

# **Public Security in Federal Polities**

## Reflections in the Indian Context and the Way Forward

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Conference Room No.2, India International Centre, New Delhi.

I thank the organisers -- the Forum of Federations, the Inter-State Council Secretariat, the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and the Centre for Public Affairs, especially its Chairman Shri Ved Marwarh, and Director, Dr. Ajay K. Mehra for inviting me to the concluding session of this international conference on Public Security in Federal Polities. Scholars and experts have deliberated on the subject in different sessions yesterday and today. I am sure they must have made a thorough analysis of the various angles of the subject and offered concrete suggestions.

Public security assumes great significance in any country, especially in a federal polity. It is the bounden duty of every State to provide security to its citizens: their lives and property. In today's strife-torn world, security—individual as well as collective—is under serious threat. Attacks on human beings at public places like offices, schools, marketplaces, hotels and places of worship are more or less common. Innocent men, women and children become hapless victims of these barbaric acts. I recall an incident that rocked a crowded market in Delhi in September 2008. A 10 year old boy picked up a plastic bag which was dropped by two men on a motorcycle and shouted, "Uncle, you dropped something." Immediately afterwards, the bomb in the plastic bag exploded and the boy's head was blown off.

Terrorism poses a serious threat to peace, democracy, human rights, security and development. It pulls down the pillars of democracy and destroys the most fundamental of all human rights—the right to life, particularly of innocent people. Humanity today is languishing in a culture of violence and hatred instead of basking in the sunshine of peace, tolerance, harmony and brotherhood. Terrorism, by its very nature, denies all that is legitimate in civil society and threatens its very existence. It undermines the very foundation every civil society. It replaces the civilized law by the law of the jungle. The

terrorist attack on Mumbai on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2008 is a recent case of brutality against innocent civilians. This, by no means, is an isolated case. Acts of terror have taken place in many parts of the world. The attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11, 2001 clearly shows that no place on earth is safe. Assassinations, car bombings and instances of aircraft hijacking are not very uncommon.

Left-wing extremism also poses a serious threat to life and property in a number of States in India, especially the hilly terrain of certain bordering areas of West Bengal, Orissa, Jharkhand, Chhatishgarh and Andhra Pradesh. Police and security forces and people suspected to be police informers are particularly targeted; landmines are exploded; communication towers are blown up; traffic is obstructed by felling trees and property is snatched away.

Instances are many. On 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008, around 10.30 in the night, heavily armed militants of Maoists carried out simultaneous and multi-pronged attacks on Nayagarh Town Police Station, District Police Armoury and Nayagarh Police Training School in Orissa. They also attacked Daspalla and Nuagaon Police Stations and Mahipur Police outpost, located nearby. They overwhelmed the security personnel by their superior numerical strength and fire power and looted around 1085 weapons along with a large quantity of ammunitions. 14 persons--13 police personnel and one civilian—were killed and two other security personnel later succumbed to injuries. The Maoists set fire to official records, destroyed Government properties and damaged vehicles.

In May 2009 in Lalgarh, West Bengal, Naxalites threw out the local police and staged attacks against the ruling Left Front Government of the State. There was a complete break down of the administrative machinery for a few weeks. Of course, Lalgarh was released from the Naxalites' control after an operation was launched with the help of CRPF and COBRA forces.

In a plural society like India, people maintain their distinct linguistic, religious and cultural identity. Although they usually live in harmony, occasional tensions do occur resulting in law-and-order problems and threatening public security. In December 2007, communal violence raised its ugly head in Kandhamal district of Orissa, causing loss of life

and property. Houses were set on fire and many, who were rendered homeless, had to spend weeks and months in relief camps. It took several months to restore normalcy there.

I do not mean to say that our planet is the most dangerous place to live in. I also do not believe that the future is bleak. True, the way ahead is beset with challenges. But in the past people have successfully met the challenges, and I am sure, they will do so in future, maybe, with greater strength and vigour. The forces of violence and terror can be defeated by the power of peace and goodwill. Peace initiatives can bring a solution to the problem of violence. We must understand the genesis of this evil. What is stated in the Preamble of the UNESCO Constitution is particularly apt in this context: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." Poverty, hatred, discrimination and lack of sensitivity -- all contribute to the nurturing of such evils. The best remedy lies in eradicating poverty, dispelling fear and in bringing the entire mankind into the orbit of peace, prosperity and progress, ensuring for every citizen a life of equal dignity. Let us all work together to fight all forms of terrorism and extremism in order to establish a peaceful society.

Democracy has struck deep roots in India. People professing different religious faiths, speaking different languages and belonging to different cultures are living together in peace and harmony. All the three wings of government – the executive, the legislative and the judiciary – are working for the welfare of all including the minorities and the marginalized, and contributing to the smooth functioning of a vibrant democracy. I have the good fortune of serving all these three wings. As a lawyer, I have tried to provide wings to judges to fly high in the sky of justice. As a member of the Parliament, I was a part of the legislature. Now as the Governor of a State, I have the rare opportunity to head its executive. From my own experience, I can say with confidence that the future is bright. With concerted and coordinated effort, the forces threatening public security will be defeated and peace will prevail.

Let me once again thank the organisers for inviting me here to participate in this international conference. I must also thank the learned participants for allowing me to express my views.

Jai Hind