

Nonviolent Measures to Deal with Naxalism in India: An Assessment of Government's Response

S.Y. Surendra Kumar⁽¹⁾

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science

Bangalore University, Bangalore

surendrajnu@gmail.com

Abstract

Naxalism has sprouted in India and has been invigorated by decades of inequality, displacement, poverty, failure to deliver on promised land reforms, denial of community rights over forests, and recourse to excessive military measures, all of which essentially boils down to failure of governance. To address the problem, successive governments have initiated a mixed baggage of both violent and nonviolent measures. Statistically, failure of this strategy is indicated by the fact that over the decades, Naxalism has spread to around 223 of India's 640 districts. In this context, this paper examines government-initiated nonviolent measures like development, socio-economic integration and political dialogue, their practical consequences, and their major limitations. It concludes that if government fails to rethink its policy approaches, the Maoist-led struggle would drastically curtail India's development and growth.

Keywords: Naxalism, Nonviolent, Development, Political Dialogue

Introduction

Then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said in 2006 that the problem of Naxalism was 'the single biggest internal security challenge' ever faced by the country and that it was intensifying (Singh 2006). This has been acknowledged by the present Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and has also advocated zero tolerance in addressing this problem (The Times of India 2014).

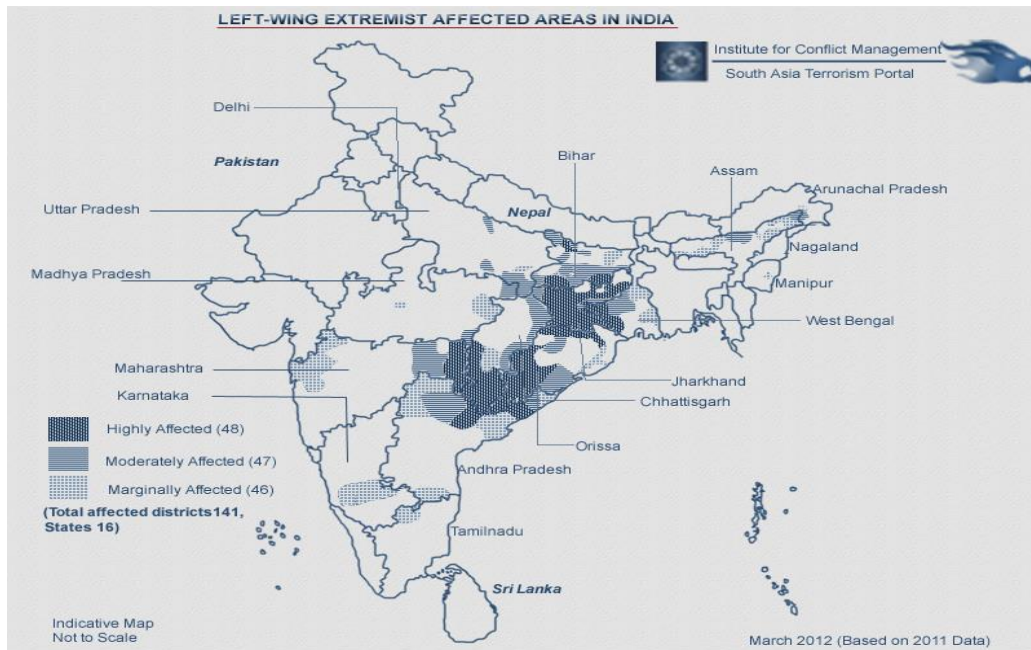
It would appear that the Naxalite phenomenon emerged with the Telengana movement in the state of Andhra Pradesh in 1948. Essentially, the local peasants began to fight with the government over what they saw as inefficient distribution of land. Inspired by the peasant movement in China and partially successful in having peasant debt and rent payments for land

in several villages getting cancelled, the movement was sturdily reborn in 1967 in another geographic area, the Naxalbari town of the state of West Bengal as an armed peasant movement, focusing on protecting the rights of poor peasants. The nomenclature 'Naxalites' derives from this rebirth. Generally, Naxalism believes in accomplishing the "new democratic revolution in India by overthrowing imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism⁽²⁾", supporting an armed struggle and as part of the class struggle to bring about socialist transformation of the country (Dasgupta 1974: 121). It also views India as a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country and shuns parliamentary democracy.

Naxalism's rise and growth may be attributed to the decades of inequality, displacement, poverty, unimplemented land reform promises, denial of community rights over forests, and India's history of poor governance. In this regard, G.K. Pillai, former Home Secretary, says: "Naxalism is a result of the failure of governance in Naxal areas and civil governance is almost absent and the police-to-population ratio is very low" (IPCS Conference Report 2012: 18). Many social activists and Naxal sympathisers argue on the other hand that it is the Indian government's failure to implement the fifth and ninth schedules of the Indian Constitution, which deal with forest reserves and land legislation, are mainly responsible for the Naxalite phenomenon.

The Naxalite movement is well entrenched in states such as Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra and they form the Naxalites' "red corridor", which comprise mainly the least developed and poorest regions of India, consisting primarily the Adivasis, Dalits and other vulnerable groups. The Naxalite movement is less prominently present in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala as of now, but it definitely has potential to escalate to a higher level.

Figure 1. Naxal-affected Areas in India



Source: http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/images/10_35/Maoist_2012map.html.

Potential Strength of the Threat

We may ascribe the threat posed by Naxalism to five distinct factors, as follows:

- (i) India's integrity has repeatedly been challenged by insurgencies in Jammu and Kashmir and northeast India, but none of these insurgencies have had the geographic or demographic spread like that of Naxalism, which infects 223 of India's 640 districts, in almost 20 of the 28 Indian states. Some experts estimate that the influence of Naxalism is in 40 per cent of the country's area and 35 per cent of its population (Venkatshamy and George 2012: 94, Kapoor 2013). If Naxalism continues to spread at its present momentum, it could potentially break away the resource-rich regions from the rest of the country.
- (ii) The Maoists have around 10,000-15,000 men and women, 7300 weapons for armed cadres nationwide, a 25,000-strong people's militia and 50,000 members in village-level units (Navlakha 2006, Bedi 2006). According to police sources, they have AK series assault rifles, carbines, self-loading rifles (SLRs), grenade launchers, mines,

improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and mortars. They also manufacture weapons. As a result, the Naxals are militarily well equipped to counter the Indian army and sustain its struggle for longer duration.

- (iii) Naxal-related violence has intensified over the years, reaching 1177 casualties in 2010, exceeding the cumulative casualties of all other insurgencies in the country during the year. According to Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) data, 1707 extremists were killed between 2003 and 2012, another 6849 were arrested and 1100 surrendered during 2010-2012 (MHA 2012). It is seen from Table 1 that though Naxal-related violence has been decreasing, the Naxals still continue to pose a threat to India's internal security. The MHA in its Annual Report 2011-12 notes: "The CPI (Maoist) continue to remain the most dominant and violent outfit among the various insurgency groups, accounting for more than 90 per cent of total incidents and 95 per cent of the resultant killings" (Ibid). Of these, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh account for 50 per cent and 20-25 per cent of the activities respectively of the Maoists' violent activities (Pillai 2012: 5). More recently, the deadliest Naxal attack took place in Chhattisgarh's Bastar district on 29 May 2013, ambushing a convoy of Congress Party leaders and killing 29 people, who were returning from a "Parivarthan Rally" (Rally to bring about change). Thus, the Naxal related violence is major cause of concern for government.

Table 1
Naxal-related Violence, 2010-2013

Parameter	2010	2011	2012	2013
Incidents	2213	1760	1415	1076
Civilians killed	720	469	301	267
Security Forces killed	285	142	114	114
Naxals killed	172	99	74	99
Total fatalities	1177	710	489	480

Source: www.idsa.in/issuebrief/InternalSecurityTrendsIn2013andaPrognosis_ISCentre_240114.

- (iv) Initially, the Maoists were present mainly in rural areas dominated by the tribals. But recently, they are gaining ground in urban areas by focusing on urban issues. In this regard, R.P.N. Singh, Minister of State for Home Affairs, said in the Lok Sabha in August 2013 that "a few cases have come to notice where the CPI (Maoist) cadres have taken employment in urban areas ... the strategy for urban areas of the country

includes mobilisation and organisation of the working classes” (Ramana 2013). Hence, the Maoists are now gaining ground in urban areas and countering them has become a major challenge to the government.

- (v) The Maoists are working determinedly for the formation of a network of Maoist parties in South Asia, known as the Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA). The CCOMPOSA has active links with the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). There are also rumours of its links with Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Communist Parties of Sri Lanka (Basu 2011: 377). The Chief Minister and Director General of Police of Chhattisgarh confirm these links. It is said in support of this claim that in April-May 2013 two operatives of the Lashkar-e-Toyyaba (LeT) attended a CPI-Maoist Central Committee meeting as observers in a jungle inside Orissa, close to Bastar (Kujur 2013: 13). This development was also acknowledged by former Minister of State for Home Affairs, Jitendra Singh in March 2012, that “The CPI (Maoist) [has] close links with foreign Maoist organisations in South Asian countries, Philippines, Turkey and has also drawn support from several organisations located in Germany, France, Holland, Turkey, Italy, etc.” (Reddy 2012). Thus, over the years, Naxalism is working toward having its global presence and seeking political, military and economic support to sustain its struggle, and continues to pose a greater threat to Indian security and integrity.

Government’s Nonviolent Response

The Indian Government initially approached the Naxal problem as a law-and-order problem and dealt with it mostly with military measures. In recent times, however, successive governments have begun to address the root causes of Naxalism through both violent and nonviolent measures. This two-pronged approach was initiated by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in 2006 on the basis of the “Status Paper on the Naxal problem”. Reflecting on this strategy, the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said that the “vital strategy to counter Maoists is through a dual approach of development and police action” (Singh 2006). In this regard, some of the nonviolent measures initiated by government are as follows:

Developmental Measures

Generally, development is a means for transformation of underdevelopment in the country, by focusing on road connectivity to villages, electrification of villages, education facilities, housing, health centres and employment generation schemes. In this regard, along with the security related measures, the successive governments have used development as tool to isolate the Naxals from the people. This was also articulated by the Smt. Sonia Gandhi, the then Chairperson of UPA, that 'rise of Naxalism is a reflection of the need for development initiatives to reach the grassroots" (IISS 2010:2). As a result, the government identified 106 districts in nine states for focused attention in the areas of security and development. As a part of the Backward Districts Initiative (BDI), the government allocated Rs. 45 crore for 147 districts in 2007-8 and in 2009-10 around Rs. 4938 crore were earmarked for nine flagship projects. Most of the development projects focused on land, forests, livelihood, human development, communication and accessibility. The schemes include Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGA), National Rural Health Mission Scheme (NRHM), Tribal Sub Plan (TSP), Skill Development, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), National Rural Drinking Water Programme, Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana, Integrated Child Development Services, Indira Awaas Yojana, and Bharat Nirman programmes for redressing rural infrastructure deficiencies. Several schemes exclusive to the agriculture sector have also been introduced like macro-management of agriculture schemes, technology mission on cotton, integrated scheme of oilseeds, pulses, oil palm and maize, national horticulture mission, macro irrigation, agricultural extension, national food security mission, and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana under state plans (Verma 2011: 39). Apart from the implementing agencies, the Planning Commission has set up a Management Information System (MIS) to monitor the implementation of the projects in 35 districts in 9 states (Annual Report 2012).

In addition, some state governments also have attempted to address the Naxal issue through development measures. For instance, the Karnataka government in 2013 provided Rs.10 lakh a year for a period of two years to gram panchayats affected by the Naxal problem to develop villages within their jurisdiction (The Hindu 2013). The Andhra Pradesh government provided subsidies for distribution of free power to farmers, land allotment, housing schemes, education scholarships and group health insurance scheme in the Naxal affected areas (Ramana 2008). It also delegated more power to district administrations, which recruited local people, especially tribals, to implement their rural development programmes and also distributed government-owned land among the landless poor and tribals. The government of Chhattisgarh announced houses worth Rs.1 lakh and employment for those who got killed in the Maoist violence. The Jharkhand government increased the insurance amount to be given to the kin of jawans involved in anti-Naxal

campaigns from Rs. 10 lakh to 12.5 lakh (Dixit 2010: 30-31). Hence, both the central and state government have initiated various schemes to address the underdevelopment in the Naxal affected areas.

Socio-economic Integration

Both the central and state governments from time to time have also attempted to integrate the people of the Naxal-affected areas through developmental programmes and legislative measures such as the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (1996) that recognises the rights of tribals and attempts to address the basic issues that concern them. The Forest Rights Act (2006) recognises the rights of scheduled tribes and forest dwellers and seeks to empower the local communities living in the forest to participate in the decision-making process (Dandkar and Choudhury 2012: 151). The Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy (2007) aims to minimise the displacement of people and to promote non-displacing or least displacing alternatives. Under this policy land in exchange for land will be given, employment to at least one member of the family, vocational training, and housing benefits including houses to people in rural areas and urban areas. The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, is regarded as a historic legislation in addressing the needs of farmers depending on land who get displaced by land acquisition for industrialisation, infrastructure and urbanisation⁽³⁾. A Civic Action Programme is also conducted to bridge the communication gap between the local population and the security forces. Overall, these legislations are been in place to integrate the people socially and economically with the society.

Apart from this, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh also announced a surrender-cum-rehabilitation policy in September 2009, offering financial incentives in return for Naxals giving up weapons. The policy also emphasised providing vocational training, employment, monthly stipends of Rs. 2000 per month for three years, and fixed rate deposits of Rs. 15,000 maturing after three years (Ramana 2013a). The Maoists shunned these offers in Bihar (2002), Odisha (2006) and also in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh (IISS 2010: 1). The Andhra Pradesh government in December 2012 also announced surrender and rehabilitation packages, consisting of cash rewards ranging from Rs. 1 lakh to 25 lakh, depending on the rank of the surrendered Maoist (Ramana 2009: 1434-1437). The government of Karnataka in mid-2013 hiked the amount paid under the Maoist surrender package from Rs. 2 lakh to 5 lakh, and increased the amount for surrendering an AK-47 rifle from Rs. 15,000 to 30,000 (The Hindu 2013: 1). Thus, both the central and state government from time to time, have made attempts to socially and economically integrate the Naxals, as well as the people in the Naxal affected areas.

Apparently, the Maoist groups have been classified by both the state and central governments as “terrorist” under section 16 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908 and Unlawful Activities Prevention Act of 1967, amended vide article 35 of 2008 (MHA 2012). Furthermore, in June 2009, the central government imposed a ban on the CPI (Maoist) along with all its formations and front organisations like Maoist Coordination Centre, also known as Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Despite the ban, both the Central government and few of the State governments like Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and Karnataka have made offers for talks and attempted to negotiate with the Maoists for an amicable political solution. Interestingly, Naxals have also offered for peace talks with the government, like in 2010 and again in April 2014.

Ironically, the successive peace talks have failed to yield results mainly because both sides laid down certain preconditions. The government wanted the Maoists to first give up violence; not to carry arms during the peace talks; give up armed struggle; publicly apologise for killing more than 4800 civilians, mostly Adivasis, since 2004; and also withdraw their poll boycott calls for successive general elections. The Union Home Minister, P Chidambaram in 2009, went one step further and argued that “Maoists should take the path of democracy and the Centre would help the state governments discuss with the Naxals all the issues of neglect, corruption, development etc” (The Economic Times 2014). Similarly, the Maoists in April 2014 laid down the following five conditions: government should recognise CPI (Maoist) as a political movement; lift the ban on it and its front organisations; punish the “killers” of Azad, the top Maoist leader who was negotiating a framework for peace talks in 2010; stop paramilitary and police aggression against people in rural areas under partial control of the Maoists; and release all veteran comrades in prisons (Bagchi 2014: 9). At times, when the Maoists suggested peace talks, the governments were reluctant to take up the offer, on the ground that the Maoists were merely seeking to buy time to regroup and fortify themselves. The continuing violent activities of Naxals in other states and counterinsurgency operation by the state forces also had a negative impact on the progress of peace talks (National Security Series 2006: 88). Thus, due to the maximalist position of both the Government and the Maoists saw the failure of successive peace talks, at times sincerely facilitated by civil society activists and groups.

Limitations of Government Response

Both the Central and State Government successfully initiated various nonviolent measures; however, the Naxal movement still persists, due to various limitations in government's approach and policies such as:

Competing Perspectives and Approaches

In government circles, there are three different perspectives on Naxalism and the ways to counter them. Most of the Union and state Home Ministry officials and military personnel and experts see the problem from a security perspective and stress that Maoists are terrorists, a self-seeking group of extortionists working to destabilise the country. They advocate military means to counter the Maoists. For example, the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Raman Singh, argued that “the country is facing a major tragedy of terrorism in the form of Naxalism which needs to be dealt with by military means” (*Indian Express* 2010: 4). Similarly, Narendra Modi, in an interview to the *Times of India*, argued for modernising the police forces and paramilitary forces and equipping them better in terms of armaments and equipment to defeat Naxalism (The Times of India 2014).

A liberal perspective, advocated by a few ministers in the erstwhile UPA government at the Centre, such as Jairam Ramesh, and in the state governments, and also advocated by the Planning Commission, argues that the root causes of Naxalism need to be addressed. These include poverty and lack of development and basic services (Sundar 2012: 126). The Planning Commission's Expert Committee Report (2008) argued along similar lines that “exhaustive anthology of the roots of tribal discontent and violence underlined the need for a development – centric approach to Maoist problem”. Thus, they argue for development and addressing the grievances of people in Naxal affected areas.

Sympathisers of the Maoist struggle in their turn argue that the Naxalite movement is a product of structural violence perpetrated by the State and the common people are forced into resistance and armed struggle. They emphasise that the government is merely interested in exploiting the natural resources in the tribal-inhabited lands and is displacing the tribals for the benefit of multinational corporations (MNCs), with whom the governments have signed several memorandums of understanding (MOU). This is the view of social and human rights activists like Arundhati Roy, Mahashweta Devi, Swami Agnivesh, Himanshu Kumar, Gladson Dungdung, Kabir Suman, and so on. Thus, prevailing difference of perception amongst government officials, policy makers and activists have also led to friction and the inability to forge a united front to address Naxalism.

Ad hoc Winning Hearts and Minds Campaign

From time to time many committees set up by the central and state governments have emphasised that there is a need to win the hearts and minds of the tribal population, who constitute the primary strength and local support base of the Maoists. In this regard, the Union and State governments have initiated campaign to win the trust, confidence and respect of the people in the Naxal-affected areas. This strategy is now one of the vital principles of India's counter-insurgency operation. However, this strategy is yet to succeed, due to the absence of a common national counter-insurgency doctrine, clearly spelling out the role of the hearts and minds component in the larger scheme of things (Routray and D'Souza 2013). The Union and state governments have accordingly initiated a campaign in this direction, primarily emphasising the economic aspects, rather than the social, political and security components (Manoharan 2012: 82). In addition, despite the reservations expressed by the Planning Commission, the MHA executed a scheme which allocates Rs. 55 crore per district for two years to a committee comprising the collector, the superintendent of police and district forest officer to deal with the Naxals. In comparison, the Chhattisgarh government has spent Rs. 800 crore on housing and feeding the paramilitary to tackle the Naxals and their sympathisers (Sundar 2012: 138). Thus, the successive government is spending more on military aspects and less on winning the confidence of the people in Naxal areas.

Meanwhile, successive state governments have officially sponsored vigilante groups to counter the Naxals: the Chhattisgarh government deployed *Salwa Judum* (Peace March or Purification Hunt); the Andhra Pradesh government employed specially trained forces like Greyhounds; and the West Bengal government conducted a proxy war through its armed gangs, locally called *Harmad Vahini* (Private Armed Brigade). These groups have proved counterproductive by alienating the common people. They have also carried out large-scale human rights violations like rape, killing, burning down villages and driving hundreds of thousands of people from their homes: more than 50,000 people have been displaced. In May 2008, the Planning Commission described the role of *Salwa Judum* as an "abdication of the state itself" and called for its immediate scrapping (The Hindu 2008: 8). The Supreme Court also stated that *Salwa Judum* "is illegal and amounts to abdication of responsibility" (The Hindu 2011). How seriously the governments' initiatives in resorting to vigilante groups is reflected in a survey conducted by the *Times of India* in the Telangana region (Andhra Pradesh), consisting the most severely Naxal-affected districts like Adilabad, Nizamabad, Karimnagar, Warangal and Khammam, where almost 60 per cent of those polled indicated that Naxals were good for the area (Times of India 2010: 1). As a result, the military measures by the government have being counter-productive in winning the hearts and minds of the tribal people.

MHA Perspective dominates

The government's perception of the Naxal problem has been evolving over time, displaying quite a degree of confusion. For a long time, the government perceived it as merely a law-and-order problem and neglected it, until it grew big enough to receive the nation's attention. Then Home Minister Y.B. Chavan said in the Lok Sabha on 13 June 1967 that the Naxal issue was a matter of "lawlessness" (Banerjee 2002: 2115). Since then, the same trend continued as successive government began to address Naxalism through military means and perspective, rather than political and developmental perspective. Only recently, the perspective has evolved to include the political and developmental aspects. Even now, the government's response remains segmented, reactive and momentary and prevention has never been part of the government's thought process, leading to inadequate, incomprehensive and bureaucratic responses (Routray and D'Souza 2013).

The MHA, which has the major responsibility of tackling Naxalism, has not adequately involved other key ministries, such as the Ministries for Tribal Affairs, Environment and Forests, Agriculture, Rural Development, and Mines, to evolve a holistic response to the problem. Even its Naxal Management Cell is dominated by policemen or security experts (Sundar 2012: 137). Thus, it lacks the interdepartmental approach to deal with Maoism. Moreover, Article 244, Fifth Schedule under the Indian Constitution mandates the establishment of a Tribal Advisory Council (TAC) and emphasises that TAC should be consulted before any legislation is made regarding matters that concern the tribals, and the Governor of the state concerned is required to submit an annual report to the President of India regarding the administration of tribal areas (Katoch 2012: 12). Unfortunately, these provisions are not fully implemented in total, despite the Naxal areas being constituted mostly of tribals and Adivasi. Thus, addressing the issue of Naxalism should be more comprehensive with the involvement of other departments and stakeholders, rather than exclusively led by MHA.

Limitations of Government Policies and Programmes

Various policies and programmes that the governments initiated from time to time to address grievances of the people in Naxal-affected areas have failed to certain extent. Five reasons may be cited for this failure, as follows:

- (i) The funds allocated for various schemes have been under-utilised and eventually lapsed, clearly indicating administrative lapses at the lowest level in programme implementation. The Planning Commission reports that the project/work completion

rate is merely 24 per cent and less than 40 per cent of funds have been utilised (Verma 2011: 40). The Planning Commission also wrote to the Prime Minister stating that “our internal exercise showed poor levels of utilisation of funds under existing flagship programmes. Thus putting more money in areas where utilisation levels were already low made no sense at all without major reforms in governance” (The Economic Times 2011).

- (ii) There are several agricultural schemes, but given that only a few of the tribals hold agricultural land, these agricultural schemes become almost irrelevant. Legislative measures like Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Area) Act of 1996 (PESA) and Forest Rights Act are not fully implemented. Section 4(i) of PESA, for example, emphasises that the government should formalise the process of consultation before acquisition of land; the Governor is empowered to monitor or intervene for upholding PESA (Dandekar and Choudhury 2012: 160). Ironically, many state governments are not upholding these provisions, which stunts the development process in tribal areas.
- (iii) Weak administration and rampant corruption. For example, according to the Sarpanch of village Hitameta Dantewada, about Rs 1 crore was spent on four non-existent stop dams, while 122 workers out of the total 145 listed workers never worked at the site: the muster roll even had six deceased villagers among the employees (Kujur 2013: 19). Even senior IAS officers acknowledge that 40-50 per cent of all government expenditure in Dantewada is lost in corruption. It is also estimated that 10-20 per cent of development funds end up in the hands of the Maoists. They also extort money from mining companies which assures them a steady stream of income (National Security Series 2006: 96).
- (iv) The development measures in the Maoist areas have not taken off well, due to lack of functional governance and poor coordination between the security forces and the civilian administration also comes in the way of implementation (Routray 2012: 6).
- (v) In order to prevent the government from initiating and sustaining development projects, through which they could address the underdevelopment in the region, the Maoists have from time to time targeted basic infrastructure such as roads, telephone, railway stations, police stations, telephone exchanges, cell phone towers, panchayat buildings, schools and government offices. According to government sources, during 2008-2012, the Maoists blasted 207 school buildings across

the country, blew up 76 panchayat buildings, blew up 590 forest roads and culverts, and destroyed 228 telephone exchanges and towers. Railway property, including engines, wagons, tracks and stations was attacked on 208 occasions (Annual Report 2012). Thus, the government efforts to bring about development in Naxal region are curtailed by the Maoist violence. Thus, all these limitations have alienated the population and prevented the socio-economic integration of the people, which has been well capitalised by the Naxals. As a result, many argue that the villagers are not against the state per se but against corrupt official, politicians and contractors.

Poor Coordination between Union and State Governments

As there are different political parties in power at the Centre and in the states, they tend to follow their respective lines of action, at times contradictory to the stance of the central government and even posing a threat to the neighbouring states. For example, when the Union Government unofficially launched 'Operation Green Hunt' (2010), different states pursued divergent policies against the Naxals, oscillating between peace talks, development and security, thus disorienting the security forces. Even when the Union government allocated huge funds for development projects, some state governments did not utilise them. According to media reports in January 2012, the development projects initiated in Jharkhand had run into rough weather owing to the tepid response of the state government (Routray 2012: 8). In terms of banning the Maoists, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu were quick to ban the CPI-M in line with Union government policy, but Orissa and West Bengal resisted the move. This contradiction and lack of co-ordination has been widely highlighted in a study sponsored by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD), MHA, notes: "States have shown remarkable similarity in ineffective handling of the situations at different stages. This is helpful to the Maoists as the States do not seem to learn from each other's experience and prefer to be satisfied with short term measures" (BPRD 2011: 12). In this regard, the then Union Minister for Rural Development, Jairam Ramesh, said in October 2011: "We need to rise above partisan political considerations and set aside old centre-vs-state arguments and work concertedly to restore people's faith in the administration ... only then will the tide of Naxalism be stemmed" (Ibid). Thus, the effective way to deal with Naxalism, would be through a strong co-ordination between central and state governments and building a broad consensus and uniform response to address the Naxal problem.

What needs to be Done?

Although the Union and State Government have made efforts to deal the Naxalism through both violent and nonviolent means, more needs to be done in the nonviolent arenas such as:

- Socio-economic integration of the Dalits and Adivasis living in the Naxal-affected areas needs to be brought about, by providing them incentives. These would include giving them the rights over the forest in which they have been living for generations, providing them with housing, health and education facilities, etc. The main cause of the spread of Naxalism is the exploitation of Dalits and Adivasis. Using force to deter them from joining the Naxals backfires against the government. Thus, the people in Naxal-affected areas should be socially and economically integrated.
- The government must instil faith in the people that they will be governed better by a constitutionally structured government than by the Naxals. This it can do by including clauses in the Forest Act that only forest-dwelling tribes and scheduled castes will be allowed to use the basic resources of the forest. Financial institutions sanctioning loans to these tribes should be monitored closely, to ensure that the tribes realise that the government is with them. This way the government can win the support of the people.
- A consensual approach and greater cooperation needs to be evolved between the Centre, the state government and the administrative machinery. Coordination between the administration and security forces also needs to be ensured. The State has to demonstrate its willingness to fill in the vacuum of underdevelopment and absence of governance through implementing policies, employment, poverty alleviation and land reform programmes.
- Efforts should be made to regain political space. The positive impact in Uttar Pradesh of the Bahujan Samajwadi Party (BSP) and Chief Minister Y.S. Raajshekar Reddy's expansion of grassroots political organisation in Andhra Pradesh villages politically resurrected the Naxal-affected areas.
- The Naxalites have effectively used the media and civil society to promote their cause. The government needs to determinedly use this channel to expose the true brutality of the Naxals and reach out the people.

- The armed forces can only partially deal with the problem but not solve it. The government needs to explore and sustain both formal and informal political dialogue, as it has done with insurgent groups in the northeast states of India, which initiatives have proved successful.

If these kinds of measures are not undertaken by the government, the Maoist aspiration to capture political power by 2050 might look feasible. Thus, the Indian government should continue with the development measures and socio-economic integration of people. At the same time, the government should continue its counterinsurgency operations to weaken the Maoists militarily. Hence, nonviolent measures will be more effective if backed by limited and necessary military-oriented intervention.

Endnotes

- (1) Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Jnana Bharathi Campus, Bangalore University, Bangalore, INDIA. E-mail: surendrajnu@gmail.com
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