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## China's Involvement in India's Internal Security Threats

30 Jul, 2012   [Dr. N Manoharan, Senior Fellow, VIF](#)   [View2697](#)   [Comments 0](#)

Unlike Pakistan, the involvement of China in meddling with India's internal security is not a simple story of 'sub-conventional warfare'. It is rather complex. Under Mao Zedong, China supported revolutionary insurgencies throughout the world. The spirit of *Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai* between India and China and the former was tagged as "neutrals" in the initial years. Yet, what made China to take interest in "national self-determination" in various parts of India? Partly it was due to Beijing's perception that its southern neighbour had been turning into an "anti-China" country. Chinese take lightly Indian sympathy to Tibetan refugees, who were fleeing the state repression. China also suspected Indian covert rebellion in Tibet. But, the actual support by China to rebel movements of India gradually commenced after the 1962 Sino-Indian war. Relations between the two countries hit rock bottom. For Beijing, patronage to insurgent groups in the northeast India looked ideal for geographical proximity, but also due to the region's isolation from the Indian mainland, and the existence of external support network created by the then East Pakistan.

From 1966, China started training several batches of rebels from the northeast. Incidentally, the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution', the 'Cultural Revolution' commenced in the same year in China. The first to reach out to the Chinese help were the Nagas. China was the "only hope for revolutionaries". Taking cue from Nagas, other groups in the region, especially Mizos and Manipuris, got hooked to China. It already been in the job of supporting insurgent groups of the northeast since the mid-1950s. The infrastructure and methodology was there and it became easy for China to take on. The China-trained guerillas not only fought better, but were also not amenable to come to negotiations when the time was ripe for resolving conflicts. However, when it came to China's involvement in Naxalism, it was more of inspiration and direct material support. Charu Mazumdar, one of the pioneering leaders of the Naxalite movement, famously remarked: "China's Chairmanism and China's path is our path". Naxals saw Maoism as the right template for making a revolution in India.

After 1978, Deng Xiaoping put Chinese economic, security and foreign policies on a new footing. His policy of "reform and opening up" replaced revolutionary and anti-imperialist elements of China's foreign policy to the overriding imperative of economic development. The Cultural Revolution was severely condemned for having obstructed and delayed China's economic and technological progress, and for the divisions it brought about between 'inner' and 'outer' worlds. China's support to Northeast insurgency dwindled in the late 1970s, if not dried out completely. At around the same time, it was noted that there was gradual normalisation of Sino-Indian relations. During this period, the northeast militant groups got an alternative support from Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar.

The revival of Chinese involvement in India's internal security threats commenced roughly in mid-1998 when Sino-Indian relations witnessed a wake of nuclear tests by India. And Beijing had been looking at the developments in the strategic landscape, especially India-US relations with concern and suspicion. More than the Indo-US Nuclear Deal, China was far more concerned about the increasing defence cooperation between India and United States. China's role in India's internal security threats during this phase has been wide-ranging: clandestine support to militant groups, asylum to Indian insurgent leaders taking asylum in its territory, turning blind eye to Chinese arms flows into India and cyber warfare.

The rebels of the northeast, apart from their nuisance value to the Indian security forces deployed in the region, are also amenable to Chinese to target key Tibetan leaders in exile based in India and to gather vital intelligence information about Indian force deployment along the borders. In the present period, Chinese intelligence agencies have taken over the role of Mao's CPC. Apart from reviving contacts with groups like NSCN and PLA, China's linkage has now extended to touch new groups like United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), National Liberation Front of Bodoland (NLFB) and All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF). On linkage with Indian Maoists, there is no evidence to suggest China's direct support. But, China did not wish to do anything overtly. Since indirect involvement is hard to prove a retaliatory response is more remote. Also, it draws less international stigma. Most importantly, it provided China 'plausible deniability'. On cyber warfare, the methodology is simple and cultivated and loosely controlled "patriotic" and mercenary hackers that allows the state to deny responsibility something similar to the case of small arms.

From time-to-time, India has taken up the issue with Beijing both diplomatically as well as through the aegis of counter-terror cooperation. India has categorically denied giving any help to insurgent groups, particularly the ULFA, UNLF, NSCN (IM) and PLA. But, what surprises is the confidence at which the issue is raised and discussed with the Chinese. India's official position on the entire gamut of China's involvement

One agrees that opinions and assessment on the state of China's involvement should be expressed after careful judgment based on the of building a stable relationship between the two countries. But, there is nothing wrong in having a structured mechanism to discuss th Simultaneously, all routes of Chinese interactions with Indian militant groups should be blocked. This requires enhancement of India's b from cooperation of India's other neighbours like Myanmar, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan. Except Bhutan, none of India's neighb consistent in cooperating with India to tackle insurgents in the region.

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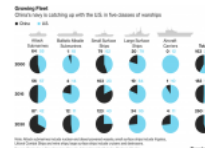


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