

IPCS Conference Report

March 2012

The Naxal Problem

Understanding the Issues, Challenges and
Alternative Approaches

First National Dialogue

Organised by IPCS in Collaboration with FG&G and IIC



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Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies





“This year, the IPCS plans to inaugurate the Internal and Regional Security Programme (IReS) which will have an exclusive focus on our region, primarily Myanmar, Iran and Afghanistan. And within India more specifically on the Naxal conflict.”

-Dr. D. Suba Chandran
Director, IPCS

Welcome Address

Dr. D. Suba Chandran

Director, IPCS

He welcomed everyone to the first annual dialogue on the Naxal Problem, which the IPCS organised in collaboration with the Foundation for Peace, Harmony and Good Governance (FGG). This year, the IPCS plans to inaugurate the *Internal and Regional Security Programme (IReS)* which will have an exclusive focus on our region, primarily Myanmar, Iran and Afghanistan. And within India more specifically on the Naxal conflict. He thanked Mr. DR Kartikeyan for his support in getting a galaxy of speakers, who are experts on the naxal issue in the country. He said that the IPCS is planning on evolving this into a process and series with the next dialogue in Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand or Hyderabad to find out what lessons have or have not been learnt. During the course of this process, he said that the IPCS would like to focus on two things: Firstly, to map the conflict. The intensity of the conflict, the initiatives taken by the government and its ability to deal with the threat and even the geographical spread of the conflict varies from region to region. The Institute would like to map all these trends and learn from the past lessons; both good and the bad. This would enable us to understand what steps should or should not be taken again. For instance, there is huge debate over the use of Salwa Judum and a focus on this issue would help understanding whether their use should or should not be repeated. Similarly, many people would say that the Andhra Pradesh model is a good model.

Dr. Chandran said that this is quite an ambitious project but he is very confident that with the support of Mr. Kartikeyan and the FGG it would be a great success. He thanked the representatives from Chhatisgarh, Mr. Giridhar Nayak, who is a scholar policeman who has not only worked in the Naxal-affected areas for over a decade but also has published a book on the topic. Mr. Srinivas Reddy, senior editor from the Hindu based in Hyderabad, who works on Naxal issues and Dr. Rajat Kujut who has published multiple issue briefs and articles on the Naxal issue with the Institute were also on the panel. The task at hand for the first panel was to discuss the issue of mapping the conflict. Dr Chandran also mentioned the people who have made a contribution to Naxal studies in the IPCS— Ms. Medha Chaturvedi, who also helped organise this event and Ms. Devyani Srivastava, who was a Research Officer at the institute and was responsible for the initial reports on the Naxals.

Session I: Mapping the conflict in the Naxal regions

Chair: Mr. DR Kaartikeyan

President, FGG

Mr Kaarthikeyan started by thanking the initiative by IPCS. He said that thousands of state and central security personnel are deployed to face the Naxals. It is a problem, which is still threatening 12 of the major states. The PM has again and again called it the single most important internal threat and the worst insurgency in India. The Home Minister has stated in March 2010 that 34 districts were virtually controlled by the Maoists. In the 2010 planning commission report on LWE states, 233 districts across 20 states were reported to be struggling with this menace with 67 districts being classified as worst affected. The fatalities related to Naxal violence have reached a staggering



1180 casualties in 2010, which is higher than the cumulative casualties of all other insurgencies in India during the year. A study of the whole trend would suggest that the problem is increasing despite all assurances given by the state governments. Mr Kaarthikeyan stated that has always been against the deployment of the army in naxal-affected areas. The army can only treat the symptoms through arrest or killings without treating the root cause of the problem. Similarly, the use of the Salwa Judum is highly counterproductive and has made things worse. The Supreme Court ruling on the Salwa Judum also stated that their use amounts to an abdication of responsibility. He cited examples from his experiences while traveling around villages where he discovered that a number of villagers empathise with the Naxals as they have done a lot of good for them. The villagers are not against the state per say but against corrupt officials, politicians and contractors. It is corruption, which is one of the main problems. Unless the state is able to identify and punish people, who are stealing money meant for development of these areas, it is not going to be able to deal with the problem.

Development should come simultaneously with counterinsurgency measures. Grouping of public health, education, public works, agriculture and irrigation to form cohesive multi-disciplinary task force and efforts to generate employment opportunities for people will send a message of the government seriousness in addressing the basic problems of the people. Moreover, it is important provide good and sophisticated weapons to the security personnel and to train them in all aspects including networking with the local population, intelligence gathering, sharing, combat operations and coordinated developmental activities. This recommendation flows from the assumption that common people see safety, security and progress and will not support violent movements if their basic needs are met. The difference in the quality of life of those under Naxal-held areas and those supporting the government will inspire the former to abandon the Naxals. The key to the success of this agenda lies in the success of the law enforcement agencies and counter-Naxal forces to restore order in Naxal affected areas. There is an urgent need to conceptualise, plan and carry out operations with clarity of aim, strategy and determination. We also have to ensure that the government learns from past mistakes and works towards development rather than just falling back upon the use of force. Naxalism continues to pose a major challenge. It will not overthrow the state but if it continues to fester it would impede all progress and affect the social fabric and internal cohesion of the country.

Giridhar Nayak

ADGP, Chhattisgarh

Mr Nayak attempted to explain a theory about how to defeat the naxals in 15 seconds with three means only- locate, isolate and eradicate. Locate the insurgents, isolate them from the local population and their channel of communication and then finish them. This is a very simple plan but even very simple things are very difficult to operate. There has been a great deal of debate regarding the nature of the conflict. Some say it is a socio-economic problem, while, others describe it as a law and order issue. It is a nation-destroying process, which has been unleashed. The strategic intent of the Left Wing Extremists has been to instigate a revolution to overthrow the state through violence or a protracted people's war. Initially this was expected to be achieved by 1975 but they have raised the flag post to 2016. What is their maximum and minimum capability? The former is their failed offensive, while their minimum capability is Jehanabad, Kolapur and Nayagarh. What is a Protracted People's War? Contrary to popular perception it is not all about guerrilla warfare but about revolutionary politics, which accounts for 70



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-DR Kaarthikeyan
President, FGG



“Contrary to popular perception it is not all about guerrilla warfare but about revolutionary politics, which accounts for 70 per cent of the strategy. Revolutionary politics is a combination of information warfare and political warfare. More than armed fighting they use propaganda.”

-Giridhar Nayak
*Additional Director General
(Training and Recruitment),
Chhattisgarh*



percent of the strategy. Revolutionary politics is a combination of information warfare and political warfare. More than armed fighting they use propaganda. Unless the politicians recognise what revolutionary politics is they cannot hope to defeat the naxals. The significance of the political warfare is evident from the Binayak Sen case. When he was arrested a number of prominent people appealed for his release including Nobel Prize laureates such as Nelson Mandela. This highlights the political clout that a number of naxals have. This is the importance of revolutionary politics, which we fail to understand.

The Naxals are extremely brutal. This is evident from their use of child soldiers, who in due course of time become effective operatives. Moreover, they are known to destroy infrastructure like roads, towers, schools, railways and so on. There have been instances of entire villages being burnt down. After the destruction of villages, they land mine the area so that if anyone goes they would be killed as well. Highest number of land mine blasts has occurred in Chhattisgarh as more than thousand land mines have been discovered in the state in the last ten years. Bastar, in particular, has become a land mine area. Although, the naxals claim that they cause destruction only because of the presence of the police forces but many times destruction has occurred even in the absence of police or state forces. There are three stages in the state's response to the naxal threat- opening, middle and end game. Some of the states have not yet done their opening game, even though, they have started their survey and other things. Some of the states are in their middle game but no state has reached the end game yet. Even the naxals despite being well entrenched in almost 16 states have not reached their end game yet. The middle game is very difficult and it continues in a very difficult manner. It is more brutal and decides who will win in the end and definitely it would be democracy but at a great cost. We can try to talk to the naxals to ameliorate the problem but will the talks succeed? The naxals have declared that the armed rebellion is non-negotiable. Talks should be there only for a short time but not for such a long duration that it provides an opportunity for the naxals to consolidate themselves. Chhattisgarh government has been responding to this threat since 2004. Efforts have been made to develop the tribal areas by strengthening the Public Distribution System, allocating nearly 40 per cent of the budget for the tribal areas, allotment of land and upgrading the infrastructure in these areas. Moreover, the police and security forces have been increased to fight this. However, much work needs to be done in order to eradicate the problem.

Dr. Rajat Kajut

Professor, Sambalpur University, Odisha

In Odisha, contrary to popular perception Naxalism is not a recent phenomenon but has been a major issue since 1968. Today, 19 out of 30 districts in the state have been officially declared as Naxal-affected such as Koraput, Raigarh, Sambalpur, Deogarh, Sundergarh, Nayagarh and so on. Recently, the Naxalites have added more territory by getting involved in newer issues, which involves newer people and more regions. They are also successfully targeting Dalits and minorities as their potential support base. The newfound territories- Bulandgir, Kalahandi and Humapuda- have a dominant Dalit population. In addition to raising slogans against the process of industrialisation in Odisha, Maoists lend their tactical support to the tribal movements of 'jal, zameen and jungle'. The national Maoist trend of urbanisation seems to have its impact on Odisha too. Urban centers like Burhanpur, Bhubhaneswar, Rourkela, Balipada and Sambalpur witnessed considerable Maoist activities in the recent past. With the kidnapping of the former Malkangiri collector, RV Krishna and the killing of legislator Jagabhandhu Malchi, Maoists in Odisha have given clear cut indication that



they are capable of hitting hard like their Jharkhand and Chhatisgarh counterparts. It is the failure of the credible governance in Odisha, which is responsible for today's sorry state of affairs. It is the lack of political will power at the top and the failure of delivery mechanism at the bottom, which has earned Odisha a prominent place in the red corridor map. Although, Odisha is one of the poorest states of India, it has also witnessed massive industrialization. This, however, has failed to ensure growth among the masses and has led to the displacement of as many as 90 lakh people. Moreover, the failures of successive governments in Odisha to implement land reforms and grant community rights over forests are a general factor that has encouraged the growth of naxalism in the state. It is a hard truth that all the indicators of Human Development in Odisha are miserably poor. The nexus between naxalism and lopsided development have considerably damaged democratic values and institutions only to facilitate Maoist growth in the state. The systematic failure of the governance has widened the gap between the government and the governed. The Maoists, on the other hand, with their slogan of people's government to people's work have successfully highlighted the inefficiencies of the government but they are no champions of development. The naxalites are the greatest roadblock to development. The state has not taken the Maoist threat seriously and has failed to come up with a coherent plan to tackle the issue properly. This has led the Odisha police to face the brunt of the Maoist violence and resulted in their demoralization. The Odisha police have no specialised training in handling the Maoist insurgency. Police modernization has become rhetoric in Odisha. The government expenditure is mostly limited to the fortification of the police stations and procurement of arms and ammunition. The coordination among the forces on the ground is clearly missing and their mobility has been curtailed due to geographical constraints. On the development front, despite all promises made by the government, Odisha still tops the list of poor state. There are serious problems at delivery level, which have paralysed the administration at the grass root. In order to tackle the problem, there is a need for simultaneous and coordinated action on all the core fronts of credible governance including development, security, perception-management and political form. The state must re-establish connectivity with local and tribal people as this can hit the Maoists the most where it matters. The process of development must also have a human face to prevent tribal alienation. Moreover, displacement without compensation should be avoided. The government must devise a public-private partnership to ensure implementation of developmental projects and utilize the media to spread awareness of its good intentions.

K. Srinivas Reddy

City Editor, Hindu, Hyderabad

Mr. Reddy started with mentioning that this is the first time that someone has tried to map the conflict zones. The most crucial step in order to devise any counter-insurgency strategy is to know what the enemy is doing, its strength and geographical variation. I think India has failed in this approach so far. We have only followed the battalion approach for all regions without understanding the actual problem. We have failed to understand that is not a conventional warfare but a war fought against our own people. Therefore, when we force the armed forces into the affected areas, a dilemma takes place. The security forces can only deal with the problem but not solve it. As far as the dialogue is concerned, a lot of negative connotation has been attached to the term 'dialogue'. Do we actually legitimise the naxal movement if we negotiate with them? If we look for peace in society, we have to enter into dialogue with them. We should explore such possibilities because we do not enter into dialogue with our friends, we have a dialogue and seek peace only with the enemy. How do we locate the naxals? The biggest problem is that this is not an interstate war. We do not know who the enemy is. Then



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-Dr. Rajat Kujur
Prof. Sambalpur University



The people living in the so-called Red Corridor are perhaps the nicest and most hospitable people in the country. They are just disadvantaged. The state must invest in their poverty alleviation

-Onkar Marwah

IPCS Distinguished Fellow

how do we fight? What is the point of having massive battalion forces in naxal-affected areas? Are we maintaining our presence only to defend ourselves or actually causing a dent on their military capacity? What the deployment of security forces could not achieve, perhaps, much pinpointed intelligence based action could have achieved more.

If we are looking at mapping the conflict zone are we looking at a solution of dumping the force or are we looking at a counter-insurgency strategy that maps everything. For instance do we say that Delhi is affected by the naxal problem? A bureaucrat may say that it is not, but as an independent observer, Mr. Reddy feels so. We tend to judge whether an area is affected or not only through the prism of violence but that is a wrong approach. When you talk about mapping this conflict we should understand that the Maoist movement has - organisation stage, the guerrilla warfare stage and finally the mobile warfare stage. We see that all these three stages are all over the country. If Dantewada and Bastar are going almost on the mobile warfare stage, Delhi is perhaps at the organisation stage. Thus, when we are talking about devising an anti-insurgency strategy it is important to adopt a holistic view and adopt separate strategies for different areas. Such a holistic approach is lacking at this stage. Moreover, we should understand that this is just not a military conflict. It is a political war, wherein the current political system is being questioned by a group, which believes that another alternative system is good for society. It is important to convince the people and neutralise the belief that revolutionary politics is necessary and relevant. We have not managed to achieve this. Finally, the government has failed to exploit the media to expose the true brutality of the naxals. The naxalites have exploited the media much better than we have. If someone produces a video called blazing fields, it goes all over the world. Perhaps the government should start its own Indian Media blitzkrieg.

Discussion

The discussions raised many questions on the issue, since, naxalism is such a deep-rooted problem in the Red Corridor, what do we do? Do we treat the symptoms or do we find the disease? Who is a naxal, a maoist or whatever the name may be? Who are we targeting? What are their strength and the weapons arsenal? Questions were also raised on the source of information for naxals since there is no proper channel of communication with them. Also, how does one differentiate between the differences in the groups? Also, what is the role of media in providing a bridge between the naxals and the state? It was suggested that instead of the state making a media organization, the media should take initiative because the government does not enjoy any credibility anymore. Moreover, the anti-naxal operations require special counter-insurgency forces and not the existing law and order forces. However, referring to the naxals as terrorists is incorrect. There is an urgent need to change the nomenclature as they are our countrymen.

A question was raised on the arrests and death of the senior leaders of the CPI (Maoist) party and how it has changed the party strategy. How has this affected the composition of the central committee and the politburo party, which was essentially from Andhra? This will give us a sense of the divisions which exist within the party and the impact of counter-insurgency on them. How much effort is being put in a positive context to alleviate their problems? It was agreed that the naxals are



definitely not the enemy. “We do not take them as enemies. Even if they are injured we take to hospitals and respect their human rights. We have not given our male policemen the permission to search women. This is the level of sensitization and respect for human rights we practice,” said Mr Giridhar Nayak. The panel added that we have to fight their strategies. Unless the state fights the strategies it cannot fight the problem. What is their strategy? How they isolate the police forces, how they mobilise, how they convert mass struggle to armed struggle, how they create armed struggle - all this needs to be understood in order to fight the problem. You have to have different strategies for differently affected areas. Since they are targeting democracy, we should use democracy to target them.

Most important casualty in an insurgency is the human casualty. Human beings have to be protected. The state needs to improve human security. Violence should not be encouraged or supported. Recruitment process - in a democracy the process is slow and not taken by one person. The loss of their leaders is affecting them and any members of CPI (Maoist), who indulge in violence is considered a naxal. Also, those who follow the philosophy of the party with violence are naxals. On the media issue, the panel said that the governments should not start a media organization, but the state must use the media to serve its own purpose, to manage public perception because it has not been done so far. The source for information pertaining to the naxals is the central government intelligence inputs which are released in the public domain. Mr. Kaartikeyan closed the session with his final remarks. The naxals are misguided people but they are definitely not the enemy. But, they have done a number of wrong things and cant get away by carrying out acts of violence. Police work is a thankless job. It is a much tougher than the army who fight a war once and for all. The police is faced with sustained offensive, often masked in the people who are not the enemy. Therefore, it is much tougher and thus, we find it very difficult to get people to join the police, especially, at the lower levels.

Session II: Learning from the Past

Chair: Lt. Gen Prakash Menon

Military Adviser, NSCS

“If human beings were to learn lessons from the past they would not be in the state they are normally in. So, it is a natural consequence of human nature that even if human beings know the lessons they don’t learn from it. It is this story that is being witnessed in the naxal problem.”

A political issue like the naxal conflict with socio-economic roots is left untouched until it escalates to a point where the government is forced to act. At an escalated stage the issue demands more time, energy and resources and is unable to seek the results that could be achieved if it was to be nipped in the bud. This fundamental lesson has not been learnt by both central and state governments in spite of their knowledge about the historical context of the naxal movement. This issue is governed by the nature of politics in the country. It is imperative to be cautious of carrying lessons from a particular context to an area and conflict with completely different dynamics. This is the first time in India that an internal conflict has sprawled over large areas, spreading across states. It is to be recognized that



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-Lt. Gen. (retd.) Prakash Menon
Deputy NSA and Military Advisor, NSCS





“The activities of the state police force were accompanied by administrative measures, especially in the naxal affected areas.”

-B. Shivadhar Reddy
Deputy Inspector General
(Subsidiary Intelligence
Branch), AP Police

these issues emerge from the cracks emanating from the interstices of India's federal structure. The challenge posed by the federal structure is in the inability to apply lessons learnt in certain contexts from the past to situations elsewhere in the country. The ideal manner in tackling any of these conflicts is to indigenize and localize them with least use of outside forces. Currently, instead of privileging the strengthening of the state police forces, the central police forces have been strengthened to treat the naxal-affected areas. It is essential to ensure the effectiveness of the state police forces as people are at the centre of gravity in these conflicts. The task entails winning the loyalty of the people whose quality is under question than encountering the armed people. Any attempt to contravene this loyalty principle would prove strategically incorrect. The deficiency of police reforms in the country is explicit in the culture of police forces, which is deprived of soft skills essential to deal with the people in conflict-affected regions. The strategic and primary objective is to be able to seek the willingness of the people to talk on a political platform. Support of the people is indispensable to the careful application of force to avert collateral damage as human intelligence explains the narrative of people's perception. It is a deficit in the country's national security system that both central and state governments have not been able to devise a mechanism to manage this domain of information encapsulated in people beliefs and behaviour. A people-sensitive approach is inevitable to resolve this conflict. This fundamentally requires political willingness at the level of state governments with the knowledge of local politics to take initiatives to recognize this people's problem with resources from the central government. A strategy to cease this conflict indubitably needs to recognize the problems of the people who resorted to using arms.

B. Shivadhar Reddy

DIG, SIB (Int.) Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh witnessed the escalation of naxal problem since 1980 with the establishment of People's War Group (PWG). It was unconventional war in the initial phase dominated by guerilla tactics and extensive use of IEDs. Then Police forces were inadequately trained and equipped. The people were hostile toward the police as an upshot of police actions on the masses. During early 1980s, the state police were dependent on vested interest groups to gather intelligence on the naxals. The period also experienced inconsistencies at the policy making level in devising mechanisms to grapple the naxal violence. The initial police response to the violence was in the form of immediate reaction lacking in any centralized strategy. Intensified raids, poorly functioning armed outposts and police excesses were the order of the day. This police reaction backfired and proved helpful to the naxals in making deeper inroads to expand their party.

The year 1989 is considered to be the watershed year with the unprecedented escalation in naxal violence in the state, especially after Marri Chenna Reddy took the Office of the Chief Minister. The government's willingness to initiate a softer approach toward naxals by permitting them to



conduct public meetings in a peaceful manner misfired. The succeeding governments were compelled to use force to diminish naxal violence. The state government adopted a multi-pronged strategy which included capacity building of police, administrative measures and public perception management. The police force improved its infrastructure, intelligence and military capabilities along with the formation of specialized forces through mass recruitment. The Anti-naxalite Wing of the state police became Special Intelligence Branch in 1990 aimed at targeting the leadership of the naxal movement. The Greyhounds was formed in 1989 as a State Commando Wing to encounter naxals with guerilla tactics. The tactics of the police force underwent tremendous change. The police forces reduced their visibility by restricting their movements to nights in civil dress using public transport system. The police were trained in enhancing their soft skills and to initiate a liberal view toward sympathizers, militants and small-time activists.

Every wing of the state police force along all hierarchical lines was provided orientation to encounter naxal violence. The police forces were committed to influencing public perception by undertaking community development programs. The activities of the state police force were accompanied by administrative measures, especially in the naxal-affected areas. Besides introducing four-tier Panchayati Raj system, the administrative measures were directed toward land reforms, setting up of self-help groups particularly in the backward districts, ensuring employment opportunities for the youth from indigenous communities. The government also launched victim reassurance packages for the victims of naxal violence and comprehensive rehabilitation policy for the surrendered extremists. It is evident from the statistics on the deaths related to naxal violence that the overall efforts from the government in Andhra Pradesh have been able to successfully contain violence over the years. There have been eight killings in naxal violence in the year 2010-2011 as compared to 276 in 1997-1998.

Nitin Gokhale

Defence Editor, NDTV

In 1969, according to Charu Majumdar, every corner in India was a volcano ready to erupt. It is crucial to inquire if the indices of socio-economic development in the country, especially in the naxal-affected regions of Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand have improved or deteriorated over the years. The initial attempt by the police in the state of West Bengal between 1970 and 1971 witnessed brutal police action to squelch naxal violence. The state police was joined by the Indian Army to contain the mounting tension in the region. Even so, ultimately, it was the effective consolidation of the state police force under the rule of then Chief Minister Siddhartha Shankar Ray who successfully crushed the violence. State police forces in every naxal-affected area are significant stakeholders in counter-ing naxal violence. A people-centric approach is vital for the police forces to encounter extremist violence. The naxals have acceded to similar tactic to make deeper inroads to gain the trust of the local people. It is also noteworthy to analyze the lessons learnt from the experience of Andhra



“A strategy that encompasses a judicious mix of counter-naxal tactics along with the policies directed toward socio-economic development of naxal-affected area would prove helpful in the future as many parts of India is still absorbed by abject poverty and poor standards of living.”

-Nitin Gokhale
Defence Editor, NDTV

Pradesh between 1980 and 1989. The state had a well-conceived strategy in tackling the rising naxal attacks in the state. The police enforced target-based operations which resulted in the death of about 250 naxal leaders.

In the present phase, it is helpful to consider data on the deaths caused by the violence in the left-wing extremist areas. The year 2010 registered 1180 deaths while the data until November 2011 notes less than 50 deaths in the violence. A comparison of these two years needs to consider two important facts. Firstly, the government action toward the naxal violence in the country was notably at a low point until the year 2010 unlike the following year. In the year 2011, the counter-insurgency actions visibly dominated the government agenda. Even as some scholars would argue that the government action has been able to reduce naxal violence, the second factor influencing the comparison of the data from last two years indicate the possibility of tactical retreat by the militants as they realized their inability to withstand attacks from specialized central and state police forces. Along with the use of force in dealing with the present upsurge of naxal violence, the central government has allotted funds under the integrated development plan aimed at naxal-affected districts of the country. The naxal violence today is markedly different from the past decades. Unlike, the naxal movements in the states of Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, the naxal issue has strikingly expanded across the country. Today, the left-wing extremists are effectively militarized to counter the establishment. It is vital for the state governments to coordinate and cooperate with the support from the central government to launch an efficient counter-naxal strategy. A strategy that encompasses a judicious mix of counter-naxal tactics along with the policies directed toward socio-economic development of naxal-affected area would prove helpful in the future as many parts of India is still absorbed by abject poverty and poor standards of living.

Dr. PV Ramanna

Senior Fellow, IDSA

The ambiguity in various data provided by both the central and state governments adversely influences an assessment of the extent of naxal problem in the country today. The lack of political consensus among different political parties and within the ruling coalition has negative impact in devising a strong anti-naxal strategy for the country. It has been noted in the past that the state governments have been unable to arrive at a consensus in proscribing the CPM Maoists at the same time. Even as Andhra Pradesh proscribed the party, the government of Karnataka refused to do so. This explains their inability to coordinate with one another to initiate an effective counter-naxal policy even as the problem is sprawling across a number of states in the country. There have been reports of politicians, bureaucrats and police personnel paying the naxal groups in order to ensure their



The Naxal Problem

Understanding the Issues, Challenges and Alternative Approaches

B. Shivadhar Reddy

“It is essential to note that Andhra Pradesh took 15 long-years to counter naxal violence in the state. It is impossible to deal with the issue in a short period of time. A long-term vision in this direction is demanded for successful implementation of the counter-naxal strategies.”

-Dr. PV Ramana
Senior Fellow, IDSA

personal safety. The Chief Ministers of the naxal-affected states have been observed to be lacking in vision and maturity to understand the intensity of naxal problem in their respective states. It is often left to the bureaucrats and the senior police officials of the state to strategize mechanisms to counter the mounting naxal issues in those states. The state of Andhra Pradesh could succeed in diminishing the naxal violence due to the presence of responsible bureaucrats and police officials who could compel the political leadership of the state to act upon the issue. Even so, it is essential to note that Andhra Pradesh took 15 long-years to counter naxal violence in the state. It is impossible to deal with the issue in a short period of time. A long-term vision in this direction is demanded for successful implementation of the counter-naxal strategies. Today, in the Telangana district of Andhra Pradesh the youth are unwilling to take up arms to revolt against the establishment as they have been exposed to new avenues providing career opportunities to them. This has unfavourably impacted the recruitment to the naxal movement.

Therefore, an effective implementation of development programs has deep influence in countering naxal problem in the country. The state governments along with the central government must ensure socio-economic development in the naxal-affected areas. At the same time, both the central and state governments have responsibility toward designing a clear direction in their approach toward naxal problem. Fundamental to this commitment is their ability to take accountability for their own actions in forming a political consensus whether it to engage in a dialogue with naxals or to deploy forces to counter the naxals. Both the central and state governments should realize that the tactical retreat by the naxals consenting to a dialogue or negotiation with the government provides them the space to regroup themselves and militarize to strengthen their force against the state. Therefore, the government should be able to use similar tactics to counter naxal violence, but this indubitably demands an absolute political consensus across party lines.

K. Srinivas Reddy

City Editor, Hindu, Hyderabad

State governments have always been observed to be reactive to the naxal problem rather than taking a proactive position on the same. It is critical for governments to be proactive. The most important lesson learnt from the experience of Andhra Pradesh in their counter naxal-strategy is in their decision to reduce the role of central paramilitary force by making the local forces more effective in dealing with the issue. In 1995, the paramilitary forces had taken the front line by patrolling the naxal-affected areas in Andhra Pradesh while the state police forces were entrusted with static protection duties which included protecting the local police stations. Even so, over a period of time the state police force of Andhra Pradesh experimented with their capacity building programs, particularly in



“The capacity building program is primarily based on the reverse application of revolutionary field tactics. Surprise, secrecy and speed have been the driving tactics for the Maoists and it is the reversal of the same strategy by the Greyhounds in Andhra Pradesh that proved triumphant for the state.”

-K. Srinivas Reddy
Hyderabad City Editor
Hindu





“The phases of activity in which they start constitute of a survey stage, a study and documentary of prospective areas, a mobilisation stage, political mass mobilisation, local grievances, resistance stage and then defying the existing governance.”

-PM Nair

**Additional Director General
(Operations) CRPF**



the early 1990s. The CRPF personnel involved with the counter-naxal tactics in the state were competent in map reading, choosing appropriate camping sites, stationing of different weapons along with other military tactics, which state police forces were not trained to possess. There was a deliberate regrouping in counter-naxal strategy of Andhra Pradesh, which involved combining of both central paramilitary forces with state police forces in order for the latter to learn the field tactics from the former. By 1997, the transfer of knowledge effectively improved the skills of the local forces in combat operations. Also, then improvised intelligence apparatus had phenomenal success. The local police forces were able to convince the silent masses to share information to facilitate their encounter strategy by assuring security to the people from naxal attacks.

Along with the change in the orientation of the security forces, a social change was taking place since 1991. A detailed analysis by the Maoists in 2001-2002 on the causative factors for their downfall explain hastening of economic empowerment in the country post-New Economic Policy as having contributed to the collapse of party's influence. Key to the success of the state of Andhra Pradesh in countering naxal crisis has not been only in the construction of roads to remote areas of the state alone, but also in developing local production centers. The capacity building program is primarily based on the reverse application of revolutionary field tactics. Surprise, secrecy and speed have been the driving tactics for the Maoists and it is the reversal of the same strategy by the Greyhounds in Andhra Pradesh that proved triumphant for the state. This capacity building programs have to be replicated in other states to cease naxal violence. The proactive approach from the police forces as well as from the state administration has been able to gain the trust of the masses, especially through community development programs. When people repose confidence in the government they bring human intelligence which is imperative to the success of any counter-naxal strategy.

Discussion

There were questions on the reasons for the dip in naxal violence in Andhra Pradesh during late 1980s and 1990s as displayed in the graph depicting naxal violence in Andhra Pradesh since 1980. Also, what are possible media strategies while taking into consideration the lessons learnt from the past? The dips in naxal violence in Andhra Pradesh during certain periods of late 1980s and 1990s is directly linked to the change in the policies of different state governments toward the naxals. The Chenna Reddy government had an extremely soft approach toward the naxal movement in the state, which unfortunately led to escalation of naxal violence that was harshly suppressed by the following government. The ban on PWG and the government's well-structured surrender policy in 1993 reduced the strength of the party. The 1990s saw naxal groups having members who were driven by selfish interests rather than party ideology. This has not been favourable to the mobilization of naxal movement in the state. The brutality associated to naxal violence is not sufficiently highlighted in the media. The new media may not be popular in rural areas, but they can be accessed by the thinking-sections of urban centers. The new media could to be utilized with a conscious effort to mould



or influence the opinions of those who can avail the luxury of new media. Traditionally, the government has been deficient in proactively employing media in perception management strategy. The naxals have factored the use of media to their benefit with an efficient media strategy. The media strategy in the government and in its various departments has not been institutionalized unlike the naxals.

Do the training methods assigned to the army and central paramilitary forces explain to them the limitations in using force to counter certain violent situations like that of naxal violence? The counter-insurgency document of Indian Army explicitly states its policies and strategies, but the concern is with respect to the paucity of institutional mechanism to pass on the lessons learnt from the past are to facilitate future actions, especially when there is always a gap between the written document and spoken words. It is a matter of cultural proclivity of the country. A certain sense of responsibility is essential, especially in the television media that is determined to make profit rather than engaging in socially relevant programs. The government could set certain norms for the media to follow to make it more beneficial to the society.

Session III: Understanding the Naxal Strategy and Campaign

Chair: PC Haldar

Centre's Interlocutor for Peace talks with the ULFA

He made a short introduction and observations based purely on his reading. The naxalite problem is the biggest internal security challenge facing India but this realisation has only come very recently. The main issue is that the problem is missed at the initial stages and the stage that India is in at present is that both the movement as well as the response to the movement is within the military realm. Furthermore, additional aspects of the problem such as ideology, development and outreach of the government are yet to be addressed and till present this has not been engaged with sufficiently as there is no uniformed battle plan. In some respects existing fault lines are exploited and there is a failure within the system to remove and deduct those fault lines effectively. The police and security forces however would provide a breathing space to the government and at that time, and within that breathing space, one would need first uphold a field of ameliorate measures and then consolidate these and put in long lasting measures which denies this space to the naxals. The panel needs to address that while the growth of the movement is generally explained with regards to local condition - one should remember that in the late 1990s Maoists took the decision to develop a red corridor, and he posed the question of did the areas of influence arise due to areas of deprivation or is there a strategy and specific mindset behind it, and what is being done to deal with that strategy as the traditional response is only to react to the symptoms.

PM Nair

ADGP (Operations) CRPF

Mr. Nair expressed his gratitude to the organisation specifically Mr Kaartikayan for the opportunity.



“Their strategies and tactics are very clear, the public support for them is strong, and one must see the threat and challenge and devise a strategy not in a sectoral or segmented way but in a comprehensive way.”

-Ved Marwah
*Former Governor
Jharkhand*



“The poor scheduled caste, they have been denied their rights and the government needs to be restore the rightful land to its people.”



He stressed that he would be speaking from a government and CRPF perspective. He then went on to provide a short history of naxalism - If one is to see the consolidation of how they started, it was from disunity in the 1970s and ideological differences and total disintegration led to the rise of the armed line of naxals in 1980, in 1990 turf war and then unification in 2000. In the post coalesces in 2004 and the consolidation of nearly 10,000 armed cadres who used violent means and was extremely serious violence in certain districts, it was the mass base which worked for them. At least 107 Maoists were inspired to join the ‘force’, revolutionary and non revolutionary. The Maoist guiding structure principle consists of a party, a united front and an army that all work in sync. There is also an apex structure which consists of the central committee, higher committee, sub-committee and other departments. The phases of activity in which they start constitute of a survey stage, a study and documentary of prospective areas, a mobilisation stage, political mass mobilisation, local grievances, resistance stage and then defying the existing governance. They then go onto a base stage where that are areas of retreat within guerilla zones but the final liberated stage is when they have managed to set up a parallel government. If we discuss the naxalism causative factors, they revolved around abysmal poverty, under development and a lack of infrastructure. The factors arise from inactivity in the administration, one should not label this corruption and he gave the example of seeing people have lunch that consisted of grass and ants. So there is no administration but the administration also cannot be provided due to the threat of naxals and the constant intimidation factor. The naxal strategy is to recruit by capitalizing on vulnerability such as women and children. They are now heavily making use of women and child soldiers, not only for the purpose of combat. In an encounter dated on 10 April 2009, a group of Naxals, men and women were bathing in a pond and there was an attempt to capture them by the CRPF and the local police in a joint operation. The women are treated like slaves within the naxal hierarchy and carry the burden and are exploited sexually. There was also a box of condoms found so it begs the question of what are 14 year old boys doing, are they violating these girls. The problem needs to be understood and women need to be gainfully recruited otherwise. He stated that there needs to be recruitment drives taken to areas such as Bastar and to employ tribal girls - the girls are not enrolled in schools but can generally be found in the hostels. In a one-of-its-kind campaign by the CRPF, they recruited such girls in Jharkhand for security agencies and trained them in armed and unarmed combat, educated them and provided them employment. 37 girls joined the force and each girl empowered herself within the community and village and became an ambassador of peace. Innovative measures need to take precedence over traditional methods.

Ved Marwah

Former Governor, Jharkhand

Mr. Marwah opened his commentary by stating that the problem of left wing extremism or naxalism has been with us from the colonial days. At the time of the partition it was linked with the Hyderabad movement but they have been learning from their experience and so once the war of independence went away, left wing extremism died down and the conclusion was drawn that the problem is over because at this time CPI (Maoists) was the main political wing of this extremism. He stated that as long as political and economic injustice exists and people have frustration against the system whether it is for political or economic demands or essential commodities, left wing extremism will



remain. The only thing that has changed in the past 60 odd years is the strategy being used, the main goal is clear and they have come to the conclusion that a “so called parliamentary democracy” is an exploitative system and there is no hope of their getting justice from this political and administrative system. This has been publicly declared by them in all their statements however this has never been taken seriously by the public. He hopes that dialogue would be the way forward. He then went on to add that although their strategy may have changed, their tactics have remained the same. Marwah emphasised that the strategy needs to be looked at from three different perspectives, the local, national and international perspectives. After the Hyderabad fiasco for the left wing extremist movement, the naxal body came about and it was a spontaneous movement again and they concentrated on Calcutta and this was a mistake because the state was strong and they were not organised enough to take on the state and they lost completely as a result. He then went on to say that again the naxals learnt from this experience and went into a low profile and infiltrated into Bihar and revived in the other areas. At the time that this was taking place, the West Bengal government assumed that the problem was over and this mistake was made time and time again when the problem was looked at strictly as a local problem. He stated that there are obviously local dimensions as they require public support, money, and arms and all this has been done locally. This is an occurrence happening all over the country and they criticise the state administration into dispute. Although statistics may suggest that the situation is getting better, this in fact means nothing because the naxals are spreading and violence was confined to areas that they were initially not so strong in. He highlighted that when one states that the situation is improving, other indicators are easily missed - the organisational network may have improved but if one is to base it on the number of incidents, the problem is actually long term. Dimensions of the problem extend to social, economic as well as political and this is what would need to be taken into consideration if the problem is to be contained and not ‘controlled’. He emphasised that this is what has been missing, the naxals strategy so far has been to attack places such as police stations, parliamentary forces, political leadership and corporate houses because they feel that these are the people standing the way and so feel a need to punish them. They are extremely selective - while the situation in Jammu and Kashmir is improving with regards to more economic activity, this is not the only dimension one should look at - all the factors need to be taken into consideration, especially in the LWE-affected areas. Returning to the strategy used by the naxals, they have given up on political participation. They had experimented with the CPI (Maoist) MLA in Jharkhand, Mohindra Singh, whom they killed because they do not want to participate in any election as they feel they will never make an impact through a political process. Now there is hardly any participation and there is no hope of them participating in the political process in the foreseeable future and this fact must be recognised. They have arms and enormous amounts of money. The anger against corruption and mis-governance is very strong, Ved Marwah then stressed that if one is to take the Anna Hazare movement, it is clear that the naxals are supporting the movement. The naxal problem is not confined to a state or area, their goal is the entire country, it has reached a level where they want to overthrow the system, they feel the situation is right today for them to take it out. This should not be a problem between the state and the centre, all parties should come together, the PM has mentioned 18 times that this is the most serious internal problem, but something needs to be done, it will not vanish, it will only get worse and this is what is happening. Their strategies and tactics are very clear, the public support for them is strong, and one must see the threat and challenge and devise a strategy not in a sectoral or segmented way but in a comprehensive way. He stated that there are some secu-



“The naxalite problem is the biggest internal security challenge facing India but this realisation has only come very recently. The problem is missed at the initial stages and the stage that India is in is that both the movement as well as the response to the movement is within the military realm.”

-PC Haldar
Centre's Interlocutor for Peace Talks with ULFA



“The naxals are not a problem at most they are challenge, they are bringing home the reality, they have in fact opened the eyes of the people. So the conclusion to be dropped is if they have such wide-spread following then the conclusion is one does not need to challenge them out of it. ”

-Dr. Aswini Ray
Former Professor
JNU



rity challenges that should not become a part of political up-manship because that is where the problem arises.

EN Rammohan
Former DG BSF

Mr. Rammohan began his commentary by stating that he would attempt to speak on a few fundamental issues. When he was in service, he was attached to accompany which was posted at the India-China border. It took him two months to do a course and it was an extremely rigorous process. The force was raised by individuals operating in Malaya and he was exposed to a lot of counter insurgency literature written by people that had fought in the 1950s. The first author, David Galula concluded that France is a Christian country and he had fought in Algeria which is a Muslim country so they were directly opposed to each other. His first task as a counter insurgency warfare company commander was to protect the people of that area, the, what exactly is an insurgency? The government has not been clean with its dealings; it is generally understood as a population being unhappy and is taken to arms. What is the population? The population is there to protect the state. The battalion commanders have been placed there to protect the people from insurgency and the government too. What is the thing that happens when a counter insurgency force is deployed in an insurgency area? The judicial system has failed and you capture an insurgent with a weapon and then send him to jail and within three days he is out on bail and he is firing back at you. So, the best principle is that the best insurgent is a dead insurgent. However, one cannot kill a man without a weapon, no one has the right to take away a man's life that has no gun. The second author, Robert Thomson stated that one must be legal in a counter insurgency, but what is a force to do in an area where an insurgency has occurred due to failure of government policies? Addressing the root causes of insurgency is necessary. It has its roots in the evolution of Hindus. The caste system within Hinduism has managed to turn society upside down and he goes on that whilst studying the Russian and Chinese revolutions, this appears to be a similar case. Within Hinduism, the ownership of land had been restricted to the three upper classes. It has not gown down to the lower classes. The CPI operated in 1946 and found the landlords selling 100s of acres of land to the people working as labourers on that land; however, this was improper as they did not have the right to own that land. So, the CPI cadres surrounded these villages, forced the landlord to bring his papers and made land records and re-distributed the consolidated land amongst 15,000 peasants. But, the police was in cohorts with the landlords and would arrive later to forcefully restore the land to the landlords.

In 1946, the state had enacted two schedules and these schedules were violated repeatedly. The Constitution says that India lives in its villages and there is unequal distribution of land there; the upper classes have very large chunks of land and the lower castes have no land at all. Land should be taken away from them and redistributed amongst others every state in India has land reform loss, and how many states have observed this only three states in India, Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal and Kerala. He stressed that his own family lost land to this and ancestors must also have lost their land. It was justified to an extent because my people were working in Calcutta and Delhi and never put their hands on the soil hence everybody who had land lost the land. No other state observed it. A space has been created for the Maoists to enter, they have a clear game, and they want



to capture power and rule. Anyone who is for the idea of freedom will support them and want them to come to power. Under the fifth schedule of the constitution the scheduling areas of India should be administered by the governor, not one governor has upheld this in 60 years. There is a very easy way to solve the problem, and that is the government needs to be restore the rightful land to its people by redistribution and making sure that the poor scheduled tribes and scheduled castes are not treated unfairly anymore.

Discussion

The chair stated that it is not that they have a widespread support; they merely have a stronghold over certain areas. The panel stressed that there is a problem with the solutions which are sought and that there are two problems joining hands with a naxal. As the chairman had observed, there are other dimensions. The country is huge and diverse, the path taken could be for own individualistic reasons and could lead to chaos, its not that a harmonious society would suddenly emerge. The strong vs. the weak will become stronger not just politically or economically, not sure if this should happen. A small observation was made and it was stated that in Nepal over 10 years, some 15,000 people were killed by the maoists or the army. Proportionate to the population, in Indian terms, that comes to half a million people dead in ten years. Things are still in terms of flexibility in Nepal. A question was posed that has the situation in Nepal been taken note of and how would these issues be dealt with. Furthermore, could there be any direct connection with Nepalese Maoists and the naxals of India? The panel stated that this is a reference to the international dimension. In the media and policy circle, maoists have come to political mainstream so this is an example that other maoists in Nepal should follow. Maoists in Nepal have reached through a very violent movement to their position and not peacefully. There are already reports that there is closer consolidation with maoists and their Indian counterparts and this is not a good sign - this is a huge problem. During discussions, another point which came up was that the data says that insurgencies globally have never died down. A question was posed about how is one to find out whether ventures controlling the naxals are working and what are the ingredients for this? The media is not helpful as naxal information is not being shown; furthermore he asked the question of whether there is power between the different political classes. The panel said that looking at the indicators mentioned, one does not need to do much work to see them. He highlighted that in his presentation when he had stated he if someone says a girl is able to go on a cycle at 10pm and she feels safe the question would be that five or 10 years ago she shouldn't and couldn't do that. Today if that girl moves freely, this should be an indicator. There are good indicators in place. He then went on to answer the second half of the question and stated that naxalism is a problem facing the country in different states but in addressing the issue there must have been ten meetings with the home minister and they have sponsored the issue with all states concerned. A remark was made that the Nepalese situation did not just come to power through violence, they had been popular amongst the population. The panel was asked to react to Mr. Rammohan's talk and why the land reforms have not been implemented so far. The panel said that by stating that the Nepal situation came over-ground after winning the battle against the army. Once they become a serious channel in political structure the scenario changed - he highlighted that he was not saying the maoists do not have public support, but that could change if they start winning because in any country where a large population is sitting on the margin - it can go either way when they see its this way there fu-



“Can the possibility where we ask both the party to step aside and let the development take place in the LWE affected area be explored? May be the vacuum can be filled by the civil society actors by taking some pro-active steps towards development.”

-K. Srinivas Reddy
Hyderabad City Editor
Hindu

First National Dialogue
Organised by IPCS in



“LWE areas are mineral rich therefore we can’t afford any mistake. In a scenario built by MHA, by taking control of resources Naxals have the capabilities to cut off power supply to Delhi in three days.”

-GK Pillai
Former Home Secretary



ture lies. That has happened in political parties that are totally in a state of disarray, it doesn't change the basic statement, if it was not the process in Nepal they would not have reached there. The political power structure, large part of the country is based on feudal elements, of ownership, it is openly known they have got 100s of acres of land but they have not given up, it is a mutually beneficial option for them. Corruption is very simplified and passing reforms through legislation will not happen, it is never implemented. There was an observation that if one is to look at the naxal problem, what it is exactly that we are looking for is. If the problem is political, then it is complicated. Different political parties rule different states - there are political movements like but within two weeks it goes back to square one. Every state dimensions of the problem are not the same so there has to be a clear strategy of what exactly one is to do. Therefore, is it a political problem or strictly firefighting?

Session IV: The Road Ahead

Chair: Dharendra Singh

Former Union Home Secretary

Naxalism, a six decade long problem is one of the foremost issues which is creating a strong sentimental public opinion. It has had many ups and downs and in its present form since the last decade, naxalism can be described as in a state of molten lava. The problem of naxalism should be understood from the point of the people involved, namely those who created it and those who are forced into it. It is important to understand their perspective towards the naxal organisations' strategy and tactics. In order draw a roadmap or to set a time frame for resolving the problem, it will be necessary to assess how naxalism will develop in the future. The government's response is two-fold: It tackles it with police action while simultaneously pursuing development of naxal affected regions. The government needs to balance its response but more importantly it needs to focus on a third aspect of the problem; the ideology in the minds of people. The government should come up with a superior idea. The idea should not be symbolic of the constitutional ideas enshrined in the preamble - that would not be sufficient. The counter- ideology should not only appeal to the deprived population in rural areas, but also to the urban sympathisers of naxalism.

G K Pillai

Former Home Secretary

Naxalism is a result of the failure of governance in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas. Civil governance is almost absent and the police to population ratio is very low in LWE areas. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Government of India seeks resolution on four terms. One, basic law and order needs improvement, therefore the number of forces has been raised. The police footfall on ground has been increased three times. The government is tackling this issue head on since the last decade, as a result, the naxals are responding with large scale violence. The government proposes to deploy 120 police battalions next year and revamp the police set up. Simultaneously, general welfare schemes are paid attention to and starting from now, it would need five years to reduce the problem significantly. Second, the focus would be on development of LWE affected areas. MHA has approved road development pro-



jects worth 7300 crore and Integrated action plan for 68 districts will be provided with internet connectivity. Considering popular grievances over land ownership, policies like the Tribal Land Act are being monitored by the MHA along with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Policies like the Tribal Land Act and Minor Forest Produce have given land ownership to the tribals. Bamboo has been declared as an exclusive ownership of the tribals. As a result, income of inhabitants has sharply gone up. To illustrate, tribals auctioned their produce themselves, eliminating middle men and earned 30 million annually as against earlier half million. The Police, Revenue and Forest departments were exploitative departments from a point of view. Officials are unwilling to be posted in naxal affected areas and look at such postings as punishments. Thus they are not interested at all. It's a challenge to post and retain the best officials. So far government has achieved only 30 per cent success rate in this regard. Besides, vacancies in schools and police postings remain, which is an impediment in improving civic administration in these areas. It is extremely necessary to improve basic infrastructure in these areas to sustain recruitment and postings. PISA is monitored by the MHA.

However situation is improving in a way that marriages are taking place, buses are running, markets have opened, and contractors are willing to build roads in naxal affected areas. Trust in government is improving; local population has demanded presence of police troops for another five to ten years. So far, the government has recovered 4000 sq. km of area from naxal occupation. Third, efforts should be made to regain political space in the problem areas. Naxals do not desire popular tilt towards government and want to terrify people with their brutality. In 2011, out of 1100 persons killed by the naxals, 700 were tribals. In many areas affected by naxalism, political parties do not exist but it is important to put political presence. To understand the positive impact of political parties in arresting naxalism, the state of Uttar Pradesh is a classic example. LWE has not exceeded in Uttar Pradesh owing to Bahujan Samaj Party's stronghold in villages. Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh former Chief Minister Y S Rajshekhar Reddy made efforts for political resurrection in naxal affected areas. A commonplace problem or limitation in such efforts lies in the different perceptions of naxal problem in different state governments and the limitations posed by slow movement of federal dialogue. Though political parties are realising the gravity of the issue and the need for political presence, much work needs to be done. LWE areas are mineral rich therefore we cannot afford to make any mistake. In a scenario built by the MHA, by taking control of resources, Naxals have the capabilities to cut off power supply to Delhi in three days. Government does not expect naxals to give up arms; rather give up on violence; to which naxals would never succumb as their ideology is founded on violence. They fear that people will not support them if they give up armed struggle. Naxals cannot be tamed or brought to talks unless put under pressure. It is crucial to show them that they are not at any advantage over the government. Last, the criminal justice system needs an overhaul. About 1.8 Lac offences are laid on tribals under the FRA. There is immense harassment due to procedural bureaucracy. Several cases were withdrawn and the MHA is pushing for the withdrawal of all cases with hope that the move would bring in some relief.



“There is no faith in between the government and the Maoists people. What is happening in Chhattisgarh is sheer slaughter. Many police personnel got caught by the Maoists and the people in position couldn't do anything. PUCL was contacted by the government official to seek for their release.”

**-Rajinder Sachar
Former Chief Justice
Delhi High Court**

Rajinder Sachar

Former Chief Justice, Delhi High Court

His first experience in dealing with the Maoists goes back to the year 1986 when he had just retired from the Delhi High Court and on behalf of the PUCL, he went to Bihar to take a look at an incident. In this particular case, poor people were demanding that the land should be redistributed so that the landless could get some part of it. As the land reforms were not yet implemented and the court failed to act in time, these people sat on a *dharna* and occupied the land. A meeting was called to discuss the matter by the so called Maoists which a large number of landless farmers attended. On the insistence of the landlord, the police surrounded them and opened fire. Around 20 people lost their lives. Gen. Sinha from the PUCL and Mr. Sachar brought together a report condemning this act of violence and highlighted the issue akin to Jalianwala Bagh. Speaking on violence, he stated that he does not believe in violence at all. It destroys the social action. However, the way the Home Ministry behaves and responds to violence is under question. It becomes clearer with an incident in 2009 when a press statement was released stating about the arrest of those who criticize the policies of the home ministry in dealing with the tribals, the Maoist problem and the threat to use Unlawful Activities Prevention Act against them. Home Ministry must answer the question that is this how they should deal with this problem. There is no trust between the government and the Maoists. What is happening in Chhattisgarh is sheer slaughter. Many police personnel got ambushed and detained by the Maoists and the state government could not do anything. The PUCL was contacted by the government officials to seek their release. First of all to reach ground zero one needs to have permission from the government and secondly, the Maoists think that whoever is coming to speak to them, may be a spy sent by the government. The PUCL was successful in rescuing the personnel. Another incident happened in Dantewada where many people were killed and detained by the Maoists. Well known social activists Medha Patkar, Kavita Srinivas and others went there with the permission from the government and stayed at a guest house rather than with the people. In the morning their building was surrounded by the tribals demanding for them to leave instantly and when the situation started getting out of hand, the police intervened.

Commenting further on the disharmonious relationship between the state government and the central government he stated that the PUCL was accused of supplying arms to the naxals by the Chhattisgarh government who also charged Binayak Sen of sedition. Later, the same PUCL was cleared and the Central Government thought Binayak Sen fit to be included in the Planning Commission. These incidents show the sorry state of how the Chhattisgarh government works. He appealed to Mr. Chidambaram and to the Government of India to enlighten the people on the terms and conditions on which the industries have been leased to the corporates who end up exploiting the forest cover. The kind of exploitation done on the tribals is hurting those who believe in social justice and in non-violence. The tribals have been robbed of their basic rights and are put behind bars. The naxal problem cannot be curbed until the government makes significant changes in its policies. The difference between the law made and law enforced has to disappear. One has to identify the gaps that exist in the thought process and this gap has to be squarely met. In terms of development, the gap between the political process and the commercial interests has to firstly meet and then it has to come to work including the local tribal people. It is generally seen that there is a lack of sympathy from the government towards local workers. The only way of attaining a common ground would be the inclusion of the tribal people in the entire process. Proper measures should be taken by the government to run the schools and not give it as a shelter to the army and the police personnel. Using Salwa Judum is not the answer, using localized democratic, development units is.

Discussion

There is a need for exploring a possibility where both parties step back from mutual destruction and allow development. Let people decide what they want. Civil society can fill the vacuum in such a scenario. Also, following the order by the Supreme Court, the security forces are authorised to construct their own shelters. They need not stay in schools, a pretext under which naxals have been blowing up school buildings. Political vacuum exists because a dialogue with political leadership is not sustained. Tribals should be included and involved in a big way in development process, policies under consideration to make the tribes the stakeholders. Then, there would be a possibility of a road ahead if worked on three-four areas.

Responding to the allegations by Justice Sachar, M. Giridhar Nayak, ADGP Chattisgarh, wanted to make an impromptu presentation on Dr. Binayak Sen's role and the role of the so called civil society activists who sometimes harbour the insurgency. However, since the case is sub-judice, his request to make the presentation was denied by the chair. It was also stated that Justice Sachar spoke about the issue of development- of Schools being destroyed by the naxals and police taking over them the possibility where we ask both the party to step aside and let the development take place in the LWE affected area is explored? May be the vacuum can be filled by the civil society actors by taking some pro-active steps towards development. The panel addressed these concerns and stated that civil society is there among the people living there be the question is of is that –a situation like that is workable or not keeping in mind the concerned people. It is mainly a question of approach. The panel then summarised the

“It has had ups and downs, ebb and low and its form since last decade naxalism can be describes as in a state of molten lava.

The problem of naxalism should be understood from the point of people involved, namely those who created it and those who are forced into it.”

-Dhirendra Singh
Former Home Secretary

The Naxal Problem

Understanding Issues, Challenges and Alternative Approaches First National Dialogue

Policy Recommendations

- The army can only treat the symptoms through arrests or killings without treating the root cause of the problem. Similarly, the use of the Salwa Judum is highly counterproductive and has made things worse.
- The villagers are not against the state per se but against corrupt officials, politicians and contractors. It is corruption, which is one of the main problems. Unless the state is able to identify and punish people, who are stealing money meant for development of these areas, it is not going to be able to deal with the problem.
- Development should come simultaneously with counterinsurgency measures. Grouping of public health, education, public works, agriculture and irrigation to form cohesive multi-disciplinary task force and efforts to generate employment opportunities for people will send a message of the government seriousness in addressing the basic problems of the people. Moreover, it is important provide good and sophisticated weapons to the security personnel and to train them in all aspects including networking with the local population, intelligence gathering, sharing, combat operations and coordinated developmental activities.
- “Locate, isolate and eradicate” - Locate the insurgents, isolate them from the local population and their channel of communication and then finish them
- Contrary to popular perception it is not all about guerrilla warfare but about revolutionary politics, which accounts for 70 percent of the strategy. Revolutionary politics is a combination of information warfare and political warfare. More than armed fighting they use propaganda. Unless the politicians recognise what revolutionary politics is they cannot hope to defeat the naxals.
- The naxals have declared that the armed rebellion is non-negotiable. Talks should be there only for a short time but not for such a long duration that it provides an opportunity for the naxals to consolidate themselves.
- The government expenditure is mostly limited to the fortification of the police stations and procurement of arms and ammunition. The coordination among the forces on the ground is clearly missing and their mobility has been curtailed due to geographical constraints.
- In order to tackle the problem, there is a need for simultaneous and coordinated action on all the core fronts of credible governance including development, security, perception-management and political form. The state must re-establish connectivity with local and tribal people as this can hit the Maoists the most where it matters. The process of development must also have a human face to prevent tribal alienation. Moreover, displacement without compensation should be avoided. The government must device a public-private partnership to ensure implementation of developmental projects and utilize the media to spread awareness of its good intentions.
- The security forces can only deal with the problem but not solve it. As far as the dialogue is concerned, a lot of negative connotation has been attached to the term 'dialogue'. Do we actually legitimise the naxal movement if we negotiate with them? If we look for peace in society, we have to enter into dialogue with them.
- What the deployment of security forces could not achieve, perhaps, much pinpointed intelligence based action could achieve.
- We tend to judge whether an area is affected or not only through the prism of violence but that is a wrong approach. When you talk about mapping this conflict we should understand that the Maoist movement has - organisation stage, the guerrilla warfare stage and finally the mobile warfare stage. We see that all these three stages are all over the country. If Dantewada and Bastar are going almost on the mobile warfare stage, Delhi is perhaps at the organisation stage. Thus, when we are talking about devising an anti-insurgency strategy it is important to adopt a holistic view and adopt separate strategies for different areas. Such a holistic approach is lacking at this stage.
- It is a political war, wherein the current political system is being questioned by a group, which believes that another alternative system is good for society. It is important to convince the people and neutralise the belief that revolutionary politics is necessary and relevant.
- The government has failed to exploit the media to expose the true brutality of the naxals. The naxalites have exploited the media much better than we have. If someone produces a video called blazing fields, it goes all over the world. Perhaps the government should start its own Indian Media blitzkrieg or the media could take some proactive actions towards this.
- Referring to the naxals as terrorists is incorrect. There is an urgent need to change the nomenclature as they are our countrymen.



- What is their strategy? How they isolate the police forces, how they mobilise, how they convert mass struggle to armed struggle, how they create armed struggle - all this needs to be understood in order to fight the problem. You have to have different strategies for differently affected areas. Since they are targetting democracy, we should use democracy to target them.
- A political issue like the naxal conflict with socio-economic roots is left untouched until it escalates to a point where the government is forced to act. At an escalated stage the issue demands more time, energy and resources and is unable to seek the results that could be achieved if it was to be nipped in the bud. This fundamental lesson has not been learnt by both central and state governments in spite of their knowledge about the historical context of the naxal movement. It is imperative to be cautious of carrying lessons from a particular context to an area and conflict with completely different dynamics.
- The ideal manner in tackling any of these conflicts is to indigenize and localize them with least use of outside forces. Currently, instead of privileging the strengthening of the state police forces, the central police forces have been strengthened to treat the naxal-affected areas. The task entails winning the loyalty of the people whose quality is under question than encountering the armed people. The deficiency of police reforms in the country is explicit in the culture of police forces, which is deprived of soft skills essential to deal with the people in conflict-affected regions. The strategic and primary objective is to be able to seek the willingness of the people to talk on a political platform. Support of the people is indispensable to the careful application of force to avert collateral damage as human intelligence explains the narrative of people's perception.
- A people-sensitive approach is inevitable to resolve this conflict. This fundamentally requires political willingness at the level of state governments with the knowledge of local politics to take initiatives to recognize this people's problem with resources from the central government. A strategy to cease this conflict indubitably needs to recognize the problems of the people who resorted to using arms.
- It is vital for the state governments to coordinate and cooperate with the support from the central government to launch an efficient counter-naxal strategy. A strategy that encompasses a judicious mix of counter-naxal tactics along with the policies directed toward socio-economic development of naxal-affected area would prove helpful in the future as many parts of India is still absorbed by abject poverty and poor standards of living.
- It is impossible to deal with the issue in a short period of time. A long-term vision in this direction is demanded for successful implementation of the counter-naxal strategies.
- Key to the success of the state of Andhra Pradesh in countering naxal crisis has not been only in the construction of roads to remote areas of the state alone, but also in developing local production centers. The capacity building program is primarily based on the reverse application of revolutionary field tactics. Surprise, secrecy and speed have been the driving tactics for the Maoists and it is the reversal of the same strategy by the Greyhounds in Andhra Pradesh that proved triumphant for the state. This capacity building programs have to be replicated in other states to cease naxal violence. The proactive approach from the police forces as well as from the state administration has been able to gain the trust of the masses, especially through community development programs. When people repose confidence in the government they bring human intelligence which is imperative to the success of any counter-naxal strategy.
- The new media could to be utilized with a conscious effort to mould or influence the opinions of those who can avail the luxury of new media. Traditionally, the government has been deficient in proactively employing media in perception management strategy. The naxals have factored the use of media to their benefit with an efficient media strategy.
- Additional aspects of the problem such as ideology, development and outreach of the government are yet to be addressed and till present this has not been engaged with sufficiently as there is no uniformed battle plan. In some respects existing fault lines are exploited and there is a failure within the system to remove and deduct those fault lines effectively.



The police and security forces however would provide a breathing space to the government and at that time, and within that breathing space, one would need first uphold a field of ameliorate measures and then consolidate these and put in long lasting measures which denies this space to the naxals.

- If we discuss the naxalism causative factors, they revolved around abysmal poverty, under development and a lack of infrastructure. The factors arise from inactivity in the administration, one should not label this corruption and he gave the example of seeing people have lunch that consisted of grass and ants. So there is no administration but the administration also cannot be provided due to the threat of naxals and the constant intimidation factor. The naxal strategy is to recruit by capitalizing on vulnerability such as women and children.
- The problem needs to be understood and women need to be gainfully recruited otherwise. There needs to be recruitment drives taken to areas such as Bastar and to employ tribal girls - the girls are not enrolled in schools but can generally be found in the hostels. Innovative measures need to take precedence over traditional methods. The strategy needs to be looked from three different perspectives, the local, national and international perspectives.
- When one says that the situation is improving, other indicators are easily missed - the organisational network may have improved but if one is to base it on the number of incidents, the problem is actually long term. Dimensions of the problem extend to social, economic as well as political and this is what would need to be taken into consideration if the problem is to be contained and not 'controlled'.
- Their strategies and tactics are very clear, the public support for them is strong, and one must see the threat and challenge and devise a strategy not in a sectoral or segmented way but in a comprehensive way. He stated that there are some security challenges that should not become a part of political up-manship because that is where the problem arises.
- The Constitution says that India lives in its villages and

there is unequal distribution of land there; the upper classes have very large chunks of land and the lower castes have no land at all. Land should be taken away from them and redistributed amongst others every state in India has land reform loss, and how many states have observed this only three states in India, Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal and Kerala. There is a very easy way to solve the problem, and that is the government needs to be restore the rightful land to its people by redistribution and making sure that the poor scheduled tribes and scheduled castes are not treated unfairly anymore.

- The government needs to balance its response but more importantly it needs to focus on a third aspect of the problem; the ideology in the minds of people. The government should come up with a superior idea. The idea should not be symbolic of the constitutional ideas enshrined in the preamble. The counter- ideology should not only appeal to the deprived population in rural areas, but also to the urban sympathisers of naxalism.
- The naxal problem cannot be curbed until the government makes significant changes in its policies. The difference between the law made and law enforced has to disappear. One has to identify the gaps that exist in the thought process and this gap has to be squarely met. In terms of development, the gap between the political process and the commercial interests has to firstly meet and then it has to come to work including the local tribal people. It is generally seen that there is a lack of sympathy from the government towards local workers. The only way of attaining a common ground would be the inclusion of the tribal people in the entire process. Proper measures should be taken by the government to run the schools and not give it as a shelter to the army and the police personnel. Using localized democratic, development units is the answer.
- Political vacuum exists because a dialogue with political leadership is not sustained. Tribals should be included and involved in a big way in development process, policies under consideration to make the tribes the stakeholders. Then, there would be a possibility of a road ahead if worked on three-four areas.

Some Distinguished Attendees



Lt. Gen. (retd.) Tej Pathak
Former Commandant, NDC

Amb. Deb Mukharji
Former High Commissioner to
Nigeria, Bangladesh and Amba-
sador to Nepal

Air Cmde. Prashant Dikshit
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Anna Stevenson
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**Lt. Gen. (retd.) Nirbhay Shar-
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Member, UPSC

Nihar Nayak
Associate Fellow, IDSA

Pushkar Raj
General Secretary, PUCL

Dr. V.S. Aiyar
RGAP

Prof. Aswini Ray
Former JNU Professor

K.N. Daruwalla
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Amb. Eric Gonsalves
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Alok Jain
Former IAS Officer

S.R. Sen
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Manoj Singh
Attorney, Supreme Court

Onkar Marwah
Former IFS Officer

Adam Roberts
South Asia Bureau Chief, The
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Col G.S. Dhillon
Army War College, Mhow

Diego Agundez
EFE News

Piero Gandini
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Naresh Shaukand
Commandant, ITBP

Frederique Hanotier
Delegation of the EU to India

Eric Randolph
Jane's Defence Weekly

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