side. The use of the term "hearts and minds" to reference a method of bringing a subjugated population on side, was first used by Louis Hubert Gonzalve Lyautey (a French general and colonial administrator) as part of his strategy to counter the Black Flags rebellion along the Indochina-Chinese border in 1895. More famously, it was used during the Malayan Emergency by the British who employed practices to keep the Malaysans' trust and reduce a tendency to side with ethnic Chinese communists, in this case, by giving medical and food aid to the Malays and indigenous tribes.

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Winning hearts and minds strategy involves more than seeking to accomplish goals, innovate, and improve financial performance. This perspective focuses on three key dimensions of strategy: the need to accrue and the just distribution of resources; maintain community living and better mutual relationship between local population and security forces; and to achieve greater expansion of power and influence over land and resources. Achieving such strategic advantages depends on the state's abilities to shape the perceptions of others about itself. The state must be able to win the public's hearts and minds if it is not a fragile state.

Scholars, such as K.S. Subramanian (2005), Nandini Sundar (2012), Brayden G King and Edward T Walker (2014) and others argue that there is serious need to redefine the national security discourse in regard of armed

conflict. A study report (1969) of Research and Policy (R&P) division of Union Home Ministry titled 'Causes and Nature of Current Agrarian Unrest', also warns that the 'green revolution' could turn into 'red revolution' if appropriate land reform measures were not taken to ensure social justice. In the context of India's Maoist armed conflict, K.S. Subramanian (2005) writes, the Naxalite movement, based on the interests of the rural poor, cannot be usefully regarded as an 'internal security' matter except perhaps in demented discourses on 'national security'.

Socio-economic backwardness, many researches reveal that, play key role in the rise of an armed conflict, have never been in centre of policy analysis. How an armed conflict could be tackled, without addressing the issues of poverty, inequality and other backwardness of society, from its very root. It is true that the armed conflict takes place in a vacuum created by the apathy of administration and democratic

political institutions; these institutions, however, are responsible to eliminate structural injustices and ensure the emancipation of those who are oppressed.

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- Socio-economic perspective focuses on three key dimensions of strategy:
    1. The need to accrue and the just distribution of resources;
    2. Maintain community living and better mutual relationship between local population and security forces;
    3. To achieve greater expansion of power and influence over land and resources.
  - The state must be able to win the public's hearts and minds if it is not a fragile state.
  - Socio-economic backwardness, many researches reveal that, play key role in the rise of an armed conflict, have never been in centre of policy analysis.
  - An armed conflict could not be tackled, without addressing the issues of poverty, inequality and other backwardness of society, from its very root.
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## Case Study from India:

In February 2009, the Indian central government announced a new nationwide initiative, to be called the '*Integrated Action Plan*' (IAP) for broad, co-ordinated operations aimed at dealing with the Naxalite problem in all affected states, namely in Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. This plan included funding for grass-roots economic development projects in Naxalite-affected areas, as well as increased special police funding for better containment and reduction of Maoist influence. In August 2010, after the first full year of implementation of the national IAP program, Karnataka was removed from the list of Naxal-affected states. In July 2011, the number of Naxal-affected areas was reduced to 83 districts across nine states. In December 2011, the national government reported that the number of Naxalite related deaths and injuries nationwide had gone down by nearly 50% from 2010 levels.

In 2011, the Government of India launched Saranda Action Plan with Ministry of Rural Development, which is main implementing agency, for the rural livelihood development in Naxal hit areas of underdeveloped region Saranda Region in West Singhbhum District. Members of Rural ministry, Govt. of Jharkhand and World Bank teams also take part in this plan and works in the field. The main aim of this plan is to bring about rural development, in backward areas, especially tribal and adivasi areas and weed out the Maoist conflict in these areas.

## Criticism:

This approach too has partial success story because of following reasons:

1. Corruption, in implementation of welfare policies has played most significant role behind its little success. Governments provide big funds for the developmental needs of the regions, launches attractive surrender policy for insurgents and other initiatives to ensure peace in the region, but the rooted corruption in local structure makes entire efforts waste.

2. Another reason behind this is ‘absence of effective policing’. Though, the insurgents are indulged in violence phenomenon and they attack on the State machineries like police and paramilitary forces along with any ‘suspected’ informers, the State is required to use violence in tackling with them. However, the State seeks to attack on the insurgents and as is the case often, a clear distinction between insurgents and innocent villager or forest dweller cannot be made, so the collateral damages are in huge numbers. Thus, State’s security policy against the insurgents often goes against the locals and this flush out entire efforts of winning hearts and mind in gutter.

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