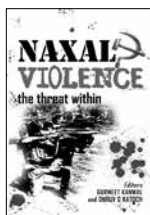


Book Review



Naxal Violence: The Threat Within

Edited by

Gurmeet Kanwal and Dhruv C Katoch

KW Publishers, 247 pages, Rs 780/-

Despite the fact that the problem of Left Wing Extremism (LWE) has been going on for a long time, there has hardly been any comprehensive effort to address and resolve it. Most of the approaches have had a partial impact, with the overall crisis expanding in both geography and gravity. This book is the result of the work by analysts who have been dealing with the issue for some time. This book has been chosen because it contains work by an ensemble of writers who hail from different backgrounds and, therefore, eschews being trapped into political chauvinism.

Chapter 1, “Naxal Violence: An Overview,” by Dhruv Katoch gives an insight into the genesis of the movement, from the birth of the Communist movement in India to the factionalism within the Party, and the subsequent onset of the Naxal uprising from the Naxalbari block in Siliguri, West Bengal, from which it takes its name. It also gradually traces the cause of the movement to both ideology and underdevelopment. The author has supported his arguments with the help of the census data of 2011, highlighting the underdevelopment of the region known as the Red Corridor (through maps) in comparison to the national average.

Chapter 2, “The Heart of our Darkness” by Mohan Guruswamy, begins with two new aspects of the movements. First, the geographical reach of the Naxals, and second, the issue of persistent tribal dissatisfaction with the establishment. What makes the article interesting is the application of facets of psychology

like “groupthink” (coined by Irving Janis) to the collective failure of the mental faculty of the political class in handling the crisis. Towards the end of the chapter, the author provides a prescription for getting out of the mess which includes creation of *Mahapanchayats* and distribution of royalties earned through the mined forest resources to their real owners in order to undo the centuries of injustice meted out to them.

Chapter 3, “A War-Fighting Strategy for the Maoist Conundrum” by Raj Mehta throws open a new kind of debate over which comes first in dealing with the crisis—security or development. Starting from faulty industrial and mining policies to the non-implementation of the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, on the one hand, to the Centre-state dilemma and lack of implementation of Supreme Court directed police reforms, on the other, all have combined and brought the situation to this state. In the end, he recommends creation of a civilian-military partnership for conflict resolution which could bridge the gap between humanitarian and developmental assistance.

In Chapter 4, “Growth of the CPI (Maoist),” PV Ramana discusses the organisational set-up of the Maoists. Their propaganda units have succeeded in garnering the required support among the tribals. The author accuses a section of the intellectual class of lending moral support to the cause and dictating its path. The collusion between the Naxals and the politicians for electoral gains has also been highlighted.

Chapter 5, “No Longer ‘Indigenous’: External Linkages of Indian Maoists” by N Manoharan establishes the links between the Maoists and the external agents. Organisations like the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the militant outfits of Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka supporting the Naxals on a reciprocal basis are the external linkages to the Naxal matrix. However, the arguments of the author have not been backed by sufficient evidence.

Chapter 6, “People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army of CPI (Maoist)” by Rishi Chhikara deals with the guerrilla army wing of the Communist Party of India [CPI (Maoist)]. They have a standing army of 9,000-12,000 cadres, equipped with modern state-of-the-art rifles, light machine guns, mortars, etc. The various methods adopted by the guerrilla army—raids, ambush, kidnapping, etc—to sustain their hold, have been discussed at length. At the end, the author claims that the ideology of Naxalism can be defeated by an alternate one based on democratic principles, with simultaneous delivery on local needs.

In Chapter 7, “India’s Response to Maoist Growth: Tactics and Strategies,” Bibhu Prasad Routray makes an attempt to critically analyse the response of

the Indian state to the Maoists' growth. The author has categorically criticised the lapses on the part of the state police that has made the latter an easy target. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), on the other hand, faces inadequate training, rendering it inefficient before the highly trained Maoist cadres, despite the former's numerical strength. However, despite the much hyped about pan-India operation against the Maoists by the government, the author does not fail to point out lapses like the absence of intelligence inputs, and the bureaucratic hurdles. Another very serious issue dealt with is that of lack of coordination among the Chief Ministers of the affected states who do not approve of the central government's way of handling the crisis. However, the author is silent on what their plan of action specifies.

In Chapter 8, "Dealing with a Major Threat," Ashok Joshi begins with the pitiable situation of the paramilitary force whose morale plunges every time the Naxals are released or their demands are fulfilled against the release of abducted officials or tourists. He is against the idea of using the Army for every trivial task needed within the country. He discusses the issue in connection with broader aspects like that of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) or the risk of collateral damage once the Army is employed. As a way out, the chapter suggests the deployment of a combined force of state police and CRPF, along with necessary training in counter-insurgency.

Chapter 9, titled "Envisaged Roles for the Army," by Gen Bakshi takes a tough stand vis-a-vis the Maoists, categorically abstaining from empathising with them. He uses references from Maoist documents to unveil the real motif of the Maoists with regard to the Indian state, Army and its people. There is an interesting point made by the author asking the state to use the faultline between the urban-centric leadership and the rural masses of the CPI (Maoist) to its advantage by provoking the latter against being used by the former as a pawn.

The final chapter, "The Long Road to Peace," by Dhruv Katoch clearly makes an attempt to take the points from the previous chapters to pen down the various available methods of conflict resolution. There is an urgent requirement of structural changes like that of police reforms. The revamp of the Indian Frontier Administrative Service is also suggested. The author suggests a three-pronged approach apart from security and development, and that is of guaranteeing the rights of the tribals. The author makes a desperate attempt to draw the attention of the policy-makers to avoid any further delay in the handling of the crisis before the reins go out of control.

However, the work is not without its share of drawbacks. Besides mentioning the issue of underdevelopment as a passing comment, there is lack of serious deliverance on this very vital point. Secondly, most of the suggestions seem to be macro in character. Be it changes in the Concurrent List, police reforms or establishing a unified central command, the authors have missed the deliberations on human security, vital in such situations. They are particularly silent on the specificities of policy recommendations, making it less effective as an implementation guide.

The book is well researched. It is a readymade book on policy recommendations, a potential guide for policy-makers. Its effortless language makes it readable even to the common man. The clarity of arguments is suggestive of coherence, and it is not an emotional manifestation of narration. For example, on the issue of Army deployment for conflict resolution, the authors are unanimously against it varying only in their respective justifications. On the issue of source of finance the authors have dealt with a variety, generally overlooked, ranging from drug trafficking to the politicians-Maoist nexus. Regular citation of extensive sources renders the study comprehensive and opens the door for future research on the topic.

Review by **Suparna Banerjee**, a Junior Research Fellow at the National Institute of Advanced Studies Bangalore. The views expressed are personal



The India-Pakistan War of 1971: A History

Edited by

Dr SN Prasad and Dr UP Thapliyal

Natraj Publishers, 576 pages, Rs 595

The book *The India - Pakistan War of 1971 : A History*, has been sponsored by the Ministry of Defence, chronicling the accounts of the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971 as maintained in the Indian government's military history records, which were declassified in 2005. The historical accounts have been gathered after detailed interaction with senior Army officers who took part in this campaign, the war diaries, official reports, journals and gazettes. The compilation is by far the most authentic and objective account of the 1971 War.

This well documented account of the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War, is spread over sixteen chapters. The first four chapters are dedicated to the events leading to the build-up for the war. The widening chasm between West and East Pakistan post 1970 elections, the barbaric employment of the military by President Yahya Khan and the events leading to the creation of the Mukti Bahini have been covered in adequate detail. The section also lucidly illustrates the efforts made by India to resolve the issue diplomatically, which failed, forcing it to participate in the liberation war of Bangladesh.

The next four chapters highlight the prevailing geo-political setting and positioning of the various superpowers vis-a-vis India and Pakistan. It describes the preparations and planning undertaken by the Indian and Pakistani defence forces for the conduct of operations. The author has very comprehensively, with maps and illustrations, covered the preparation and conduct of the war on the western front by the three Services. The narration is simplistic, highlighting the strategic thought process of Pakistan ie, "The defence of East Pakistan lay in its Western Wing," and operations by the Indian Army across the complete frontage, from Partapur in the north, the Battle of Chicken Neck in the Akhnoor sector, Shakargarh Bulge and along the western borders to the Rann of Kutch, including the valiant attack on Karachi harbour by the Indian Navy. The accounts present a reliable picture covering the nuances of planning, force deployment and actual conduct of operations.

In the following chapters, the authors have very deliberately compiled the conduct of all-out war between the two countries, leading to the capture of

Dhaka. The gallant role played by the Indian Army during its march towards Dhaka and the capture of Munshi Bazaar, seige of Sylhet, etc have been covered exhaustively. The coordinated employment of the Indian Air Force (IAF) and Navy in support of ground operations, including the paradropping at Tangail and sinking of the Pakistani submarine, *Ghazi*, have been dealt with in detail .

The last three chapters are dedicated to the events leading to the surrender of the Pakistan Army, the creation of Bangladesh and the pivotal role played by India in stabilising and developing the fledgling nation. The professionalism of the Indian Army in handling the refugees, management of Pakistani Prisoners of War (POWs) and conduct of post war events have all been comprehensively illustrated.

The concluding chapter summarises certain very vital aspects of the war and the lessons learnt, like the importance of inter-Services coordination, correct and timely intelligence, exploitation of fleeting opportunities and important role of Paramilitary forces in the conduct of war. A critical study of these aspects would enable officers to fine tune their military skills , particularly relating to the strategy and tactics of war.

The book very lucidly maps the India-Pakistan War of 1971. The detailing of various important accounts is fascinating and gives an insight into the nuances of the operation. It is a significant addition to the history of the Indian armed forces and many of the military aspects covered are applicable even in the present context, and need to be analysed. The book would assist the intelligentsia in assessing the war in the correct perspective and help the men in uniform to sharpen their military skills. It also makes easy and interesting reading for the common reader.

Review by Col **HPS Hansi**, a Senior Fellow with CLAWS. The views expressed are personal.