

Left Wing Extremism in India: Context, Implications and Response Options

G D Bakshi



KONWLEDGE WORLD

KW Publishers Pvt Ltd
New Delhi



Centre for Land Warfare Studies
New Delhi

in association with

Editorial Team

Editor-in-Chief : Brig Gurmeet Kanwal (Retd)
Managing Editor : Dr N Manoharan
Copy Editor : Ms Rehana Mishra



Centre for Land Warfare Studies

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

RPSO Complex, Parade Road, Delhi Cantt, New Delhi 110010
Phone: +91.11.25691308 Fax: +91.11.25692347
email: landwarfare@gmail.com website: www.claws.in

© 2009, Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi



All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Published in India by

Kalpna Shukla
KW Publishers Pvt Ltd
NEW DELHI: 4676/21, First Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110002
Phone: +91.11.23263498 / 43528107
email: mail@kwpub.in / knowledgeworld@vsnl.net
MUMBAI: 15 Jay Kay Industrial Estate, Linking Road Extn., Santacruz (W), Mumbai 400054
Phone: +91.22.26614110 / 26613505
email: mumbai@kwpub.in

Printed at Parangat Offset Pvt Ltd, New Delhi

Contents

1. Summary of Findings	5
2. Introduction	7
3. Demographic Drivers of Internal Security	10
4. The Tribal Nature of LWI	12
5. The Tribal Dimension of Insurgency in South Asia	14
6. History of Tribal Rebellions in India	16
7. Brief Historical Overview of Naxalite Violence	21
8. Present Strengths and Organisation of LWI	24
9. Incident Analysis and Operational Trends	26
10. The Time Dimension: India's Three Front Scenario	31
11. Government Response so Far	32
12. Response Options: Use of Army	34
14. Conclusion	41
15. References	43

Tables and Figures

Table 1 Tactical Exchange Rate/Casualty Ration between Police/CPOs and Left Wing Insurgents	9
Table 2 Core Insurgency Area Analysis	10
Table 3 Comparative Evaluation of Development Indices of ST/SC	20
Table 4 Spatial Growth of LWI 2001-2008	22
Table 5 Casualty Ratio	23
Fig 1 Demographic Dimensions of Internal Security	11
Fig 2 Organisational Structure of CPI (Maoists)	26

Summary of Findings

- Left wing extremism (LWE) is primarily a tribal insurgency. Only 12 per cent of the Indian tribal population lives in the Northeast. The Northeastern tribal insurgencies had broken out in 1956 and are yet to be fully resolved. These have tied down two to six divisions of the Indian Army and huge numbers of paramilitary and police forces. A rebellion by 85 per cent of the Indian tribal populations that live in the central Indian heartland, therefore, has very serious security implications.
- What makes the LWE particularly disturbing is its correlation with the demographic youth bulge in the general Indian population. This will translate into the need for generating a billion jobs by 2026. If the Indian state fails to do so, the widespread unemployment could lead to a serious internal security situation. LWE is its first manifestation.
- The Maoist ideology is what makes this tribal insurgency particularly dangerous and likely to bridge the rural-urban faultline. It poses a threat not just to India's access to its mineral resources but to India's liberal and democratic polity *per se*.
- India is in a dangerous two-front strategic situation. Internal security is fast becoming its "Third Front". Keeping in view China's rising power, India has a limited time horizon in which to address this internal security dimension in isolation. It will otherwise have to deal with it in tandem with external threats.
- The adverse casualty ratio in police-Naxal operations highlights the fact that insurgencies are best tackled by military forces that are trained and structured for this role.

- An across the board paramilitarisation of the police forces is not possible or desirable. It will take over a decade of intensive training and restructuring and still not deliver optimal results. Nowhere in the world is insurgency being tackled by the police.
- Insurgency calls for a military response and one will have to be initiated at some stage. The Indian nation-state is pressed for time. We must stop wasting resources in trying to paramilitarise the police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).
- If the army/RR (Rashtriya Rifles) has to be involved, this must not be delayed any further. We could begin by offensive sweeps in 2009 (in a repeat of Operation Steeple Chase I).
- If that does not give a decisive setback to LWE, India will have no option but to raise two to three additional army divisions/RR formations in a compressed time-frame for a forceful and purposive response.

Left Wing Extremism in India: Context, Implications and Response Options

Introduction

India today does not face any existential threat from external sources. Any future conflict with China or Pakistan is likely to be a limited one under conditions of nuclear symmetry. India, however, does face an existential threat from a host of internal stressors. These range from a fracturing of the Indian polity that could result from an accentuation of identity-based politics, to the asymmetric assault launched by the *jehadi tanzeems* aided and abetted by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan. A failure of the nation-state to generate adequate employment for the huge youthful population (that is a result of the demographic youth bulge) would generate major social tensions. This demographic bulge, in turn, could generate a major rural-urban faultline in India. The primary manifestation of this today is in the left wing extremism (LWE) that is sweeping through the tribal regions of central and peninsular India. Naxalism had started as an agrarian rebellion by the Santhal tribals of Naxalbari in West Bengal in the year 1967. Ruthless attempts by the state to stamp it out have failed as the state has exhibited a lack of political will to effect agrarian reforms. This insurgency resurfaced in the 1980s with the rise of the People's War Group (PWG) and Maoist Communist Centre (MCC). In 2004, the PWG and MCC merged to form the Communist Party of India (Maoists). This has given a pan-India orientation to LWE. The spatial growth of LWE has thereafter been dramatic and alarming. Large scale displacement of tribal populations by major hydro-electric projects and extensive mining in jungle areas has led to the third phase of LWE. From just nine states and 53 districts in 2001, it is variously estimated to have affected some 203 to 252 districts in 18 states. Of this, the core of the insurgency is focussed in Chhattisgarh (Abujmar

region) and Jharkhand, with significant activity levels in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa. What is becoming a cause for alarm is the adverse tactical exchange rate or casualty ratio between the police/central police organisations (CPOs) and the Naxals. This had ranged between a not very reassuring 1:1.4 to 1:2 between 1999 and 2006. However, in the years 2007 and 2008, this ratio has become more adverse and tilted in favour of the left wing insurgents. The Maoists are now talking of a Red Corridor (or Compact Revolutionary Zone) that stretches from Pashupati in Nepal to Tirupati in South India. Tribals make natural guerrillas. Only 12 percent of India's tribal population lives in the Northeast. This had revolted in 1956 and tied down some 2 to 6 divisions of the Indian Army and three times that number of police and paramilitary forces. Eighty-five percent of the Indian tribal population lives in central and peninsular India. It is this which is now in varying stages of rebellion. The internal security implications of this are patent and obvious. Unlike the earlier insurgencies in the Northeast and the terrorist movements in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), this is not a rimland insurgency but a heartland rebellion. The Indian Army obviously is not keen to intervene here because this will draw it far away from the borders it is supposed to guard. The key issue is: can we (or should we) militarise our police forces to quell this insurgency? The strength of the Indian state police forces has been raised by 300,000 in the past few years. It has gone up from 1.3 million to 1.6 million. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is raising 10 Combat Battalion Resolute Action (COBRA) battalions to combat this menace. So far, however, the casualty ratio between the police and insurgents has been a cause for concern. The world over, armies are employed to tackle insurgencies. Militarising the entire police forces would take 8 to 10 years with the existing training infrastructure. Would it be cost-effective or even possible to raise the tactical skills of all the states' police forces to even a basal military level? Quite obviously, therefore, the Andhra Pradesh Greyhounds model of elite, specialised police forces is the obvious solution. It has worked well in Andhra Pradesh. Can the Andhra model be replicated in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand? The outlook seems rather pessimistic as the state of road infrastructure is much poorer in these two states. A better road communication network in Andhra Pradesh had enabled the police to gain the upper hand. Unfortunately, the

police leadership in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand has been focussing more upon raising the general level of training of the entire police force than on creating elite forces on the Andhra model. Counter-insurgency (CI) training and operations are treated as virtual punishment postings/assignments and the state of morale and motivation of these state police forces is poor. An increase of pressure by the Greyhounds in Andhra Pradesh has merely pushed the left wing *dalams* into the neighbouring states of Jharkhand and Orissa. The key parameter to be closely watched is the tactical exchange rate or the casualty ratio between the police and the left wing insurgents. This is now becoming a cause for concern. Should this deteriorate further, we may have to consider a genuine paramilitarisation of the conflict i.e. intervention by the Rashtriya Rifles (RR) or Assam Rifles (AR). Alternatively, we may have to consider a one-time repeat of Operation Steeple Chase (army assistance provided to anti-Naxal operations in West Bengal in 1971). The prime areas of concern are the core LWE affected states of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. Tables 1 and 2 highlight the essence of the problem.

Table 1: Tactical Exchange Rate/Casualty Ratio between Police/CPOs and Left Wing Insurgents

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Police/CPO Casualties	98	125	100	105	100	153	157	236	175
Left Wing Insurgents	254	182	141	211	87	255	274	141	137
Ratio	1:1.6	1:1.4	1:1.4	1:2	1:0.8	1:1.6	1:1.6	1:0.6	1:0.7

Source: Extracted from Ministry of Home Affairs Status Paper on Internal Security, 3 September 2008. Data compiled till 31 August 2008.

An ideal security forces to insurgents casualty ratio that is indicative of a successful CI campaign is 1:5 or 6. The police-left wing insurgents casualty ratio has, thus, been sub-optimal throughout. This is due to the widespread use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs)/landmines by the left wing insurgents. However, what is cause for serious concern is the adverse casualty ratio that has occurred in the years 2007 and 2008 when the exchange rate tilted clearly in favour of the insurgents. That this has happened despite the massive efforts at training, reequipping and modernisation of the police forces only

accentuates the level of concern. It clearly highlights that police forces are not optimally suited for offensive counter-insurgency operations.

Table 2: Core Insurgency Area Analysis

State	No. of Casualties		
	2005	2006	2007
Chhattisgarh	168	388	369
Jharkhand	119	124	157
Bihar	96	45	67
Andhra Pradesh	208	47	45
Maharashtra	53	42	25
Orissa	14	9	17

Source: Extracted from Ministry of Home Affairs Annual Report 2007-08.

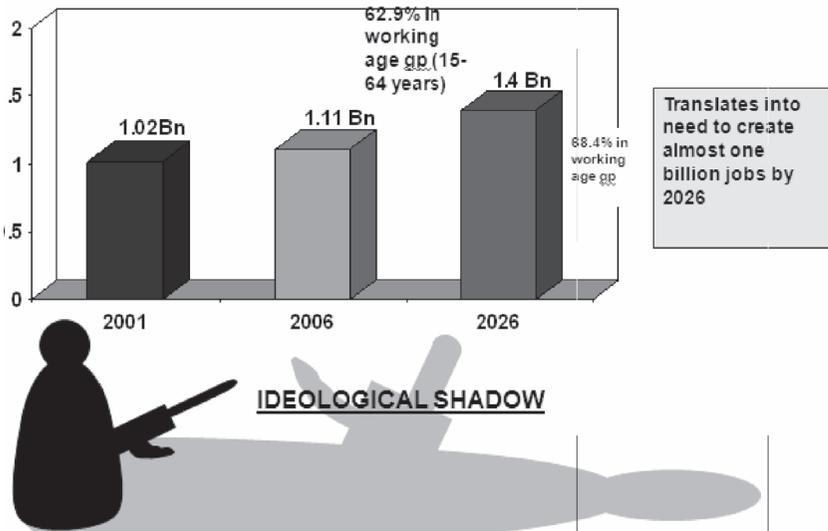
Table 2 clearly highlights the geographical areas where LWI is becoming a cause for serious concern. It is noteworthy that casualties have come down in Andhra Pradesh from 208 in 2005 to 45 in 2007. This is indicative of the operational efficacy of the Greyhounds model. The prime states of concern, however, are Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand where casualties due to LWI have been rising steadily since 2005. In 2007, the highest casualties were in Chhattisgarh (369) and then in Jharkhand (157). The Chhattisgarh Abujmar/Dandkaranaya area is the core of LWI and has been classed as a liberated zone by the insurgents.

Demographic Drivers of Internal Security

One of the key drivers of the national security process is the aspect of demographic growth. Unfortunately, so far, security analysts have given it minimal attention. India's population stands at 1.1 billion today; 62.9 percent of this comprises the working age group. By 2026, India's population would have overtaken that of China's and would stand at 1.4 billion. Of this, 68.4 percent would be in the working age group. This translates into a need for creating one billion jobs. Failure to create this huge number of jobs could lead to large scale unemployment and consequent serious internal instability. Historically, such youth bulges have invariably preceded the onset of bloody revolutions. India's growth story so far has been lopsided. India's growth has not been inclusive and has largely benefited some 300 million urban middle class. The trickle down effect has not been visible so far. This has left some

800 million people in a stage of marked relative deprivation. India's recent economic revival has created the miracle of jobless growth. The downsizing and automation *mantra* was borrowed by our industry by emulating the best practices of the West. Unfortunately, this lopsided growth does not take into account India's demographic structure, and if not corrected, could lead to an internal security disaster.

**Fig 1: Rural-Urban Faultline?
Demographic Dimensions of Internal Security**



There is intense debate amongst demographers about the impact of this demographic youth dividend. Harvard demographer David Bloom, in his paper entitled “Demographic Transitions and Economic Miracles in Emerging Asia” had analysed the remarkable population trend that had coincided with East Asia’s economic boom that occurred between 1950–2000. This had resulted from a youth dividend that turned human capital into an asset rather than a Malthusian liability. This asset, however, resulted from the proper skilling and education of the population. Literacy levels had risen dramatically in South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan. This had enhanced the skill levels of the population exponentially. Less graying populations meant

less percentage of national income being spent on the social welfare costs of a dependent population. This led to higher rates of savings and this in itself spurred economic growth. However, in his book (*Imagining India: Ideas for a New Century*), Nandan Nilekani has highlighted that only a skilled population can translate into human capital, instead of an economic liability. A massive unskilled and unemployed population with a youthful profile could prove to be a demographic time-bomb instead of providing a demographic dividend. The biggest challenge India faces today is to educate and equip its youthful population with the requisite skills for productive employment. Failure to generate these skills and create the level of employment required could lead to serious internal security problems. This internal security iceberg is manifesting itself today as LWE, and a rising tide of fanaticism based on identity markers like religious, caste and sub-regional identities. LWE, however, is probably its most pressing and serious manifestation that is casting a long and ominous shadow upon our collective future.

This could translate into a rural-urban faultline of dangerous dimensions. The first manifestation of this faultline in India has taken the form of LWE.

The Tribal Nature of LWE

Despite the critical leadership and ideological guidance provided by the committed urban youth, LWE today largely remains a tribal phenomenon. An analysis of its spatial and geographical spread clearly highlights its correlation with India's forest cover and tribal district boundaries. It is the tribal nature of this movement that compounds the internal security threat potential of this insurgency. India has 533 tribes, comprising a population of some 88.3 million. This constitutes some 8.6 percent of India's overall population and primarily inhabits India's forest tracts. A study of the geographical distribution of this population presents some interesting insights:

- 85 percent of our Scheduled Tribes (ST) population resides in the forested tracts of central and peninsular India. The main tribes of central India are the Bhils and Gonds who number 6 million, the Santhals number 4 million and the Oraon 3 million.
- A mere 11-12 percent of India's tribal population resides in the forests of the Northeast. Thus, the Nagas number 12-14 lakh and the Mizos just 7 lakh. However, these tribal population concentrations are far

denser and, in many cases, constitute the majority in most states of the Northeast. The tribal majorities in these areas are explained largely by the failure of the Sanskritised Aryan civilisation of the plains to penetrate these remote forest regions.

- The Scheduled Castes (SC) population, on the other hand, numbers over 179.7 million (2001 Census) and constitutes 17.5 percent of India's overall population. Interestingly, nearly 84 percent of India's SC population lives in the 10 states of Uttar Pradesh (UP) (21.5 percent), West Bengal (11.6 percent), Bihar (9.09 percent), Tamil Nadu (7.75 percent), Andhra Pradesh (7.6 percent), Madhya Pradesh (6.96 percent), Maharashtra (6.34 percent), Rajasthan (5.5 percent), Karnataka (5.3 percent) and Kerala (2.09 percent).
- It is noteworthy that these precisely are the states from which the forest cover has been cleared for large-scale, settled agriculture. This has led some anthropologists to speculate that the bulk of our SC populations are possibly former tribals of the forests who were integrated into the fold of the Aryan civilisation, generally at the lowest levels of the caste hierarchies. In most cases, their position was akin to that of the slave labour which had helped to build the grand infrastructure of the Roman Empire. However, this entry level was largely a function of the prevailing military fortunes of that era. Thus, many tribes in Nepal and Manipur were able to gain entry at much higher levels of the caste hierarchies, including the highest Brahmanical or Kshatriya levels. However, in most cases, they were integrated as the abysmally lowest strata and have been the victims of unbelievable oppression and exploitation. They were mostly landless labourers and serfs. The political lack of will to enforce land reforms in the post-independence era was the primal cause of the first Naxalite upsurge in India in 1967. Let us not forget that Mao Zedong had based the revolution in China on the landless peasantry. The basic cause of this angst—the glaring lack of land reforms—has still not been addressed in India. What is cause for hope and optimism, however, is the very high level of political mobilisation of India's SC population, which is now making its numbers count in the Indian electoral process. The Dalits have produced many pan-India level leaders like Ambedkar, Kanshiram,

Jagjivanram and Mayawati. As a consequence, the human indices of development of the SC population have surged visibly ahead of those of India's ST population. The stark tragedy of our tribal population has been its complete failure to mobilise itself politically and throw up a charismatic pan-Indian leadership which could articulate its demands within the democratic system. This, in turn, is an effect of the abysmally low levels of literacy of our ST population. As per the 2001 Census, this was just 29.6 percent compared to the national average of 65.4 percent. Even the SC literacy levels were 37.9 percent in comparison; 45.8 percent of India's ST population was below the poverty line as compared to the national average of 27.09 percent. It is this which has forced India's forest tribes to take up arms and seek redress through violent means. The lack of political mobilisation amongst the central Indian tribes has ceded this strategic space to the extremist organisations. This in sum is the basis of the escalating tribal insurgency in central and peninsular India.

It is noteworthy that insurgencies had broken out in the Northeast tribal areas as far back as 1956. These have kept 2 to 6 divisions of the Indian Army, some 45 Assam Rifles battalions and large number of CPOs and police forces tied down for over five decades. The tribal societies lend themselves to easy militarisation as the sub-set of skills required for hunting and sub-conventional operations is similar. The tribals are innately good at field craft, stealth and natural alignment for shooting. As such, they make highly effective insurgents. If 12 percent of the tribal population could tie down such inordinately high levels of Indian security forces for decades, it is worth considering what the impact of a revolt by 85 percent of our tribes in central and peninsular India could be. The human and physical terrain here ideally lends itself to prolonged and costly insurgencies.

The Tribal Dimension of Insurgency in South Asia

Incidentally, this tribal upsurge is not just confined to India but is today affecting tribal societies in the whole of South Asia. It stems from a historical failure of the states in South Asia to effect a comprehensive administrative and infrastructural penetration of their tribal areas.

Pakistan

Elsewhere in South Asia, the tribes of the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and Federally Administered Tribal Agencies (FATA) of Pakistan are in virtual revolt. The problem there has been gravely compounded by the short-sighted policies of the Pakistani state which has led to widespread proliferation of small arms and sophisticated weapons in Pakistan's tribal societies. Pakistan, in fact, militarised and armed its tribal society to the teeth to wage a *jihad* against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. This indiscriminate proliferation of arms in the Pakistani tribal areas has eroded the very basis of the nation-state itself. Pakistan is in serious danger of losing its entire tribal tracts west of the Indus river. The extremist *jihad* ideology it nurtured is proving to be a threat to the very system of nation-state and today is posing a serious existential challenge to the historic agricultural civilisation that had flourished east of the Indus river. Pakistan is now facing the very real spectre of state collapse as Talibanisation radiates outwards from the tribal regions of the Northwest and makes inroads into the Punjab heartland.

Nepal

In Nepal, the Maoist rebellion is a very close analogue of the LWE in India. Its base is largely tribal (the Magar, Gurung and Pun tribes of central and western Nepal) while the leadership is from the educated elite of the Kathmandu valley. The Maoist movement in Nepal fought the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) to a standstill. The Maoist movement in Nepal had effected a somewhat premature switch to regular military operations. It had launched a series of disastrous, frontal attacks on well fortified positions of the RNA. These caused it to suffer such heavy attrition that ultimately compelled it to seek an alliance with the democratic parties and a negotiated settlement. It was subsequently mainstreamed and has now formed a Maoist-led government in Nepal. It remains to be seen whether this mainstreaming model will work satisfactorily in Nepal itself and whether it would induce the LWE in India to also mainstream and enter the democratic process.

Bangladesh

The Buddhist Chakma tribes had revolted in Bangladesh in the 1970s. Though this insurgency has largely been contained by highly repressive measures

(including changing the demographic composition of the tribal areas), Maoist style insurgencies are erupting amongst the other tribes almost as a sympathetic detonation induced by the tribal/ Maoist insurgencies in West Bengal and Nepal.

The onset of tribal insurgencies, therefore, is not just an Indian phenomenon; it is endemic to the whole of South Asia and stems from a clash of the modern industrial civilisation taking root in these countries with the subaltern tribal cultures left over from pre-history. Durga Mitra in his thesis, "Understanding Indian Insurgencies: Implications for Counter-Insurgency Operations in the World," has developed an Indian variant of the Skocpol model to explain the causative factors of Indian insurgencies. Skocpol argued that the probability of revolution against the state is determined by the degree of penetration of the national territory by the state, the importance of socially mobilised groups and the degree of bureaucratisation of the state administration and its armed forces. Mitra contends that the degree of inaccessibility of an area (that is, the lack of logistical, infrastructure and administrative penetration), the strength of a separate social identity of its population and the amount of external unifying influence on it determine the propensity of that region for insurgency. Left wing extremism is the direct outgrowth of the failure of the state to effect comprehensive penetration and control of its forested areas.

History of Tribal Rebellions in India

Tribal rebellions are not a new phenomenon. The Mauryan state had employed tribal levies for enhancing the strength of their standing or regular armies in times of war. Kautilya did not trust the tribal levies and primarily used them for looting and pillaging the enemy countryside. In recent history, there have been a number of large scale tribal rebellions:

Pre-Independence

Kol and Bhurmi revolt	– Early 19 th century
Santhal Hool	– 1855
Birsa Munda (Ulugulan)	– 1911
Gunden Rampa	– 1920s
Warli Revolt	– 1945-1946

Post-Independence

Bastar Uprising	– 1966
Jharkhand Agitation (Tribal districts of Bihar)	
Maharashtrian – Bhoomi Sena	– 1970s
Kasht Kari Sangathana	
Protest against Koel Kano Project in Bihar	– 1980s
Narmada Bachao Andolan	
Orissa Tribal lands taken away for mines	– 1990s

All governments in the Indian history failed to subdue or penetrate the dense forest tribal tracts or the rugged hilly regions of the Northwest. It was simply not cost-effective to pacify or control these tribal areas because they produced no agriculture surplus that could yield taxable revenues. The agricultural civilisations in South Asia, therefore, simply marginalised the subaltern, tribal cultures and were content to let them survive in isolation on the fringes/periphery. The onset of industrialisation has now made such continued marginalisation impossible.

Today, the tribal societies inhabit India's poorest and least developed jungle regions. Paradoxically, these are richest in mineral deposits: 85 percent of India's coal reserves are in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Orissa. These areas also have huge deposits of iron ore and bauxite. Industrialisation, therefore, has brought about a violent clash of these two civilisations. A large number of mega hydro-electric projects, smaller dams, mines and now the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) have led to the large scale displacement of tribal populations. It is estimated that from 1951-2005, some 50 million people were displaced in India due to such mega projects. Tribal societies constitute some 40 percent of this displaced population. This virtually amounts to some 20-24 million out of a tribal population of 85 million. So far, only 18-20 percent of these people have been rehabilitated. The tribes have also been displaced from their natural habitats by wild life parks and sanctuaries. The Forests Rights Act of 2006 gives the tribes only the limited right to own, collect, move and dispose of minor forest produce (e.g. honey, tendu leaf, etc). Special

Economic Zones are being established in these mineral rich areas, leading to further displacement of tribal populations. By and large, where the forest lands were cleared for cultivation, the tribals were largely assimilated in the Aryan/Sanskritised civilisation at the lowest levels of the caste hierarchy. Their position in the agricultural era was akin to that of the slave labour that built the Roman Empire. Today, their descendants are still the victims of unbelievable caste oppression and occupy the lowest rungs of the economic and social hierarchy as landless labourers. The government has clearly shown a lack of political will to enforce land reforms that would give ownership of the soil they till to these destitute sections of the population and thereby give them a means of secure livelihood.

The Naxalite Upsurge

The salient difference in the post-independence tribal upsurge of LWE is the dangerous ideological dimension provided by Maoism. If it remains confined to a tribal rebellion, it could at best delay or disrupt India's industrialisation and modernisation by hindering access to its minerals in the tribal regions. However, LWE in India poses a serious long-term ideological threat through its potential to generate a dangerous rural-urban faultline. This faultline will acquire the proportions of an existential threat once India's demographic bulge acquires a critical mass because of rising unemployment. Mao had based his revolution in China not upon the industrial proletariat but upon the landless peasants in the countryside. It was, in essence, an agrarian revolution that overthrew the landlords and developed a three-phase model of People's Revolutionary War that defeated the Republic of Chiang Kai Shek and ushered in Communist rule in China. The revolution started in the countryside and later overwhelmed the cities. Mao's singular contribution was the concept of the three stages of guerrilla warfare that he enunciated during the Chinese civil war:

- **The Strategic Defensive:** In this phase, the nascent guerrilla organisation was formed and increased its influence by selective terrorist actions against the state functionaries and their supporters – its aim at this stage was survival and consolidation.
- **The Strategic Stalemate:** Mao then used space to extend the war in time and exhaust the state of its will to fight. Company and battalion-size guerrilla bands were formed and extended the war in space and time

for one to two decades by employing hit and run tactics of raids and ambushes.

- **The Strategic Counter-Offensive:** Once the stage was set by extended guerrilla warfare, the regular People's Liberation Army was formed to effect the switch to conventional military operations that would deliver the *coup de grace* and destroy the exhausted armed forces of the state.

In essence, the Chinese civil war was a struggle between a newly industrialising capitalist state and a revolution led by the peasantry of China. It was a struggle between the ancient agricultural civilisation and the emergent industrial civilisation. The revolution was led not by the industrial proletariat but by the peasants of China. It is this parallelism which is casting an ominous ideological shadow over the march of LWE across tribal India.

An industrial era army, said Mao, mobilised all its material resources to gain a swift victory in time. The aim was to deny it that quick victory for it could not sustain its material mobilisation indefinitely. Mao used space to extend the war in time, to drag it on for decades to harass, wear down and exhaust the enemy; to induce war weariness and homesickness and wear down his will to resist. To mobilise the masses, Mao used political mobilisation, propaganda and subversion. The prime aim was to attack the will of the class enemy and counter his industrial mobilisation with a mobilisation of the masses.

It is the introduction of this Maoist ideology that poses a long-term systemic and existential threat to India's democratic and liberal state that is based on a free market economy.

Naxalism started in India as an agrarian revolt in the West Bengal district of Naxalbari in 1967. This agrarian rebellion was crushed in a brutal police action. In 1971, the Indian Army had provided assistance by establishing the outer cordon in Operation Steeple Chase I. Prakash Singh former director general (DG), Border Security Force (BSF) and DG Police, UP has provided an exhaustive account of the growth of Naxal violence in his seminal book *The Naxalite Movement in India*. What is surprising is the sheer tenacity and persistence of this ideology of rural rebellion. The leftist governments of West Bengal and Kerala effected land reforms and addressed the root cause of the rural angst. All the other state governments

of India, however, have been unable to summon the political will to address the issue of land reform. It is this that explains the persistence and tenacity of LWE. Large scale displacement of tribal populations by mega projects and SEZs and the insensitive implementation of the Forest Act have only added to the tribal angst. The failure of infrastructural and administrative penetration had led to the ruthless exploitation of these tribals by venal money lenders and forest contractor mafias. Coupled with horrific caste oppression, these atrocities have fuelled the tribal angst to a level where it is now manifesting itself in widespread armed insurrection against the state. What is particularly worrisome is that the Naxalite *dalams* now have a vested interest in keeping these inaccessible regions backward, to prevent state penetration and access; to block development that could redress that tribal angst and in specific prevent road construction which would facilitate the movement of security forces and improve the delivery mechanisms of governance.

Political Marginalisation of the Scheduled Tribes

What is particularly distressing is the continued political marginalisation of the Scheduled Tribes (ST) that has not allowed them to develop a stake in the democratic system. Compared to the ST, the Scheduled Castes (SC) have fared much better in terms of political mobilisation. This lack of political empowerment is reflected in the clear development differential that is fast emerging between the SC and the ST themselves:

Table 3: Comparative Evaluation of Development Indices of ST/SC

Development Indices	ST	SC
Literacy Rate	29.6%	37.9%
Below Poverty Line	45.8%	36.2%
School Dropouts (Before matriculation)	62.5%	49.4%
Safe Water	43.2%	63.6%
No Access to Doctors	28.9%	15.6%
Immunisation	42.2%	57.6%

Source: Ramachandra Guha, "Adivasis, Naxalites and Indian Democracy," *Economic & Political Weekly*, 11 August 2007.

The SC comprise some 16.2 percent of the Indian population. Many Naxalite affected districts are marked by a high proportion of Dalit population and especially in Bihar they have been taking an active part in the left wing insurgency, as part of the former MCC. However, Dalit angst has been much better addressed due to the superior political mobilisation of the SC. It is the total political marginalisation of the ST that has forced them to resort to violence and let the left wing extremists champion their cause.

Brief Historical Overview of Naxalite Violence

First Phase: Naxalbari

The history of LWE in India is well documented. This brief overview will only highlight the salient details. Naxal violence started as an agrarian revolt in 1967 by the Santhal peasants of the Naxalbari district of West Bengal. They were led by hardcore Communist leaders like Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal. This uprising was initially hailed in the Chinese official media. In fact, the *People's Daily* in its editorial of July 5, 1967, hailed it as "Spring Thunder Breaks over India." However, subsequent Naxalite slogans like "China's Chairman is our Chairman," led the Chinese to deride them as infantile Communists. They formed the third Communist Party – Communist Party of India – Marxist-Leninist [CPI (ML)]. It turned towards violent annihilation of class enemies through rural rebellions in Bihar, Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal (Debra, Gopiballabpur and Burdwan districts). By 1970, it began to enter the urban areas of Kolkata (Calcutta). Between 1970 and 1971, there were 4,000 incidents of Naxalite violence. Concerted police operations were launched. These culminated in Operation Steeple Chase I (1 July-15 August 1971) in which the army provided the outer cordon for joint operations with the police. This broke the back of the movement and crushed the first agrarian rebellion in India. It is noteworthy, however, that this revolt occurred in the plains of West Bengal and Bihar where the communication infrastructure was fairly well developed and gave the distinct advantage of a vehicle-based mobility deferential to the security forces. It also merits emphasis that the Santhal tribes were largely armed with bows, arrows, *dahs* and spears.

The Naxalite movements also suffered serious demoralisation and a series of splits (pro and anti-Lin Biao factions). It weakened from 1972-77. The imposition of the emergency led to a major crackdown that brought the movement to a virtual standstill. The Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) had emerged in Bihar. This led to the formation of caste armies like the Ranvir Sena and the struggle degenerated into caste violence.

Second Phase: People's War Group (PWG)

In the 1980s, there was a second upsurge of the left wing violence. The various Naxalite groups had merged in April 1980 to form the PWG. Insurgency in the plains was easily combated as the mobilisation, fire-power and movement deferential lay entirely with the security forces. In response, the PWG, therefore, shifted the struggle towards the forested tribal areas in Adilabad in Andhra Pradesh. The terrain here was far more difficult and the forest tribes better suited for guerrilla warfare than the lower caste peasants of the plains. Forest Committees and armed squads or *dalams* were formed. The struggle, thus, shifted from Bengal to Andhra Pradesh and Bihar and from there it spread to Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa by 1991.

The Third Phase: Left Wing Violence

From 1990 onwards, India began to globalise its economy. Liberalisation was opposed strongly by the left wing extremists. A series of mergers now took place to strengthen the Maoist upsurge. Thus, the Ninth Party Congress saw the merger of the CPI (ML) and the PWG. On 21 September 2004, the PWG of Kondapally Seetaramiah and MCC of Kanai Chatterjee finally merged to give a pan-India orientation to LWE in the form of CPI (Maoists). The spread of LWE thereafter has been dramatic.

Table 4: Spatial Growth of LWE 2001-2008

Year	No. of States	No. of Districts
2001	09	53
2004	13	105
2008	17	180

The spatial spread of LWE is assessed variously by different state agencies/ the media. Generally, the Home Ministry had tended to play down its extent and spread. Upper estimates put the number of districts affected at 232 out of India's total 601 districts. However, some 60 districts are seriously affected in the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Maharashtra. Of these, some 8 districts are critical.

Casualty Ratio

What is cause for concern is the adverse casualty ratio between the police and CPOs and the Naxalites, as indicated by the Ministry of Home Affairs figures.

Table 5: Casualty Ratio

Year	Police Casualties	LWE Casualties	Ratio	Civilian Casualties
2002	100	141	1:1.4	382
2003	105	211	1:2	410
2004	100	87	1:0.8	466
2005	158	223	1:1.5	524
2006	129	210	1:1.6	521
2007	236	141	1:0.6	521
2008	175	137	1:0.8	310

Data compiled till 31 August 2008, from Ministry of Home Affairs Annual Reports.

The security forces have been sustaining on an average 150 casualties per year from 2004 onwards. These very high casualties are caused by the extensive use of IEDs/ landmines by the left wing extremists. It is noteworthy that because of extensive mining in the tribal areas, many young men are adept in the handling of industrial explosives like dynamite and gelatin. Some of the explosions have been so powerful that they have overturned fully laden mine protected vehicles (MPVs), thus, causing large scale casualties. It is reported that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) instructors had trained the left wing extremists in the art of making and using IEDs. As has been noted earlier, a major cause of concern is the adverse casualty ratio between the police and the insurgents, especially in 2007-08. It is this which calls into question the continuing use of the police and CPOs for offensive CI operations.

Present Strengths and Organisation of LWE

The CPI (Maoists) has set itself the aim of overthrowing the state in India and replacing constitutional, parliamentary democracy with its *Janathana Sarkar* or people's government. Though strongly leftist in its ideological orientation, it remains primarily a tribal rebellion. As per Ashok Patnaik, there are 187 districts in India with a significant percentage of tribal population. Over half of these are currently affected by LWE. Of these, 84 districts are characterised by dense forest cover. Thus, a clear spatial correlation is established between the spread of LWE and the tribal districts along with the forest cover. A clear phase-wise distinction can also be seen among the three phases of the Naxalite struggle. In the first phase, it had begun as an agrarian revolt by the Santhal tribes of the plains of West Bengal. It realised to its cost that the plains terrain was ill suited for guerrilla warfare. In the second phase, therefore, it shifted the struggle from West Bengal to the tribal tracts of Andhra Pradesh. Intensive operations in Andhra Pradesh pushed it into Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and Maharashtra. In the Ninth Unity Congress, the CPI (Maoists) had decided to intensify the people's war in the nine guerrilla zones and the four red resistance areas. It spoke of developing the Abujmar–Dandkaranya area into a base area for the revolution and spreading the war to new areas. It sought unity with the struggles of the oppressed nationalities in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and the Northeast. It is also trying to coopt the resistance of the peasants and tribals to the establishment of SEZs around the major metropolises of Kolkata (Calcutta) and New Delhi as also in the forested areas of Orissa, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. It is now trying to spread the revolution from the countryside to the cities.

Strength: As per Ashok Patnaik, the CPI (Maoists) and other splinter groups are estimated to have a strength of some 10,000 armed cadres. There are some 45,000-50,000 overground workers and an overall weapon holding of some 15,000 assorted weapons.

The weapons holdings of the LWE have been estimated by Ashok Patnaik to be in the region of:

- 900 X AK-47/AK-56 rifles
- 200 X light machine guns (LMGs)
- 100 X 2" mortars / grenade firing rifles

Besides, LWE has several thousand .303 rifles, 7.62 mm self-loading rifles SLRs and 12 bore rifles along with pistols and handmade country guns. What is cause for serious concern are reports that it has established three centres for the manufacture of local weapons. Surprisingly, these include highly lethal rocket launchers.

One of key features of this insurgency is the extensive use of IEDs and landmines to cause heavy casualties to the security forces. Due to the widespread mining activities in the tribal areas, many tribal youths are familiar with the handling of industrial explosives, which are also widely available in these areas because of mining. Terrorist organisations tend to network. As closer links are forged between the left wing extremists and the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and the *jehadi* groups, we could see increasing use of local chemicals like ammonium nitrate, hydrogen peroxide, sulphur, slurry, fuel-oil and neogel-90 for making IEDs. There is an urgent requirement to check the widespread and easy availability of explosives.

Organisation: What is cause for concern is the increasing coordination and centralisation of the actions of the LWE through the emergence of standard Communist organisational structures. These have a lot in common with the organisation and structures of the Maoist movement in Nepal.

Central Military Commission (CMC): The CPI (Maoists) has formed a Central Military Commission of some 35 members. It is headed by the General Secretary Laxmana Rao aka Ganapathy and is guided by a 13-member Politbureau.

Regional Bureaus: Under the CMC are five Regional Bureaus which cover various geographical portions of the country, as indicated in Fig. I.

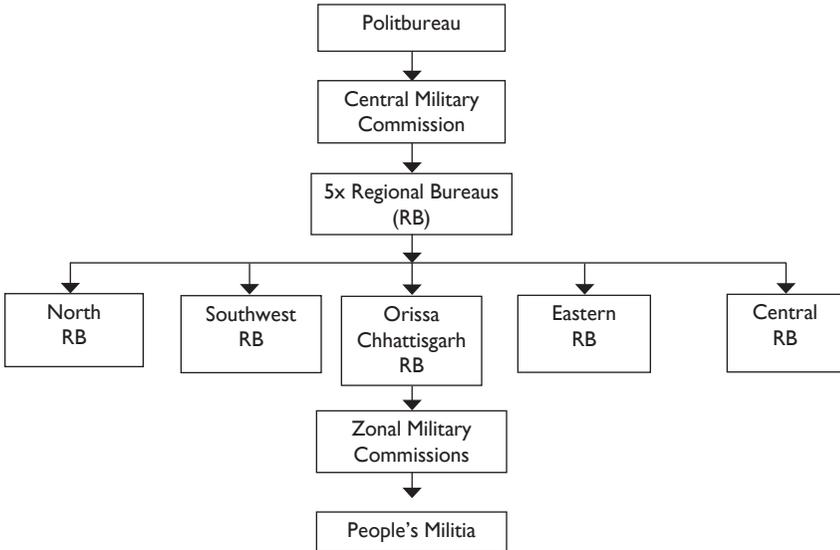
Zonal Military Commissions: The Regional Bureaus control the Zonal Military Commissions. These, in turn, control the fighting cadres or the *dalams* of the people's militias.

Liberated Zones: The left wing extremists have set up liberated zones with *Janathana Sarkars* (people's governments) and *Jan Adalats* (people's courts) in parts of 60 districts.

Red Corridor: The Maoists are now talking of establishing a Compact Revolutionary Zone or a Red Corridor stretching from Pashupati in Nepal to Tirupati in South India. This will encompass the tribal areas of

Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala.

Fig 2: Organisational Structure of CPI (Maoists)



Incident Analysis and Operational Trends

What is cause for serious concern is the rather early switch to mobile warfare or regular operations by the LWE. The LWE in India has this trend in common with the Maoists of Nepal who had also developed a penchant for launching large scale frontal assaults (in strengths ranging from 1,000 to almost 5,000). Such large target sets have never been encountered before in the counter-insurgency/counter-terrorism (CI/CT) operations in J&K, Punjab or the Northeast. This reflects a fatal tactical flaw that must be exploited to the optimum. As will be detailed subsequently, such large scale, frontal assaults on the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) posts had caused the Maoists to suffer serious attrition (up to 40 percent in a single assault and they lost a lot of their middle tier leadership). This heavy attrition forced them to seek peace talks and alignment with Nepal's political parties, which ultimately led to their mainstreaming and participation in democratic elections.

Major Incidents of LWE in India: 2003 - 08

27

MANEKSHAW PAPER NO. 9, 2009

October 2003: Attempt to assassinate Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh (AP) Mr. Chandra Babu Naidu, at Tirumala (in Chittoor district)

February 2004: Attack on district HQ town of Koraput in Orissa. Launched well coordinated and multi-pronged attacks on 13 locations (district Police HQ, district armoury, district treasury, district jail, State Armed Police Battalion HQ and several police stations; 528 service weapons were looted.

7 April 2004: 28 policemen killed and 11 injured in landmine blast at West Singhbhum in Jharkhand

20 November 2004: 10 Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) jawans and five members of a civilian police party killed in landmine explosion.

11 March 2005: Attack on police post at Chila Kaluripet in Guntur district of AP; 5 police personal and 2 civilians killed.

23 June 2005: Large scale attack in Madhubani town in east Champaran. Four groups launched concurrent attacks on police stations, block office, local branches of state and central banks and the house of a Member of Parliament (MP). Looted 29 weapons and Rs 9.8 lakh in cash.

3 September 2005: 22 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel and 2 police constables killed in landmine blast in Dantewada district (Chhattisgarh) while travelling in an MPV. MPV overturned.

13 November 2005: Raided district jail in Jehanabad and rescued 150 Maoist cadres and looted 16 weapons.

10 February 2006: Large scale attack on Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) magazine at Hiroli in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh. 8 jawans killed and 9 wounded.

24 March 2006: Large scale and coordinated attack on Ramagiri and Udaigiri towns of Gajapati district in Orissa.

15 March 2006: Attacked railway train in Lathehar district, Jharkhand.

15 March 2007: Raided Salwa Judam camp in Ranibodili, Chhattisgarh and massacred 56 security personnel (including 35 SPOs).

26-27 June 2007: Enforced economic blockade in Jharkhand, Orissa and neighbouring states by disrupting rail and road traffic. Stopped movement of all minerals and ores in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand for 48 hours.

15 February 2008: Large scale attack on Nayagarh town in Orissa. Overran three police stations, killed 13 policemen and 2 civilians and decamped with 1,100 weapons (400 said to have been recovered).

29 June 2008: 39 Greyhounds personnel killed as their boat was ambushed and sunk in Orissa.

An analysis of these salient incidents indicates an increasing level of boldness, resulting in large scale and coordinated frontal attacks based on the Maoist pattern of Nepal. Coordinated attacks on towns like Madhubani, Ramgiri, Udaigiri, Nayagarh and the district jail at Jehanabad are very disturbing portents. The massing of such large tribal concentrations could easily have been picked up by police intelligence. Such large scale attacks represent a highly premature switch to regular warfare and provide major target sets on which heavy and salutary attrition could have been imposed as was done by the RNA in Nepal. The failure of the police to inflict even a moderate level of attrition is cause for concern. The tribal penchant for launching such large scale frontal attacks needs to be fully exploited. The IED attacks are causing very high casualties. There is an overriding need, therefore, to curtail the availability of explosives to the LWE and to specifically target IED experts. The police and CPOs must follow proper road opening drills and convoy system and the roads must be sanitised prior to the move of such convoys.

Lessons from the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal

There is a strong parallelism in the Maoist insurgency in Nepal and the LWE insurgency in India. There is a remarkable similarity of organisational structures, armament patterns and operating techniques. As such, a study of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal would be highly instructive and useful and will throw up valuable insights and lessons for tackling the LWE in India. The Maoist insurgency in Nepal lasted a decade from 1996-2006. It was primarily a tribal insurgency of the Magar, Gurung and Pun tribes of central and western Nepal. The leadership, however, was provided by the Kathmandu valley intellectuals (like Prachanda and Bhattarai). About 40 per cent of the armed cadre were females and performed well in combat. Some 13,000 military, police and civilian personnel were killed.

Strength: According to SD Muni, the Maoists had some 15,000 armed guerrillas, a militia of 36,000, some 14,000 political activists, some 24,000 overground workers/supporters and approximately 100,000 sympathisers.

Armament Pattern: The bulk of the sophisticated weapons were looted from the RNA/police. These included:

- 11 x 81 mm mortars

- 6 x MMGs/GPMGs
- 58 x LMGs
- 568 x semi-automatic rifles
- 2056 x .303 rifles
- Assorted country-made rifles /pistols

Thus, the organisational structure and armament pattern was remarkably similar to the LWE in India. The Nepali Maoists had a Central Military Commission with Regional Bureaus and Zonal Military Commissions. They had three divisions with several brigades of some 1,000 men each. These coordinated their movements to launch large scale, frontal attacks on well fortified RNA positions, which had been strengthened by mines and barbed wire and were covered by automatics in well dug-in bunkers. The Magar and Gurung tribes showed a great penchant for launching suicidal frontal attacks without any covering fire by artillery or mortars. They suffered heavily in the bargain (taking up to 40 percent casualties in such attacks which decimated their middle tier leadership). Some of these set-piece assaults have been recounted in detail by Sam Covan in a very informative article in the *Himal South Asia Magazine* (“The Lost Battles of Khara and Pili”) and merit study, for they throw up very valuable lessons:

- **March 2002:** People’s Liberation Army (PLA) (the Maoist army with the same name as the Chinese) attack on RNA Base at Khara (Rukum district Western Nepal). This was a very costly failure and the PLA lost some 150 cadres. After this attack, the RNA heavily reinforced the base and fortified it with mines, barbed wire and well dug-in bunkers.
- **November 2002:** PLA Attack on Khalanga Base (Jumla district). This was a major failure and proved to be a turning point in the war. It convinced the Maoists that they would have to scale down their aspirations for an overall military victory.
- **March 2004:** Attack on Beni Base (Western Nepal). This was another costly failure.
- **7 April 2005:** Second attack on RNA Base at Khara. This was launched at the insistence of Prachanda after King Gyanendra began the military crackdown on the Maoists. The Central and Western Divisions of the PLA combined forces to launch the second major attack on Khara. The attack was pressed home for 18 hours but proved to be a costly failure.

The PLA suffered over 250 killed. It was only after the failure of this attack that Prachanda agreed to an India-mediated alliance with the political parties of Nepal.

- **7 August 2005:** Attack on Engineer Battalion at Pili. King Gyanendra used to make promises of building roads whenever he met the people. To save face, he ordered an engineer battalion to be sent to Pili on the Tila river (a tributary of the Karnali) in mid-western Kalikot District. This was a disastrous decision that should have been opposed strongly by the Nepali Chief of Army Staff (COAS). However, he acquiesced. The Maoists rapidly concentrated three brigades (3,000 men) after long forced marches and launched a concerted attack even as a large portion of the garrison was receiving its supplies by helicopter. The commanding officer (CO) of the battalion had just arrived by the same helicopter. Of the 227 defenders, some 58 were killed, 60 captured and 115 fled. The RNA blamed the poor performance on the alleged failure of the Indian supplied INSAS rifles in this operation. This was the only face saving victory for the Maoists in their string of failed frontal attacks on fortified positions.

A similar tribal rashness and penchant for such high profile bravado is visible even in the large scale LWE assaults on significant towns in Indian states. In specific, the attacks on Koraput, Madhubani and Nayagarh are replicas of the Nepal Maoists operations. Unfortunately, the lack of properly coordinated defences resulted in a dismal failure of the Indian police to inflict heavy attrition in response to such frontal assaults. This constitutes a highly premature switch to regular style operations by the insurgents which must be exploited to the optimum. Prohibitive casualties can be inflicted if such attacks are anticipated and adequate preparations are made. A similar, premature switch to regular, set-piece operations by the Vietminh (in North Vietnam in 1953) had caused them to court initial disaster. The French had responded by establishing air-maintained military garrisons deep in the Vietminh's held areas/liberated zones. Dien Bien Phu was almost a division-size garrison. However, by 1956, the Vietminh had acquired artillery and mortars and were operating in division-size formations. It was this that led the French to court disaster at Dien Bein Phu.

The Time Dimension: India's Three Front Scenario

The time dimension is the most critical aspect of this analysis. Once again, this has surprisingly not found a place in most analytical frameworks for addressing LWE. The issue needs to be placed in a larger geo-strategic perspective.

- The key feature of India's strategic situation is its two-front orientation with China to the north and Pakistan to the west.
- Internal security in the form of LWE and *jehadi* terrorism constitutes the third emerging front.
- Such a scenario makes it vital for a nation-state to clearly define its time-lines.
- A proactive response demands that we do not just react to situations but define our clear time horizons for tackling strategic adversaries/ challenges – sequentially and not all together.
- The key question is: when do we expect our external environment to turn hostile and demanding?
- If so, when do we propose to deal with our internal security problems in detail – before we have to deal with them in concert with external threats?

China's current benign stance of seeking a peaceful periphery might change abruptly and in a non-linear fashion, based upon its perception of India allying itself with the USA and mounting internal security challenges in Tibet.

To that extent, the time horizons of the Indian state for resolving its internal security threats are markedly limited and we do not have the luxury of drifting along for a decade or more in tackling the LWE. We have a current lull/ grace period of a peaceful periphery. It should be fully exploited to deal with our internal security stressors in detail before the actions of external actors take away the initiative from our hands and we are forced to fight on several fronts concurrently.

The next two to four years time-frame, therefore, is critical for dealing with the serious internal security threats from LWE and *jehadi* terrorism in a proactive and comprehensive manner. As a nation-state, we cannot afford to confine ourselves to a purely reactive stance that lets the internal security threats reach crisis proportions before we react to them in a concerted manner.

Preemption should be the key to a cost-effective and timely response. Viewed in this light, the LWE violence needs to be seriously curbed at this stage itself before it becomes unmanageable or erupts in tandem with external crises. It *would be essential to head off this threat before external actors establish linkages with this emergent threat and escalate the levels of weapons/logistic support.* A restricted time horizon of 2-4 years demands that we use forces in being or those which can be rapidly raised and do not require major organisational changes or reorientation of operational culture. The CRPF as the prime CI force may not be the optimal solution at all. The Indian nation-state as an entity has adequate organisational mechanisms and operational memory and expertise to deal with this problem in the here and now, rather than letting it drift till it assumes alarming proportions in a few years time-frame. It needs to be highlighted that in the last two years, the tide of the police battle against the left wing insurgents has taken an unfavourable turn. The casualty ratio has shifted in favour of the insurgents in 2007 and 2008. This is cause for serious concern.

The core of the response strategy must rest upon preemption and heading off the problem before it begins to assume unmanageable proportions. Our extensive experience in countering insurgencies and terrorist movements should now enable us to graduate from purely reactive stances to proactive strategies.

Government Response so Far

The socio-economic basis of angst that fuels the LWE is well known and understood, and so is the need for a new and better administrative delivery mechanisms. It cannot be treated purely as a law and order problem. Due to multiple causes, there has been a definite failure of the administrative system at the grassroots level. Spread of good governance would be the basic key to normalising the situation. Accordingly, while addressing the Chief Ministers' Conference on Internal Security in New Delhi on 13 April 2006, the prime minister had enunciated the "walk on two legs" response scenario wherein the military and development solutions are implemented concurrently. A 14-point policy to combat Naxalism was also enunciated in this meeting which included *inter alia* the need to distribute land to the landless poor as part of speedy implementation of land reforms and the development of physical infrastructure. The Planning Commission, under its Backward District Initiative (BDI) and Backward Regions Grant Fund

has identified 250 districts for pumping in extra funds for the purpose of accelerated development.

Providing Employment

At the grand strategic level, one of the prime challenges of the Indian state is to impart job related skills and education to its huge and growing youth population that is entering the working age group every year. If India succeeds in educating and multi-skilling its population, its human capital could well become a key resource that will enable it to perform economic miracles in this country and even export skilled manpower to countries with graying populations. However, the consequences of a failure to do so can be quite grim. India's demographic dividend could well turn out to be a demographic time-bomb. The criticality of employment generation cannot be overstated.

Security Responses

The government has recently sanctioned Rs 800 crore for anti-LWE operations and to improve security and mobility. Some of the measures envisaged are:

- Raising 10,000 strong COBRA battalions under the CRPF. The earlier plan to raise another 180 CRPF battalions was rightly shelved.
- Tarmac approach roads to posts to prevent use of IEDs (which are easier to plant on unmettled roads/tracks).
- Strengthening of armouries at each police post /jail to thwart attacks. These will need to be tactically sited and fortified to inflict deterrent casualties if attacked. These could play a major role in enhancing the level of attrition by exploiting the tribal penchant for large scale set-piece frontal assaults and a premature switch to the third phase of guerrilla war.
- Core focus to be on eight districts
 - Bihar – Aurangabad and Gaya
 - Chhattisgarh – Byapur and Dantewada
 - Jharkhand – Chatra and Palamu
 - Orissa – Malkangiri and Raigadh
- Districts earmarked for special attention
 - Andhra Pradesh – Khaman

- Madhya Pradesh – Balaghat
- Maharashtra – Gadchiroli and Gadya
- UP – Sona Bhadra
- The Naxalites are also active in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala and these districts would also have to be closely monitored.

Response Options: Use of Army

Should the measures taken so far succeed in containing the situation, a military response could be obviated. However, should the situation deteriorate further, a call would have to be taken on employing the army or otherwise in early/mid 2009. Possible army employment options could be:

Steeple Chase II – The Offensive Sweep Model: Prakash Singh, former DG BSF, has suggested a one-time employment of the army for a limited period in the Offensive Sweep Model. A mix of RR and infantry battalions with recent CI/CT operations experience could be employed for a 6 to 8 months period in the core 8 districts (Aurangabad and Gaya in Bihar, Byapur and Dantewada in Chhattisgarh, Chatra and Palamu in Jharkhand and Malkangiri and Raigadh in Orissa). We could employ one/two RR Sector HQ and 4 to 6 battalions from J&K and one/two infantry brigades from the Northeast for this task. Units could be deployed in battalion bases. One special forces team with requisite helicopter effort could be allocated to each of these four states for the duration of this operation. The operations could be directed by a Divisional/RR Force HQ allocated to HQ Central Command for this purpose. Careful intelligence preparation for this offensive sweep would have to be undertaken by human intelligence/ technical intelligence sources (e.g. unmanned aerial vehicles — UAVs) and aerial surveillance. The offensive sweep should be designed to inflict major attrition on the *LWE dalams*, eliminate key leaders and IED experts, and give a significant military setback to this rising tide of LWE.

Covert Application Model: This would entail exploiting the tribal penchant for large scale set-piece attacks by having army special forces (in police uniforms) establish heli-maintained posts provocatively in Liberated Zones like Abujmar, Dantewada, Dandkaranya, etc. to invite large scale set-piece attacks and inflict deterrent attrition. Once the left wing extremists are induced to concentrate for such large scale attacks and present sizeable

targets, heliborne operations could be mounted to exploit the situations so orchestrated.

CI Grid in Eight Core Districts: The alternative would be to raise 20 to 30 RR or AR battalions in a phased manner (10 battalions per year) to establish a classical CI grid in the eight core districts and carry out offensive CI operations for a two to three years period. A minimum 30 per cent of the recruitment for these RR/AR battalions should be from the local tribal areas. These should be supplemented by Home and Hearth TA (Territorial Army) battalions entirely recruited from these areas (to provide employment and suck out the recruitable male population – as also to obtain better human intelligence. The experience of raising 30 RR battalions and 10 Sector HQ in a year (in Gen BC Joshi's tenure in 1994) serves as a precedent for a rapid response in a proactive time-frame. Each of these core districts would need at a minimum one RR/AR sector – hence, the overall requirement would be 8 RR Sector HQ and 24 battalions at the least.

Recommended Option: In case of a sudden deterioration of the situation, the offensive sweep model or the covert deployment model (or a judicious combination of both) could first be employed. Only if this fails to restore the situation should we proceed to Phase Two in the form of establishing an RR/AR based CI grid in the 8 core districts under a Force HQ operating directly under HQ Central Command (with a Force HQ and 6 to 8 Sector HQ with 24 to 30 RR Battalions).

Response Options: Other Than the Use of the Army

The Indian Army's understandable unwillingness to get embroiled in a hinterland insurgency that can tie it down thousands of miles away from the borders it has to defend, has forced the union and state governments to rely upon the police forces and CPOs to tackle this insurgency. This is a serious constraint. The world over, offensive counter-insurgency operations are conducted by armies and not police forces. Insurgents specifically target the security forces and adopt military tactics and organisations. As such, insurgents (as opposed to terrorists who primarily target soft and unprotected targets) are best tackled by military means. The reluctance of

the Indian Army to get involved stems from its concerns about the impact of such involvement on a conventional conflict with Pakistan or China. The Cold Start doctrine is premised upon reducing mobilisation timings for any war on the Western Front. These will be adversely affected by any committal of the regular army deep in the interior. What then are the non-military response options? These are broadly three-fold.

Paramilitarise the Police of the Affected States

The police to population ratio in India is amongst the lowest in the world. In a response to rising internal security threats, the strength of the state police forces has gone up from 13 lakh to 16 lakh in the last four years. One school of thought, therefore, is to opt for an across the board capacity building by virtually paramilitarising the state police forces of the Naxal affected states. This entails reequipping these forces with modern infantry weapons to more than match the insurgent firepower (semi-automatic rifles, carbines, mortars and rocket launchers). This, in fact, is the approach of the Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand state police forces which are facing the brunt of the tribal insurgency now. A Counter-Terrorism and Jungle Warfare (CTJW) Centre has been set up at Kanker in Chhattisgarh which is led by a retired army brigadier. This trains up to 3,600 personnel annually. However, at this rate, it will take up to 8-10 years to train the entire police strength of the Chhattisgarh Police itself (33,000 men). Most of these Kanker trainees are then posted all over the state (rather than being focussed in specialised police units). This severely dilutes their impact. Offensive counter-insurgency operations have never been the forte of police forces or part of their ethos. In fact, CI assignments and training postings are generally deemed as punishment postings. Most police personnel aspire for lucrative peace assignments in cities and towns which give them social prestige, monetary advantages and a soft life. The weapon holdings and standards of firing are generally abysmal. The army is providing intensive training support to state police forces and CPOs and, as per the COAS, has so far provided training to over 150 companies. The unfortunate fact, however, is that state police forces are organised on the police chowki or post as the primary unit. This organisation was designed for normal policing and not combat duties in terms of offensive CI/CT operations. The alternative is to train the Indian Reserve Police Force battalions for such a

role. However, these suffer from similar constraints of organisational culture, ethos and training as the state police itself.

An Evaluation of the Training Infrastructure

The Bureau for Police Research and Training had carried out an evaluation of the police training infrastructure and resources in the country. This is woefully inadequate for even the existing role of training new recruits (to cater for the massive contemplated increase in police strength) and conduct of promotional/upgradation courses. Refresher training exists only in name. Weapons training is a major constraint. The police are hardly trained even in firing the legacy World War I .303 Lee Enfield rifles that they are equipped with. As recent Mumbai attacks highlighted so painfully, even rudimentary training in this legacy rifle would have enabled the police to respond much better. Untrained personnel should best fire with such single shot rifles as they would tend to waste ammunition with the more modern semi-automatics. The .303 is a very high powered bullet that can penetrate most of the body armour/bullet proof vests now available. However, due to lack of firing ranges, resources and time, most policemen of the state police forces hardly get a chance to practise firing each year. A study conducted by OS Jha, a researcher at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), has revealed that with the existing and even greatly enhanced police training infrastructure, it would take 8-10 years or more to train the state police forces to acquire a bare modicum of tactical, field craft and shooting skills. It is proposed to set up 20 counter-insurgency and anti-terrorism training centres in the country. However, even with these, it will take 8-10 years at the very least to put the bulk of the state police forces through such cadres. Can the nation afford this long and costly delay? The very ethos of our police forces would have to be revamped and an army like sub-culture which gives primacy to training and operations will have to be introduced. Training assignments must have enormous prestige value and be linked to promotions. Service in active counter-insurgency operations must be a criterion/norm for promotion and such assignments should not be treated as punishment postings bereft of lucrative opportunities in peace environments. In short, it calls for a massive and radical transformation of the police ethos and culture. Another key question is of leadership. This

cannot be based on the all India seniority principle alone but dynamic police officers (in the Rebiero, KPS Gill and Gurubachan Jagat mould) must be selected for leading the police in the LWEE affected states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and Maharashtra. The 1861 Police Act itself may need substantial modifications if the state police forces are intended to be paramilitarised.

The Central Police Organisation (CPO) Option

Post the Kargil War, the Group of Ministers (GOM) had designated the CRPF as the primary counter-insurgency force of the country. Unfortunately, this entails a very major restructuring and overhaul of the very organisational ethos and structure of this force. It may be recalled that the CRPF had been raised as the Crown Reserve Police Force in the colonial era. It was primarily an add-on police force designed to tackle aggravated law and order situations stemming from Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent freedom struggle and later the communal violence generated by the partition. In that low threat environment, it proved to be an excellent and invaluable add-on police force. It has been especially useful in tackling communal riots, election duties and aggravated law and order situations. In CI and CT operations in the past, it has generally been assigned protective duties like guarding vulnerable areas and vulnerable points and key installations, which it has done creditably. Its primary unit of functioning is the company (and not the battalion – which is needed for cohesive CI operations). Its age profile is a serious constraint for undertaking offensive CI/CT operations. Some of its constables are in the advanced age group of 55 to 60 years and can by no stretch of the imagination be deemed fit for such duties. This force would need major restructuring and overhaul if it is to serve as the primary CI force of India. As of now, it is not capable of such tasking.

The BSF, on the other hand, was raised in the post-independence era for the specific purpose of border guarding. As such, it has a far greater paramilitary orientation than the CRPF. Its organisational structure of battalions and companies was mirrored on the military model. A large number of army officers who came to it on deputation initially imparted it a paramilitary orientation and ethos. In its G Sections/Branch it had a very good human intelligence (HUMINT) organisation. As such, BSF units tended to do

relatively better than CRPF units in offensive CI/CT operations. Pursuant to the GOM's report (post Kargil) the BSF was replaced by the CRPF in the most critical centre of gravity in J&K – the capital city of Srinagar. This was a hasty and premature decision. As the recent 2008 elections in J&K showed, Srinagar has become the hotbed of secessionist sentiment that is at odds with the feelings in the rest of the state. Our centre of gravity, in fact, has become our weakest and most tenuous link, and this merits urgent correction. Post Kargil there was a massive increase in the CRPF and BSF strength. The CRPF was expanded by the addition of approximately 180 additional battalions and the BSF by 140 battalions. This occurred at the same time when there was a strident media outcry to downsize the Indian Army. There was similar media speculation in 2008 that due to the intensification of LWE, the CRPF strength would be enhanced by another 180 battalions. Given the force's organisational and operational ethos constraints, this would have been a most non-cost-effective solution. The combat performance of most CRPF units in offensive CI operations has been sub-optimal primarily because of their manning profile and overall operational ethos. The very adverse casualty ratio between the police/CPO and left wing insurgents highlights the unsuitability of these instruments for offensive CI operations. Correcting this failure or giving the police and CRPF 8-10 years to learn on the job is a luxury the Indian state may not be able to afford for long. Persisting with this approach will only result in greater police casualties and more loss of weapons to the LWE. It may be time to cut our costs and accept conventional wisdom by leaving offensive CI operations to the army or tested paramilitary forces like the Rashtriya Rifles/Assam Rifles (RR/AR). Turf equations between the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) must strictly be left out of the reckoning when dealing with an issue of such serious impact on India's national security. In recognition of these limitations, the CRPF is now raising 10 COBRA battalions at the rate of two battalions per year over the next five years. These are designed to have a much younger age profile and are based on generating 18 teams per battalion capable of undertaking CI operations in deep jungles. Despite the martial nomenclature, it remains to be seen how effective these COBRA battalions will be in offensive CI operations. A large proportion of the recruits for such battalions should be recruited from the tribal areas to provide local language and terrain knowledge skills.

The Andhra Pradesh Greyhounds Model

The Greyhounds of Andhra Pradesh Police have become a much talked of model that merits emulation by other state police forces. These were elite units for offensive counter-insurgency operations that were given the cream of police manpower and resources, had a distinct ethos and élan and led the anti-Naxal struggle in Andhra Pradesh. All Indian Police Service (IPS) officers on joining the Andhra Pradesh police cadre had to do a compulsory initial stint with the Greyhounds. The Greyhounds were the brainchild of an erstwhile State Intelligence Bureau (SIB) officer and have done very well in combat. Selected men of the Andhra Pradesh Police serve for three years on secondment to the Greyhounds and then revert to normal police duties. Thus, they provide a pool of trained manpower reserve for such operations. The Greyhounds model is not all that new. It had been tried with great success earlier in Punjab and J&K. The J&K police had recruited many ex-army commandos/men from the special forces to raise their Special Operations Forces (SOF). These elite police forces proved far more practicable to raise and train and have proved their efficacy in such operations. Quite obviously, this model of raising elite special police forces in all the Naxal affected states is the most optimal solution and must be expedited. However, two constraints that such elite police forces would suffer from are:

- Their size would remain small compared to the overall force requirements entailed. A very large scale expansion, however, could dilute quality and militate against their elitist nature.
- Even though highly effective within the state due to better ground intelligence, these would present the problem of inter-state coordination among the elite groups of various state police forces. This coordination may be far better achieved by a central paramilitary force.

The Civic Action Dimension

The Indian tribal population has been the victim of millennia of neglect and exploitation. Their grievances are genuine and merit urgent redressal. It is primarily an issue of governance. Unfortunately, the tribal insurgency has reached a stage where the insurgents now have a vested interest and stake in the continued underdevelopment of this area. They are specifically keen to prevent infrastructural penetration of these difficult jungle areas and, to

that extent, have been doing their best to hamper road construction and developmental activities. Development and good governance is a *sine qua non* for the resolution of this vexed problem. However, things have reached a stage where development will have to be preceded by area pacification in most cases. Without such a pacification of the region, the administrators and developing agencies will not be able to operate optimally in these remote and inaccessible areas. This calls for the establishment of a classical CI grid of posts, and an urgent road construction programme to open up these remote areas. Infrastructural penetration will have to be facilitated by specific area pacification operations. There is a need to replicate the Operation Sadbhavana model of civic action in J&K by the security forces involved.

Conclusion

There is a perceptible gap between the stated estimates of the LWE situation as articulated by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The MHA had till recently tended to downplay the situation and had put forth that only some 76 districts of 7 states are affected. Such an optimistic spin may well turn out to be counter-productive in the long-term. The Institute of Conflict Management estimates indicate 194 districts in 18 states. The Planning Commission has identified 250 backward districts for accelerated development. The PMO's perspective is far-sighted and realist and takes into account the demographic drivers of our internal security. It would be best if the problem could be contained by special police forces (the Greyhounds model). However, contingency plans for the employment of the RR/ army must be drawn up. It is noteworthy that nowhere else in the world are offensive counter-insurgency operations being undertaken by police forces alone. There is a need to distinguish between insurgency and terrorism. Terrorism is best tackled by the police but in an insurgency, the primary target systems are the security forces themselves. Flogging the police for the wrong task will only increase their casualties and result in loss of more weapons to the insurgents.

The home minister, in his written reply in Parliament, had given out the comparative statistics of casualties in J&K, the Northeast and LWE violence since 2004 to 31 August 2008. These were:

- J&K – 1,882
- Northeast – 1,909
- LWE – 2,281

Thus, the levels of violence of LWE have clearly overtaken the violence and casualty levels in J&K and the Northeast. Should the situation deteriorate further and it becomes imperative to intensify the military response (as a proactive response option to curtail the LWE growth before it reaches critical proportions), we may need Operation Steeple Chase II in the form of an offensive sweep model or a covert action model or a combination of both. Only if this fails to arrest/restore the situation should we consider graduating to the second phase of establishing a CI grid of the RR in the 8 core districts identified earlier. For this, India would have to urgently raise some 4 Sector HQ and 30 RR Battalions in a two to three years' time-frame. It is, however, vital that we arrest the rising trend of LWE violence before external actors seek to exploit it to destabilise our country in a serious manner. Above all, long-term perspective planning demands that we draw up national time-lines and a roadmap for a proactive response that seeks to head off adverse situations well before they acquire a critical mass.

References

- Bedi, Rahul, "The Maoist Insurgency Spreads in India," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, July 2006.
- Bhatia, Bela, "The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XL No. 15, 9 August 2005.
- Bloom, David E & Jeffrey G. Williamson, "Demographic Transitions and Economic Miracles in Emerging Asia," *World Bank Economic Review*, Vol. 12, No. 3, September 1998, pp. 419-55.
- Chakrabarti, Srimati, *China and the Naxalites* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1990).
- Cowan, Sam, "The Lost Battles of Khara and Pili," *Himal South Asia Journal*, September 2008.
- Dasgupta, Biplab, *The Naxalite Movement* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1974).
- Dayon, Tim, Robert Cassen and Leela Visaria (eds.), *Population Economy, Human Development and the Environment* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- Doval, Ajit K, "Code Red: Naxals The Biggest Threat," *Hindustan Times*, 26 March 2006.
- _____, "Indian Naxalites: A Specter Haunting India," *The Economist*, 17 August 2006.
- Duykor, Edward, *Tribal Guerrillas: The Santhals of West Bengal* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- Gosh, Jayati and C P Chandra Shekhar, "India's Potential Demographic Dividend," *The Hindu*, 17 January 2006.
- Gosh, Jayati, "The Uncertain Advantages of Demographic Change," *The Asian Age*, 26 January 2006.
- Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Reports 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06, and 2006-07*.
- Guha, Ramachandra "Adivasis, Naxalites and Indian Democracy," *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 42, No. 32, 11 August 2007, pp. 3305-3312.
- Hudson, Valerie and Andreadon Boer, *Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population* (BCSIA Studies in International Security, MIT Press, 2004).
- Jaweid, Sohail, *The Naxalite Movement in India: Origin and Failure of the Maoist Revolutionary Strategy in West Bengal, 1967-71* (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1979).
- Jha, O S, "Spreading Tentacles of Left Wing Extremism: Are We Failing in Police Training?" Paper presented at IDSA Fellows Seminar, 9 January 2009.
- Louis, Prakash, *People's Power: The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar* (Delhi: Wordsmith, 2002).
- Luce, Edward, *In Spite of the Gods: The Strange Rise of Modern India* (London: Little Brown, 2006).
- Maribhot, P N, *Demographic Scenario 2025*, Study S-15, Research Projects on India-2025 conducted by Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, 2003.
- Mishra, Trinath, *Barrel of the Gun: The Maoist Challenge to Indian Democracy* (New Delhi: Sheredian Book Company, 2007).
- Mitra, Durga, "Understanding Indian Insurgencies: Implications for Counter Insurgency Operations in the World," *Letort Papers*, February 2007.
- Muni, S D, *Maoist Insurgency in Nepal* (New Delhi: Observer Research Foundation & Rupa and Company, 2003).
- Nilekani, Nandan, *Imagining India: Ideas for the New Century* (New Delhi: Allan Lane, Penguins India, 2008).
- Patnaik, Ashok, "Left Wing Extremism: Causes and Perspectives," *NDC Research Journal*, 2008.

- People's Republic of China, White Paper on Defense 2006, Cited in *The Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2007*, Annual Report to Congress, Office of the US Secretary of Defense.
- Ray, Rabindra, *The Naxalites and Their Ideology* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).
- Rothermund, Dietmar and Herman Kulke, *A History of India Vol 2*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).
- Simon, Julian, *The Ultimate Resource* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- Singh, Prakash, *The Naxalite Movement in India* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2006).
- _____, "Strategy to Combat Left Wing Extremism Effectively," Seminar on LWE at Headquarters, Central Command, Lucknow, 20 November 2008.
- Weiner, Myron and Michael S Tatebaum, *Political Demography: Demographic Engineering* (New York: Berghahan Books, 2001).