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RESPONSE OF INDIA TOWARDS COUNTERING MAOISM: A BRIEF ANALYSIS

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Prafulla Kumar Lakra

Ph. D. Scholar, Sambalpur University

ABSTRACT

Of late, Maoism has posed a great threat to the process of development in India as it has spread its tentacles to almost half of the states of Indian Union. In 2006, then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh branded Maoist Uprising as “the single greatest internal security challenge”, the Nation has still witnessed. While L. K. Advani called it as “the worst enemy of the Indian dream.” In this paper an attempt has been made to argue that today, Maoist Movement no more causes the same degree of threat to India rather counterinsurgency of India has reduced the Maoist violence considerably, eliminated many top leaders of the Movement and has limited its domination to a few districts of the adjoining states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Maharashtra. Thus, in this paper an attempt has been made to examine initiatives taken by Central Government to combat Maoism.

INTRODUCTION

The Maoist movement in India is amongst the highest and most deadly domestic uprising that the Nation has witnessed. The origin of Maoist Movement in the country can be traced back to the Telangana peasant uprising (1946-51). On 25th May 1967, peasants, landless labourers, and adivasis with their *lathis*, arrows and bows attacked landlords at the Naxalbari village in the Darjeeling District of West Bengal. After few days the movement checked by the police gave birth as Naxalite Movement (named after the Village Naxalbari). The Movement developed its momentum under the leadership of Charu Majumdar and his close friends, Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santhal who were well inspired from the ideology of Mao Zedong, and his strategies to seize political power. The arrest of Charu Majumdar in 1972 and his later demise in police custody made political forecaster to write obituaries for the Naxalite movement. However, within very few years the movement made its presence felt in other areas of the country. Especially, the early 1980s witnessed the resurgence of the equipped militancy as Andhra Pradesh-based Kondapalli Seetharamaiah formed the People's War Group (PWG) in 1980. Created to fight for the cause of downtrodden, the armed militia took a series of bold hits, killings, murders and bombings aiming landlords, upper-caste leaders and politicians in Andhra Pradesh. In the late 1990s, after the Andhra Pradesh police personnel destroyed the PWG, many considered the end of the movement.

Once more the uprising proved political analyst incorrect, when it extended into Central India in the early 2000s, predominantly the hilly Dandakaranya and the bordering areas wrapping Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and fractions of Maharashtra. The amalgamation of the Communist Party of India (Maoist-Leninist), the PWG, Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) and 40 other armed factions into the Communist Party of India (Maoist) in 2004 incased the tide of insurgency. Prior to 2004, the Maoists were not just a comparatively a small force insecurely working in four states (i.e., Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh)—but were too greatly disjointed to the point that they killed each other's cadres and supporters.¹

The movement would finally extend across such a huge geography that it exceeded all other rising action including those in the J&K and the Northeast. On their climax, the Naxalites were controlling in more than 200 districts across the country which promoted then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in April 2006 to brand the Maoist Uprising “the single biggest internal-security challenge ever faced by our country.”

The rebels also speedily improved their firepower in terms of usual armed forces, weapons and bullets, properties and

rebel skill. Within a short period of times, the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PGLA), the armed wing of CPI (Maoist) fostered 20,000 standard cadres of which almost 10,000 are hardcore armed forces.¹¹ These cadres were equipped with automatic arms, shoulder rocket launchers, mines and other explosive devices, light machine guns, mortars, self-loading guns, AK-47s, and grenades. They were also expert in making and fixing sophisticated bombs, and according to some information, they establish industrialized centers for arms as well as rocket launchers. By mid-2000s, the Maoists had controlled to make full-grown organizational and military infrastructure in states like Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Bihar and West Bengal.

A key to the Maoist movement's enlargement was the growth of its fiscal support. By the late 2000s, matching with the increase of their physical power, the amount of financing in the hands of the Naxalites had reached some INR 1,500 crore (approximately US\$ 350 million).¹² This increase in economic income obviously enhanced their capability to purchase weapons, draw recruits, and revise their communication fighting systems with the use of information and communication technology.

The high points of the Maoist insurgency were the Chintalnar massacre of 76 security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district in April 2010, and the killings of top leaders of the Congress Party in Chhattisgarh's Jeeram Ghati area in Sukma district in May 2013. These two incidents, amongst many other daring attacks on security forces alerted policymakers of the country that the rebels were posing a great threat.

The Centre's Response

As per Article 355 of the Indian Constitution, it is the constitutional obligation of Centre to protect each and every single state from internal disturbance and external aggression. Though, the subject of law and order is served in the state list successive Governments at the Centre have extended cooperation in terms of security and development to bring amicable solutions to the Maoist uprising. Between 2004 and 2014 United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government under the leadership of Dr. Manmohan Singh has set up building blocks to counter Maoist movement. And, the present National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government under the leadership of Sri Narendra Modi has increased its pace to quell Maoism. As a whole UPA and NDA governments have launched a mix of methods-population-centric and enemy-centric-to put down the LWE.

The Law and Order Approach

The law and order approach carries on to be the key support of the Centre's counterinsurgency plan. This is best

exemplified by the employment of some 532 companies of central paramilitary forces in the infested states.⁷ The 2004 union of Maoist groups served as a wake-up call for the Central government. The Union government in the mid-2000s started taking more practical position against left-wing extremism across India after the launch of bold attacks of insurgents against security forces which caused huge numbers of casualties and stopped many industrial projects mainly in mining states.⁷

In 2006, security blueprint to contain the Maoist threat was issued by the Central government for the first time under the leadership of Dr. Manmohan Singh. The draft was highly marked in the government's 14-Point Policy⁸ and then got the shape of a series of security-centric steps to tackle the growing Maoist movement.

Modernization of Police Forces

Due to absence of strong and effective policing LWEs were able to make their presence in vast areas of the country which was soon noticed by the central Government. In order to quell the rising tide of Maoism the government executed Police Modernization Scheme to reinforce and advance the excellence of policing in the Maoist-prone states in the mid-2000s. The Centre allotted extensive amount of money to assist states in modernization and up-gradation of their police forces in terms of getting new weapons, communication equipment, mobility, and infrastructure.⁹ Current reports have revealed that the nail of police change and up-gradation in intelligence-gathering certainly brought bonus for Indian states in their anti-Maoists campaigns.¹⁰

Strengthening Intelligence Networks

For a long time, poor intelligence communication mainly at the state level was a major bother to combat Maoism. Now, the Centre, in direct collaboration and consultation with states, has taken certain strong initiatives for strengthening and upgrading the abilities of intelligence agencies. It largely consists of round-the-clock intelligence-sharing through Multi Agency Centre (MAC) at the Central level and through State Multi Agency Centre (SMAC) at the State level. In addition to this, central government has also taken important steps that extensively comprises of the establishment of Joint Command and Control Centre at Maoist hotbed areas for intensification of technological and human intelligence, for making sure of assistance amongst the security forces, district police and intelligence agencies as well as thrust on generation of real-time intelligence.

Aiding States in Security-Related Infrastructure

One of the most serious mechanisms of the Centre's anti-Maoist policy was the introduction of the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) scheme which was innovated by UPA government that permitted state governments to repay 50 percent of their expenses on necessities like insurance scheme for police personnel, community policing, rehabilitation of surrendered Maoists, other security-related items not mentioned under the Police Modernization Scheme. Newly, the NDA Government has increased the SRE reimbursement upto 100 percent. SRE currently permits the advance pay of funds to the Maoist infested States.

Deployment of Central Paramilitary Forces

Maybe, among the most dangerous counterinsurgency programs from the Centre has been the formation of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) to aid the Maoist-infested states. The Centre has extended cooperation in terms of the deployment of CAPFs on a long-term basis. Currently, more than 70,000 CAPFs have been employed across Maoist-affected states. Further, the Centre has assisted states to raise 14 Specialized Commando Battalion (CoBRA) that are equipped and trained in guerilla and jungle warfare techniques and stationed to the worst Maoist-affected districts. In addition to this, the Centre has also helped in

forming a number of Counter Insurgency and Anti-Terrorist (CIAT) Schools for long-term sustainability of counter-offensives.

Special Infrastructure Scheme

To achieve the serious infrastructure spaces that are not included under existing government schemes, the Centre has launched the Special Infrastructure Scheme. These covers necessities of mobility for the police and security forces by up-gradation of existing roads and rail tracks in unreachable region, and providing safe camp basis and helipads at strategic locations in isolated and interior areas. Under the scheme, some 250 Fortified Police Stations are set up in Naxal infested states. The current Central Government has enhanced the figure of stations to 400. In addition, in December 2016, the Union Government accepted road connectivity projects in 44 of the worst-affected districts and sanctioned a considerable amount of funds (INR 14025 crore) for establishment of telephone development in those areas.¹¹ Further, the scheme provides money for setting up of training infrastructure, arms, vehicles, and other related items to improve in LWE-affected states.

SAMADHAN

The NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has started a scheme called the SAMADHAN is one of them which were announced by the minister of Home Affairs in May 2017. The short form stands for the following: S – Smart Leadership, A – Aggressive Strategy, M – Motivation and Training, A – Actionable Intelligence, D – Dashboard Based KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), and KRAs (Key Result Areas), H- Harnessing Technology, A – Action plan for each threat and N- No access to financing. This policy intends to re-energise the government's anti-Maoist strategies, even as the basics are certainly the essential mechanisms of any effectual counterinsurgency campaign. The present government has also brought in systems and processes to execute the use of unique identification numbers (Aadhaar) in smart guns, gelatin and other explosive materials. It has also extended the ambits of existing provisions under the Explosives Act as well as the Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2017 to observe the transportation of explosive substances and put obstructions for the run of funds of the rebels. Additionally, the government has come up with the use of UAV or Mini UAV for each of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) battalions positioned in the Maoist hotbeds. The Centre is also setting up fast-tracking infrastructure, with an aim to ensure solar lights, mobile towers with 3G connectivity, and road-rail connectivity in unreachable pockets of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha that remain the hotbed of the Maoists.

Ban on the CPI (Maoist) and the UAPA Act, 2009

To bring the pressure on Maoists, the Central government in 2009 put a country-wide ban on CPI (Maoist). Apart from providing police and paramilitary forces to mitigate the LWE, the government also enacted the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act¹² in June 2009 to exercise a control on their activities.

Strengthening Monitoring and Coordination Mechanisms

A chain of initiatives with the creation of a Unified Command have come up over the last decade or so. The list of actions taken so far is mentioned as follows:

- The Centre established a high-level Task Force under Cabinet Secretary for promotion of coordinated attempts across a variety of safety and growth measures.
- A Coordination Centre chaired by the Union Home Secretary was formed to examine and direct the efforts of the concerned State governments in close discussion with Chief Secretaries and Directors General of Police of respective states.
- A Task Force chaired by a Special Secretary (Internal Security) in the Ministry of Home Affairs with senior officers from Intelligence agencies, Central paramilitary

forces and State police forces was constituted to deliberate upon the operational strategies.

- An Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG), chaired by Additional Secretary (Naxal Management) was set up to administer effective implementation of development schemes in the Maoist-infested belts.
- A dedicated Naxal Management Division^{xii} chaired by an Additional Secretary was constituted within Home Ministry to observe and offer actionable inputs.
- The UPA-2 also brought in a Unified Command to further strengthen the continuing anti-Maoist operations among four worst affected states- Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal.^{xiii} This was casually named Operation Green Hunt.^{xiii} The Unified Command is intended to fortify intelligence and operational management, and start synchronized attacks on the Maoists.^{xiv}

Center's Response to counter Maoism on Development Front

The population-centric COIN focused on pleasing hearts and minds among the local people in Maoist-affected states came as a late addition for succeeding governments at the Centre. Opening with the containment of Naxalite movement in 1967 to that of the Maoist movement in mid-1990, for a long time the Indian state relied on an enemy-centric law and order approach to answer Maoist insurgency. However, since this did not finish the rebellion which took newer avatars and increased even beyond, the Centre lastly started a series of development and good-governance measures to refute the Maoists.

Basing on development front Indian Government started Backward Districts Initiative in 2003-2004 and the Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF) under which 55 of the worst affected Maoist areas in 9 states were allotted with funds to the tune of Rs. 2,475 crores to check the issue of Maoism. Approximately, 250 districts have been covered in the BRGF scheme to scale up socio-economic progress in these districts which is directly run by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.^{xv} As development is a matter of great concern in Maoist affected districts, various developmental schemes have been launched by Government to contain the Maoism. Among such are Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna, National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP), Bharat Nirman, National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS).

In 2006, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India established Left Wing Extremism Division (LWED) to execute the security related programmes and coordinate the development schemes in Maoist affected states particularly in Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar and Jharkhand. A total of 106 districts in 9 states have been taken up for special attention, planning, and monitoring various schemes. Some of the major features of government policy to deal with the Naxal problem, as outlined in the Ministry of Home Affairs Status Paper brought out in May 2006(Government of India 2008), " Development challenges in the extremist affected areas" (Report of an Expert Group to the Planning Commission), are summarized below:

1. To deal with the problem at the same time on political, security and development fronts in a holistic way.
2. To guarantee inter-state coordination in dealing with the problems;
3. To give main concern for faster socio-economic growth in Naxal infested belts;
4. Promotion of local fight group against the Naxalites;

5. Use of mass media to emphasize the uselessness of Naxal attack and the loss of life and assets caused by it; and

6. Naxal affected states will not have any peace conversation with the Naxal groups, unless the latter agree to abandon violence and arms.^{xvii}

The Government of India brought a rehabilitation policy on 11 October 2007 for displaced people who had lost their land for industrial development. Under this policy land in change for land had to be given, job future to at least one member of the family, vocational training and housing benefits including houses to people in rural areas and urban areas were some of the benefits. As early as 1989, Prevention of Atrocities Act was approved to stop atrocities against the tribals and to ensure successful contribution of the tribals in the process of planning and decision-making. In 1996, the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act was set up and Gram Sabha (village council) received the uppermost power to make a decision over the natural resource along with power to gather, process, transfer and bazaar non timber forest produce liberally.^{xviii}

This approach was best demonstrated in the Union government's appointment of an expert committee (headed by D. Bandhopadhyay, the designer of "Operation Barga")^{xix} to continue a detailed learning of socio-economic growth in the affected regions and recommend measures to deal with these shortfalls. Following the recommendations of the Expert Committee and the government's own evaluation of the condition, an unparalleled quantity of capital was released to areas affected by the Maoist revolution. One of them is the flagship Integrated Action Plan (IAP) initiated by the UPA government to execute a special scheme which answers the development deficits in LWE-affected districts. The economic parcel was over INR 6,000 crore per annum. While the NDA government has broken up IAP scheme and has come out with its own scheme named Special Central Assistance (SCA) to wrap 35 most LWE-affected districts.

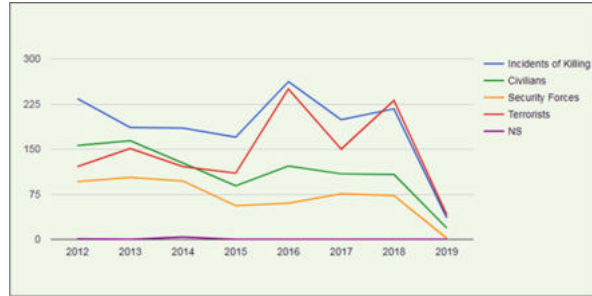
The most significant step initiated by the Centre to respond the longstanding grievances of *adivasis* is the enactment of the Scheduled Tribe and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 or the Forest Rights Act which identifies the privileges of the Scheduled tribes and forest dwellers. As a follow-up, the current NDA Government has begun a new scheme called Civic Action Program (CAP) which provides economic contributions to start various benefit activities in the LWE affected areas. This scheme mainly intends to win hearts and minds of the infested people.

Another notable development scheme chiefly to improve connectivity in unreachable Maoist affected regions is the Universal Services Obligation Fund (USOF). With the cost of INR 7330 crore, this novel plan offers economic and executive support to increase mobile services at 4072 tower locations recognized by MHA in 96 districts in 10 states. Further, to answer problems of education and employability in Maoist affect regions, the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MoSDE) started two fresh schemes, namely, 'Skill Development in 47 LWE affected districts' and 'Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)' for generating infrastructure and providing service linked skill training to youth in affected regions.

Similarly, the NDA government has also come up with main initiatives in supplying electricity to villages in the LWE-affected districts under Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY). Out of 7164 un-electrified villages, electrification has been completed in 7065 villages so far. Further, access of education has got a main boost. The Centre under Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) has promoted 1590 schools and 350 girl's hostels have been approved in 35 most affected LWE districts. Besides, 08

Kendriya Vidyalayas and 05 Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas have also been approved in the most affected LWE districts.^{xix}

Chart 1 Rapid decline in Maoist-related fatalities



Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, GoI, 2016-18

RESULTS:

The result of a coordinated COIN is shown in Chart1 which indicates the rapid decline of Maoist Violence. While there can be contradictory observations in the character and degree of their decline as available evidence point to a persuasive decline of an uprising that was once measured as causing a credible menace to the Indian state. Coordinated and concentrated efforts from the Centre and Maoist affected states have put down the Maoist sponsored violence to extreme stages, have resulted in exclusion of many key leaders of the Movement, and reduced their dominance to a handful of tri-junction districts in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha. This is witnessed when MHA lately detached 44 districts from Naxal affected list, while the 'worst-affected category' was reduced from 36 to 30.^{xxx}

Concluding Remarks

As showed in this study, the Indian state joint both population-centric and enemy-centric approaches to address the Maoist insurgency. The state has provided huge amounts of funds in construction of roads and telecommunication amenities in the affected regions. Basic services such as education and healthcare, and public distribution systems have been ensured in these affected belts. Upon understanding that the Maoist movement was booming owing to absence of governance in large parts of central India mostly settled by *adivasis* in hilly and forested terrains; state representatives began to show promptness in making up for such long absence. The state returned the privileges of indigenous communities, particularly the *adivasis*, over land (also ending an arbitrary land acquisition policy that rendered millions homeless in 2013 with a new legislation), forest and natural resources; dispersed the issue of land records (*pattas*); renewed the justice delivery systems; and rolled up attractive surrender and rehabilitation schemes. The state focused, and succeeded to an important extent, to stab the Maoist narrative of "an exploitative state run by the bourgeoisie".

While it may be unquestionable that the Maoists still have the power to make their presence felt in certain regions, it would be foully untenable to say that they continue to pose an existential menace to the Indian state as they did in the late 2000s. This study shows that left-wing extremism in India is in terminal decline. Not only has the ideology of revolution lost its old appeal (evident in the lack of interest among locals to join the militia), but an improved act from the state on the development and governance fronts makes it very hard for the rebels to grow in the same manner as they managed at their peak. The Maoists could carry on as a fringe group with the capacity to open irregular but violent attacks and disrupt governance in their areas of dominance.

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