
Politics of Extremism in India

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Introduction

As politics in India gets more and more competitive, with stakes of various sections of society in power growing, it is witnessing intense political mobilization in the mainstream politics as well as non-conventional politics – both of revolutionary and extremism (terrorism and insurgency) kinds. Needless to say, such an intense mobilization generates violence not only in extremist politics, but also it generates violence in mainstream politics. This paper is concerned with emerging and future patterns of political mobilization in India in the context of caste, ethnicity and identity demographics (excluding the religious identity) and their impact on security.

Broadly speaking, two drivers of identity and ethnic mobilization (and politics) are prevalent in India – religious and non-religious. While

the use of and appeal to religion has not been completely missing in what could be apparently defined as non-religious mobilization, the religious mobilization, till the phenomenal rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) since 1989 on the political plank of Hindutva, has largely been restricted to wooing of minority religious groups by various political parties for electoral support.

The Muslims, forming 13.43 percent of the total population in the country in 2001, are the most prominent among the minority religious groups in India with a distinct weight in the context of electoral mobilization by various political parties. This, however, does not mean that other religious groups do not matter in electoral stakes. They certainly do. However, the larger and more vocal groups mattered more. In many areas of Christian concentration, special ethnic considerations like tribe too came into play.

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Moreover, size, visibility, socio-economic prominence and importance and other such variables become the basis for and precipitate non-electoral political (autonomous and/or induced) mobilization of ethnic groups, which for electoral or other reasons receive support of political parties due to their immediate or long term electoral stakes. This dimension of political mobilization is also very important in considering conflict and security scenario in the country.

The appeal to caste and tribal identity for electoral or non-electoral political mobilization can broadly be called non-religious, but we must bear in mind that the Hindutva plank of the BJP has taken away non-religious dimensions from these mobilizations too. The party's thrust, to begin with, was to create a winning social coalition consisting of the upper castes, certain middle castes and a section of dalits, traditionally known as the Scheduled Castes. The party also attempted to enroll the Scheduled Tribe population in certain parts of the country, but their enrolment too had two elements – their shift from various forms of animism to the Hindutva fold of the Sangh variety and a check to religious conversion among them, particularly to Christianity through

the activities of the missionaries. The violence against the Christian missionaries in the Dangs district of Gujarat by the Sangh Parivar activists during 1998-99, which had a repercussion in far away Orissa in the murder of Graham Staines and his children, was not only a stern and brutal message to the Christian missionaries, it was an equally tough and stark message to the tribals to resist being lured by the Christian missionaries into conversion and to heed the Sangh Parivar call to Hinduise themselves. Obviously, while analysing the non-religious ethnic and identity mobilizations and their implications for security, the overlapping between the two must not be missed.

Since this essay is concerned with non-religious ethnic and identity mobilizations, issues related with use of religion in political mobilization would generally be avoided, but may be referred to where religion comes in by default in other ethnic mobilizations and impacts general security scenario. Further, even while political mobilization of tribes may come in for analysis, the Northeastern States are excluded from the scope of analysis here, because their distinct social and political situations demand exclusive treatment to them.

Finally, the difficulty in basing the analysis and assessment on the demography under such a situation must also be stated at the outset. Aside from the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (and, of course religion, which we are not taking into account), demographic data based on caste and/or any other ethnic category is not available. It is a common knowledge that all the Backward Classes Commissions in the country so far have interpolated data from the 1931 census, which is unlikely to give us a precise caste-wise breakup for the first quarter of the current century, neither would it give a precise growth rate of these communities.

Identity and Political Mobilization

Identity, particularly the ascriptive ones like ethnicity, caste, tribe, race and so on, is the primary basis of political mobilization in any democracy, because, easily identified by parties and leaders, it provides a structured basis for political organization. Since the individuals and groups thus sought also easily identify their interests holistically when put in a group context, they tend to be willing to be mobilized. The mobilizer easily identifies the existing support base in quantitative

and qualitative terms while attempting identity-based mobilization as well as finds it convenient to articulate and invent issues for a more effective and aggressive mobilization. In understanding and assessing the implications of ethnic mobilization for national security, we take into account Karl Deutsch's theory that presupposes the existence of a socially mobilizable population for the development of nationalism among its members, but in the following analysis we move beyond this with Paul Brass that 'political mobilization of traditional rural communities can occur in modernizing societies in the absence of fully developed systems of mass communication, especially through traditional networks of religious communication. Thus, Brass's thesis that '(t)he cultural forms, values, and practices of ethnic groups become political resources for elites in competition for political power and economic advantage' has been confirmed further with subsequent studies of political mobilization and party systems in the country. It concurs with our argument given at the outset.

Taking the 'instrumentalist', rather than 'primordialist', view of identity formation, Paul Brass has argued that 'the process of ethnic identity

formation and its transformation into nationalism is reversible.... Because of both the dynamics of external competition and the internal divisions and contradictions which exist within all groups of people.' Further, 'political and economic circumstances may cause elites to downplay or discard the symbolic manipulation of cultural forms, values, and practices and to instead seek cooperation with other groups or collaboration with the state authorities.' In fact, stressing the role of elites in ethnic identity formation, Brass points out that 'the process by which elites mobilize ethnic identities simplifies those beliefs and values, distorts them, and selects which are politically useful rather than central to the belief systems of the people in question. Insofar as political elites succeed in mobilizing an ethnic group by such means, the ethnic community or nation created in this way does not necessarily constitute an entirely new entity but one that has been transformed, whose boundaries in some ways been widened, in other ways confined.'

Clearly, intensification of political competition in a traditional, though modernizing, society would naturally lead to dynamic political uses of primordial networks, which would be undergoing a dual, often

contradictory, process of identity-based politicization as well as social and political modernization. In the process their identity markers might change, or get modified under the process of political realignment, but would not disappear. As a group, they nonetheless become instruments in political power struggle. While they are available to be mobilized and reorganized into different political formations and coalitions as instruments, they are not without their own stakes. Atul Kohli has articulated this process in the context of self-determination movements very aptly and succinctly:

... a democratic polity in a developing country encourages group mobilization, heightening group identities and facilitating a sense of increased group efficacy; mobilized groups then confront state authority, followed by a more or less prolonged process of power negotiation; and such movements eventually decline as exhaustion sets in, some leaders are repressed, others are co-opted and a modicum of genuine power-sharing and mutual accommodation between the movement and the central state authorities is reached.

Two things are apparent from Kohli's observation here. First,

group mobilization in developing countries could be part of state or nation-building exercise, where autonomous mobilization of groups is as significant as induced mobilization. Second, the state can and does use cooption to end conflict. In any case, aside from induced mobilization based on real, perceived or constructed grievances and demands, such groups are also open to autonomous mobilization, which could be less political and based more on social and economic grievances. Autonomous mobilization with community leadership tends to be more systematically or constructively channelized than if it is spontaneous, in which case often a strong group identity and group demand could be the basis for political mobilization. These processes are more often than not conflictual, particularly in cases of strong identity-based mobilization by the elites, or in cases of substantive grievances and demands of the groups leading to disorderly demonstrations and street politics.

Ethnic Mobilization and Political Conflict in India

Ever since organized political mobilization began in India, virtually with the dawn of the 20th century, identity and ethnicity began playing

a significant role and the process acquired tremendous intensity with the onset of electoral politics since the 1950s. However, ethnic politics and resulting conflict in India has had a varying curve due to the changing nature of identity formation, very often manipulated by the leaders sitting virtually at the top of the political hierarchy, and overlapping boundaries of ethnicity, which are at play simultaneously, as well as continuous infusion of modernist rhetoric and non-ethnic factors. Thus, identity and ethnic conflicts in India, resulting from both autonomous and induced mobilizations, have not had nonlinear run and several of them have been resolved through political negotiations.

Even some of the persisting and festering ones have continued to be on the negotiating table despite generating tremendous violence over decades. Some of the conflicts pose curious difficulties in conceptualization and characterization, as despite being under the Marxist/Leninist/Maoist banner, due to their societal nature and loci among the impoverished populace of the country, the affected underprivileged belong to certain caste and ethnic groups and their political mobilization for the revolutionary struggle ends up being

on caste or ethnic lines. This pattern, as we shall see in the following analysis, is likely to continue. Obviously, their security implications – either national (from external threats) or internal – also accordingly vary.

Indeed, religion was first to come into play because the Muslims, over one-fifth of the population of the British India in 1901, constituted nearly one-fourth of the population of the country at the time of partition. The conflict it led to over decades in India – before and after desalinization, independence and partition – is well recorded. The caste-based political mobilization too became a natural strategy in a caste-ridden society like India, as various caste groups and associations jostled for a prominent space in the organizational politics of the Congress in the process of its becoming a mass party and leading the country to independence.

The process of ethnic mobilization became keener after independence, particularly after electoral politics was set in motion. As politics in the later years revealed, the provision for linguistic States too had set in motion the process of further ethno-linguistic mobilization that caused political conflict in the 1960s. In fact, the 1960s was marked by several linguistic-

based mobilizations, including anti-English (and pro-Hindi) and anti-Hindi protests. Indeed, caste came to play a very prominent role in political mobilization strategies of political parties and leaders in the country, because due to its societal organization, it had turned into a vote bank from the outset

Of course, the caste associations too have played a significant role in raising the stakes of political mobilization for their caste groups. This has been brought out succinctly by a number of studies since independence. No wonder, caste conflict, which was earlier a localized social phenomenon, acquired political overtones and got aggravated particularly during elections. Two simultaneous processes in recent years have added new dimensions to political mobilization of castes and consequently heightened conflict threat from them. First, aside from wooing of caste groups (like the backward castes, dalits and the ST groups) by the existing political parties, caste-based political parties also have appeared in the Indian political arena. And, second, there has been an attempt to mobilize the caste groups on the Hindutva platform since the mid-1980s. No wonder, the Mandalisation was

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Table 1: Non-Electoral Ethnic Mobilizations in India

S. No	Movement (Y)	Location	Mobilization	Nature	Threat	Impact
1	Telengana (1946-51)	Andhra Pradesh	Poor peasants & Tribals	Violent Revolutionary	Internal Security	Awareness of Eco. under-development
2.	Naga (1947-ongoing)	Northeast	Naga Tribes	Violent secessionist	National Security	Creation of Nagaland various accords
3.	Gujarat (1961-62)	Bombay State	Lingustic	Violent Protest Movement	Internal Security	Bifurcation into Gujarat and Maharashtra
4.	Dravidian (1960s)	Madras State	Ethnic	Democratic Protest	Internal Security	Settled
5.	Punabi Suba (1960s)	Punjab	Ethno-linguistic	Violent Protest Movement	Internal Security	Bifurcation into Punjab & Haryana
6.	Anti-English, Pro- & Anti-Hindi (1966-68)	Hindi heartland/ South India	Linguistic	Violent Protest Movement	Internal Security	Ran out of steam
7.	Naxalbari (1967-72)	West Bengal	Tribal/ Peasant	Maoist Revolutionary	Internal Security	Suppressed
8.	Sons of the Soil (1970s)	Mumbai	Ethno chauvinistic	Violent chauvinistic	Internal Security	Ran out of Steam
9.	Assam Movement (1977-85)	Assam	Ethno-regional	Violent Protest Movement	Internal Security	Negotiated in 1985
10	The Northeastern Maze (since independence)	North East region	Ethnic and regional	Insurgency, Terrorism, Violent Protests	National & Internal Security	Despite Negotiations some are endemic
11.	Khalistan (1980-95)	Punjab	Ethno-religious	Terrorist secessionist	National Security	Crushed
12	Maoist revolutionary movements (1980-)	Attempting a corridor from TN to Nepal	Mobilized poor SC & ST groups with revolutionary ideology	Though 'revolutionary' terror is an important tool	Internal & National Security	13 affected states and looking for a strategy consultation with the Union Govt.
13	Autonomy (1980-)	Several States	Ethno-regional	Democratic and Violent Protest	Internal Security	The issue remains unsettled and endemic
14	J&K (1980-)	Kashmir Valley	Ethno-religious	Democratic Protest/ Terrorism	National Security	Ongoing

found to be the anti-thesis of the Sangh's Hindutva, triggering the then BJP President L. K. Advani's *rath yatra* resulting in conflict and violence.

Since electoral mobilization is an ongoing process that climbs up on political and socio-economic issues till it reaches a crescendo in years or months immediately preceding elections, it would be worthwhile to take stock of and analyze the non-electoral ethnic mobilizations in India since independence. It will facilitate our analysis of the types and nature of ethnic mobilizations that might emerge in near future and the kind of security threat they might pose in different parts of the country.

Table 1 presents a list of fourteen movements the country has witnessed since independence. It is necessary to begin with an explanation because while we have mentioned Telangana/Naxalbari, Naga and Gujarat/Punjabi Suba separately, we have clubbed the later developments in these streams as Maoism, the Northeastern maze and autonomy movements respectively. The reason is that while Maoism in various parts of the country carries on from where the Telangana and Naxalbari had left, it is highly splintered in its spread and ideology

and many a times in violent conflict with each other. The character of the movement too has changed from people-based to cadre-based and highly secretive in functioning and operation. Similarly, while the Naga insurgency was, and continues to be, the longest and highly focused armed movement and the Assam movement was directed at foreigners' issue, several Northeast movements continue to be diffused in character, though their violence potential and intensity are not in doubt. Finally, the ethno-linguistic movement for Gujarat and similar, though with certain religious overtones, Punjabi Suba movement will indeed bear a lot of similarities with the later movements for greater autonomy, but they needed to be clubbed due to two reasons. First, it was not assumed that regional autonomy under the constitution would become such an endemic problem with different kinds of overtones. Second, they are each subject of an independent social science inquiry and greater treatment to them will diffuse the focus of the present discussion.

We list the movements, their location, the kind of mobilization they have achieved, their nature, threat and impact. The movements, mobilized over the years on socio-

economic as well as ethnic lines, show four kinds of ethnic mobilizations – tribal, linguistic, religious and regional. This classification excludes the sons of the soil movement of the 1970s in Mumbai and certain parts of Maharashtra, which we have characterized as ethno-chauvinistic. Though certain degree of chauvinism was visible in the Assam movement too, it was spurred more by migrations from Bangladesh, than due to ethnic factors. Similarly, broadly classified as an autonomy movement, the Jharkhand movement too displayed certain degree of tribal chauvinism in being aimed against the '*dikus*', or the non-tribal outsiders, but it was a protest also against centuries of exploitation of the indigenous population of the Chhotanagpur region by such people. Therefore, we characterize them as ethno-regional rather than as ethno-chauvinistic on the pattern of the sons-of-the-soil movement.

Practically each part of the country has witnessed some form of non-electoral ethnic mobilization or the other. Clearly, their resolvability has depended on the nature of grievance and demands. In fact, though not clearly mentioned in the table, the Mizo insurrection led by the MNF is only one of its kind insurgency that

has been resolved and mainstreamed through negotiations. It deserves flagging from the perspective of political resolution of national security threat.

These movements ranging from democratic, many a time violent, protest to Marxist revolutionary, to secessionist insurgency and terrorism, have posed internal and national security problems of varying degrees over the years. Some have been resolved, reflecting the resilience and endurance of the democratic spirit of the Indian polity. Some have been crushed, which reflects the toughness of the Indian state. If we closely and critically analyze the fourteen broad movements mentioned here, two different scenarios and conclusions emerge. First, eight of the movements – 3 to 9 and 11 – have apparently been resolved in some respect or the other; showing that whatever the kind and extent of ethnic or identity-based mobilization, it is possible to eventually subsume them in the greater Indian identity through negotiations. Those, which have been resolved, were, except for two, violent or democratic protest movements within the constitutional scheme with internal security implications. The two exceptions include Maoist

insurrection in Naxalbari (internal security) and terrorism in Punjab (national security), both of which were crushed. Second, six – 1, 2, 10, 12-14 – still remain endemic and have defied a solution. Three out of the six, the Telangana movement, the Naxalbari movement and the contemporary Maoist movements have the same ideological string linking them. Though the Telangana movement was resolved in 1951 with the Communist Party of India withdrawing the revolutionary movement on the advice of the Soviet Union in 1951 and the Naxalbari movement was crushed by the government by 1972, they are the precursors of the current Maoist movements in the country. In fact, the operations of the People's War Group in Andhra Pradesh are in the same area where first revolutionary spark was ignited. Similarly, the Naga movement (or insurgency) and some of the northeastern ethnic regional mobilizations have some linkages with each other. Further, though Gujarat and Punjabi Suba movements and their mobilizations would rank amongst the resolved ones, the broad issues raised during these movements find reflections in the unresolved northeastern movements, various autonomy movements that have been cropping up, getting resolved in ad hoc fashion

and arising and enduring in different regions and contexts. In fact, Jammu and Kashmir imbroglio too began by alternating between greater autonomy and self-determination.

Most of the resolved movements, whatever the nature and degree of ethnic mobilizations, had had implications for internal security. Only exception was the Khalistani terrorism, appearing to be breathing oxygen again, which, along with creating internal security problem by attempting to draw a wedge between the Sikh and the Hindu communities, also created a serious national security threat with the help of a section of wealthy Sikh diaspora and a highly inimical Pakistan. Though ethnic identity of some variety propelled these movements and mobilizations they attempted, it is difficult to link them to and draw any kind of futuristic security scenario from them based on demographics of the regions they emerged in or the ethnic groups mobilized for them. Of the unresolved movements, the revolutionary movements inspired by Maoism currently pose a grave threat to both internal and national security. The thirteen States afflicted with Maoist violence – Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Chhatisgarh, Madhya

Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Punjab, Orissa, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal – virtually form a red corridor from India's southern most State to Nepal, which is currently under a red cloud. We will discuss more about it a little later. In the northeast, where China has not given up its territorial claims and where all the States surrounding Bangladesh have been facing serious problems of infiltration and migration, violence due to Naga, ULFA and other insurgencies as well as violent autonomy movements that feed on mobilization of ethnicity, serious internal and national security risks are present.

Aside from religion, caste remains one of the most visible identities and ethnic markers that appears organized enough to be mobilized and volatile enough to be open to various kinds of social, economic and political contestations. It was not without basis that Rajni Kothari observed as early as the late 1960s that since democratic politics in India drew upon the traditional structure and its leadership, '(t)he caste system made available to the leadership structural and ideological bases for political mobilization, providing it with both a segmental organization and identification system on which support could be crystallized.' As a

consequence, 'the expanding mobilization of politics either found an ongoing vertical network or created one through its factionalising tendencies, and in both cases made the social structure of caste an important vehicle of political organization and extended it to include other forms of patronage and socio-economic relationship.' Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph have explained the relationship between caste and politics in terms of vertical (by higher castes through and by perpetuating the existing caste hierarchy), horizontal (amongst the castes of similar ranks) and differential (inter-hierarchy) mobilizations. Obviously, given the complexity of caste system across the country, it created its own pattern of patron client relationship.

The role of caste in Indian politics has over the years been highlighted by a number of contributions in the social sciences. These contributions have not only recorded the existing and traditional patterns of domination and subordination, they have also recorded how democratic politics has been changing it over the years. Obviously, while it has been described as 'silent revolution', intense and shrill mobilization preceding and following such changes do cause friction and

conflict, impacting internal security in some way or the other.

Caste and Ethnic Mobilization by Maoist Groups

Political mobilizations based on Marxist ideology the world over have thrived on deprivation. In India too, from the first such armed rebellion in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh in 1946 led by the Communist Party of India, through the 'Spring Thunder' descending on India in Naxalbari (a small village in West Bengal that has given the nomenclature Naxalism to Marxist-Leninist-Maoist movements in India virtually in perpetuity) in 1967, to the Srikakulam movement beginning again in Andhra Pradesh in 1980, to the spread of the movement to thirteen States of the country during the late 1980s and 1990s, that have virtually formed a corridor from Tamil Nadu in the south to Nepal in the north, have thrived on deprivation, exploitation and repression. The convergence of caste and class, particularly at the lower end of the *varna* system and the prevailing caste structure, the prevailing exploitation and repression of the lower castes and tribal population discussed above, have created a fertile recruitment ground for the Marxist-Leninist-

Maoist groups.

The Telangana movement was indeed spearheaded by the CPI's elite cadre, but the foot soldiers were the people of dalit and girijan communities. The adivasis were again the foot soldiers in the Naxalbari uprising too. When Vempatapu Satynarayana, a schoolteacher, organized the Srikakulam movement, he not only set up Girijan Sangham, he married a woman each from the two major tribes, Jatapu and Savara, of the area, to identify himself with the girijans. Many of the cadres of the People's War Group in Andhra Pradesh come from dalits and girijans. Prakash Karat, a Marxist ideologue and currently the General Secretary of the CPI (M) has argued that the Naxalites are governed in ethnic mobilization by their internationalist stand on nationalities question. They ended up supporting Bhindrawale in the garb of supporting Anandpur Sahib Resolution and gave a call to 'enhance the struggle against Centre and the police'. He also points out that a section of the Naxalites in the 1980s, while inveighing against the chauvinistic aspect of the Assam movement, supported tribal separatism in Jharkhand. In Bihar too major recruits and foot soldiers of the Maoist Communist Centre and other Maoist groups are dalits. In

fact, the Maoist movement in Bihar has further escalated caste war as private armies of the upper castes (Savarna Liberation Force, Sunlight Sena, Brahmarsi Sena and so on) and middle castes (Samajvadi Shosit Sena) have been battling various 'red' armies. Many a time they just turn their ire against innocent dalits in order to take revenge on the raids conducted on their hamlets by the Maoist groups. It has, according to reports, turned into a vicious circle, for this incites and compels many dalit youth towards Maoist groups for revenge and support against the upper and middle caste repression and violence.

Transformation of the caste and ethnic violence into revolutionary violence due to the class character inherent in it, with the kind of spread it has achieved in the past two decades, has serious consequences for both internal security and national security. The guerilla tactics of the Maoist is too complex for the corrupt and inefficient police force of the most affected States to tackle. Some, like Andhra Pradesh, have raised a specialist commando force (Gray Hound) to tackle Naxalism, but political considerations involved in the issue due to its socio-economic ramifications, the use of force has not been enough to tackle the violence

and security threat caused by Naxalism. The strategy and operations of Naxalites requires modern arms and ammunitions, which they acquire by various means. Raids on police stations are one of the strategies. This, however, neither gives them sufficient arms, nor very sophisticated ones. In any case, they need ammunitions, for which they require cash. Kidnapping, extortion and loot are some of the tactics used for the purpose. Not only have they developed linkages with extremist groups within the country, they have also ideological linkages with international groups. The development, growth and consolidation of Maoist in Nepal has give further boost to them by providing them with a base for international linkages.

Naxalism, which has also drawn support through caste and ethnic mobilization in the garb of class mobilization, thus, has emerged as a major internal as well as national security threat for the country. In terms of loci of the threat, aside from the thirteen affected States, surrounding States need to be put on the watch list, for the Naxalites not only have been strategizing to enhance their support base, they have also been looking for safe havens in States and areas which low

pressure from the security point of view.

Loci of Conflicts and Predictive Mechanisms

Any policy prescription for the internal and national security scenario from the current as well as future perspective would depend largely on where and how ethnic political mobilization and conflicts related to them are going to be located. It is important here to begin with two caveats. First, we are analysing ethnic political mobilization in a functioning and volatile democracy, where use of ethnic identity, sometimes creating new ones and at other times by heightening the existing ones is a norm. Second, despite its limitations, it also has a record of using assimilation and inclusion to resolve conflicts. Indeed, between the emergence of conflicts and their resolution the use of security apparatus comes in.

From the available data and analysis, three scenarios of political mobilization based ethnic conflicts, which are as independent of each other as interlinked, are present in the country – arising out of development linked displacement, result of caste-based (particularly of the dalits and

OBC) mobilization and recruitment of dalits and adivasis/girijans by the Maoists, who have virtually created a red corridor from Tamilnadu to Nepal. In fact, aside from mobilizing the dalits and adivasis/girijans as foot-soldiers for their cause, the Maoists also oppose capitalists-led development in their domain and the displaced poor, most of them belonging to the categories mentioned above, become a fertile recruitment ground for them.

The Kalinganagar incident in Jaipur district of eastern Orissa on January 2, 2006 is indicative of the development linked ethnic conflict that can arise in any part of the country where the processes of capitalist and globalize development is insensitive to local realities of inequity and impoverishment and does not adequately compensate local communities for using and acquiring their resources – land or any other. The fact that Kalinganagar happened with autonomous mobilization, which spontaneously expressed itself, though pent up frustration did play a role, is indicative of other such possibilities in other parts of the country where major developmental projects – dams, factories and mines – are on or likely to be launched. Such autonomous mobilizations in the

past have been used by established political parties for electoral gains, who have converted autonomous mobilization into an induced one including local and regional political agenda into it. Such possibilities have been increasingly expanding with the one-party dominant system coming to an end and the political turf getting more and more contentious.

I would also like to extend my arguments here about the recruitment of the poor as foot soldiers by the Maoists; the red bastion could indeed feed on the development projects that are not socially sensitive both in terms of adequately compensating the locals for the acquisitions made as well as in terms of sharing the benefits accruing from the local resources with the communities in the next couple of decades. It is evident that ten States that have been affected by large dams, displacing a large number of people, mostly tribals and dalits. The resettlement has generally been inadequate and sloppy, but relative deprivation of the adivasis and dalits combined with pent up feelings that are increasingly being used for induced mobilization in the country's competitive politics, the possibility of such communities turning volatile, if not violent, would

keep increasing.

We should also remember, in talking of ten States, we are talking of three divided States too, which means thirteen States. Since new States like Uttaranchal, Chhatisgarh and Jharkhand are aggressively wooing investments to pep up their economy and optimally utilize natural resources, they deserve to be watched carefully for the next couple of decades. While the latter two are already part of the Maoist movement, there are simmering pockets of discontent waiting to be tapped in Uttaranchal for all kinds of political mobilizations. Uttaranchal is also a critical State in terms of its border and strong cross-border social and ethnic links with Nepal, which is currently in ferment. It will be unfortunate if the neglect would lead to a spillover of Maoist and other kinds of extremist politics, or even its exploitation by terrorist networks that are operating in the surrounding States.

It is to be noted that there is correspondence between the States high on crime against dalits and adivasis and expanding tentacles Maoism. Indeed, each of the States discussed deserves watching, States like Rajasthan, where atrocities on the dalits is high, but Maoists have yet

to arrive and Haryana, which has recently witnessed brutal reprisals against dalits, need to be put on the alert list. Rajasthan needs to be watched more carefully because it is possible to whip up revolutionary sentiments in a feudal surrounding.

Those falling in the red corridor deserve special mention given the increasingly daring attacks that the Maoists are able to launch. The attack on Jehanabad jail in Bihar on 13 November 2005 was perhaps a follow up of 23 June 2005 assault by over 200 Maoists at Madhuban in East Champaran district of Bihar. Earlier, on 6 February 2004, a few hundred Naxalites laid siege to the district headquarters town of Koraput, Orissa, brought it to a complete halt for a few hours. In each of these cases they have succeeded in freeing their comrades and looting arms and ammunition, in the process demoralizing both the police and the civil administration.

Whether the impending simmering unrests on ethnic or caste-class mobilization can be predicted, is a question that has its answer hidden in the pattern and nature of such unrests discussed in the essay. Most of them have implications for internal security, though some of them do spill over into national security. If we

divide such imminent unrests into political and socio-economic (related to displacements), the predictive mechanisms are already parts of the security drill of the police in the former and a more systematic, participative and sensitive approach to developmental plans keeping the local communities at the centre of economic development.

Policy Prescription

Political mobilization in India based on non-religious identities can be seen in terms of caste and tribe. Both have been observed to be natural in the political sociology of a multi-cultural country like India by most social scientists. In a democratizing society full of socio-economic inequity and competitive polity that constitutionally grants equality in all spheres of life to each citizen and also practices constitutional engineering for social justice, this inheres conflict, which is clearly visible in the country. Non-religious identity-based electoral, induced as well as autonomous mobilizations that are critical for our analysis are OBC, SC and ST.

Demographic pattern in none of them is found to be alarming, though the SC and ST have growth rate that is faster than national growth rate.

However, their decennial growth appears to be declining. Therefore, no particular policy prescription is being recommended for them.

The claim of the OBCs for being covered under affirmative action is already a national policy. However, since the demographics of the OBCs are not rationalized, there are contesting claims from different caste groups in different States for inclusion. While it is necessary to rationalize caste enumeration for this purpose, which has not been done since 1931, recommending caste enumeration in the census would be opening Pandora's box. Even if the OBCs alone are enumerated, a nationwide consensus is required to prepare an acceptable list. This perhaps can be done like for the SC and ST. But since class has been taken to be the basis of backwardness, this will cut across religious boundaries.

Politically too the intermediary castes, which form the backbone of the OBC classification, have arrived on the national scene and are dictating terms in more than one State. Contestations and conflict are inherent in it. The most important policy prescription would be to make the administration – bureaucracy, police etc. more professional in order to meet the challenges of partisanship in day to

day administration as well as in conflict situations.

While assertions from the STs in certain areas has resulted in the creation of two tribal majority States – Jharkhand and Uttaranchal – STs and SCs continue to be on the margins of socio-economic scale despite half a century of affirmative action programme. Both experience humiliation and violence in their day-to-day life. Due to their location in areas with natural resources, the STs are also subjected to uprooting from their habitat without adequate and timely compensation due to developmental projects, particularly for construction of big dams. This has not only led to frustration, but also their mobilization against injustice by non-party groups and movements. No wonder, the National Tribal Policy as well as the Forest Conservation Bills have been put to social scrutiny.

This area of contestation deserves a close watch, for mobilization on these lines of the SC and ST has the potential to turn violent. It is, therefore, imperative that the security forces – police, para-military forces and the army, formulate a coherent non-offensive policy to deal with such agitations with minimum damages to life. For,

counter violence would lead to their alienation from this section of the Indian society.

There have been recommendations in the past to make the police and the para-military forces more representative of the society, which in effect means greater share of job to be offered to the Muslims, Christians, SCs and STs. However, the premise that a 'representative police' without adequate professionalization of the cadres will necessarily be non-partisan has been contested. It has been pointed out that this may lead to organizational schism, which will come in the way of professionalization. Thus, while making the efforts to make the police more representative in terms of professionalization and modernisation, not merely in terms of equipments, but also in terms of attitude need to be stressed and achieved. It would be equally important to ascertain that the army, which off and on gets deployed to help the civilian administration in cases of severe violence, is sanitised from time to time of caste and communal biases.

The spilling over of the caste and tribal mobilization in the arena of ultra-left campaigns is worrisome. Indeed, it can be effectively tackled

and checked in the years to come only through sound economic policies and packages. In the short run, the political leadership needs to study the reasons for and sources of their mobilizations to effectively check it. Naxalism, particularly with 'liberated zones' in the thirteen States, is, of course, the matter of greatest concern. Naxals' nexus with the LTTE in the south, with the ULFA in the east and the Nepal Maoists in the north deserves a careful study from the security perspective. Both their supply and recruitment lines need to be effectively choked.

Conclusion

A futuristic study based on non-religious identity mobilizations from the security perspective is not easy to undertake. For, such mobilization eventually boils down to caste mobilization, which can be and has been studied qualitatively, rather than quantitatively or demographically. Moreover, political mobilization of castes is linked to existing socio-economic realities that have been dictating politics in the country since independence. They are not static, but they are not changing rapidly. Political mobilization of identities in India is for power and resources. Therefore, while they have implications for the security agencies,

they impose severe limitations on them dictated by power politics. For, the use of instruments of the state, particularly the strong instruments like the police and security forces, based on power politics, is seldom adhering to the principles of the rule of law.

The tough question to answer, therefore, is do they have autonomous capacity to deal with such pressures? The experience of nearly six decades leaves little room for optimism. However, this also creates a compelling need to ponder for options

in the face of the existing realities.

Finally, we must caution ourselves in creating too shrill a security scenario. Several of the violent conflicts and movements have been mainstreamed by the democratic process in the country. Therefore, to assume that the political mobilizations of the OBCs, SCs and STs will create conflict and violence seriously affecting security of the country could be misplaced. Yet, while recommending policy interventions to prevent such eventualities, it would be worthwhile to initiate preparedness of the security forces. ■