

CHAPTER - 4

Naxalism Problems in Different States of India

The problem of Naxalism is more dangerous than any other form of violence in India, either terrorism or religion or caste related violence. The number of people died in Naxalite is more than the death caused by insurgent in Kashmir and north eastern states. Naxalism is an informal name given to communist group that were born out of the Sino-Soviet split the Indian communist movement. Ideologically they belong to various trends to Maoism. Initially movement had its centre in West Bengal.¹

In recent years, Naxalites have spread into less developed areas of rural central and eastern India, such as Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh through the activities of underground groups like the Communist Party of India (Maoist). They are conducting an insurgency, the Naxalite-Maoist insurgency. They now have a presence in 40% of India's geographical area, and are especially concentrated in an area known as the 'Naxal Belt,' comprising 92,000 square kilometers. According to India's intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing, 20,000 insurgents are currently in operation, and their growing influence prompted Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to declare them as the most serious threat to India's national security.²

Region affected

The rebels claim to operate in 182 districts in India, mainly in the states of Jharkhand, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal. The area affected by Naxalism stretches from the border with Nepal to Karnataka in the South (2006). In West Bengal areas west of Howrah are affected by the insurgency. Chhattisgarh is the epicenter of the conflict (2007).³

The Red Corridor

The Red Corridor is a term used to describe an impoverished region in the east of India that experiences considerable Naxalite Maoist militant activity. These are also areas that suffer from the greatest illiteracy, poverty and overpopulation in modern India, and span parts of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal states.⁴

According to Judith Vidal-Hall (2006), “More recent figures put the strength of the movement at 15,000, and claim the guerrillas control an estimated one fifth of India’s forests, as well as being active in 180 of the country’s 630 administrative districts. There exists the pro-democratic and anti-Maoist Salwa Judum, which is a government, sponsored self-defense force which was constituted after the Maoists unleashed a campaign of violence against the tribal of Chhattisgarh.⁵ The Ranvir Sena, a caste-supremacist paramilitary of the upper-caste landlords and proscribed terrorist organization by the Indian government, is anti-communist and has been known to kill Dalit civilians in retaliation to Naxalite activity. Similar self-defense groups have emerged in Andhra Pradesh during the last decade. Some of these groups are Fear Vikas, Green Tigers, Nalladandu, Red Tigers, Tirumala Tigers, Palnadu Tigers, Kakatiya Cobras, Narsa Cobras, Nallamalla Nallatrachu (Cobras) and Kranthi Sena. Over ground activists of Maoists were axed to death by the Nayeem gang in 1998 and 2000. On 24 August 2005, alleged members of the self-styled Narsi Cobras killed a Maoist activist in Mahbubnagar district.⁶

The tribals are quite primitive and live mostly off the land. Their religion is animist and does not conform to the purity of Vedic ritual (which is one way of identifying them as being different). The word tribal means preliterate and it is true that these people are neither literate nor possessing of the sophistication that modernity and literacy brings. Because they are close to their land, they are affected when its features — forest, river, mountain, animal – are taken from them. Or when the tribal’s are forcibly displaced, as often happens.⁷ This separation has created conflict. Indian industry needs the space to expand, and it needs raw materials. The government does this by handing out licenses to mine these areas for metals.

The state is corrupt in India, and land is signed away with little regard to the tribal’s who have association with it. Often companies breach the conditions under which they may mine.⁸ Other than facilitating the mining and the deforestation, the state is absent from these areas. The conditions are quite inhuman, and the tribal’s are the lowest group on India’s Human

Development Index.⁹ In the 1970s, when the state did enter the areas to set up heavy industry like hydroelectric dams, reports of contractors sexually exploiting the tribal women, who were not particularly moralistic, regularly appeared in magazines. The state is clearly the offender here. But even those who accept this feel the Naxalites have no proper solution to the problem of development. This is because Naxals are from a faction of the Communist party called Marxist-Leninist, whose wild ideas may be compared to the Khmer Rouge's. The Naxals (their name comes from the Bengali village where the movement started) are fighting a revolution, but what comes at the end of it is not very clear, and there is really no substitute for the modern state. And the problem of the state in poor nations is, of course, that it is inherently corrupt.¹⁰ Corruption also touches tribal's, and when one of them becomes a leader, his behavior is no different from that of a leader from another community. The latest news is that on Monday, a landmine was detonated under a bus that killed 44 people. As in Pakistan, there are Indians who see the other side's view, and think the solution is not state violence. They also look at the link between the state and the exploiters. For instance, one company accused of exploitation is Vedanta, which makes aluminum. Home minister Chidambaram, who leads the fight against Naxals, used to be a director on Vedanta's board. He is one of our few good leaders, but this is a serious conflict of interest. He brushes this aside as irrelevant, and perhaps it is.

Bihar: Want the full coppers

The Ministry of Home Affairs has allocated an annual budget of Rs 23,000 crores for all the Naxalite affected States. Out of these, the state government of Bihar alone sought Rs 21,000 crore to tackle the Naxal menace. That leaves the Central government with Rs 2,000 crore for the rest of the states. Bihar was asked to trim up the proposal.

Chhattisgarh: Demand choppers

The Chhattisgarh State Government demanded choppers for reconnaissance and para dropping of the forces in the Maoist strongholds. With a view to recruit more eligible people, read as Adivasis, to strengthen the State Police, the Chhattisgarh Government on 28 April 2006 relaxed parameters of recruitment by reducing the required height of 158 cm to 153 cm for the

candidates.¹¹ The April 6, 2010, ambush in Chhattisgarh state, killing 76 members of the Central Reserve Police Force, marks the deadliest attack upon Indian security forces since the foundation of the “Naxalite” movement. Formed from a 1967 split within the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the insurgency has been responsible for decades of violence throughout eastern and central India’s “Red Corridor.” These loosely affiliated Maoist rebels claim to fight on behalf of the landless poor, virulently opposing the injustice and oppression of the Indian state.¹² In response to attacks on police officers, government officials, and landlords, India has employed an assortment of counterinsurgency strategies that, over the years, have met varied levels of success.¹³ As the modern Naxalite movement continues to develop, the Indian government faces new complications related to one of its most destabilizing internal security challenges. Adequately addressing this threat will prove essential in solidifying India’s status as a rising world power, as well as demonstrating its capacity to effectively combat militancy.

Persistent Threat: The first 25 years of the Naxalite insurgency were characterized by the communist principles on which the movement was founded. Fighting for land reform, the rebels gained support from the impoverished rural populations of eastern and central India.¹⁴ The Maoist rebellion quickly adopted violence and terror as the core instruments of its struggle against the Indian authority. Primary targets included railway tracks, post offices, and other state infrastructure, demonstrating the Maoists’ commitment to undermining a central government that they believed exploited low castes and rural populations.¹⁵ As states and the central government employed uncoordinated and underfunded responses to the Naxalites, the threat expanded beyond West Bengal and its neighboring states. In 2004, the two predominant rebel groups, the Maoist Communist Center (MCC) and the People’s War Group (PWG), merged together. The resulting Communist Party of India (Maoist) emerged as a solidified base of power for the Naxalites, with a stated goal of overthrowing the Indian government. It has developed in its modern form as a rebellion that comprises up to 40,000 permanent armed cadres and 100,000 additional militia members. According to the South Asia Intelligence Review, Maoist violence bears responsibility for 998 deaths in 2009, representing the highest one-year total since 1971.¹⁶

The Expansion of the Rebellion: The nascent stages of the movement reflected the stark contrast between urbanized areas of India and the primarily rural, underdeveloped regions of Naxalite influence. With the Maoist rebels firmly entrenched in geographically remote areas, Indian government resources remained dedicated to urban security and development concerns. As India

looks increasingly to its east for vital resources, the conflict continues to expand beyond the principles of its origin.¹⁷ With a growing population and new development initiatives that require additional coal-powered electricity sources, India's urban centers have come into direct contact with the states most affected by the Naxalite uprising: West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. Containing 85 percent of India's coal reserves, these states have presented insurgents with an opportunity both to strike at the heart of national interests and to seek economic profit of their own.¹⁸

Jharkhand: Price for the soldiers limbs

'If any of the 25,000 personnel engaged in anti-Naxal drive suffers fatal wounds or permanent total disability or loses two limbs or sight, his or her family will be entitled to a maximum benefit of Rs 11.5 lakh,' stated Jharkhand's Home Minister Sudesh Mahto. In April 2006, the Jharkhand government increased the insurance to dependants of jawans killed in operations against Naxalites in the state to Rs 21.5 lakh, instead of Rs 10 lakh which are being paid presently. The annual premium amount of Rs 2, 47, 50,000 for 2006 has already been paid by the state government for the "group personal accident insurance policy". About 25,000 security personnel engaged in anti-insurgency operations including from other states will also be benefited.¹⁹ The insurance amount would be apart from the Rs 10 lakh package, awarded by the State Government to families of such martyrs. On 20 April 2006, the Jharkhand government also announced a new surrender policy. It offered Rs 50,000 in cash to each surrendered Naxalite and a monthly allowance of Rs 2,000. Other benefits include cash equivalent to the price of the weapon surrendered, a life insurance cover worth Rs 10 lakhs, vocational training for two years, one acre of agricultural land, health and educational facility for their children.²⁰ The Naxalites will also be entitled to a lawyer to fight their case in the court. In case, the surrendered Naxalites want different lawyer, the government would bear all the expenses. The village, whose residents help in mass surrender of Naxalites, will get Rs 25 lakhs as bonus for development and the villagers would decide how to use the money for the development of their area.²¹

Karnataka: Secret plans

“I will not publicize it. It will be revealed after the problem is tackled,” - declared Chief Minister Mr. Kumaraswamy on his secret plan to tackle the Naxalite problem. Earlier, the state government decided to allocate special funds for developing Naxal-affected villages in Karnataka over the next two years. Each gram panchayat, village council, would be given Rs 10 lakh a year for two years for developing Naxal affected villages in their jurisdiction. As many as 315 villages under 152 gram panchayats in 11 districts have been identified as Naxal-affected.²² The state government has directed the gram panchayats to prepare a comprehensive development plan as per the guidelines of the Kugrama Suvarna Scheme by 15 May 2006. The gram panchayats will be the implementing agencies for these programmes. The government has also directed use of other grants from the government, zilla and taluk panchayats for developing these villages on priority.²³

Orissa: Extension of the ban

On 9 June 2006, Orissa government banned CPI (Maoists) and seven of its front organizations- Damana Pratirodh Manch, Revolutionary Democratic Front, Chasi Mulia Samiti, Kui Lawenga Sangh, JanaNatya Mandali, Krantikari Kisan Samiti and Bal Sangam. The Orissa government has also approved a comprehensive rehabilitation package for the Naxals who surrender.²⁴ The rehabilitation package consists of payment up to Rs 10,000 on acceptance of surrender, payment up to Rs 20,000 for surrendering arms and ammunition, allotment of homestead land, house building grant up to Rs 25,000, Rs 15,000 for marriage, assistance to take loan up to Rs 2 lakhs from banks on which there will be no interest for two years, subsidy up to Rs 50,000 after repayment of 75 per cent of the loan, free medical treatment in government hospitals within the state and cost of fees and textbooks for study up to high school. The government also proposed to withdraw cases involving minor offences against surrendered Naxalites.²⁵

END NOTES

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