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INTERNAL SECURITY IMPERATIVES: J&K, NORTH EAST AND LWE

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The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi, is an autonomous think tank dealing with contemporary issues of national security and conceptual aspects of land warfare, including conventional and sub-conventional conflicts and terrorism. CLAWS conducts research that is futuristic in outlook and policy-oriented in approach.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Conflict within states often occurs because of multiple identities and aspirations of the people not in synchrony with that of the state. Political, social and economic fault lines are often exploited by inimical forces to cause subversion in a state and society.
2. **Proxy War in J&K.**
 - a. The separatist movement in Kashmir has seen paradigm shift. Proxy war along with agitation strategy has made it difficult for security forces to maintain public order. Security forces can operate against the terrorists, but unarmed Jihadis require a different approach.
 - b. Indian Army has put in robust mechanism to keep the infiltration down and incorporation of technology has assisted in identification and neutralization of terrorists before infiltration into India.
 - c. Troops operate with extreme caution and “doctrine of restraint” is being exercised while dealing with agitation strategy of separatists.
 - d. Perception management initiative including engagement of youth had positive impact but the efforts of security forces do not find support among the political leadership of Kashmir.
 - e. Social media is being exploited by separatists and terrorists, thus their is need for counter narrative to neutralize the propaganda by separatists.
 - f. In spite of the criticism of the armed forces by separatists, development is taking place in remote areas primarily due to the efforts of the Armed Forces. The initiative taken by the Army must continue.
 - g. J&K is a political problem and the solution has to be found by political process.
3. **Ethnic Secessionist Movements in North East.**
 - a. North East has witnessed multi-ethnic secessionist armed movement since last six decades. These are outcome of difference of perceptions and inability of the successive governments to integrate these states with the main stream.
 - b. Parallel economy is acting as the life line for insurgency in North East. Drug, trafficking, arms smuggling and nexus between politicians and insurgents should be exposed.

- c. NSCN (IM) is the mother of all insurgency in the North east. Framework for Naga Peace Accord is a good initiative to bring the oldest and longest insurgency to an end provided government is able to bring all stakeholders of Naga community on board.
- d. At the moment only three out of seven states are connected by rail, thus isolation of Northeast can only be removed if all states are connected by rail, road and air.
- e. Northeast is a land bridge to ASEAN, integration of India with ASEAN should be through Northeast. This would need development of communication infrastructure and internet connectivity.
- g. Northeast has received huge financial aid and development packages from successive centre of governments. But due to corruption and lack of accountability the states remain underdeveloped.
- h. Intellectual resonance will have to come from within the society and the people becoming stakeholders in socio- political development of Northeast is imperative.

4. **Left Wing Extremism.**

- a. Fight against Left Wing Extremism (LWE) has reached a strategic stalemate. The security forces may have eroded the military wing of LWE but the ideology remains intact.
- b. The governmental approach has been beyond security and development; states have started talking about ensuring rights, empowering local communities, improving governance and public perception management.
- c. Maoists are now making inroads into urban centres and educational institutions. Urban movement ensures logistics support, access to finances and ideological inroads into educational institutions. If this movement is not curbed, it is likely to expand the area of influence of left wing extremists (LWE).
- d. Use of gun to make government to wake up to the formidable development challenges in these areas is a sign of neglect of last six decades. Challenge for the government is to nurture the aspirations of tribals and elimination of LWE.
- e. Tribal people are losing command over resources and tribal identity that is unprecedented and should be addressed at priority.
- f. Exploitation of natural resources is essential for development, but the benefits must also be shared with the Tribel for their development.

DETAILED REPORT

Introduction. Conflict within States often occurs because of multiple identities and aspirations of the people are not in synchrony with that of the state. Political, social and economic fault lines are often exploited by inimical forces to cause uprising in a state and society. India is a victim of cross border terrorism in J&K for the past 26 years, insurgency in North East since 1950s and Left Wing Extremism since past two decades. There is a need to analyse whether India needs single approach across the spectrum or it needs to adopt radically different approaches to each of these internal security challenges. Therefore, a seminar is organised to introspect and find plausible road map to deal with each of these conflicts that are different in nature, character and the objectives. The seminar was conducted in three sessions:-

- a. **Session I** - Proxy Terror War in J&K.
- b. **Session II** - Ethnic Secessionist Movements in North East
- c. **Session III** - Left Wing Extremism

The issues discussed during the seminar were:-

a. **J&K.**

- Is military strategy showing the sign of diminishing returns? If so is there a need to change the strategy in view of change in sentiments among the population?
- Causes for unrest and rise in number of young Kashmir youths joining terrorist organisations? How can this trend be reversed?
- What are the options for prevention and escalation of ground situation?
- What are the options ensure social and political integration of youth with main stream.

b. **North East.**

- The violence level in Assam has come down but ethnic fault lines continue to remain a potential flash point. Naga Ahom border dispute, Bodo versus Bengali settlers, ULFA (Pareesh Baruah faction) stills a potential threat to peace and stability. Spread of network of Jihadi terror groups and LWE in Assam can't be ruled out.
- Insurgency in Manipur is a complex internal security challenge that needs long term solution.
- All Naga stakeholders have not endorsed the Framework for Naga Peace Accord, therefore the challenge for the government is to bring all stakeholders to agree to the initiative for lasting peace.

- Meghalaya resource rich state slipping into violence and insurgency.

c. **LWE.**

- There is a sense among the Naxals that the movement may have lost momentum but they have not lost the war. The strategy seems to be to expand the area of influence and bringing the movement to population centre through intellectual discourse. Is there a strategy in the place to deal with such a threat?
- There is a sense that security forces operations are losing relevance in an environment that is social and economic in nature. Has the time come to adopt integrated approach to simultaneously deal with containment of violence and social and economic empowerment of people?
- Social media is playing an important role in articulation of ideology and creation of awareness. But it favours only those who know how to exploit the potential of social media.

PROXY WAR IN J&K

Military Strategy in Changing Environment in Kashmir

The Indian army succeeded in breaking the tactical and ideological backbone of terrorism in early 2000. It was a message to Pakistan and its proxies that the dream of dawn of Azadi through violence is unachievable. It forced Pakistan and separatists to alter their strategy, and in 2010 when the armed Jihad was losing the war in Kashmir, unarmed Jihadi took the centre stage. Since 2010 the separatist movement in Kashmir has seen paradigm shift. Proxy war along with agitation strategy has made it difficult for security forces to maintain public order.

Prolonged proxy terror war has made population weary and tolerance of threshold has reduced among the civil population. As a consequence Army reduced spot checks and vehicle checks to avoid inconvenience to the public at large. The situation appeared calm but the instability has remained just one incident away. In such a fragile situation Army adopted “**doctrine of restrain**” to prevent escalation of instability in Kashmir. This doctrine has facilitated two way communication with the people that is very important in CI/CT environment. However, it is extremely difficult to maintain restrain under extreme provocation from public.

With the changed security dynamics the Unified Command also laid out three tiers security mechanism. First tier along the LOC is the responsibility of the Army, second tier is shared between Rashtraiya Rifles, CRPF and local police and third tier is CRPF and police. It has assisted in bridging information gap especially during the ongoing public unrest

Counter infiltration operations are critical to maintain peace and stability in J&K. Indian Army has put in robust mechanism to keep the infiltration down by incorporating technology and infrastructure to identify and neutralize terrorists along the fence. To maintain surprise and unpredictability, security forces have to continuously change the strategy and tactics.

Perception management initiative including engagement of youth is an operation in itself. Super 30, Kashmir Cricket League and Schools aided and managed by Army has made difference, but the beneficiaries of these schemes are becoming target of public antagonism. Unfortunately the efforts of security forces are at times being construed as trespassing by political leadership and separatists.

The Indian military strategy in the valley is a calibrated mix of technology, numbers, sustained commitment, resolve intimate interface with the Awam. Army has displayed extraordinary restraint when compared with global matrix, in the light of personal experiences. The army, especially in the recent years, has been extremely sensitive to the need to reduce the overt display of military symbols. Through open channels of communications and outreach with local community leaders,

prominent citizens, academics and youths, attempt is being made to understand the social dynamics and preservation of public and private space.

Non Military Measures for Prevention of Escalation of Conflict

In spite of the criticism of armed forces by separatists, the fact remains that whatever development is taking place in remote areas it is due to the efforts of the Armed Forces through Sadbhavna. The political leadership sees this initiative by the Army as threat to their existence. Efforts were made in the past to control operation Sadbhavna and that would have been a suicidal step for the only functional scheme that benefits population in remote areas.

Social media is being exploited by separatisms and terrorists. However, state has failed to initiate counter narrative to expose the agenda of separatists. There is a need for a long term policy to deal with this threat that has the potential to cause great harm to the efforts of the government to establish peace.

Iftikhar Gilani, stated that PMO Scholarship Scheme for higher studies was a landmark initiative to integrate youths with main stream of India. However, the implementation has been flawed that has resulted in ruining of many careers of bright students. The scheme can still be effective if it is implemented in an earnest manner without any vested interest.

Institutional mechanisms are required to bring in financial accountability. In spite of large number of packages given out by central government for development projects, infrastructure and flood relief yet nothing has changed in Kashmir. Unfinished projects stand in public places as monuments of corruption. Centre should institute mechanisms to bring transparency in the entire system of disbursement of aids and packages given for development and infrastructure.

Tolerance of threshold of people as it stands today is low. Very presence of security forces in the population centre is seen as intrusion in public and private space. Kashmir is suffering from the fractured polity and absence of functional state institutions. Kashmiriyat and Sufism the bed rock of Kashmiri culture is facing existential threat from Salafi Islam. The corruption and lack of political accountability has led to disaffection of the people towards state and India. J&K is a political problem and solution has to be found by political process. It is an extra ordinary situation and before a political solution is found CBM (Confidence Building Measures) must be initiated to shape the environment and reduce the opposition. Late Mufti Muhammad had a vision for Kashmir and he wanted to usher in politics of hope, change, and development for Kashmir. Sentiment of reassurance in the hope of gradually marginalizing the politics of protests and separatism is the only way out.

ETHNIC SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS IN NORTH EAST

Conflict Resolution in North East Beyond Military Means

North East is land surplus, resource surplus and water surplus but is facing security deficit, power deficit and economic backwardness. General perception is that successive Central Governments lack understanding of ethnic issues of the region specifically socio economic and cultural aspects of North East. In the absence of economic opportunity insurgency has become an industry that is benefitting politicians, undergrounds and the criminals. Conviction rate of insurgent is so low that even if insurgents are apprehended he is confident that he is unlikely to be punished for his crime. As a result at times apprehension is an incentive because there after he has legal protection to continue his underground activities till he is caught again.

NSCN (K) in Nagaland, Meitei insurgent groups in Manipur and ULFA (Paresh Barua faction) is a source of instability in the North East. All the three major insurgent factions have their bases across in Myanmar. Engagement with Bangladesh has helped in curbing insurgency in Assam and even in Manipur to a great extent since Bangladesh government has not allowed its soil to be used for insurgency and subversive activities by Indian insurgents. Diplomatic engagement with Myanmar will certainly help curtailing insurgency in Northeast.

NSCN (IM) is mother of all insurgencies in the North East, with external linkages especially China and some of the European nations. NSCN has the cadres, weapons, linkages and nexus with drug and arms traffickers to route weapons to other groups at a cost. NSCN (IM) in spite of the cease fire continues to remain a potent threat to the stability of North east. The framework agreement with NSCN (IM) is a welcome step if this initiative can be taken to the logical conclusion and the armed groups are disbanded to usher in an era of peace.

Insurgency has become an industry and AFSPA has become a tool in the hands of the state government to run the states through the army and CAPF. States and central governments have outsourced political problem to military for resolution.

As the situation stands, most complex problem is Manipur that has the largest numbers of Insurgent groups. Meitei's are demanding sovereignty, Naga are demanding integration of all Naga tribes under one administrative unit and Kuki (Chin Tribe) are demanding state within state. The experiment with autonomous hill council has failed since it has no power of self rule or self development. Reconciliation among the three prominent ethnic communities is the only answer, but the efforts to bring all three communities to negotiating tables are conspicuous by absence.

Assam is returning to normalcy and insurgency related incidents are on the decline. But the problem of demographic inversion still remains. BJP government in Assam has given itself two years time to identify and prevent further migration of Bangladeshi population into Assam. The fear is that an overdrive of rhetoric of deporting Bangladeshi population may start another dimension of insurgency in North East and that is Islamic insurgent groups that so far are not active in the state.

Conflict Resolution through Economic Development & Empowerment of People.

The central govt is contributing approximately 95% of the state's budget and as a result the states have abdicated their responsibility to generate the revenue. Northeast is never short of aid, but the problem in accountability and transparency in utilization of the funds has remained a big problem. As a result states continue to remain backward. It is a considered view that there is a need to monitor the utilization of funds in a given timeframe and should not be left to the states. There is a need for the government to undertake following measure to integrate Northeast with main stream:-

- a. Development of rail and road communication in all states. Each state capital should be linked with air and rail head apart from improving surface communication. This will remove isolation of the states from the main land.
- b. Improvement in internet connectivity for better e-governance.
- c. Development of power generation so that BPOs and industries can start functioning.
- d. Education system will get boost with improvement in availability of power and net connectivity.
- e. Agriculture sector has huge potential especially organic farming.
- f. Development of tourism industry.
- g. Skill development of youth is essential to guarantee economic empowerment of the people of Northeast.
- j. Northeast is land bridge to ASEAN, therefore, Northeast should be ideally integrated with the economic activities with ASEAN and other neighbouring countries.

To resolve the problem of Northeast intellectual resonance will have to come from within the society and people becoming stakeholders in socio- political development of Northeast is imperative. However the state and centre government should endeavour to break the nexus between insurgents, politicians and corrupt administrative organs of the state.

LEFT WING EXTREMISM

The Movement Changing from Gun to Mind and Rural to Urban Areas

Naxal violence does not make headlines but it does not mean that it has lost momentum. Violence has come down but organizationally Maoists influence has not diminished. Their military capability, central leadership and their arsenals are intact, which the statistics otherwise may not suggest. Reduction in violence is not an indication of conflict resolution, it appears to be a strategic stalemate. Maoists have not targeted infrastructure, power generation installations and railway lines in the recent past, since there seems to be an intentional pause since the public has not endorsed the idea of disruption of development. Apart from public support, Maoists are looking at consolidating three important areas, strong party, strong army and United Front. United front is of two types- tactical and strategic. Strategic is an amalgamation of all the underground forces. Tactical is consolidating the control over the tribal areas and shifting movement to urban areas.

Urban movement is vital for Maoists because this is where they have access to weapons, industry to produce war like stores and more importantly funds. Pandpali Sitaramayya was known to be living in Bangalore for a long time; Krishnaji was in Lalgah for 15 years. It's the idea of Maoism to target students, youth, the unemployed- educated or uneducated industrial workers. As Mao said, you first occupy the villages and then you storm the town. Maoists are consolidating their bases in rural areas and expanding their footprints in towns. Whether they succeed or not is a different question, but the march towards urban centres has already begun.

During British era, certain steps were taken that further marginalized the status of tribal's, curb on their forest rights, forcing them to commence settle farming and extraction of minerals from traditional tribal land. Somehow even after independence these issues remained unchanged and thus Government needs to look at, tribal identity and history of alienation, governance issues in tribal areas, and rehabilitation of those who are displaced due to exploitation of natural resources.

Conflict Resolution: Development versus Security and Tribal Linkages

The governmental approach has been beyond security and development, the government has started talking about ensuring rights, empowering local communities, improving governance and public perception management. As the central government claims it is more or less playing the role of monitoring and assisting the state government and nothing more. On the other hand - the tribal, and the economically underprivileged sections, who claim to have been the biggest sufferers of Maoists are victims crushed between the security forces, the state and the Maoist.

Displacement is a major cause of tribal unrest because one in every 10 tribal is displaced and 59% displaced population is tribal. It is also becoming a problem to adjust tribals in new areas because that is directly affecting their way of life and culture. The bigger challenge is that even if the government is initiating schemes to rehabilitate tribals but the information of rehabilitation package and other government schemes for compensation are not reaching the tribals, even if the information is reaching them, the tribals are unaware how to proceed and as a result of that are being cheated by middlemen and corrupt system. Government needs to find a method so that the benefits of the schemes reach the deserving and in turn are not exploited by the middlemen. States have failed to meet the aspirations of tribals especially the promised compensation. Land for land compensation is what tribals are asking and even if that is considered it is taking tribals away from their roots and culture. It is having negative impact on the displaced population because they become alien in their own land.

Earlier it was strategic raw material for colonial rulers and now it is the commercial and industrial interest which has been dictating development without sharing the benefits with the tribals. The displacement of the population for resource acquisition without the consent of the local community has been one of the major reasons, and the tribal areas instead of being the focus of development have become centres of exploitation. Uprooting the people from their traditional land to an unknown area causes cultural and economic hardship and there is no mechanism through which redressal of grievances of tribal can be carried out. In this melee the voice and concerns of the tribals have been muffled and are exploited by industrial houses and Maoists.

Dr Man Mohan Singh stated that Naxalism is our biggest internal security threat but what is not spoken often is systematic failure in giving the tribals stake in the economic process. Exploitation and abuse of the tribal communities is no longer accepted. The development schemes are often announced and remain limited to the urban centres and rarely reach the villagers. More often than not these schemes are on papers and villagers are not even aware of such schemes. Focus should be generation of jobs, education, health and development of roads and communication. Maoism in the current form is not a tribal movement it is manifestation of neglect and exploitation of centuries that is impacting the tribals socially culturally and economically. Tribal are caught in a war that they do not want to be part of. Maoist intentions are to be defied and tribal aspiration should be nurtured. Tribal people are at a critical point in the history, losing command over resources and cultural roots. The pleas from tribal areas are not heard outside because they are voiceless and misunderstood citizens. Tribals should be given space and platform to express and redress their grievances. Some important recommendations are as under:-

- a. Under the Sixth Schedule Governor has the power to give tribal communities considerable autonomy. The governor can delegate the District Council and the Regional Council under the Sixth Schedule to make laws to protect ethnic identity, economic traditional rights on forest produce, receiving grants-in-aids from the “Consolidated Fund of India” to meet the costs of schemes for development, health care, education, roads and regulatory powers to state

control. The mandate towards devolution, and protection of their customs, better economic development and most importantly ethnic security. The governors should exercise their powers to ensure economic development, protection of identity and cultural heritage of tribal.

- b. Rehabilitation package should be based on choice, either money or land for land with compensation to start a new life at different location but not far from their cultural roots.
- c. Tribal elders say must remain paramount since it is part of culture and tradition. Panchayati Raj without taking into consideration the cultural practices should not be imposed.
- d. Development and security are complementary to each other and tribal needs both to prevent exploitation by Maoists and middle men.
- e. Government should share some percentage of economic benefits with tribals.
- f. Tribal community should not become victim in war between Maoists and government forces. Operations must be conducted without bias against tribal population.
- g. Tribal grievance redressal system should be established that looks after their concerns.
- h. Transparency in functioning of government agencies to prevent exploitation by middlemen and corrupt government functionaries.



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