

Problem of Naxalism in India: Ground Realities and Strategic Challenges Towards Conflict Resolution *

Introduction

A joint USI-Amity Panel Discussion on the subject '*The Problem of Naxalism in India*' was conducted on 26 July 2012 at the Amity University Campus for the convenience of nearly 600 USI members residing in NOIDA. Approximately 175 USI members and 100 eminent Amity invitees attended the event. The panel discussion began with welcome remarks by Lieutenant General PK Singh, PVSM, AVSM (Retd), Director USI and Major General K Jai Singh (Retd), Group Vice Chancellor, Amity Universities Group and Executive Senior Vice President, Ritnand Balved Education Foundation (RBEF); and some thoughts by Dr Ashok K Chauhan, Founder President, RBEF and Amity Group of Universities and Institutions.

Director USI, in his welcome remarks stressed, "It is beyond doubt that Naxalism is the most serious internal security threat that the Country is facing today; it is expanding with increasing evidence of external linkages and if left unchecked, it will sooner than later threaten India's cohesion, stability and economic growth and that the challenge has to be faced squarely". He highlighted the great personal experience and expertise of the panelists to discuss this problem in its entirety. He thanked Shri Mani Shankar Aiyar, MP, Rajya Sabha for having agreed to deliver the Special Address and Lieutenant General KM Seth, former Governor of Tripura and Chattisgarh to Chair the event. The following were the panelists :-

- (a) Shri EN Rammohan, IPS (Retd), former DG, BSF
- (b) Lieutenant General VK Ahluwalia, PVSM, AVSM**, YSM, VSM (Retd), former GOC-in-C Central Command
- (c) Ms Shoma Chaudhury, Managing Editor, Tehelka

* A report on Joint USI - Amity University Panel Discussion held on 26 July 2012 at Amity University Campus, Noida.

Special Address by Shri Mani Shankar Aiyar, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha

Let me begin by narrating a story – how the Americans got rid of a large number of alligators (crocodiles) that inhabited Florida swamps by ‘draining the swamps’ to settle human beings there. We must draw a lesson from this episode to get rid of Naxalism in India. Simply killing them would not result in an enduring solution. Even if we succeed, as through *Operation Greyhound* in Andhra Pradesh; those Naxalites that were not disposed by the Police, took refuge in the neighbouring states of Chhattisgarh and Odisha. Similarly, if we were ever to succeed in driving them out of the jungles of Dandakaranya, we would find them surfacing in Mumbai, Kolkata and New Delhi.

A few years ago, a Ministry of Home Affairs report indicated that one third of the Indian districts were either partially or very severely affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE). The current figure of 78 LWE districts is bogus because of a plan under which money is made available for them. To access that money, politicians have started claiming with considerable pride that they have LWE districts in their constituencies. At the same time, there are districts which ought to be declared LWE affected; but are not included in that category because they are voiceless. Without quarrelling over the specific figure, we ought to recognise, as the Prime Minister indicated a few years ago, that “LWE constitutes the single most important internal security problem that this Country faces”. Over the years many ad hoc solutions have been attempted, however, none have succeeded.

The spread of this malaise indicates the reluctant acquiescence of the people and rising active collaboration. There is no way of knowing the extent to which they are acquiescent because they are bullied into doing so. There may be no full proof way of assessing whether it is an active form of collaboration; but in this context, we need to take note of what Mao Tse Tung said about Guerrilla fighters. He said, “The Guerrilla are like fish in the ocean and the ocean is like the people’s support; the ‘fish’ can survive only so long as there is for them the support of the people”. Therefore, it would be foolish to consider the presence of Naxalism in Dandakaranya forests either as an accident or as something to which there could be an ‘easy security based solution’.

He referred to a report commissioned by the Government of India (GOI), titled, '*Developmental Challenges in Extremist Affected Areas*'. It was Chaired by Shri Deobandopadhyay, a former Rural Development Secretary of the West Bengal Cadre, who later became an active politician and is an elected Rajya Sabha Member now. He and his very eminent colleagues are deeply dedicated to the 'cause of lifting the poorest of poor'. They have given convincing details of '*what lies at the root of the Naxal Problem in India*'. At the time that report came out, another internally commissioned joint report of Ministries of Home Affairs and Defence, indicated the quantum of additional security complement required in terms of arms, ammunition and personnel to be deployed. Those days attention was wholly focused on '*Crushing Naxalism through the use of our security forces*', causing a personal sense of despair at not getting my voice heard in the Cabinet meetings. Since then, the Deobandopadhyay Report has remained in the Yojna Bhawan without any chance of it being ever heard again. That report clearly shows that Naxalism has not come up suddenly upon our Country. It mentions, why frustration, anger and fury have grown amongst the most quiescent people of India.

Long ago, the tribal people withdrew into the forests to save themselves from the onslaught of so called civilising influences; firstly, of the Aryans and finally of the British; and now, of the Brown sahibs. They hid themselves in the jungles, kept to their own practices and remained ethnic at extraordinarily low level of livelihood. They survived by largely having a very strong community sense, development of traditions, customs, usages and rituals. They have stuck to their own lives and preserved their own ecological systems. They could do this because there was nothing to pollute their environs and they had enough food of the kind they wished to have to survive and replicate; and then came modernisation.

Modernisation hit India in 1947 and came to be recognised by an expression, which was later used by Jawaharlal Nehru while inaugurating the Hirakud Hydel Project. He referred to the hydro-electric plants as "The modern temples of India". A recent study has indicated that; since 1947, the number of tribal people that have been displaced (many of them more than once) amounts to an accumulative total of 60 to 65 million – the figure may be 40 million, but nobody can deny that it runs into millions of displaced

tribals. Generation after generation, the same families have spread out geographically as a consequence of economic development. Modernisation and industrialisation demand acquisition of as many of the resources of land and whatever is the wealth above the land; but most importantly, the wealth that is below the land with deep concern for the GDP growth rate, with 'no concern for, what happens to the people?'

In this connection, I would like to mention about the Land Acquisition Act, 1984. It is an antiquated colonial legislation which modern India has to get rid of; and replace it with a law that is not '*Imperial*' in nature. The British Act did not provide for any land acquisition for any private company by the Government, except for Railway companies. In 1920s, there were amendments which permitted the Government to acquire land in order to enable canteens and dormitories to be built for workers who were part of laying the Railway lines, till they moved further.

In 1984, the Land Acquisition Act was amended by the Indian Parliament to provide for '*massive and completely unrestricted / unlimited acquisition of private property by the poorest for the private benefit of the richest*'. In the same year Ranveer Sena started to take law into its own hands, which led to the resurgence of Naxalism, which had earlier become a phenomenon under Charu Mazumdar in a small district of Darjeeling. In the last thirty years it has grown as a result of the actions of Independent India, with delightful collaboration of a huge number of State governments. They have seen great benefit (for themselves) in bringing in capital investment; domestic in some instances and, even more lip smacking, led from outside India. This included the largest single investment ever made by the Republic of Korea anywhere in the world or received in India at the Pohang Steel Company (POSCO) Project, Odisha.

We have a complete disconnection between the rising curve of economic growth and rising curve of people's discontent. It manifested fully when Medha Patekar succeeded in persuading the World Bank '*not to finance*' the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada River. But, we still went ahead. The World Bank's refusal was based on GOI and local government's lack of concern in not having a clear resettlement and rehabilitation plan. Today, we have the dam and lots of complaints by the displaced people.

Perhaps, that is the last multi-purpose dam that was built in India because these dams cannot be built without displacing people.

In recent years, there has been considerable increase in the entry of outsiders into these Tribal properties. Its sheer coincidence or may be strange are the ways of the Lord; because, much of our mineral resources are found in lands on top of which the tribals have been settled for centuries, even millennium. In the meanwhile, the value of what is above this land in terms of timber is over Rs. 50,000 crore annually, of which only a pittance of Rs 500 crore only finally reaches the tribals. Their lives have also been seriously disrupted by saying that *'they cannot access major forest produce on environmental grounds'*. An ordinary tribal who cuts down a tree is liable to immediate arrest and imprisonment. And, since he is a poor tribal he will actually be never released, even after his prison term is over. A tribal is entitled to have some access to *'minor forest produce'*; but that has so far been regulated by State corporations, who send in armies of non tribals into these lands. The tribal then, quite literally, becomes the *'hewer of wood and drawer of water'*. He provides the berries, leaves or the seeds or whatever grows on a plant/tree. It goes into the hands of the State Forest Produce Corporation, from there it finds its way to the United States; where it is used for plugging into oil drilling machines which are now used for producing shale gas – that is where the Guar gum and the seeds are now going. The tribal, regrettably, remains where he is.

This fast economic growth is breeding enormous inequality in our Country. Thus far, it has not damaged our democracy. But, now we are facing a dilemma. The democracy polity, which includes the tribals and the workers at Manesar, have got completely used to it through 15 general elections for the Lok Sabha, thousands of elections for State assemblies and millions of local bodies elections. They are aware of the secrecy of their ballot. They exercise their ballot in complete contrast to the developed countries. The poorest in India, the most powerless, have discovered that once in every five years they can determine who will form the next Government; and that nobody will be able to discover either who they voted for or how they voted. They exercise their ballot ferociously with enthusiasm and also with great viciousness.

India is the only democracy in the world where *'incumbency'*

is a serious handicap. In more than two third cases, the incumbent government is overthrown. Even when an incumbent government returns to office, more often than not, two third of the incumbent MPs are thrown out only for the reason that they had been in office for more than five years. In this way democracy is able to inflict retribution.

Democracy in that way becomes an active vengeance. However, it is only a matter of time, when the electorate discovers that whoever 'they vote for' or 'they vote against' their condition is not going to improve. Therefore, they feel that this 'five years revenge' cycle should perhaps be converted into 'once in five days' affair. That is why you get, this fury in which a completely innocent manager has his legs broken and his office set on fire – resulting in his death. To address issues; such as, demand for excessive wages, housing conditions and privileges of the labour class, we need to make our labour laws more flexible.

In our Country, we have such severe inequality that Vivek Deb Roy, an anti-Marxist economist, has estimated that in five years from 2004-2009 (which were the best years of GDP growth for India) the Ground Economic (GE) coefficient that measures inequality, the GE co-efficient of income and wealth in urban India has gone up from 0.37 to 0.65 – which means 'doubling of inequality'. We also have symbols of obscene prosperity everywhere; but, they are all part of the democratic space. There is also social unrest; and there is a cauldron bubbling in our Country. That cauldron bubbled first in the jungles of Dandakaranya. But today, we are talking not only about, "How to free Dandakaranya of Naxalism, but how to prevent this terrible disease from spreading through the rest of our Country, before it is too late?"

People have got used to democracy; which means 'one person one vote'. It also means that no person has more than one vote. Yet our economy says, "*one person many notes, many persons no notes*". The dilemma is, how do you reconcile votes with notes? It is because Indian society has always been aspirational more so, in the last 70 years. Today, even rural India wants to learn English. But, after learning English, the rural youth wants a job to fulfill his long awaited aspirations. But, is there a job available? The latest figures indicate that in the period of highest boom (2004-2009) in organised sector we were adding only 40,000 jobs a

year. Due to recent economic downturn the numbers have come down to 25,000 new jobs per year. Therefore, we need to have economic reforms to meet the rising aspirations of youth across the whole Country.

There is a need to understand the mind of the tribal; who finds himself displaced again and again 'repeatedly' because of a completely uncaring bureaucracy. The political system in both these States, Jharkhand & Chattisgarh, has been captured by non tribals who are completely contemptuous of those whom they are supposed to serve. In Chattisgarh; particularly, created because the Government wanted it to be a majority tribal area, the non tribal civil servants find the area to be of great discomfort; because there are no doctors in the dispensaries, no teachers in the schools and no engineers to look after the irrigation and the roads there. They are left to fester there and fester they did.

The Instruments in hand to improve the lot of tribals are principally :-

(a) The Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, called the 73rd Amendment, came into force on 22 April 1993. It is now sanctified as Part IX of the Constitution. It creates and indicates a road to empowerment of institutions of democratic local communities.

(b) It was supplemented in 1996 by a remarkable piece of legislation called the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act (PESA) of 1996.

If you combine the 73rd Amendment with PESA, you have an instrument of making the people feel that they are incharge of their own lives. If you affect the empowerment that is provided for in this Act; then, given what the Central Budget is earmarking every year, for the 29 subjects mentioned in the 11th Schedule that is Annexed to Part IX of the Constitution, you arrive at a figure of these 1/3rd affected districts being entitled to about Rs 50,000 crore of Central Government funding. If, of this Rs 50,000 crore the State Government were to retain about Rs 30,000 crore and give say Rs 20,000 crore to these Panchayats (that are partially or locally affected by Naxalism, we could go to the tribal, who is supporting the Naxalite and say, "You come here, you have Rs 20,000 crore of your own to spend; if you remain there, you will

either be killed by Naxalites or Security Forces". The choice is stark. Why would any rational people not pick the possibility of running their own lives in terms of the legal guarantees of the Constitution and PESA. As far as the Governors are concerned, we have the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution which requires the Governor to review any kind of law that is passed by the State Assembly before allowing it to go into tribal areas. We also have provision under Paragraph Three of the Fifth Schedule for the Central Government to direct the State Government in respect of the Administration of Fifth Schedule Areas. There is no lack of instruments; but, there is a total lack of will.

The Central Government has an integrated plan of Rs 50,000 crore administered by a committee comprising the District Collector, the Police Chief and the Forests Chief. It is these three functionaries who are responsible for the situation that got created. They are the ones that are given additional money to build the roads and schools, that they should have built anyway. But, they throw up their hands saying, *"Look at these awful Naxalites, they are destroying our schools"*. The tribals say, *"Yes, the school are there, but when did the teacher last come there?"*

I would like to reiterate, *"If we want to kill this alligator, which we must otherwise it will swallow all of us, we have to drain the swamp."* Draining the swamp means empowering the peoples' neighbourhoods and communities to take charge of their lives once again; empowering them with finances, functions, functionaries who will do their bidding; and ensure that, if there are any mistakes they will be of the tribals themselves and not of non tribals dominating over them. Once they know that they have got the money, power and self-respect; and find that they cannot be displaced without their consent and without adequate compensation; why would they pick up the gun against the Government soldiers and policemen? They will realise, there is no need to do so. But for them to do so, we have to include them in the process of governing and safeguarding their interests. This is the right way of looking at the problem. If it is taken only as a law and order problem, you cannot kill them all, because, then they will either move away or they will breed more of their kind. Every time innocent people are killed, it automatically creates more Maoists. In the end, I would like to say 'while there is this internal security problem',

we have to have security forces, dealing with it. They may be able to contain the problem but the solution lies in the hands of the civil society and the civil governments.

Chairman's Opening Remarks

I remember my first talk on Naxalite problem in October 2003 at the National Defence College, New Delhi, and later in 2004 at USI, wherein I had mentioned that this problem, which is being swept under the carpet and wished away as a mere socio-economic problem of the State concerned or at best a law and order, would one day pose a serious threat to our internal security. From a handful of districts in a few States this *hydra-headed* monster has spread to nearly 200 districts in 16 states. Our Prime Minister on 13th March 2006 said, "*Naxalism constitutes the greatest Internal Security Threat for the Nation*". In my personal opinion – severely affected districts would be about 80 out of a total of 608 districts that the Country has.

The phenomenal spread of Naxalism can be attributed to the inability of the State to deliver basic services and make the rural inhabitants, particularly in tribal belts, part of the national development process which provided space to the LWE to take roots in these States. Naxalites exploited the opportunity to discredit the capability of the Government and failure of the Parliamentary Democratic System of Governance to bring relief to the poor and deprived.

We have an eminent panel to go over the *ground realities and strategic challenges* to resolve the problem, but let me go over some of the ground realities which I had the opportunity to see from close quarters and not seen through the glass window of the air conditioned chambers in Delhi.

- (a) Exploitation and oppression of dalits, adivasis and landless people, living in interior areas due to feudal agrarian system and strong interface of caste and class. For the adivasis forest is their natural habitat and their means of livelihood. They have been deprived of their land and even the picking rights of the minor forest produce through the unfair Forest Conservation Act of 1980, which needs immediate relook.

(b) Total alienation of the population, due to virtual absence of health care, drinking water, roads, electricity and educational facilities in the interior areas, from the Government machinery.

(c) There are schemes after schemes for the development of the area – Central Government has allocated thousands of crores, but on ground not even 20 per cent of it has been deployed. The current system has completely failed to deliver or implement any of these schemes.

(d) There are liberated areas like '*Abhujmadh*', an area of 7000 sq km mainly in Chhattisgarh, which has no administrative machinery or police stations to govern this huge mass of land having nearly 237 villages and a population of about 20,000 tribals. This area serves as the Nerve Centre of Naxalites housing logistic and training bases. This area has not even been surveyed by the revenue department.

(e) *Inadequate Police Force*, in all the Naxal affected districts. The density of police force per sq km is just about 30 per cent of the average need. Not only this, the training and equipment profile, which goes to create the desired capability and capacity of the security force, is far from satisfactory.

(f) It will be unfair to blame the Government alone for the lack of development. Naxalites themselves do not want any developmental activity to succeed, they do not allow construction of roads and want the area to remain as such for their designs to succeed and the tribals to remain dependent on them.

(g) Naxalites resort to killings, kidnappings, abductions, extortions and IED blasts with impunity. They are reported to have developed linkages with terrorist organisations, like Maoists (Nepal), ULFA (Assam) and with other northeast extremist organisations for training and procurement of modern weapons.

(h) Naxalites are able to raise adequate funds for their cadres and other needs. It is estimated that their annual income runs into nearly 14 billion rupees.

(j) 80 per cent of coal reserves and nearly 19 per cent of other rich mineral resources are located in Naxal affected

tribal areas. With pressures building on greater exploitation of national resources, to maintain India's growth trajectory, this has given them an additional weapon and impetus to extract maximum benefits and greater scope for extortion.

The Naxalites have a centralised command and control; whereas, our response is most diffused. We have got to evolve a national strategy and response in a holistic manner which is ruthlessly implemented with specific time frame and strict monitoring. Political considerations must give way to national interest. The strategy must focus on tackling security environment and infrastructure development simultaneously, which would require immediate revamping and capability enhancement of the security forces deployed in these areas apart from improving numbers of security personnel per sq km of the affected area. The Governance per se and an innovative delivery system has to be put in place without any further delay. For all this to happen, better coordination between Central Government and respective State Governments has to be there. The present approach of State Governments towards National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) has to give way to what is the need of the hour.

If this strategy can be put in place our focus should be on economic development which is the most promising solution to the current state of affairs. Economic development increases accessibility and decreases individual dependence on others for survival. This also would encourage demographic mobility to reduce the feeling of alienation. For this, the Government has to be the prime mover and we cannot indefinitely wait for 'peace to return first' concept. What, possibly is needed is 'aggressive infusion of developmental effort' which should be all encompassing as far as essential human needs are concerned. One last thing I want to mention is that we have got to restore the 'dignity' of the Adivasis and evolve a system to get them speedy 'Justice' close to their place of residence.

Shri EN Rammohan, IPS (Retd) on The Naxalite Maoist Insurgency in India – the Root Causes and a Possible Solution

The Naxalite Maoist insurgency has been festering in India since 1946, when the Communist Party of India began working in North Bengal and Telengana among landless scheduled castes and tribes who worked for a pittance in the lands of the upper caste land

owners of these two areas. The root causes of this problem lie in the pernicious caste system of our society. During the evolution of this caste system, the upper castes saw to it that ownership of cultivable lands remained with the upper castes. As for the tribals during the evolution of the caste system, they were driven into the forests and hence came to be called *Vanvasis* or *Adivasis*.

The British did not interfere with this system. However, when India became Independent and the Constituent Assembly was convened to frame the Constitution of India, our leaders framed two Articles that are relevant to this issue – the Fifth Schedule and the Ninth Schedule.

Briefly, the Fifth Schedule states that all Scheduled Areas of the Country which are the Forest Reserves and that are inhabited by Scheduled Tribes are to be administered by the Governors of the States by appointing Tribes Advisory Councils from among the tribals of a particular Forest Reserve or a Scheduled Area. Regrettably, no Governor of any State in India has ever constituted Tribes Advisory Councils of Scheduled Tribes living in the Reserve Forests or Scheduled Areas of the States where they were functioning as Governors. In this vacuum, the Chief Ministers of the States have merrily administered their Reserve Forests by leasing forests for mining to private companies, evicting the tribals who were living in these forests for thousands of years.

The Ninth Schedule of the Constitution dealt with the fact that cultivable land, which over thousands of years had come under the ownership of upper castes, should be acquired by the Government and redistributed among India's landless peasantry. Since land was a State subject the States were directed to legislate Land Ceiling laws and implement these laws by acquiring farm lands from landlords and redistribute these lands to landless farmers who for thousands of years were working under the most abominable conditions on the lands of the land owners.

Regrettably only three States had implemented the Land Ceiling laws legislated by all the States by 1955. These were Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal and Kerala, the latter two when Communist Ministries were ruling there. In West Bengal, the *Jotedars*, as the landlords are called there, tried to manipulate the land records and deceive the landless farmers and the Government.

This resulted in an uprising in a village called Naxalbari led by a faction of the Communist Party Marxist called the Communist Party Marxist-Leninist (CPIML). In Kerala, the Land Ceiling laws were successfully implemented in the plains districts and this has prevented the Maoist Naxalites from organising a revolution there.

In the vacant space created by the Central Government in not implementing the Fifth and Ninth Schedules of the Constitution, the CPIML, that has further evolved into the Communist Party of India Maoist (CPI Maoist), has entered on the scene from the 1970s, trained and organised the scheduled castes and tribes who were deliberately denied cultivable lands and rights in the forest or Scheduled Areas that are enshrined in the Constitution of India. The Land Ceiling Acts legislated by all the States are lying abegging in the statute books as also the Fifth Schedule because no Tribes Advisory Councils have been formed by any Governor.

Today, the States and the Centre are only screaming about the Maoist threat to the Country and a mini war is being carried out against the evil Maoists and the poor scheduled castes and tribes whom the Maoist leaders have organised as their cadres. Nobody wants a Maoist Government. But what is the answer to this problem? Is it to maintain a thunderous silence on not enforcing the Fifth and Ninth Schedules of the Constitution of India? Under what laws have the State Governments leased forest lands to mining companies when it is the Tribes Advisory Council who is to decide how to utilise their forest lands, where they have been living for thousands of years?

There is a simple solution to the problem of the forests. The forests have to be divided into sections of ten villages. The whole area should then be cordoned by the CRPF or BSF and Tribes Advisory Councils constituted in each section. The Para Military Force deployed around will prevent any Maoists from entering this area and also see that the Tribal Advisory Councils are formed. The Councils will then decide how to organise collection of Forest Produce or liase with mining companies. The rest of the State's Scheduled Areas should then be covered step by step in a similar manner. As each section of tribals find that the Government has now devolved powers to them through the Tribes Advisory Councils the Maoist leaders will automatically be neutralised. The CRPF should be retained in each segment cleared, to see that the Minor

Forest Produce from the forests are sold directly to the Cooperatives set-up by the State Government and the Private Sector businessmen are cut-out from trading with the Scheduled Tribes.

In the States, the Land Ceiling laws must be enforced by deploying the CRPF on the ground and supervising the removal of land in excess of the Land Ceiling laws of the State and distributing it to the landless people. The oppressed people will then realise that the CRPF are their friends and not the oppressive arm of a corrupt Government. This is not as simple as stated. There will be enormous pressures from the upper caste lobbies, particularly in States like Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. The Central Government should be firm on this and if necessary impose President's rule in the recalcitrant States if they refuse to obey the Centre's directions on enforcing the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution.

Lieutenant General Vijay Kumar Ahluwalia, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, VSM (Retd) on Naxalism: Ground Realities and Strategic Challenges**

Amongst all the insurgent, secessionist and revolutionary movements in India, the Naxalite problem at present is the greatest threat to India's internal security. This is primarily because of the nature, reach and expanse of this problem to nearly 40 per cent of the Country's landmass and at least 35 per cent of the population. The Naxal movement in India entered a phase of transformation with the merger of two of the principal lethal armed organisations, viz. People's War Group (PWG) and the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI), which resulted in the formation of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), also called CPI (Maoists), on 21st September 2004. The merger of the PWG and the MCCI brought about a radical change in the dynamics of the movement in India.

Naxalism is a natural outcome of abject poverty, deprivation, exploitation, injustice and poor socio-economic conditions of an area. This is true not only for the states afflicted by Naxalism in India but also for any such area or country in the world, which is rich in natural resources but has been exploited unscrupulously by the State or a group of individuals or an individual, e.g. Congo, Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria etc. In India also, it is a case of 'rich land but poor people'. Poverty alone does not drive a man to violence;

it is social exploitation, deprivation and denial of justice along with poverty that drives a man to violence.

Non implementation of land reform laws, archaic forest laws, corrupt and repressive administration made the situation worse for the lower classes, especially the tribals in these regions. This coupled with illegal and uncontrolled mining activities, clearance of forests for timber, dams and industries led to large scale displacements of the indigenous tribes without any proper rehabilitation programmes. According to a study by D Bandhopadhyay, Chairman of the Expert Group of Planning Commission on "Development Issues to deal with Causes of Discontent, Unrest and Extremism", the villagers in the Maoist dominated areas lost trust and confidence in successive governments because 5.5 crore of the rural population was displaced between 1951 and 2005. These sentiments were fully exploited by the Naxal leaders to propagate the plight of the people at the hands of the government. Rehabilitation programmes, if any, were also not fully and effectively implemented leading to further discontent. All this has had a profound negative impact on the socio-economic conditions of these areas.

Human Development outcomes are a function of economic growth, social policy, poverty reduction measures and more importantly, their implementation on ground. Some of the indicators of major concern in these areas, which have led to social and economic development of the population are: poverty (BPL), education (availability of schools, literacy level), unemployment, land ownership, food security, health, mortality rates of children, hygiene and sanitation. A close study of all these indices and statistics, including those of mineral resources and forest cover, does suggest that the Naxal affected areas have wide gap between the national average and the affected areas, much to the disadvantage of the latter. For instance, these areas have over 42 per cent of the forest cover of our Country and enormous mineral wealth. Almost all type of minerals are found – coal, lignite, iron ore, bauxite, copper, zinc, manganese, lead, gold, mica, diamond, gypsum, graphite, limestone, crude oil etc.

Food security has a very important role to play in enhancement of human capabilities, which is directly related to employment opportunities. Poverty alleviation cannot be achieved through provision of economic infrastructure alone. There is a need to provide social

infrastructure along with supporting facilities like housing, power, telecommunications, sanitation and accessible surface connectivity that can give economic growth a human face. While these enhance the human capital and capability, the land (rich with natural resources) has not been the beneficiary of India's growth story. As there are no meaningful cash crops in these areas, people have taken to illegal growth of opium and cannabis, which gives the local population much higher returns in terms of cash, its adverse effects notwithstanding. Poverty alleviation can best be achieved by ensuring implementation of social and economic developmental projects on ground.

It has been seen that the support base for the Naxals has also increased substantially, particularly in the remote and inaccessible parts of rural India, primarily due to voids left by inadequacies of governance, as also non availability of basic amenities. Given the progressive increase in the spatial spread, casualties and destruction of infrastructure in the Maoists' affected areas, the statistics are too large to be ignored by anyone – instead, it warrants a serious look. As per statistics on the government website, 5467 civilians have been killed and 281 schools destroyed in the Naxal affected areas from 2001 to 2011. The governments, both at the Centre and in the States, have a great role to ensure the safety and security of its people. It is no longer a security related issue; but predominantly, has its roots in socio-economic, environmental, cultural and political problems. Insurgency is a result of accumulation of a large number of grievances - till such time these genuine grievances are addressed and the faith of the population in the legislature, judiciary and the executive is restored, the problem cannot be solved effectively.

In order to formulate and recommend a national strategy for conflict resolution of the Naxal problem, it would be prudent to lay out the key strategic challenges which must be addressed in order to move towards a definite end state, which is conflict resolution. Some of the major challenges, therefore, are – achieving national consensus, achieving inclusive growth, perception management, prevent further spread of Naxalism, empowerment of youth, ensuring implementation of developmental initiatives, isolation from external support, capacity and capability building of police forces, choke the flow of funds to Naxals and early passage of pro poor people socio-economic reforms. Harmonious Centre and States

relations are significant to conduct a synergised anti-terrorist and anti-Naxal campaign.

One of the key drivers of the national security process is the aspect of demographic growth. As per the Census of India-2011, India's population stands at 1.21 billion. India is one the youngest nations in the world today. It is, therefore, important to engage the youth, particularly from the Naxal affected areas, in a constructive and positive manner. Failure to empower the youth or to create number of jobs, with other factors, could lead to large scale unemployment and consequent serious conflict and internal instability. It remains a huge strategic challenge to empower the youth of the Country and to provide job related skills.

The Naxal problem is multi – dimensional that encompasses a large number of factors. There is a large amount of trust deficit between the people in the affected regions and the Government. It is this trust deficit, which is being used by the Naxals to gain the confidence of the locals by filling the void, which has been created due to the absence and ineffectiveness of the Government machinery. While formulating the National Strategy, it must be kept in mind that trust cannot be won overnight. It is a prolonged process and can be achieved only if successive governments, both at the Centre and the States, make genuine efforts.

Ms Shoma Chaudhury, Managing Editor, Tehelka on The Maoist-Tribal Crisis (A Synopsis)

How we articulate a problem defines the solution we bring to it. The Maoist crisis should not be seen as merely a security threat but a reflection on India's own approach to development; its neglect of the tribals; its greed to extract mineral resources now on any terms – by displacing tribals, violating environmental norms and having no regard for the rights of ordinary people

The Maoist affected areas should not be called "red corridors" but "grey zones". Who is a Maoist is a very layered question. Yes, there is a threat to the idea of India by Maoist ideologues, who want to overthrow Indian parliamentary democracy. But that is a distant threat and there are only a handful of party ideologues. The bulk of the Maoists following are tribals – the most dispossessed of Indians – who have joined the insurgency out of desperation; people who are angry with the Indian State; who have felt its brute

face; who have no health care, roads, electricity, schools; and more importantly, don't have access to justice. They are picking up arms not because they want to place the Communist flag on Red Fort. They are picking up arms because apart from neglecting them, the Indian State now wants to push them out of their lands to be able to get at the minerals. To declare war on these people is to declare war on our own people. It's better to wean tribals away from the Maoists by displaying the positive and benign face of Indian democracy than sending in only security forces.

Yes, some factions of the Maoists have become corrupt; yes there is coercion in their liberated zones; yes, many Maoist factions extort money from the corporate, but tribals are caught between the Maoists and the Indian State. What complicates this further is that the Maoists still speak a language of rights – forest and land rights of the tribals, and raise flags on illegal and senseless jailing of thousands of innocent tribals; they talk of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution and PESA. These are issues that the democratically elected Government of India should be addressing. Instead of committing itself to improving its track record in these areas, a harsh security approach will only drive more angry citizens into the Maoist fold.

India is a country which is inhabited by two distinct sets of people - one which is fairly happy; people like us – privileged, middle class and rich. For us, Indian democracy is a very robust and benign place. For Muslims, dalits and tribals, India is a much darker place. When we say people have taken up arms against the Indian State, it's not our experience of the Indian State they are fighting and refuting; it's the experience of the Indian State that they experience, which is unfair, unjust and draconian. Unless we fix this, we can bring on as many police forces and security forces as we want, the fever will only rise.

You cannot police an entire nation; you cannot bring in the army into central India which is thousands and thousands of square kilometers. Just Kashmir required six lakh security forces; imagine the resources it would need to put down an insurgency that stretches across 200 districts and more than half a dozen states. Also, if we do this, the illogicality of violence and the gun will take over. With each mistake like Sarkeguda, the cycle of anger and violence will renew and expand itself.

If we want to control the Maoist crisis, India needs to create enclaves of model governance around the core crisis zones. Create more benevolent governance zones like Sarguja. The tribals themselves will get tired of the Maoists and the circle of fear and summary killings they are guilty of. Treat the Maoists as a political challenge. To call Naxals just terrorists is to miss the correct response the Indian State needs to have to them; because it paints them as pure, unmotivated evil and removes the burden of the Indian State from introspecting about itself. As DG, CRPF Vijay Kumar recently said, the security forces have to see the Maoists as adversaries, not enemies. In the final analysis, we need to win the moral battle against the Maoists.

Views of Former Governors

After presentations by the Panelists, the Chairman invited Lieutenant General VK Nayar, PVSM, SM (Retd) Former Governor of Manipur and Nagaland and Lieutenant General Ajai Singh, PVSM, AVSM (Retd), Former Governor of Assam to share their views with the audience.

Lieutenant General VK Nayar highlighted the need 'to win over the people of the area'. Also, it was not the correct approach to create a new instrument everytime the Nation was faced with a new problem. He stressed that the main drawback of the present approach was that not enough efforts were being made to bring Naxalites into the mainstream. If we continue to tackle the Naxalites by using force, it is likely to create more problems. He recommended a 'people-centric approach, whereby the focus would shift to the people'.

Lieutenant General Ajai Singh in his brief comments posed four questions : Have we defined what India is? ; Have we defined who is an Indian? ; Are we resolved to solve the Naxalism problem?; Are there different types of threats to National Security? As there was not enough time to discuss these questions, he asked the audience to ponder over these in their own time. He was of the view that 'all threats to the Nation, whether external or internal, ought to be treated as one and addressed with single minded resolve, like we deal with a disease in our body'.

Discussion

Due to the constraint of time, the interactive session had to be

curtailed. The important points raised by the participants and responses by the panelists are enumerated in the succeeding paragraphs.

Crisis Management vs Long Term Preventive Steps. These are the two aspects which merit consideration. 'Crisis Management' comes in the domain of evolving an effective strategy. The state is well equipped to deal with security related issues. There is, however, a lack of consensus and resolve to use the instruments of the State decisively. Rightly, there should be no hesitation in using all the instruments of power to gain an upper hand against anti-national segments of the society because they are a threat to National Security. However, from the long term perspective, partisan political interests coupled with monetary considerations by the non-tribals (mining mafia) were hampering the Government's efforts to evolve and implement an effective plan of action. The Government needs to ensure that issues related to efficient governance are addressed with utmost honesty and transparency to meet the interests of local inhabitants and tribals fearlessly – without favouring any vested interests. If the Government servants and functionaries fulfill their duties and responsibilities related to improving the tribals living conditions, bringing them into the 'national mainstream' should not take a very long time. The Government's policy as enunciated by Shri P Chidambaram appears to favour that security had to precede development in most areas affected by Naxalism.

Role of Corporate World and Business Community . A few far seeing corporate houses have taken right steps in this direction. Some of them are : (a) Identifying and training tribal youth to get gainful employment and jobs to meet their economic needs. (b) Improving the effectiveness of Panchayat Committees by enhancing their mobility and accessibility into remote tribal areas by providing them the right means of transportation e.g. jeeps, trucks and heavy earth moving vehicles. (c) Providing quality education and amenities to meet the aspirations of the tribal people to identify themselves with the 'Spirit of Oneness' with the rest of the Country.

Building-up on Past Experience to deal with Separatist Movements. We succeeded in suppressing violence in dealing with Naga problem in 1950's, Naxals in early 1970's and Jammu and Kashmir in the late 1980s and worked out Peace Agreements;

albeit, without fully meeting the aspirations of the affected people in the long run. Past experience of dealing with such issues needs to be put to good use through better use of the government machinery to: (a) Enforce Constitutional Provisions with missionary zeal (b) Keeping welfare and interests of the tribals uppermost while executing infrastructural development projects and making use of mineral wealth and above the ground products like timber, forest produce and agricultural products.

Employment of the Military and Para Military Forces.

Employment of excessive force can lead to dangerous consequences. The men in uniform should 'present themselves as friends of the people' and not treat them as 'enemy'. The emphasis should be on 'catching the correct culprit', which at times may take a longer time, but that would not arouse the hostility of those who are not involved in hostile activities. The reason why the Army should not come into the area is because they are 'trained to treat their opponents as enemy' and to inflict maximum damage'. That is the 'psyche of the soldier' which motivates him to 'act with determination to succeed'. This attitude is alright against a 'sworn enemy', but not against own people; in a Country which takes pride in being civilised and believes in observing democratic norms which require that the rights of the people be respected. Unrestrained retaliation should be avoided. It needs to be appreciated by all such forces who are involved in anti-Naxal operations that the tribal people continue to live in fear and misery. They are fearful of coming out of the forests of Abujhmad, even when they fall sick; because if they stay out for more than five days, they are deemed to be informers by the Maoists and they cannot go back to their homes.

Linkages with Nepal Maoists. There are some distinct differences between the two. The Maoists in Nepal achieved success within four years; whereas Maoists in India, though they have been active since 1967, have achieved nothing as compared to them. The Maoists in Chattisgarh know their limitations. They know that it is not easy to fight against democracy by undemocratic means and that it would be a prolonged struggle.

We need to take note that the Naxalites only want 'Revolutionary Democracy'. We need to understand: What do they mean by 'revolutionary democracy'? They certainly want

democracy and are confident of getting their constitutional rights. Despite these differences, 'linkage between the two are there' and these (linkages) need to be strengthened by reaching out to them.

Conclusion

It may appear that the panel discussion has not indicated a clear cut approach to resolve the problem of Naxalism. Such a feeling is natural and correct to a great extent. As the papers presented and the ensuing discussion would indicate that it is quite a vexed problem. The number of people involved and the areas affected are large, underdeveloped and difficult terrain. The problem has been allowed to fester and a lot of time has been lost. One may definitely draw a conclusion that it has to be a multipronged approach and that resolution will take time. The State has to gradually regain the lost ground which it has lost due to lack of governance in these areas. It will require a special and dedicated band of administrators who would remain committed, even at a risk to their lives. The Security Forces employed in these areas will require a different type of leadership to succeed. It is not a simple law and order problem. It is a socio-political problem. The challenge is to neutralise the Naxalites, to win the hearts and minds of the people and draw them into the mainstream.

Rightly, the Naxalites should be treated as political opponents and not as terrorists and anti-national elements en masse. A mix of patience, firmness and effective governance would help in getting them into the mainstream of Indian polity and enable them to enjoy the fruits of a vibrant democracy.