Urban Perspective Plan – An Analysis of Maoist Perspective and Assessment

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Introduction

Large scale violence along with the brutal killing of a manager at Maruti Suzuki's Manesar plant on July 18, 2012 has set the government thinking whether there is any Maoist influence on the trade unions in the industrial belts in the National Capital Region (NCR).[1] Approximately 200-300 workers (earlier reported to be around 3000) reportedly went on a rampage, destroying the CCTV cable network, its control room and then setting the office on fire, as a result of which around 100 persons, including two Japanese executives, were injured during the dreadful incident. Considering the nature of attack, the chairman of the company has claimed that 'Extreme Left Wing may have triggered Maruti violence'.[2] Near similar incidents of violence have taken place in other industrial hubs of the Country in the recent past. Notwithstanding the outcome of the investigations, the Maoist urban perspective plan merits an analysis to understand its likely multifaceted impact.

Consequent to the release of the *'Urban Perspective Plan (UPP)'* by the Maoists in 2007, three years after the release of their famous document, *'Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution (STIR)'* in September 2004'[3], which had also partly dwelt on the urban revolution, the CPI (Maoist) puts forth the UPP – the strategy for the Maoist revolution in the urban areas. Based on the strategy propounded in the UPP and STIR, it is evident that the Maoists have seriously started spreading their tentacles and wings into semi-urban/urban areas. In fact, it was way back in January 2007, that the "Central Committee of the CPI (Maoist), at its meeting, is believed to have constituted an Urban Sub-Committee (USCO) to implement the plan.

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USCO is believed to comprise five very senior Central Committee members, and has been tasked with the building of the working class movement".[4]

Over the last few years, a fair number of arrests of the Maoists have been made from the important cities, more prominently the capitals and industrial hubs/cities of the country like Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Bangaluru, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Kolkata, Patna, Raipur, Ranchi and Chandigarh. It is under the 'All India Perspective Plan' that the Maoists have, as per reports, set-up a 'Golden Corridor Committee' to build its base in hitherto untouched areas of Gujarat and Maharashtra, stretching from Pune to Ahmedabad. These areas are one of the most industrialised belts in India and include commercial hubs like Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad, Nashik, Surat and Vadodara.[5]

Considering the serious dimension envisaged in the UPP by the Maoist, the paper seeks to analyse UPP in conjunction with the STIR and the broad rationale for the ideology and the strategy for building the urban revolutionary movement in India and the means to achieve their goals and objectives. Simultaneously, it also briefly discusses some of the actions that need to be taken to control the situation in time.

Essence of Maoist Document

The Maoist document STIR states, *"Work in the urban areas has a special importance in our revolutionary work.... in our revolution, which follows the line of protracted people's war, the liberation of urban areas, will be possible only in the last stage of the revolution."*[6]

The Maoists are clear that the liberation of urban areas would form the last stage of their revolution, the centre of gravity being the urban working class. The Maoists in their grand strategy have enumerated plans for spread of their ideology and movement amongst the working class in the semi-urban / urban areas. They see the urban areas as the centres of power of the 'ruling class,' whom they plan to overthrow to capture political power. The working class in the urban areas are identified as a reliable ally in their revolution. They feel that the urban working class is exploited by the 'ruling class' and the capitalists, and therefore if properly motivated would form a major support base for their revolution, once it closes in on the urban areas. A study of their documents reveals that the Maoists consider that the urban movement would be one of the main sources, which would

provide cadres and leadership having various types of capabilities essential for the people's war and for the establishment of liberated areas. The responsibility for the provision of supplies, technology-expertise, propaganda, information and such other things, to the people's war, is seen to lie on the shoulders of the urban class. Hence, in their perception, the urban revolution has great significance without which, they feel that the growth of the people's war will face limitations and difficulties in its advancement. The Prime Minister's concern regarding the urban scenario is totally justified if we take into consideration the plans of the Maoists for the urban areas.[7]

Urban Areas as Strong Centres

The Maoists have laid a great deal of stress on their work in the urban areas. STIR, at pages 69-70, mentions, "We should not belittle the importance of the fact that the urban areas are the strong centres of the enemy. With this long term perspective, we should develop a secret party, a united front and people's armed elements; intensify the class struggle in the urban areas and mobilise the support of millions of urban masses for the people's war." The document examines the following issues in some detail, to draw useful deductions for the urban revolutionary movement [8] :-

(a) Deindustrialisation of some of the major cities and resultant reduction in workers' population in large industries and the strength of the trade unions/associations. The Maoists are required to carry-out local class analysis to formulate area specific action plan.

(b) Possible methods of exploiting ghetto – a slum or locality inhabited mostly or completely by one community – by dividing the communities on various emotive issues and by triggering violence / riots. The aim, therefore, is to make firm entries into the ghettos to organise the community(s) to carry forward the movement, among others.

(c) As per 'urban work' policy and guidelines, the role of political and military strategy in dealing with a stronger enemy (government) is also given.

Strategy and Methods to Achieve Objectives

The envisaged role of urban work would be to form close links with the working class and through the class struggle establish the party

as a proletarian vanguard, thereby mobilising and unifying all other sections (as identified by them to be likely allies) under the proletarian leadership. In the long term, the Maoists wish to avoid engaging the state in a fight till such time the conditions are not favourable. The Maoists opine that the policy should be one of protecting, preserving, consolidating and expanding the Party forces, while mobilising and preparing the broad urban masses for revolutionary struggle. It advocates the tactics of advancing step by step with restraint and maintaining the principle of waging struggles on just ground and turning it to their advantage by making use of such open forms of activity, as are permitted by law, decree and social customs. Their plan propagates that the party organisation within the urban areas must be secret, whereas the mass organisations should be open in order to have a wide base. However, they maintain that the link between the two must be kept in utmost secrecy. The work in the cities and towns has been combined under three broad objectives[9]:-

(a) **Building the United Front.** It envisages mobilisation of the basic class in the urban areas, i.e., the working class, as well as other classes and sections like the semi-proletariat, students, middle class employees, self employed persons and intellectuals, etc. It also aims at dealing with the problems of special social groups like women, dalits and religious minorities, and mobilising them for the revolutionary movement. Their goal is to form a *Working Class Unity* (e.g. trade unions), *Industry Based Unity* (formation of coordination committees of unions within a particular industry), *Issue Based Unity* (joint front of various unions and political organisations to oppose government policies or take up socio-political issues) and *Area Based Unity* also called *Ghettoisation* (common front for a particular industrial area/locality/community related problems like water, electricity, transport etc). Thus they aim at consolidating these classes into the party folds once they are suitably politically mobilised and then build an alliance between the working and the peasant class.

(b) **Military Tasks.** They have put forth military plans for the urban areas. They seek complementary roles for the urban class as far as military tasks are concerned. These involve infiltrating into the enemy ranks, organising activities in key industries, sabotage actions in coordination with the rural armed struggle,

providing logistical support etc.[10] Setting up of *self defence teams* against social evils, secret self defence squads with an aim of participating with the masses to give them confidence to undertake militant actions during their struggles and formation of an *Urban Militia*[11] are their major military tasks for the urban areas.

(c) **All India Perspective Plan.** In order to put their urban plan into action, the Maoists have carried out extensive research to identify and prioritise the main target areas.[12]

Assessment

The Maoists have correctly assessed that the urban population in India today is greater than what was available in urban China at the time of the Chinese Revolution. Census of India 2011 substantiates the increase in urban population. Over the past decade, the urban population has grown by as much as 31.20 per cent as compared to the rural growth rate of 12.18 per cent.[13] The Census 2011 shows us that for the first time in 90 years urban India (91 million) has added more people than rural India (90.6 million).[14] The number of metropolitan cities with population of 1 million and above has increased from 35 in 2001 to 50 in 2011, and is expected to increase to 87 by 2031.[15] Uncontrolled increase in urban population, without adequate infrastructure and facilities, could become a socio-economic problem of gigantic scale in the future.

Therefore, the importance that they attach to the urban revolution can be gauged by the fact that they have published a separate document detailing their ideology and strategy to be followed for urban areas. The urban area perspective however, is the last stage of the Maoist revolution and definitely not the end state. The document is obsessed in its approach towards appreciating the Indian fact file. The future perspectives have probably been deliberately ignored to retain an apparent upper hand in portraying the background information. Although the assumptions of the urban profile appear to be correct to a large extent, the Maoists need to understand that the urban areas have fairly effective democratic institutions, administrative and public information system in place, with basic amenities being made available to majority of the population. In addition, the urban centres have huge population, spread over a large area, which would be difficult to control by the Maoists. Notwithstanding this, considering the dynamic nature

of changing environment, better awareness and increased aspirations of the working class in particular, there is a need to pay special attention to the pulse of the trade unions and the working class, which may otherwise be a critical factor in the movement per se. The Maoists are looking towards the urban areas to supply them with literate cadres which would form the base of their leadership in the rural areas. In the short term, they, however, do not intend targeting the urban areas with guerrilla warfare style attacks as they fear that it may deter the literate urban class from supporting them, thus eroding their mass base.[16]

The document thus points to a long term approach of the Maoists towards the urban areas. This would include solidifying their existing bases in urban areas, trying to penetrate the industrial working class, trade unions, unorganised labour, white collar employees, youth bodies and NGOs. Under the current circumstances, they are required to provide logistics support to the Maoists operating in the rural areas by way of supplying arms, ammunition, medicines, food supplies, foot wear, clothing, spare parts, communication equipment, batteries etc. In addition, they could provide further impetus to mobilise the front organisations, media, social activists and human right activists to espouse their cause. They have also analysed the use of cyber warfare, which is intended to be used more in the urban environment due to higher penetration of the internet in such areas. Though not given out in detail, they probably intend to progressively target vital installations, crucial networks like financial networks, security networks and essential services, which today run on internet and social networks to profess their ideology and spread their propaganda.

Exploitation of Vulnerable Population

The Maoists intend to exploit the economic divide in the urban society at large. Their design aims to use and exploit the fault lines in the prevailing socio-economic environment, as also the condition of the displaced people. The people who migrate to the urban areas are predominantly young people, looking for better job opportunities and better quality of life. Non availability of the same in the urban areas coupled with exploitation by middlemen and labour contractors who offer low wages, no security, poor working conditions and no standard benefits, creates dissent, distress and disillusionment in the minds of the poor migrants. Most of these migrants are people who have given up their traditional source of employment in rural areas like

agriculture.[17] Dr Moore R Scoot, Department of History, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, mentions, "While in the past, insurgencies grew among rural peasants, they now mature among the world's displaced and vulnerable urban populations."[18] The poor living conditions and the widening disparity between the rich and the poor are particularly the main vulnerabilities. However, they have underestimated the capability of the established lot of private industry, which is today forming a large part of our services and manufacturing industry, in preventing the activism by the trade unions as private industries tend to look after their aspirations, attempt to apply best practises of human resource management and keep them under great amount of check as compared to government enterprises. However, a lot more needs to be done to improve the working conditions of the workers, their pay and facilities, improve working conditions, opportunities to improve their skills or professional knowledge and progression in their careers. The industry is also under tremendous pressure to contribute towards social and environmental responsibilities.

Migration is not a problem in itself. Migration from rural to urban areas is one of the natural outcomes of economic development. Mega cities provide better employment opportunities, modern amenities, education, culture and trade. Economic growth, especially when it is driven by services and industry, is labour intensive, both skilled and unskilled, though the proportion of skilled labour required is much more. Therefore, migration of people from rural to urban areas in search of better jobs, lifestyle and knowledge appreciation, is a natural outcome. Considering the demographic pattern, uncontrolled migration to the urban areas (predominantly the youth in search of jobs and better quality of life for their families) and resultant manifold increase in the population in the urban areas, it must be understood that rampant corruption and crime, lack of basic amenities cum essential services (facilities such as potable water, electricity, affordable houses, solid waste disposal, sewerage, education, medical, transport, security facilities), infrastructure and lack of job opportunities for the unemployed youth in the urban areas, could act as a catalyst to aggravate the conflict situation. In this context, the words of Dr Moore R Scoot, are relevant and merit due attention, "Within cities and populated areas, instability feeds on poverty, crime, ethnically exclusive enclaves and corruption."[19]

In a Policy Research Working Paper, co-authored by Henrik Urdal, senior researcher, and Kristain Hoelscher, research assistant, both from The International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO), have analysed at length the demographic profile, economic exclusion and unemployment, education, gender imbalance and their impact on the society.[20] Extraordinary growth in urban population could pose considerable challenges to the urban governance, in providing efficient and effective basic facilities and services, as also adequate job opportunities to the population, else may lead to instability and violence. The Maoists would make efforts to infiltrate trade unions / government organisations, which are responsible for providing essential facilities. They could, in consonance with the dissatisfaction among the population, create a crisis of sorts by disrupting the services like provision of electricity, water, clearance of garbage and waste to show their visibility in the urban areas.

The Maoist document also focuses on taking advantage of the religious divide between the Hindus and the Muslims, by proclaiming the Muslims as the oppressed class by 'fascist' Hindus.[21] This is an alarming proposition as it tends to try and inflame a decades old perceived simmering feud between the two communities, which is not true and must be guarded against at all levels through proactive measures by the government machinery.

The All India Perspective Plan drawn-out by the Maoists does not appear to be pragmatic and fully implementable since it lacks credible direction and vision. The document is vague and does not indicate clear cut objectives, tasks, task analysis, timelines, logistics, finances, training, propaganda, communications, futuristic leadership or a credible action plan. While the document appears to have been circulated only to appease the masses by selling a popular dream, it could actually gain ground if we do not address the serious issue of uncontrolled urbanisation, huge unemployment among the youth, lack of basic facilities for the ever increasing urban population and exploitation of the workers etc.

Recommendations

(a)   The urban areas are easy for a criminal or insurgent to hide because of the high density of population in these areas. The tacit support being advocated to various types of mass organisations like trade unions, associations and NGOs for

furtherance and deeper penetration of their agenda in the government organisations/industries must be guarded against by proactive checks and preventive counter measures. Therefore, the surveillance, intelligence mechanism and law and order infrastructure has to be further strengthened, to take timely action against the terror and criminal networks. The leaders, who are given the task of organising urban support to rural insurgency must be identified.

(b) The strategy and modus-operandi of the Maoists' must be given adequate publicity to promote awareness, particularly along the industrial corridors and important cities identified by them. The perception management programme should also target their ideology.

(c) Maoists penetrating into trade unions / youth organisations and fostering communal / caste / regional divide among the communities, as propagated in their document, need to be identified and appropriate action taken. Therefore, our present focus on development in rural areas to curb Maoism must not be made an excuse to neglect the urban areas, for it may lead to disastrous consequences.

(d) As part of long term perspective plan, we must create new semi-urban areas in the vicinity of rural areas or on the outskirts of large urban areas, which can absorb the migrant population. Simultaneously, the aim should be to empower the rural economy, improve education, medical facilities, provide training for job related skills to the youth and create employment opportunities.

(e) Urban local governments will play a critical role in the structural transformation of the Indian economy and in sustaining the high rates of economic growth. Ensuring high quality public services in the cities and towns is important to meet the aspirations of the rising urban population and thus prevent violence and conflicts. While maintaining a watch over the activities in slums/ ghettos, the conditions of the slums need to be improved by selectively legalising them and providing essential facilities, among others.

(f) Specialised cyber crime units must be set-up to tackle cyber crimes.

(g) Since the Maoists have designs to penetrate into industrial hubs, the management of the industries too must take genuine interest towards the well-being of their workers and their families; i.e. working conditions, opportunities for upgrading their skills and career progression, salaries, hiring process, education and medical facilities, workers-management relations etc.

Conclusion

Just as we had grossly underestimated the threat of Maoists building-up in the rural areas for over a decade, as a result of which the rural insurgency has increased in its intensity of violence and spatial spread, it would be prudent to analyse the lethal 'threat in being' in the urban areas and take proactive measures to prevent it from taking roots. As extension of urban support for the armed struggle in the rural areas is of prime concern to the Maoists, the state must take immediate action to cut-off all intellectual, moral, psychological, financial and logistics support emanating from the urban areas. While addressing the ills of rapid uncontrolled urbanisation, the government must promote awareness of Maoist's urban perspective plans, improve intelligence mechanism, identify elements fostering religious/caste/regional divide amongst the working class and those penetrating the trade unions / youth organisations/white collar employees/ NGOs etc to instigate the vulnerable population.

Endnotes

1.   Joshi Sandeep, 'IB asked to probe Maoist link in Maruti plant violence', The Hindu, July 23, 2012.

2.   'Extreme Left-Wing may have triggered Maruti violence', Times of India, August 02, 2012.

3.   The document titled "Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution" was conceived by the Joint Central Committee of the PWG and MCCI prior to their merger in September 2004. Five draft documents were prepared after a series of intense discussions over a long period. The document is the synthesis of all important policies and perceptions of the two erstwhile parties.

4.   PV Ramana, "Maoists' Tactical United Front (TUF) and Urban Movement", IDSA Fellow Paper, New Delhi, July 10, 2009. Copy made available by author.

5.   Mohan Vishwa - 'Red Octopus Spreads Tentacles in West India', The Times of India, 14 December 2011.

6.   Maoist document, "Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution."

7.   *"Rapid urbanisation has not only outpaced infrastructure development, but has also brought in its train a terrible downside - the downside of proliferating slums, the downside of increasing homelessness , the downside of growing urban poverty and crime, of relentless march of pollution and ecological damage. This gives you an idea of the massive challenge that lies ahead"* - Speech given by PM Manmohan Singh during the launch of Jawahar Lal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) on 3rd Dec 2005 via http://jnnurm.nic.in/about-us.html *accessed on 23 Feb 12.*

8.   Document, 'Urban Perspective Plan.'

9.   CPI (Maoist) party document- "Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution".

10.   'Dangerous Shift in Maoist Strategy: IB' – The Asian Age, 06 Oct 2011.

11.   Formation of the Urban Militia is envisaged only at an advanced stage of the movement.

12.   Key Industries, towns and cities of military and economic significance from their document urban perspective plan UPP).

13.   The Census of India 2011.

14.   Ibid.

15.   Ahluwalia Ishar Judge, 'Report on Indian Urban Infrastructure and Services'

16.   Such a similar situation has happened with the movement in 1971 when Charu Majumdar tried to usher in such dramatic attacks and violence in urban areas of West Bengal, which did not go down well with the urban middle class thus leading to a loss of support for the movement leading to easy subjugation by the security forces.

17.   Between 1991 and 2001, over 7 million people for whom cultivation was the main livelihood, quit farming-P Sianath, "Census Findings Point to Decade of Rural Distress" – The Indian Express, 27 September 2011.

18.   Moore R.Scoot, The Basics of Counterinsurgency.

19.   Moore R.Scoot, The Basics of Counterinsurgency.

20.   Henrik Urdal and Kristain Hoelscher, 'Urban Youth Bulges and Social Disorder: An Empirical Study of Asian and Sub-Sahara African Cities,'

21.   Urban Perspective Plan-Chapter 2, sub para 2.2.4 page 14.