



Naxalism: Need to Revisit Basics

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Just because you are a hammer, every problem is not a nail. Left extremist problem is serious but use of Army is no solution. We first understand the nature and ingredients of the problem. Naxalism is a variant of Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW) in which civil society is the critical element. This war is to protect the civil society and at the same time fought in the battle ground of civil society.

Experiences of the armies world over, including India, have been that armies have not proved best antidotes against warriors who are in civil society and hold no defined ground. Armies are trained, structured, equipped and work on doctrines suited to fight against visible enemies in defined territories. The studies conducted so far indicate that the societies that are fragile, fragmented and alienated on one hand and ruled by illegitimacy, credibility and capacity on the other are not only vulnerable to threats from 4GW but quite often lose them — their notwithstanding.

The modern day guru of 4GW William Lind aptly observes that, "If nation states are going to survive, people in power must earn and be governed." Addressing the American Council of Foreign Relations, he said: "The heart of Fourth Generation Warfare is a crisis of legitimacy. How true to the Indian model when he added that, "The establishment is no longer made up of 'policy types'— most of its important members are placenters. Their expertise is in becoming and then remaining members of the establishment. Their reality is covert politics and not overt expertise". When the 4GW will visit them their response would be to "close the shutters on the windows of Versailles". To meet the challenge, raise its level and style of governance, build capacities and raise legitimacy of the political class.

The immediate need in India is for all the political parties, national or regional, to realise that Left wing extremism is a political problem created through blood bath and it is their politics which is responsible for it. Maoists feel and are able to sell that ousting their form of polity is do or die. The ruling class is fast losing its legitimacy and credibility due to its subordinating national interests to electoral policies, craving for power only to perpetuate themselves, allowing vested interests to undermine the civil society at the cost of justice and fair play and using their political power to exploit the society on all conceivable fault lines to gain power. All this provides the right recipe for a 4GW and in a setting like this any extremist can exploit it as a low cost and sustainable option to bleed India.

Developing a political consensus, cutting across party lines, and all democratic forces joining hands together treating it as a common national requirement. With a political consensus it should be possible to invoke Article 355 of the Constitution, empower the Centre to support central forces in badly hit areas with total central support, legislate new laws and empower central security agencies to undertake more effective operations. Majority of Maoist supporters or even their cadres have little to do with Maoism. They are only frustrated and angered people with a sense of injustice, oppression and indignity. Maoists are cleverly exploiting this sentiment to their advantage — caste conflicts in Bihar, resentment in Andhra, discontent against forest laws in tribal areas, unemployment amongst youth and radicalism amongst Muslims prescribing through gun as solution of all their grievances. The local grievances need to be effectively addressed through improved governance and accountability.

Maoist propaganda must be effectively countered, particularly at the political level. All parties should activate their local units to counter Maoist ideology — a job that has been totally ignored and cannot be done by policemen on their behalf. Additionally, through a concerted sustained psy-war offensive highlighting contradiction in their ideologies and practices, tales of their brutalities, collaborations with the enemy and their use for personal comfort, incidents of moral turpitude etc. should be exposed. The local and national media, think tanks and NGOs in the region could be leveraged for the purpose. Some of their front organisations, masquerading as think tanks and NGOs, engaged in subversion also need to be tackled effectively, through new legislations, if necessary.

Money is one of the most important factors helping extremists to acquire weapons and explosives, raise their cadre strength by recruiting members and carrying out mass mobilisation programmes. They are reportedly collecting Rs 1,600-crore a year, which is big money for an impoverished area. With a determined effort and no risk, the governments can take stern actions against bus protection money, transporters paying levies, contractors giving bribes and corrupt government officials sharing the loot from the development. The people would be willing to cooperate if provided sense of security and protection which can be achieved at a much lesser cost.

The most important advantage of 4GW warriors is the advantage of invisibility. Only quality operational grade intelligence can make then physical or legal actions. It is also the only instrumentality through which proactive operations can be launched. The tendency to un intelligence and doing little to strengthen it is largely responsible for recent tactical setbacks.

The tendency to raise additional battalions without corresponding accretion in intelligence network creates little pressure on the e provides them more visible targets to hit. State police forces, with their intimate knowledge of the terrain, language and local recruitmen to develop ground intelligence. They need to be resourced and trained for intelligence work at war footing. Diversion of atleast 30% of ce grants to state police for intelligence work should be made mandatory.

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