ABSTRACT

ROLE OF ARMED FORCES IN INTERNAL SECURITY MANAGEMENT IN NORTH EASTERN STATES OF INDIA (1985 TO PRESENT)

In pre-independence India, conventional wisdom had it that external security threats stemmed from hostile countries and internal security threats were all totally, indigenous. In the six decades since then, the internal security situation has undergone a sea change. Many internal security threats are externally powered or guided or inspired or supported or tolerated. Therefore, as change has been said to be the only constant in the order of things, the country has to adapt attitude and policies to the new realities. We can no longer merely offer or accept the excuse of the “foreign hand”. The rapidly developing political, economic and military strength of India, is unfortunately accompanied by a fragile Internal Security scenario, could become a significant factor for instability in the region and the world.

While the constitutionally defined and assigned principal role of the armed forces rightly is to protect India from external threats and aggression and protect our territorial integrity and security, there exists a provision to employ the armed forces in internal security duties as and when deemed necessary by the government. The provision should be used only in exceptional cases since internal security is not the primary role of the armed forces.

It is pertinent that great care and caution should be exercised while assigning the role and employing Indian armed forces in internal securities duties. Of course, internal securities duties or commitments should not be mixed up and confused with natural disasters like cyclone, flood, tsunami etc. Their services should be sought only in rare cases where other security agencies have failed or proved ineffective to address the problem and handle the emerging situation. However, after having raised so many new organisations, the employment of armed forces still continues. The involvement of armoured forces for prolonged periods in assisting the civil administration in controlling law and order is not without consequences, both within the armed forces and the nation as whole. Such large scale prolonged involvement goes against the basic tenets of democratic system of governance and could have far reaching effects on the Indian polity.

Yet another drawback or adverse impact of prolonged deployment of the army in the so called “management of Internal Security and violence”, is the shift in the focus and priorities from the classical conventional role of meeting external threats to the daily issues of “internal security” since it becomes the immediate major concern of political leadership and governing mechanism, which also impacts the Armed Forces. The employment of the central security forces for internal security duties and counter – insurgency operations is mostly adhoc. This has adversely affected their training and recuperation schedules. The employment of a plethora of forces inevitably results in lack of cohesiveness and dissonance in the execution of policy and is bound to lead to institutionally debilitating turf battles.