Elevating the State's Participation in the Resolution of its Internal Security Issues

- Pratyush Pran Sarma

Maintaining order and peace in a territory against its security threats allows the governing body to initiate and regulate the resolution or elimination of such threats. In the case of the Indian federal system, the Central government has often been seen collaborating with the respective State governments to solve these issues. Out of several security threats, much of which has been brought under the gambit of non-traditional security, communal sentiments-driven terrorism and segregation-driven insurgent movements constitute the major part of issues that India suffers from inside its boundaries. However, the nature of the relationship between the Centre and the States, and the inherent sense of domination of the Centre has also exhibited certain discrepancies in their collaboration. While substantial research has been done to understand these violent conflicts and socio-political mobilisations, this article evaluates the quality of the government's participation in resolving these issues, considering the pre-existing critics of conflict resolution practices.

From our understanding of the violent conflicts in India, it is observable that most of these internal security issues find their roots in the inherent social structure of the region. Therefore, it can be safely assumed that bringing a political solution to a socio-political challenge alone will not result in a permanent resolution of the issue. Insecurity remains, and results in the protraction of the conflict and eruption of violence. While the federal governments have the right idea in trying to 'win the hearts and minds of the people', to be able to do so requires the identification and redressal of the issues and challenges on that path. The following paragraphs discuss these issues in brief, considering society as an integral part of addressing the political issues.

Challenges to the State's Participation in Regional Security Threats

In the Indian federal system, in the presence of respective regional governments at the State level, the interrelationship between the Centre and the States serves as an important pre-condition in building the trust with the people that their grievances are heard and worked for. The crux of incorporating a federal system of governance in India is to maintain the regional aspirations and address the grievances of diverse groups of people, all encompassed in the Indian Union. The nature of the Central government's relationship with a region's inhabitants

depends on the relationship between their regional representatives and the Centre. An alienated Centre, therefore, creates the perception of rejection and abandonment of regional aspirations and allows the insecurity of people to find themselves dominated. While the Centre needs the popular support of the people to be legitimate and relevant, the people also require the involvement of the Centre and State governments in the successful implementation of their development policies. An entity that overlooks the administration and development of the nation but remains alienated from the population and its grievances has seemed to be accepted as a colonial déjà vu. In such circumstances, it becomes increasingly difficult for the government to gain people's trust. How the society perceives the state confuses the former in the latter's ability to provide them with justice, a clause imbued in the social contract between the individual and the state.

Apart from people's perception of a functional Centre-State relationship, it is also important to be involved in multi-faceted dialogue platforms with the communities in conflict. Many times, the issues in conflict branch out from the systemic repression of aspirations and incentives. The people translate the absences of the Central government during such instances of vulnerability as the irresponsibility of civic duties of the government and their well-being taken for granted. Such actions are further perceived by the communities in conflict as a legitimising factor for their struggles and violent actions.

The devolution of power in the Indian Constitution's Seventh Schedule has been another reason for confusion amongst the people regarding the extent to which the Centre can involve itself in a regional issue. The Constitution does not necessarily provide a guide by which the Centre can separately react to internal turmoil or external aggression. In the case of maintaining the internal security of the nation, the Central government takes precedence in its actions while such operations and endeavours are expected to be done in cooperation and consultation with the regional government, without any coercion. To summarise, the maintenance of the internal security of the nation is more efficient if the Central government and the respective State government(s) work in tandem to resolve the issues.

The Way Forward

The major difference in the way the State responds to external and internal threats is that in the case of the latter, 'winning the hearts and minds of people' is considered a significant step in the resolution of security threats. The majority of counter-insurgency operations today include earning the trust of the people in the respective regions. However, it is seen at this step that the

government remains confused in figuring out how to exactly do that. Shaping the public perception remains dependent on the development of the region and how such development has been perceived by the people. The regional sentiments that allow the people to attach themselves to violent ideologies and militant outfits are watered down in the presence of social and developmental benefits. Such a process ensures the legitimization of the government bodies in front of the aggrieved masses, proving themselves an important part of their societies. What else legitimises the governance of the Centre in these pockets of conflict is the implementation of the development policies that serve as a reassurance and fraternity built on citizenship and welfare. The implementation of such policies also showcases good relationships between the Centre and the States, ultimately earning the trust of the regional leaders and people. Apart from that, the proper communication of development is also essential to let the people understand good governance and identify a good government.

The cooperation between the different levels of governance is also necessary to understand the region and its sentiments properly. The most important step in solving domestic security threats is understanding the people who are protesting against the state, which is why winning their hearts and minds is anonymous with walking towards a peaceful resolution of such conflicts and threats. Engaging in inclusive dialogue platforms that aim at the redressal of the people's grievances and the government's shortcomings is the pretext for nipping the threats in the bud. The collective effort of different levels of the federal government towards the resolution of internal security threats can be achieved if and only if they are treated as a part of society and their issues are placed in the socio-political context.