



Research Paper

A Study of Naxalism and Its Management in India:A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT: This article reviews literature available on Naxalism and Its Management in India. Different facets of Naxalism and approaches for handling it have been studied/analysed. This problem has been defined /looked at differently by different authors depending on background, source of information and position (governmental, security expert, victim, business house employee or volunteer or ideologue or Naxal himself). The views differ from a mere state level law and order issue or governance issue to a grave national security concern. This review will provide insight to future researchers to research different facets /shades of Naxalism, its drivers, stakeholders involved and understand the approaches needed for handling it and rid India of factors fueling Naxalism.

KEYWORDS: Naxalism, Ideologue, Drivers, Stakeholder, Factors

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I. INTRODUCTION

Naxalism is a generic word used to describe the activities used by a group of activists forming part of various organizations functioning primarily under the Maoist ideology in a number of states in India. The Naxal activists use this ideology to garner the ground – level support from the oppressed masses. Though revolutionary in its basic idea, over the past few years, it has slowly hinged more on extreme violence against the state machinery to achieve its aim of overthrowing the sovereign Indian State.¹

Naxalism is also known as Maoism/Left Wing Extremism (LWE). Its growth and spread can be gauged from the fact till 25 March 2018, a total of 66555 terrorism related casualties have been reported in the period from 2004 till date as per details available on South Asia Terrorism Portal (www.satp.org/satporgrp/countries/india/database/indiafatalities.htm accessed at 8.35 pm on 30 Mar 2018). Out of these casualties 7738 have taken place in LWE affected areas which amounts to 12% of the total casualties (66555). According to the assessment of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), while 106 districts of 10 states are affected by LWE activities, 35 districts in seven states report 90% of extremist violence.

Similarly, India has been a victim of cross border terrorism both in J&K and North East. India ranks amongst the world's most terrorism affected countries in US state Department's annual report on terrorism released on 30 April 2009. While the problems of terrorism are being tackled largely by Army with the help of Para Military Forces (PMF) in the country, the problem of Naxalism is being essentially dealt with by local police or PMF.

Both terrorism and Naxalism deal in violence. Whereas Terrorism has become international phenomenon, Naxalism is still Indian in its nascent stage. Terrorism is largely supported and funded by foreign neighbours inimical to India interests whereas Naxalism is mainly homegrown. Terrorism has mostly flourished in border states whereas Naxalism has grown in the heartland of India.

This literature review has tried to study the birth, growth and spread of Naxalism and its management in India by trying to find answer to the following :-

- Genesis and growth of Naxalism in India.
- Drivers of Naxalism; different actors and forces at work in fuelling and containing Naxalism.
- Security challenge posed to the country.
- The current Naxal management strategies and policies of the government (both centre and state) and their adequacy.

A cross-section of literature available on the subject of Naxalism both by Indian and foreign authors has been reviewed and different aspects of Naxalism have been analysed to identify the gaps or unexplored/partially explored aspects of the problem as given in subsequent paragraphs.

II BOOKS DEPICTING DIFFERENT FACETS OF NAXALISM/ MAOISM/ LEFT WING EXTREMISM.

A number of researchers both in India and outside have written large number of books/articles on Naxalism/Maoism/Left Wing Extremism (LWE) some of them have painted them as terrorists or criminals/bandits, while other depict them as Robinhoods undertaking the cause of socially and economically underprivileged. Some authors feel they are not anti-national but anti the prevalent system of governance and want to usher a 'Red Revolution' through an armed struggle. Some recommend the problem to be handled with iron hand; some with development works; others with a pure humane approach and still others as a mix of all the above aspects. Therefore, there is no clear consensus on the problem of Naxalism till date as is evident from the review of available literature on Naxalism as discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

2.1 Naxalism a Form of Terrorism

Banerjee Sumanta (2009) brands Naxalite as a terrorist group active in rural and the central and eastern part of India. He is of the view that it originated from communist movement and groups in India. Their activities include damaging property and mass massacre of civilians. They are considered as terrorist by the government of India. Padhye Vilas (2013) opined that the world was besieged by problems, most of which are man-made or atleast manageable by collective human effort. But the problems seem to be spiraling out of control due to lack of understanding or effort or both. Terrorism is one such problem that is man made, humanly manageable and yet allowed to grow in scale and proportion with every passing day. Pressman D Elaine (2009) wrote that the extremist beliefs were dependent on perspective. The person who held views which were considered to be "extreme" within one cultural context or time may not be considered to be 'extreme' beliefs within another cultural context or time. Norms and values are intricately bound up in the definition of 'Extremism' and also within the process of radicalization.

2.2 Naxalism Born out of Inequality and Sense of Deprivation in Indian Society

Aggarwal P K (2010) says that Naxalism is the greatest threat to the internal security of India. According to him the root cause of Naxalism is the glaring inequality in the rural India based on unequal distribution of land. He deliberates upon the causes and nature of the problem leading to uncontrolled violence in states like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Chakravarti Sudeep (2008) talks about the spread of Naxalism in 15 out of the 28 states in India. According to him Maoist movement is now one of the world's biggest and most sophisticated extreme left movements. Hardly a week passes without people dying in strikes and counter strikes by the Maoist or Naxalite and the police and paramilitary forces. He narrates his experience in the heart of the Maoist zone in the country which are also areas of extreme destitution, bad governance and perpetual war. Harris John (2010) had analysed that it was the tragedy of the politics of armed struggle that it was a response to the appalling structural violence that had been perpetrated historically and that continues to be perpetrated by elite, supported by the state against landless and poor peasants, Dalits and Adivasis, and yet it leads to spiral of violence in which the same people get trapped. V K Ahluwalia (2013) has opined that areas affected by Naxalism are among the poorest, the remotest, the most backward areas, which are poorly connected by rail and other form of surface communication in India, but are rich in terms of mineral wealth and natural resources. As aptly remarked by a statesman, it is a case of "Rich Land but Poor People". He further quotes a study chaired by D Bandhopadhyay, Expert Group of Planning Commission which had observed that "Poverty alone does not drive a man to violence, it is the prevalence of social discrimination, exploitation and denial of Justice". While people may be able to withstand extreme hardship and poverty, they will not bear injustice and discrimination. Irrespective of the political parties in power, the country has witnessed numerous cases of unbridled corruption and lack of public accountability. These factors coupled with illegal and uncontrolled mining activities, clearance of forest for timber, dams, and industries leads to large scale displacement of indigenous tribes, without any meaningful rehabilitation programmes. It boils down to the fact that barring an odd business house, majority of them have only exploited the local populace and natural resources – Jal, Jungle, Jamin and Khanij (Water, forests, land and mineral wealth) to maximize profits, without contributing much to the local population (society) and the environment. The unemployment rates of tribal population are the highest in the country, much higher than the national average of 7.5 for rural and 10 for urban areas. High unemployment finally manifests in higher incidences of Naxal Violence. Therefore, the fruits of growth should be inclusive, sustainable and should reach the grass roots to make a difference in lives of the poor people. Roy Surajit (2014) had replied to a question as to how the implementation of new land acquisition bill will curb the Maoist menace as follows "LWE or the

Maoist movement takes its sinew from the security, administrative and political vacuum that extends over vast areas in parts of the country. The twin process of liberalization and globalization has further aggravated this threat by alienating some sections of the society. The Maoist strategy of protracted war recognizes the strength and superiority of the state's brute force, but recognizes equally its vulnerability. One such vulnerability emanates from the non-implementation of land reforms in many states, which has resulted in the amassing of large tracts of land by a few at the cost of many which in turns has lead to huge unrest among the later to be exploited by the Maoists. The post liberalization economic policies have focused on high growth rates, which come at the cost of social exclusion of many. Azad (2006, 4280) had expressed concern that tribals are deprived of legal and open opportunities for propaganda and agitation, making it difficult to launch mass movements and demonstrations. Naxalite counter that violence is endemic in Indian Society : from the state, class society, and caste. Violence is "preceded and provoked by the violence of the opprobrious, is not really the main issue; Justice is".

2.3 Naxalism an Ideological Issue

Sahni Ajay (2006) had researched that LWEs, progressively united under the banner of Communist Party of India – Maoist (CPI-Maoist) see themselves as engaged in classical Maoist' Protracted war in India, whose eventual and unambiguous objective is the seizure of state power. This is a well planned calibrated attempt by an organized and ideologically motivated political grouping to wrest power through the 'barrel of the gun'. The strategies of protracted war seek to harness all instruments, military, political, economic, social and cultural, to the objectives of the war and the Maoist campaign is a complex and severely underestimated mix of all these instrumentalities. The complexity and intractability of this conflict has been substantially compounded by conflicting and contradictory assessments emanating principally from official sources, and a persistent and misguided effort to underplay the risks and dangers of Maoist in India. He had further opined there was an insufficient understanding within the National, state and security establishment of the details of Maoist strategy and tactics, and the imperatives of the character of response. It is useful to note, within the context, that the union government has failed at planning and strategic level itself.

2.4 Naxalism Result of Poor Governanace

Malik V P (2010) had opined that almost daily instances of disrupted communisations and violence in 'Red Corridor' have brought the long festering Maoist insurgency to the centre stage of India's Internal Security threats. It has also highlighted our hollowness and incompetence to deal with the problem at the strategic, operational and tactical level. The base of our counter – Maoist Strategy has been a lack of lucidity in analysis and consistency in formulating and implementing a viable strategy. Besides, there are many NGOs and media who still consider that Maoists are nothing more than today's avatar of Robin Hood. The root causes of the Maoist problem are loopholes in the Indian Forest Conservation Act, the mining act, the land acquisition act and the power plant act etcuntill the necessary measures are taken by the govt to reform these laws, it will not be possible to uproot the Maoists' movement or any other LWE problem. Even more important is the need to address governance through good administration prompt and fair Judiciary, and the law and order machinery that inspire confidences in the public. He further stated that military pressure alone cannot resolve matter unless there is good governance and strong thrust on socio-political and socio-economic issues. Political Leadership and Civil administration have to govern affected areas (and the rest of the country) with greater commitment and efficiency. Counter-insurgency operations against the Maoists require integrated operations because insurgents when pursued in one state manage to take shelter in neighbouring states. White Bernadette (2008) has raised the question of lack of governance and to the disregard to the aspiration of tribals of Naxal affected area as reasons for Naxalite Problem. He has opined that the Naxalite movement has had wide ranging implications for the Indian state. Naxalism poses a unique internal security question for India, as it attacks the where it is weakest. In addition, liberalization has entailed government policies that are consciously against the interests of the poorest and most oppressed. This research finding highlights elements of human intent, negligence or failure of human – made system (i.e., State/ National government) which is resulting in damage to tribals mental, social and well- being and the naxal cadres in these area trying to avenge that by resorting to violence.

2.5 Naxalism A Law and Order Problem

Chikara Rishi (2012) had analysed the weaknesses of the Central Police Organisation (CPOs) in terms of training, exposure and wherewithal had been fully exploited by the PLGA (Peoples Liberation Guerrilla Army) elements to inflict casualties on them and to loot their weapons, ammunition and equipment to refurbish their own holdings. Banerjee Sumanta (2006) views at the Naxalite issue from the perspective of the police. He recommends a three fold strategy to the policy makers to counter Naxalism; first to suppress it by police operations; second to face local insurgencies and third to use democratic measures to convince people to join democratic mainstream. Ray Rabindra (2002) wrote that Naxals occupied an ambiguous niche in history.

Exemplary idealist to some, he indicates to other an expression of immature disaffection that has nothing constructive to offer.

2.6 Naxalism A National Security Issue

Dash Satya Prakash (2006) talks about the formative years of the Naxal movement and subsequently focuses on the situation in Orissa. He is of the view that though Orissa is a low intensity Naxal affected state the movement has the potency to strike more violently in future, if timely actions are not taken to counter it. The book provides ample factual references about the growth of the Naxal movement and their strategy so far. Pallai G K (2010) opined that the power of the Left Wing Extremism was immense and they could bring many sectors of Indian Economy to its knees. Prasad Bibhu Routray (2014) has written that the Maoist war against the state, as long as it lasts, will be bloody. The least that the state can do is to embark upon a strategy to ensure that the areas in which the Maoists launch bloody attacks are shrunk on a gradual basis. Singh Prakash (2006) narrated about the Naxalite movement as an important component in the political spectrum in India. He is of the view that the movement continues to have a large foot print.

2.7 Naxalism Needs Humane Approach

Kumar B Maria (2007) had analysed that the foremost work to be done was to prevent the growth of Maoist mind-set among the Jungle dwellers by various attitudinisation and sensitisation schemes and at the same time to reform the mind-set of the Maoists through carefully designed and well thought measures. Madan Gopal (2010) wrote that Naxalism was not a problem rather it was the symptom of a problem. Why does not Naxalism flourish in the markets of Gujrat, the fields of Punjab or in the IT Parks of Gurgaon and Hyderabad? Why is Maoist ideology succeeding in Nepal when it is failing in China? The answer is obvious. In the places that LWE succeeds, people are relatively poor; they face oppression by certain segments of society; the government is indifferent to their plight and there are little prospects that things will get better in the future. On the other hand LWE fails when the reverse is true. To truly eliminate Naxalism we must undercut their Raison d'etre, their reason for being. Remember while their methods may be abhorrent, most of their goals (apart from overthrowing govt) are not. Therefore, we must fulfill their goals for them. If they have nothing to fight they would not fight. Challey Brahma (1999) writes that Naxalism is a grave concern and threat to India's internal security and recommends the need for all round and sustainable efforts by administration to counter the problem. Giri Saroj (2009) observed that debate in India on the Maoist Movement Centres on whether one views this movement as 'Law and Order' problem or 'Socio Economic Problem'. Ramana P V (2009) had opined that when the people are either won over or weaned away from the rebels, the later would be forced to wind up shop honourably, or they would be could shouldered, if not driven away, by the people themselves. Kumar Uday (2012) opined that Naxalism is an agrarian and social problem. It has changed its color in course of time. The author says that Naxalism will melt with the time due to positive policies of the government. The implementation of the government rural schemes is vital for engaging the tribals, who provide the support and manpower to Naxal cadre.

III SUMMARY

It is evident from the above review that Naxalism is eventually the result of human follies which failed to redress the genuine aspiration of tribals and alienated them. This resulted in an administrative, political, social and economic vacuum in Naxalism affected states creating ideal conditions for LWE cadre to step in. The political, social, economic and security costs of tackling Naxalism are very serious.

IV CONCLUSION

Naxal Organisations in India project themselves as front runner of an ideological revolution, but there are large number of ground inputs/ Naxal actions which defy their claims that they are protectors of human beings. The tools used by terrorist organisations are also being used by Naxalite Organisations though differing in scale and context. This blurred dividing line causes confusion in the mind of common man, policy makers and executors. The irrefutable fact or common thread between the two is that both resort to violence, terror, shock and propaganda to achieve their aims. They cause disturbance, create problems for law and order machinery, do not hesitate in killing their opponents, derail the development process and cause huge financial drain on the state fighting them (Loss of human lives and national economic assets etc). These are problems created, accentuated, complicated and finally fought also by human beings. Hence they are eventually man-made disasters. It is hoped that the study will act as a precursor for detailed quantification of each aspect of disastrous dimensions of Naxalism/ Maoism/ LWE so that we accord necessary seriousness for solving the problem that it truly deserves.

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Preliminary sources of information have been shown as bibliography in the attached Appendix. .

Appendix

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