

## SYMPOSIUM ON PEACE AND SECURITY IN INDIA: AN INTRODUCTION

RUPAYAN GUPTA [Symposium guest editor]

Rupayan Gupta is Associate Professor of Economics, The Gabelli School of Business, Roger Williams University, Bristol, RI, USA. He may be reached at rxgupta@rwu.edu.

### Abstract

The World Health Organization categorizes violence as including self-harm such as suicide, interpersonal violence such as domestic violence and violent crime, and collective violence such as inter-communal violence and international war. Peace and security issues in India abound in all of these categories. To name a few, they range from cases of farmer suicides, violence against women and female infanticide, religious, communal, and political violence, land-acquisition disputes, crime, policing, regional disputes between Indian states and other groups over scarce natural resources, separatist movements, military expenditure and policy, and territorial disputes and arms races with neighboring countries. This symposium focuses on points of interpersonal and inter-communal violence, largely restricting its attention to India's internal rather than external concerns.

The World Health Organization's *World Report on Violence and Health*, published in 2002 and readily available on the internet, categorizes violence as including self-harm such as suicide, interpersonal violence such as domestic violence and violent crime, and collective violence such as inter-communal violence and international war. Peace and security issues in India abound in all of these categories. To name a few, they range from cases of farmer suicides, violence against women and female infanticide, religious, communal, and political violence, land-acquisition disputes, crime, policing, regional disputes between Indian states and other groups over scarce natural resources, separatist movements, military expenditure and policy, and territorial disputes and arms races with neighboring countries. This symposium focuses on points related to interpersonal and inter-communal violence, largely restricting its attention to India's internal rather than external concerns, and covers issues and topics the editor believes to be of broad, general interest.

Of the six symposium articles, two study the Maoist (Naxalite) insurgency in India. The first, by Saurabh Singhal, analyzes aspects of the effectiveness of the centrally funded Security Related Expenditure Scheme (SRES) in repairing the investment climate of Andhra Pradesh, which has suffered due to the insurgency. The SRES is a fund for India's armed forces to fight the Naxalite insurgency. The author finds the scheme to have had no effect on industrial bank credit taken at the district level. A further disaggregation of the industrial credit data reveals no effects on construction but finds a positive effect on mining and quarrying activity.

While Singhal's article uses economic indicators to assess success or failure of armed counterinsurgency policies, Khanna

and Zimmermann analyze whether anti-poverty programs can increase the effectiveness of government forces by improving the relationship between citizens and the state and making civilians more willing to share information on insurgents. The program considered by the authors is the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), adopted by the Indian government in 2005. The authors find that the introduction of NREGS led to an increase in violence in the short run, driven by police-initiated attacks, and an increase in the number of captured Maoists. Their results are consistent with the hypothesis that civilians assist the police because of the NREGS. Khanna and Zimmerman's article suggests that the support of local civilians in affected areas might prove crucial in containing insurgencies. Moreover, as schemes like the NREGS promote economically constructive activities, rather than destructive activities, as compared to the SRES they may be considered an attractive method of mitigating violence, or, at the very least, be viewed as playing an important supporting role alongside more traditional arms-based methods.

Amaral, Bandyopadhyay, Bhattacharya, and Sensarma's article analyzes how non-crime conflict affects both crime as well as various determinants of crime. Perhaps surprisingly, they find that in districts affected by the Maoist insurgency, all types of crime are lower than elsewhere. In addition, their article examines key determinants of violent crime, nonviolent crime, and crime against women in India for the period 1990-2007. Looking at conventional determinants of crime (such as law enforcement and economic variables), they also examine how variation in sex ratios affects crime, and whether the gender of the chief political decisionmaker in each state

(i.e., the Chief Minister) affects crime. If not entirely unexpected, the findings are intriguing: While improvements in arrest rates do decrease the incidence of all types of crime, socioeconomic variables carry relatively little explanatory power. Instead, unbalanced sex ratios, particularly in rural areas, do adversely affect crime. And the presence of a woman in a high political capacity does seem to make a difference: If the Chief Minister is female, both violent crime and crimes against women decrease.

The article by Bhushan and Prakarsh also examines crimes against women, but with a focus on domestic violence alone. Specifically, the authors examine the effect of broadcast media on domestic violence norms. They find evidence that regularly accessing both television and radio leads to a small but statistically significant reduction in the probability of women accepting domestic violence. Astonishingly, the effect of media consumption on reducing the acceptability of domestic violence is statistically equivalent to three additional years of education, a sizeable effect indeed. Intriguingly, in India, the effect holds only when television and radio are used concurrently, as complements, and disappears for those women who access only one or the other media outlet.

Practitioners' views on security issues are important to academics and policymakers. Nilanjana Sengupta and Dolon Ganguly provide one such perspective, with their narrative of the Jeevika Development Society's journey through gender, poverty, and domestic violence in rural West Bengal. Among other activities, this not-for-profit, charitable organization, runs a women's rights-based microcredit program that has assisted rural women to address both practical economic needs as well as strategic needs related to gender-based oppression and violence. The authors' narrative provides a fascinating account of many such cases.

The final article in our symposium is wholly in the spirit of peace economics. Through the lens of India's independence movements, Rikhil Bhavnani and Saumitra Jha examine the potential for and limitations of nonviolent civil disobedience to successfully achieve a revolutionary outcome. Two problems need to be overcome: First, how to form a mass movement in the first place and, second, how to keep it peaceful. The authors argue that in the Indian case, the problem of mobilization was solved due to the historic chance occurrence of the Great Depression (1929-1933), which helped to draw important Indian constituencies into the movement and made it more massive in numbers than it had been before. The problem of controlling the masses, once mobilized, was handled by Gandhi by effecting certain innovative changes in the organizational structure of the Congress party, which rewarded nonviolent behavior.

The authors document that when external pressure prompted the British to repress India less harshly, it was easier for Gandhi to control the movement and to secure nonviolent outcomes. In contrast, with harsher punitive measures applied by the British, it became difficult for Gandhi to control the movement and to obtain nonviolent outcomes. The opportunity costs for rulers undertaking repression must thus be made high enough, perhaps through monitoring by the international community, so that peaceful mass protest remains an option. By inflicting audience costs, global society might both have an opportunity and a responsibility to help provide the right circumstances under which peaceful mass protest movements in repressive regimes might thrive and succeed.

Bhavnani and Jha's article highlights the need for further study of peace economics rather than of violence economics. Peace and violence are not symmetric: the absence of violence is not the presence of peace. There is a constructive aspect of studying and thinking about peace and security that goes beyond the traditional realm of conflict or defense economics.

India is a complex nation. An intriguing social experiment, it is truly representative of our desire to achieve unity in diversity. Lessons learned by peace economists, while thinking about Indian peace and security-related issues, no doubt have broader relevance and applicability and may prove useful in promoting harmony in an increasingly interconnected and diverse world. I hope this symposium provokes more such research.