6

Linkages Between Development and Spread of Extremism

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan once proclaimed, 'No one in this world can be comfortable or safe when so many people are suffering and deprived'. Therefore, suffering and deprivation due to under-development are bound to have implications on issues of internal security.

Simply speaking, there are several areas in the country where crucial elements of survival, like food, shelter and clothing, are a luxury for people and these areas also lack basic infrastructure like roads, drinking water and electricity. In such cases, there is economic insecurity leading to crime and other anti-social activities.

➤ 6.1 Major Components of Development

Major components of development are:

1. *Economic development*: Employment, per capita income, industrial development
2. *Social development*: Gender equality, women empowerment, pluralism, respect for diversity, education of children, social security, etc.

3. *Political development*: Democracy, political rights, civil liberties
4. *Human development*: Health, education, human rights, life with dignity and self-esteem
5. *Infrastructure development*: Transport, communication, highways, rail network, telephone connectivity, cyber broadband network
6. *Sustainable development*: Ecological safety, environmental protection, biodiversity preservation
7. *Administrative development*: Good governance, time bound delivery of public services, public participation in government, transparency, accountability, pro-people governance

➤ | 6.2 | Factors Responsible for Spread of Extremism

The factors responsible for the spread of extremism are:

1. **Jal-Jangal-Jameen:** Disruption of age-old tribal–forest relationship, violation of traditional land rights, land acquisition without appropriate compensation and rehabilitation
2. **Economic:** Unemployment, poverty, infrastructure deficit like poor transport, lack of health facility, lack of education, communication and electricity, rising gap between rich and poor
3. **Social:** Social inequality, discrimination, denial of human rights, abuse of dignity of life
4. **Political:** Lack of people's participation in government
5. **Governance deficit:** Lack of routine administration, complete absence of government machinery in remote areas, poor implementation of laws, mismanagement and corruption in government schemes
6. **Ethnic**
7. **Geographical**
8. **Historical**

The first three factors are development deficit related factors that directly cause extremism. The fourth and fifth factors are not the root causes but give impetus to the already existing extremist feelings and are thus used by extremists to propagate their nefarious designs. The sixth, seventh and eighth are not related to development at all and they have their roots in history, geography and ethnicity and have been explained in detail in earlier chapters.

➤ 6.2.1 Development-linked Factors Applicable to India for Spread of Extremism

For growth of terrorism in a particular area, we need to have some fertile breeding ground. Poverty, unemployment and lack of development provide that fertile ground. Terrorism needs an ideology which could be in the name of religion, race and region or the Marxist ideology of egalitarian society. Combined with fertile ground and ideologies, lack of administration resulting in governance deficit along with political factors is used by hardcore ideologues

to brainwash and radicalize the youth. Therefore, lack of development has direct as well as indirect linkages with extremism.

1. Jal-Jangal-Jameen Issues (Disruption of Age-old Relationship)

For centuries, tribals have a natural co-existential relationship with their natural habitat, i.e. forests. But modern legislations and governance in the last century considerably altered this age-old relationship. The Forest Act, 1927 and the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 along with stringent Supreme Court orders and developmental activities like mining, power projects and industrialization have taken away sources of their basic livelihood. The most important being the Forest Conservation Act, 1980. As per the Act, their traditional rights have been curtailed and they can no longer make a livelihood out of their habitat (forests). As a result, their old livelihood has been taken away and has not been replaced by the fruits of new development. They have access to neither the basic infrastructure (transport, communication and electricity), nor the consequent economic development which could provide them employment and rid them of poverty. This has resulted in a feeling of despair and deprivation among the tribals. Therefore, they are vulnerable to recruitment by extremist ideologues. They should have been given fair share in profit and royalty of mining and industries.

The tribal population has thus been fertile ground for recruitment for the left wing extremists. Coupled with poor governance and other social and political factors they have easily been converted into hardcore followers of the naxalite movement.

2. Economic Issues

Poverty, unemployment and lack of education continue to be portrayed as fundamental drivers of extremism. Poverty and unemployment are often blamed for creating feelings of hopelessness and desperation. Poor economic conditions foster lack of opportunities, resulting in a limited number of options for gainful employment. The unemployment pushes the youth towards the lure of extremist ideas. It is not surprising that the hotbeds of terrorism today– Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan, Indonesia – happen to be some of the poorest and most corrupt countries in the world. Poverty and unemployment resulting in anger, resentment, despair and sense of injustice are a volatile combination in the minds of young men and women. These young minds can be manipulated to pick up arms. Individuals from higher income groups of society are more likely to have a range of economic activities available to them and are less likely to engage in terrorist activities. High levels of unemployment and higher gap between rich and poor also increases the potential for terror organizations to recruit educated, unemployed youth who are capable of carrying out more effective and brutal attacks.

3. Social Issues

High levels of social fragmentation, perception of exclusion and marginalization in some segments of society act as push factors for extremism. Relative deprivation and frustrated expectations for economic improvement and social mobility are also major drivers of extremism.

4. Political Issues

Political factors are also an indirect cause for spread of extremism. In places where human rights and democratic values are lacking, disaffected groups are more likely to opt for a path of violence. Extremism also flourishes due to severe restrictions on civil liberties and political rights. Civil liberties include freedom of expression, association, movement, and the press; freedom of, and from, religion; the right to due process; protection for individuals against unwarranted use of state power; and protection for minorities against potential encroachment on their fundamental rights that may result from majority rule. Political rights refer to the existence of rules and mechanisms (e.g., free and fair elections) that enable individuals and communities to affect governmental decision-making, and to participate in political processes more generally. These political factors are used by terrorist groups to brainwash educated unemployed youths to their ideology.

5. Governance Deficit

Ungoverned or poorly governed places may enable extremists to establish sanctuaries or safe havens. Poorly governed places may also create passive or active support for extremists among communities that feel ignored by the government. Where no government agency is able to provide for security and the rule of law, extremists may be able to impose their own order, and they may be able to extract money or recruits from the population.

Regarding the link between extremism and governance, stable democracy manages conflicts effectively by being open to political feedback about what is not working in the country, and by responding with remedial measures. But unfortunately, in India, over the years, the government has not been proactive in this regard. It ignored the legitimate grievances of the tribals of the North-east and Dandakaranya region. A society that does not respect principles of good governance, that is not transparent or accountable, and that does not respect the rule of law, finds it difficult to achieve sustainable development. Because the link between good governance and conflict is apparent, development is also tied to conflict and terrorism. Good governance is necessary to achieve sustainable development and to avoid, or at least manage, conflicts including terrorism.

6. Tri-Junction Theory

According to this theory, areas situated around the tri-junction of borders of three states have the problem of governance-deficit. These areas lack transport, communication and other infrastructure. Dandakaranya – the worst affected Maoist area in the country is a perfect example of tri-junction theory.

Conclusion   Terrorism has to have some basis, some ideology or some utopian goal so that a romantic illusion can be created in the minds of some sections of people, especially the younger generation. Sometimes, they use genuine issues like poverty, unemployment, etc. as a tool to attract masses to their cause. Many well meaning, liberal intellectuals fall prey to their propaganda without understanding the true nature of their doctrine which glorifies violence and believes in annihilation of all the people who are not with them. Sometimes, they create false issues by which their support base can be consolidated. But the underlying factor which fuels these movements is the visible lack of economic and social development. This is the basis of the insurgency movements in the North-east or Left Wing extremism in the country.

However the link between extremism and underdevelopment is not universal. J&K is an example where extremism is not because of underdevelopment but is due to historical and geographical reasons.

➤ | 6.3 | Positive Impact of Socio-Economic Development on Reducing Extremism

Social and economical development policies can contribute to peace and stability. The sections of society benefitted with development may start working to inhibit local support to extremists. It can discourage terrorist recruits. Many terrorist organizations attract new members from communities in which terrorism is generally considered a viable response to perceived grievances. Some terrorist groups also offer recruits financial incentives and additional family support. Social and economic development policies can help to reduce the pools of potential recruits by reducing their perceived grievances and providing the members of these communities with viable alternatives to terrorism. The ability of development policies to curb terrorism depends on their implementation. The most successful social and economic development policies are those that are

1. Developed in consultation with community leaders
2. Are based on needs and assessments that address the specific requirements of targeted communities, and
3. Are accompanied by disbursement mechanisms that ensure proper fiscal management and non-partisanship

Social and economic development policies can be used as a 'stick' to discourage terrorism. Development assistance can be made conditional on the absence of violence, thus discouraging support for terrorists.

We have successful examples of Tripura, Mizoram and other parts of the North-east where the spread of extremism ideology has been contained after robust and holistic development of these areas.

➤ | 6.4 | Constitutional and Legal Safeguards for Tribal Population

1. The **Fifth Schedule** states briefly that all scheduled areas of the country which are forest reserves and inhabited by scheduled tribes are to be administered by the governors of the states by appointing tribal advisory councils from among the tribal community of a particular forest reserve or a scheduled area. Regrettably, this has not happened in India. In this vacuum, these forests have been leased for mining, thereby displacing the tribal communities.

2. The **Ninth Schedule** of the Constitution deals with the fact that cultivable land which over thousands of years had come under the ownership of upper castes should be acquired by the government and redistributed among India's landless peasantry. Since land revenue was a state subject, the states were to legislate land ceiling laws and implement them by acquiring farmlands from landlords and redistributing them to landless farmers who for centuries worked on the lands of the landowners. Regrettably, only three states, Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal and Kerala, had implemented the land ceiling laws legislated by all the states by 1955. In West Bengal, the jotedars—as the landlords are called there—tried to manipulate the land records and deceive landless farmers and the government. This resulted in an uprising in a village called Naxalbari led by the Communist Party of India, Marxist-Leninist (CPI-ML), a faction of the Communist party. In Kerala, land ceiling was successfully implemented in the non-hilly districts and this has prevented the Maoist Naxalites from organizing a revolution there.

3. Politically, the **PESA, (Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996** gives radical governance powers to the tribal community and recognizes its traditional community rights over local natural resources. It not only accepts the validity of 'customary law, social and religious practices, and traditional management practices of community resources', but also directs the state governments not to make any law which is inconsistent with these. Accepting a clear-cut role for the community, it gives wide-ranging powers to Gram Sabhas, which had hitherto been denied to them by the lawmakers of the country.

The ground reality, however, is still quite different and PESA has mostly been reduced to a paper tiger. The two fundamental responsible factors are the mindset of the government functionaries who are contemptuous of the tribal community and the existing state government laws and provisions that negate the PESA Act.

PESA Act is for rural areas, but a similar legislation for urban scheduled areas was never debated and enacted. State governments are taking advantage of this to give speedy clearances to mining and industries in tribal areas. Their modus operandi is simple: they upgrade rural panchayats in scheduled areas to urban panchayats to bypass PESA which mandates village council's approval for such projects.

In the past few years, more than 600 village panchayats, many of them in scheduled areas, have been converted into urban local bodies, and these areas have major industrial investment proposals.

4. Forests Rights Act 2006 recognizes and vests the forest rights of occupation to the Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in such forests for generations but whose rights could not be recorded. The Act is an important instrument for improving the livelihoods of people dependant on forests by securing land rights. Before this Act came into force, there were nearly forty lakh tribal people not possessing legal status to their lands.

Some of the major concerns regarding implementation of this Act are related to high rate of rejection of claims, very little progress in the recognition of community rights and habitat rights of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), convening of Gram Sabha meetings at the Panchayat level, insistence of particular form of evidence, claimants not being informed about rejection of claims and inadequate awareness.

5. Prevention of Atrocities on SC/ST Act 1989 was brought into force with effect from 30th January, 1990 with the main objective 'to prevent the commission of offences of atrocities against members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, to provide for Special Courts for the trial of such offences and for the relief and rehabilitation of the victims of such offences and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto'.

6. New Land Acquisition Act (The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013) regulates land acquisition and provides laid down rules for granting compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement to the affected persons in India. The Act has provisions to provide fair compensation to those whose land is taken away, bring transparency to the process of acquisition of land to set up factories or buildings, infrastructural projects and assured rehabilitation of those affected. The Act establishes regulations for land acquisition as a part of India's massive industrialization drive driven by public-private partnership.

► | 6.5 | What Should be Done?

Our mission should be to end left wing extremism by ending extreme poverty and rampant unemployment. Anger, resentment, and despair are a volatile combination in the minds of young men and women who see little hope for escaping their situation. The goal of development is to eradicate poverty, promote inclusion and social justice, to bring the marginalized into the economic and global mainstream. Building of capacity is the essence of development and is a long-term process. The following are some of the steps required:

1. Sensitization to local context and customs, and addressing the critical needs of conflict-affected communities
2. Giving more emphasis to topics like community development, governance, service delivery, human rights, and political grievances
3. Effective implementation of protective legislation

4. Intense dialogue, so as to arrive at conclusions
5. Improved infrastructure and large investment in infrastructure
6. Protecting tribal rights
7. Employment opportunities through tax holidays to investments in those areas
8. Ensuring social security, livelihood security
9. Food security and education
10. Land reforms and equitable distribution of infrastructure projects
11. Constructive dialogue with extremists
12. Prosperity for all people
13. Anti-corruption efforts
14. End of political marginalization, social discrimination, cultural humiliation, violence by state functionaries, human rights abuses, and social oppression
16. Ensuring minimum wages and proper implementation of labour laws

PROBABLE QUESTIONS BASED ON THIS CHAPTER

1. What are the linkages between development and the spread of left wing extremism? Explain with suitable examples.
2. Is underdevelopment the sole reason for the rise of extremism?