



## **Naxalites movement: its Causes and Impact of on Marginal class of Economy**

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### **Abstract**

The Naxalite problem reflects underlying issues in the Indian social, economic and political institutions which threaten to expose India to even more danger from outside forces. While the Naxalite movement is mainly an internal threat, with globalization, external and internal security threats are inextricably linked. The complex and multi-faceted approach to solving the Naxalite issue also reflects the fact that this is the biggest menace to India's security in the future, as it highlights various underlying weaknesses of India's governance, political institutions and socio-economic structure. Naxalism is the biggest threat because it affects several areas including the economy, security and foreign affairs, its citizens and rule of law.

The constitutional obligation to take special care of the protection and development of adivasis and dalits was diluted when the Union home ministry transferred this role to a new ministry of social justice, writes K S Subramanian, former director of the home ministry's Research and Policy Division, which studied emerging Naxalite violence in the context of increasing atrocities against adivasis.

As the Naxalites are fuelled by discontent from the marginalised and the poor, a larger percentage of the national budget must be allocated to addressing the needs of these regions. More of the national expenditure needs to be focused on developing these poorer regions through initiatives regarding health, education, social welfare and rural and urban development. By opening dialogue, the government can give opportunity for the rebels to join the mainstream by showing them that solutions can be created together with the government, by being part of the political system in a legitimate way.

## **Introduction:**

The terms Naxalites or Maoists are used to refer to militant far-left radical Communist groups operating in India. Inspired by the doctrines of Mao Zedong, Naxalites work to overthrow the government and upper classes by violence. The Indian Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) describes the objectives of Naxalites as destroying “state legitimacy...with the ultimate object of attaining political power by violent means”. They are considered as a terrorist organization under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of India (1967).

The movement started in West Bengal in the early seventies but has since spread to the rural areas in central and eastern India. Naxalites have been attacking police establishments and infrastructures such as public transportation, causing insecurity and instability to the area. From the period 2006-2010 alone, there were nearly 9,000 incidents with Naxalites with over 3,000 civilians killed. The Naxalites are active in approximately 40 percent of India’s geographical area. They control large portions of remote and densely forested areas and are concentrated in an area called “Red Corridor”. This area is also the tribal belt where the tension between economic development and aboriginal land rights is most apparent. The Naxalites movement has been one of the most significant political developments since independence. Its ideological underpinnings and continuance since 1967 with ups and down have been posed the most serious challenge to the legitimacy of not only the government but democracy as well.

The Naxalites has been identified as the biggest internal security threat to India. . The complex and structural causes of the problem support this proposition. The Naxal movement also presents the greatest overall threat to India in the future, as it highlights various underlying weaknesses of India’s governance, political institutions and socio-economic structure. Naxalism is the biggest threat because it affects several areas including the economy, security and foreign affairs, its citizens and rule of law. Because of the multi-dimensional aspect of the Naxal problem, a three-pronged approach should be taken in dealing with the threat. It calls for a balance between military forces, social and economic development, as well as dialogue between all parties.

## **Causes of the Threat:**

India has experienced relatively fast economic growth, which has led to increased levels of national wealth. To facilitate and continue this development, businesses need more land and natural resources such as minerals. On the other hand, this economic growth has been uneven among regions, and has widened the disparity between the rich and the poor. Proponents of these businesses argue that these regions need economic development, if they are to catch up with their richer counterparts. The conflict between economic progress and aboriginal land rights continues to fuel the Naxalite’s activities. Their strongest bases are in the

poorest areas of India. They are concentrated on the tribal belt such as West Bengal, Orissa, and Andhra Pradesh where locals experience forced acquisition of their land for developmental projects.

The area where Naxalites operations are concentrated lies in the forested region of central India covering Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and west Bengal though it has had an extensive presence in the plains of Bihar. The tribes constitute the largest segment of population here followed by the dalits and other socially marginalized groups. These are the groups for whom the programmes of the Naxalites movement have great appeal and who form its large support base. The root of this support lies in the social condition of these people which are characterized by extreme poverty, widespread discrimination, acute social exploitation, pronounced development disparities, indifference to the state institution and political neglect.

The factors giving rise to the Naxalites movement and its extensive spread are many; the interface of people with the government holds the key to the understanding of its roots and application of its violent manifestation. But the attraction of the movement has for these communities are also significantly related to the day-to-day experiences in their relationship with the larger society. The government-people relationship is multifaceted. It covers all organs of government-legislature, executive and judiciary as well as the institutions and processes association with them.

The spread of Naxalism reflects the widespread alienation and discontentment felt by large parts of the country that are systematically marginalized. Dr. Subramanian, a former Director-General of the National Security Guard and Central Reserve Police Force notes that Naxalism exists in these tribal areas because of the dissatisfaction of the people against the government and big businesses, the terrain is suitable for guerrilla tactics, and there is no existence of a proper and effective local administration mechanism. In these areas, the conditions are conducive to warfare and extremist ideologies. Even if Naxalites are simply exploiting the adivasis' situation for their own ends, their popularity indicates the power of the root causes to create such an environment for insecurity and violence.

### **Present scenario of problem:**

The Naxalites are the biggest threat to security is because of the way the issue affects India's economic development. This is apparent in several ways. For example, the more the Maoists concentrate on the poor and marginalized regions of India, the more economic development (which is imperative to improving those regions' conditions) will be hampered. Furthermore, the Naxalites rebels are no longer just focusing on remote jungles but on urban centers. Maoist leader Kishenji even declared that the group aims to establish an armed movement in Calcutta by 2011. Internal order and stability are necessary for a nation's economic development. For India to continue being able to withstand outside security threats, it must build up its

infrastructure, its defence and its people. In terms of lifting its citizens out of poverty, India has a long way to go, and continued economic growth is integral to India's development as a strong global player. The Naxalites activities are using up scarce resources on defence and internal security when it should be spent on areas such as social development. For example in 2006, 22% of the total government expenditure is on the military, compared with a mere 1.84% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) spent on the social sector.

The Naxalites movement is also the biggest threat to India, in terms of the effects on its citizens and what it means for democracy and rule of law. Not only has there been a great loss of life since the conflict between the guerrillas and the military, but addressing the problem through violence risks polarizing people further and driving them to subservience. The guerrilla warfare is a threat not only to citizens' lives but their properties. Too impatient and desperate to wait for government intervention, civilians such as landlords are taking matters into their own hands. As writer Navlakha noted, by portraying the Maoists as a 'menace' and separating the movement from socio-economic causes, it "allows the rich and poor divide to impose itself on a formal democratic structure". Navlakha gives the example in Bihar where Naxalite groups are banned under the Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act, yet a majority of the massacre was committed by landlord armies which were not considered an act of terror under the law. Such treatment for the upper class only serves to threaten the rule of law, state legitimacy and democracy as the political norm.

### **Ineffective government policies for tribal areas**

Government programmes for tribal development have had adverse consequences for tribal communities as well documented in studies.

The extension of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to tribal areas can become an instrument of empowerment only after steps are taken to restore indigenous rights over land and forest. The setting up of the new states to enable tribal participation in decentralised governance and decision-making has been ineffective because the character and mindset of the administrative and police organisations has not changed.

B Mungekar, member, Planning Commission, is reported to have prepared a report showing that between 1951 and 1990, 40 million people were displaced as a result of development projects. Of these, 40% were tribal people. Only 25% of the displaced have so far been 'rehabilitated'. The adequacy and quality of the rehabilitation has come into serious question especially in the context of the controversy over the Sardar Sarovar Project. In the light of this, it is not surprising that the Maoist movement has found support among those sections.

In much the same vein, the 2008 Experts' Group report to the Planning Commission, 'Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Areas', makes a profound analysis of the socio-economic situation in the

states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Jharkhand and suggests that the problem of violence and terrorism should be understood in the proper development perspective and handled politically and administratively rather than by using brute police force. Many of the issues in this regard are brought out clearly though briefly in the recent letter to the President of India written by Dr B D Sharma, former Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Sharma, 2010). The letter notes the following points forcefully:

- The virtual collapse of the constitutional regime with regard to the tribal people of India, who are now being attacked and suppressed in a war-like situation;
- The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, regarded as ‘the Constitution within the Constitution’, provides for the governors of states to write an annual report to the President on the administration of the tribal areas and the giving of directions by the President but no such directions have been issued in the last 60 years;
- The Constitutional machinery of the Tribal Advisory Council has become extinct;
- State power extends to the tribal areas subject to the provisions of the Fifth Schedule;
- PESA, 1996, which extends a ‘Village Republic’ frame has remained virtually unimplemented in most states and so is the case with the Forest Rights Act, 2006;
- The history of broken promises, predatory administration, co-option through faulty development programmes and unconcern at the top has led to massive displacement and multiplication of revolts.

## Solutions

The complexity of the causes of the Naxalite problem as well as its implications both for internal and external security reflect a solution that is multi-dimensional and calls for a synergy between the central governments and the states. In order to comprehensively dissolve the Naxalite threat, the government has to address its root causes. The need for institutionalizing efforts to attempt a healing process for societies such as India is important. ‘Closure’ should be clearly identified as a core element during periods of political violence with the focus on institutionalizing human rights, especially for the state, but also for the anti-state political movement. Reconciliation is an obvious element of ‘closure’. So are transparency and justice. ‘Closure’ should include judicial measures ranging from war crime tribunals to informal village-level trials. The major achievement of ‘closure’ would be transparency. Setting out the facts, opening whatever records are available and attempting honestly to answer the questions of victims provides a major impetus to healing. It promotes understanding as a first step to some degree of justice and the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation. Transparency may be the most lasting result, a willingness to live with the truth. In political violence, excessive means -- sometimes clandestine -- are used. Similarly, because of security concerns the state often becomes a mirror image of the terrorist movement, holding it necessary to use means that are illegal according to the Geneva Convention.

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