



Security Challenges From Naxalism

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Today, Naxalism have become the generic name for Maoist activities in India. Since 1947, India has faced the problem of insurgency, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir and in the North East region. In these cases, the conflicts are based on the principle of 'self determination.' The Naxalite movement calls for a complete transformation of the political, social and economic system. In the process they tend to reject the present parliamentary system and to create a new social order so that it may lead to an end of the exploitation of vulnerable sections of India society. It cannot be denied that naxalism is an expression of aspirations of the people who are deprived for a life of dignity and self respect. The pattern of violence perpetuated by Naxalites are an indicator of an emerging serious challenge to economic and social stability of the nation. What makes the Naxalite movement an interesting study is that the struggle has taken place in the biggest democracy in the world. India is regarded as a strong state with extensive experience with insurgency problems.

The Movement

What are the root causes of the Naxal movement ? Various governmental and non – governmental studies have revealed that the causes are varied depending on the following factors : social, economic and cultural backward; corruption; their structural problems; ineffective land reforms topography and so on. These are rooted in the objective conditions of life and respond to the deep – seated frustration of the people.

The Naxalite movement in West Bengal was launched from a strategically located territory called "Naxalbari" in March 1967.

This northern portion of West Bengal is important as it touches the boundaries of Sikkim, Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. The situation became so volatile that the Centre had to impose President's rule and take stringent measures. The police forces were posted in the main Naxal areas especially Siliguri, Midnapur and Calcutta. As a result, thousands of naxal activists and sympathizers were arrested or put to death. By the end of 1971, the Naxalites were forced to abandon the urban operation in the face of increasing casualties and losses.

In early 1972, the movement underwent a process of fragmentation that seriously affected their organisation over the coming decades. The fragmentation in the form of various groups during 1972-91 proliferated. These years were unquestionably the nadir of the Naxalite movement in Indian history. It badly needed to re-unify and consolidate its position. The 1970s and the 1980s were a period of transition in Indian national politics. Specifically, the period from 1975 to 1977 is generally

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regarded as the "dark era" of the national politics. During this period, Indira Gandhi's popularity declined because of a series of legal challenges to her rule. As a result, she temporarily abrogated the constitution and imposed emergency throughout the country. The Congress defeat in 1977 election enabled the Naxalites to mobilize.

Resurgence of Naxalism

In the history of Naxalite movement, the period from 1991 to the present time is undoubtedly the most paradoxical. During this period, India emerged as a central player in the emerging

geo-political order modern world. And, on the other side, Maoism was also in the ascendency. Naxalism staged a spectacular comeback in this period, growing in strength and violence. What explains the resurgence of Naxalism in a period that has witnessed such phenomenal growth and national development? The answer to this question, probably, lies in the growth of Naxal's strategy in different states of the country. They are ruthless in implementing their strategies. They killed some 11 CRPF personnel in Maharashtra and 2 CRPF jawan in Chhattisgarh in land mine blast in March and August 2012. Similarly, they had abducted two Italian nationals and a MLA in Odisha and a Collector, Alex Paul Menon, in Chhattisgarh in the month of March and April 2012 respectively.

Naxal Strategy

Military Strategy: It is in this context, the aim of Naxal strategy becomes important for understanding the movement. Over a period of more than four decades, Naxalites have developed their strategies with the focus on the following aspects. The survey of the literature divides the history of the Naxalite movement in India into three phases: organizational, fragmentary and the reconsolidation phase. In the organized phase from 1967 to 1972, the main objective was the "Land of the tiller". The strategy was the elimination of the feudal system in the Indian countryside, to emancipate the poor and landless peasants from the feudal overlords and replace the old system with a Communist system that would implement land reforms. The second phase, from 1972-1991, began which was characterized by internal violent struggles. This period is also called the fragmentary period, because it saw a culmination of violence between different left wing groups. The Third phase began with the revival of the movement from 1991 onwards. After the economic reforms from 1991 and the corresponding rapid industrialization and globalization, tribal right and forest issues were highlighted by the Naxalite movement. They adopted the strategy of "protracted warfare", with the aim of capturing political power by armed struggle as a prelude to subsequent unification of liberated areas.

Political Strategy: Along with military strategy, the Naxalites have formulated effective political strategy. Their political strategy has three major aims (i) unity between the CPI Maoist party and cadres, (ii) sound relationship among party, PLGA and people and (iii) disunity

between people and security forces. It is interesting to note that the Naxal strategy has worked in the consolidation of their military and political wings. Political Strategy complements military strategy with the main aim of the development of New Democratic Revolution.

Urban Strategy: Though the movement has strengthened itself in the forest areas and in areas marked with lack of governance, the Maoist leadership feels that urban centres remain unaffected. Therefore, the Central Committee prepared an Urban Perspective Document in early 2009 and the new strategy focuses on a six stage approach called "SAARC"- survey, awareness, agitation, recruitment, resistance and control. So far urban areas are concerned, the Maoists have completed the stage of survey, i.e., identifying the target groups and political areas of discontent. Now they are in the process of implementing the second and third stages of their strategy. The process will take time as evident from their strategy of protracted warfare.

Naxal Economy

The question that perplexes many security experts is how large is the size of the Naxal financial strength. According to the government records, the Ministry of Home Affairs has put up the figure close to Rs 1400 crore annually, while according to the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Raman Singh, the figure is around Rs 1200 crore. Money also comes through West Bengal- Malaysia drug trade route to procure sophisticated weapons such as the AK-47s, landmines and rocket launcher. The Naxalites also indulge in huge extortion from businessmen that extends over the region, also known as the Red Corridor. Poppy and Opium cultivation also figures among the chief sources of funds.

Recommended Political and Military Strategy

In order to implement the various strategies at the tactical level, the government must have a clear political goal. For winning the hearts of the people, what is needed is the combination of political and military strategy that could defeat the Naxalites. If one were to examine the policies of the central government over the last 10 years it would appear that it had come to terms with some of the basic aspects of counter Naxal strategy. Today, Naxal problem is linked to economic development and , therefore, the planning for security and development must go together. Similarly, Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh has proclaimed that the government would implement a 'two pronged

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First, by using 'coercive powers', the state should be prepared to fight and defeat the Naxal forces which challenges the sovereignty of the Indian Republic and the political system of parliamentary democracy. Secondly, by promoting "development" the government should focus to improve the living conditions of the tribal. And, thirdly, by providing "good governance", the governments – State and Centre- should win the confidence of the tribals. This approach can be covered under two heads: (i) Coercive Strategy and (2) Non-Coercive Strategy or Development.

Under the coercive strategy, the government adopts the following measures : use of State Police force; emphasis on Special Intelligence Structure; security related expenditure; deployment of Seema Suraksha Bal and employment of the Army.

Under the non-coercive strategy, as part of the development, the Indian government has undertaken various measures such as socio- economic development; making Panchayati system a powerful body; better provisions for tribal and forest people; effective implementation of land reforms and creation of employment opportunities of those naxalites who want to surrender.

Very importantly, on the government side, it would be beneficial to review the current policy of tackling Naxalism by emphasizing not only the military factor but rather reorient it for implementation of a comprehensive agenda of protection which would wean away the tribals from the influence of the Naxalites.

Some of the measures which could be considered in shaping long term government planning as follows:

Political Measures: The government must build up political pressure by initiating diplomatic measures in order to enlist the support of the neighbouring countries to deny any kind of cooperation amongst the Naxal organizations. The Left Group –CPI, CPI (M), All India Forward Block (AIFB) CPI (ML) and CPI (Maoist) - must be asked to join the political process. Talks must be initiated by the centre and states representatives and all militant groups. Ceasefire, if desired, should be carried out in all the affected Naxal states in order to show the united force of the government.

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Socio-economic Measures: The central and eastern parts of the country are relatively underdeveloped as compared to other parts of the country, both industrially and agriculturally. The

agricultural policies should be based as per the local needs of people and the entire framework of agricultural policies should be farmer oriented. The laws related to land are irrelevant in the present context and, therefore, it should be reviewed with the mass participation of people, non-governmental organization and small farmers. Today, corruption has become an integral part of our society. Global Financial Institute estimates that Indians had stashed Rs 25.4lakh crore in overseas tax havens between 2004-08. If the money is taxed even at 30%, the figure would stand at approximately Rs. 7.6 Lakh crore. The money could be used for; (i) the development of 405 million poor people; building 170,000 km of national expressway; super speciality hospital in each district; and providing jobs for poor rural households.

Psychological Initiatives: In order to enlist the support of the people, the government must rely on psychological warfare. The government must expose the weaknesses of Naxal's ideology, the restoration of people's faith in the government and efficient use of the mass media to highlight the loss of human life and property. The government should also make the masses realize that socialism can be achieved peacefully through the democratic process. It should be noted that many South American and South Asian countries have not progressed despite strong leftist movements.

Application of Forces: The government must constitute an apex central body which would coordinate counter Naxal measures in all affected states. Simultaneously, each state should step up dedicated anti - Naxal force under capable officers with fixed tenure of 2 or 3 years. A variety of options exist to tackle the security scenario as a separate entity, i.e., either by involvement of only the police force or police and central paramilitary forces or involvement of the India armed forces in a limited capacity.

There are various repercussions of the use of the armed forces. Today, the Indian armed forces are fighting a prolonged proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir and facing insurgency problem in North East India. At present, the armed forces have a

very limited involvement in the counter Naxal operations. They are involved in the training of the police forces and CPOs in Army run Jungle Warfare Schools in guerilla warfare.

In such a situation what kind of picture emerges? Can CPI – Maoist ever establish power in New Delhi through

their ideology. To me, the answer is no. At the moment, the Naxalites can easily elude a police force or even manage to establish a liberated zone in some parts of states. But, then, there is a pause because once they indulged into more open areas, they will be certainly countered by the Indian army.



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