

Terrorism, Agriculture and U.S India Cooperation

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Terrorism and Agriculture are among the issues raised in the Joint India - U.S statement issued on 18th July 2005 during Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh's meeting with President Bush. As the statement declares, the two leaders resolved -

- to create an international environment conducive to promotion of democratic values, and to strengthen democratic practices in societies which wish to become open and pluralistic.

- To combat terrorism relentlessly.

The leaders also agreed to -

- launch a U.S - India knowledge initiative on agriculture focused on promoting teaching, research, service and commercial linkages.

The MOU on Science and Technology signed between U.S and India on 20th July, 2005 has made it clear that teaching and research would focus on Biotechnology or genetic engineering, also often referred to as the second green revolution. The Science Technology Agreement cites the green revolution in the 1960's as the beginning of U.S - India cooperation in India. To assess the impact of the new agreement we need to do an honest appraisal of the impact of the green revolution.

This is not the first time a U.S driven agriculture agenda is being imposed on India. The so-called green revolution was introduced forty years ago. And it fuelled terrorism and extremism in the 1980's in Punjab.

While the two leaders resolve, "to combat terrorism relentlessly" they are promoting the technologies, and trade models, which serve the US corporate interests and destroy farmers' livelihood security thus becoming the breeding ground for terrorism as I have shown in my book "The Violence of the Green Revolution" (Zed Books).

When we became independent, our agriculture was in crisis due to neglect and exploitation. The Agriculture Minister, K.M. Munshi put priority to repairing nature's hydrological cycle and nutritional cycle. These are the principles followed in sustainable, ecological farming.

However, while Indian scientists and policy makers were working out self-reliant and ecological alternatives for the regeneration of agriculture in India, another vision of agricultural development was taking shape in American foundations and aid agencies. This vision was based not on cooperation with nature, but on its conquest.

It was based not on the intensification of nature's processes, but on the intensification of credit and purchased inputs like chemical fertilizers and pesticides. It was based not on self-reliance, but dependence. It was based not on diversity but uniformity. Advisors and experts came from America to shift India's agricultural research and agricultural policy from an indigenous and ecological model

to an exogenous, and high input one, finding, of course, partners in sections of the elite, because the new model suited their political priorities and interests.

There were three groups of international agencies involved in transferring the American model of agriculture to India - the private American Foundations, the American Government and the World Bank. The Ford Foundation had been involved in training and agricultural extension since 1952. The Rockefeller Foundation had been involved in remodeling the agricultural research system in India since 1953. In 1958, the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, which had been set up in 1905, was reorganized, and Ralph Cummings, the field director of the Rockefeller Foundation, became its first dean. In 1960, he was succeeded by A.B. Joshi, and in 1965 by M.S. Swaminathan

Besides reorganizing Indian research institutes on American lines, the Rockefeller Foundation also financed the trips of Indians to American institutions. Between 1956 and 1970, 90 short-term travel grants were awarded to Indian leaders to see the American agricultural institutes and experimental stations. One hundred and fifteen trainees finished studies under the Foundation. Another 2000 Indians were financed by USAID to visit the US for agricultural education during the period.

The work of the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations was facilitated by agencies like the World Bank, which provided the credit to introduce a capital-intensive agricultural model in a poor country. In the mid 1960s India was forced to devalue its currency to the extent of 37.5%. The World Bank and USAID also exerted pressure for favourable conditions for foreign investment in India's fertilizer industry, import liberalization, and elimination of domestic controls.

The World Bank provided credit for the foreign exchange needed to implement these policies. The foreign exchange component of the Green Revolution strategy, over the five year plan period (1966 - 71) was projected to be Rs. 1114 crores, which converted to about \$ 2.8 billion at the then official rate. This was a little over six times the total amount allocated to agriculture during the preceding third plan (Rs. 191 crores). Most of the foreign exchange was needed for the import of fertilizers, seeds and pesticides, the new input in a chemically intensive strategy.

The World Bank and USAID stepped in to provide the financial input for a technology package that the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations had evolved and transferred.

The occurrence of drought in 1966 caused a severe drop in food production in India, and an unprecedented increase in food grain supply from the US. Food dependency was used to set new policy conditions on India. The US President, Lyndon Johnson, put wheat supplies on a short tether. He refused to commit food aid beyond one month in advance until an agreement to adopt the green revolution package was signed between the Indian agriculture minister, C.S. Subramanian and the US Secretary of agriculture, Orville Freeman.

The combination of science and politics in creating the green revolution goes back to the period in the 1940s when Daniels, the US Ambassador to the Government of Mexico, and Henry Wallace, Vice President of the United States set up a scientific mission to assist in the development of agricultural technology in Mexico. The office of the Special Studies was set up in Mexico in 1943 within the agricultural ministry as a cooperation venture between the Rockefeller Foundation and the Mexican Government.

In 1944, Dr. J. George Harrar, head of the new Mexican

research programme and Dr. Frank Hanson, an official of the Rockefeller Foundation in New York invited Norman Borlaug to shift from his classified wartime laboratory job in Dupont to the plant breeding programme in Mexico. By 1954, Borlaug's 'miracle seeds' of dwarf varieties of wheat had been bred. In 1970, Borlaug had been awarded the 'Nobel Peace Prize' for his 'great contributions towards creating a new world situation with regard to nutrition'.

However, the green revolution did not bring peace to Punjab, it brought terrorism.

The Green Revolution, awarded a Nobel Prize for Peace in 1970, has contributed to two social and environmental disasters in India. One was the extremist movement and terrorism in Punjab, which led to the military assault on the Golden Temple and finally the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984. The other was the gas leak from the Union Carbide pesticides plant in Bhopal, which killed 3,000 people on that tragic night of December 1984. In the two decades since that tragedy, 30,000 people have died in Bhopal due to the leak of these toxic gases. The Punjab violence also took the lives of 30,000 people in the years following 1984.

Why did a 'Revolution' awarded a Nobel Peace Prize lead to so much violence? The Green Revolution came with a promise of peace. But its crude linearity - Technology -> Prosperity -> Peace - failed. The reason for this failure was because the technologies of the Green Revolution, like technologies of war, leave nature and society impoverished. To expect prosperity to grow out of violent technologies that destroy the earth, erode biodiversity, deplete and pollute water and leave peasants indebted and in ruins was a false assumption made during the launch of Green Revolution. This false assumption is being repeated in the launch of the Second Green Revolution based on biotechnology and genetic engineering, which are at the core of the US - India agreement.

The 'terrorism' and 'extremism' in Punjab was born out of the experience of injustice of the Green Revolution as a development model, which centralized power and appropriated resources and earth from the people. In the words of Gurmata from the All Sikh Convention (quoted in my book, The Violence of the Green Revolution), on 13th April 1986,

"If the hard-earned income of the people or the natural resources of any nation or the region are forcibly plundered; if the goods produced by them are paid for at arbitrarily determined prices while the goods bought are sold at higher prices and if, in order to carry this process of economic exploitation to its logical conclusion, the human rights of a nation, region or people are lost then the people will be like the Sikhs today - shackled by the chains of slavery."

The peasants and people of Punjab were clearly not experiencing the Green Revolution as a source of prosperity and freedom. For them it was slavery. The Green Revolution, the social and ecological impacts it had, and the responses it created among an angry and disillusioned peasantry, has many lessons for our times, both for understanding the roots of terrorism and searching for solutions to violence.

These are connections our leaders fail to make. The more they fight terrorism, the more they create it with their policies that create economic insecurity. The more they talk democracy, the more they destroy freedom by imposing trade rules and policies that deny people freedom and work against farmers and citizens. The Agreement on Agriculture of the WTO was drafted by a Cargill official. The Trade

Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement was drafted by a group of US corporations including Monsanto. Monsanto's seed monopolies have already pushed thousands of farmers in India to suicide. Promoting commerce for Monsanto and Cargill through the US India Agreement on Agriculture will kill more farmers, and ultimately destroy India's food security, sovereignty and democracy, fuelling more terrorism and extremism.

The Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement between US and India establishes intellectual property protocols of research by passing consultation with Indian scientists and the Indian public which has been resisting the US style IPR regimes which force countries to patent life, and create monopolies on seeds, medicine and software. For us, these agreements are instruments of corporate dictatorship; they are not instruments of democracy. And as dictatorship, they will fuel more anger, more discontent, more frustration.

Terrorism is a child of economically unjust and anti-democratic policies, as became clear in Punjab in India and Oklahoma in the US. As Joel Dyer says in the Harvest of Rage, an investigation on the Oklahoma bombing and its roots in the US farm crisis, farmers loosing their farms and livelihoods are victims of long-term stress. If they are not helped, they get violent. If they blame themselves, they direct violence inwards and commit suicide. If they blame others, they turn their violence outwards.

This is the violence of terrorism and extremism. The only lasting solution to dealing with terror is to increase people's freedom and security by protecting their livelihoods, their cultures, their rights to resources, and their democratic choices in how their society and lives are organized.

The India - US Agreement on Agriculture and Science and Technology will do the opposite. It will breed more insecurity and erode people's capacity to make choices. It will therefore fail in its two prime objectives of promoting democracy and ending terrorism.