

Dual Power

Truth is stranger than fiction. The ruling authorities throughout the world seem to have accepted the reality of dual power, at least as a strategy of maintaining their official presence in a desperate situation. Insurgencies without marxist tag are increasingly getting powerful in most third world countries by challenging traditional pattern of governance. Faced with harassment and uncertainty, the rulers everywhere would like to strike a deal with insurgents, deliberately allowing their adversaries to exert control hoping somewhat against hope that one day they could be pacified. True, some insurgents are regularly returning to what they call mainstream by continually surrendering arms but many more are joining the rebels.

Indians have been witnessing this dual power syndrome for no less than five decades in Nagaland. Also, in many parts of North-East parallel administration continues with different degrees of control despite massive state repression. And in Kashmir, whether they admit it or not, in some areas government writ does not exist. It may be short of dual power but government is hardly in a position to exercise its exclusive authority. That Maoists in India have created some pockets of dual power is a fact of life though New Delhi's security strategists downplay the alternative scenario. As for Asom ULFA is not just a state of mind, it makes its presence felt by thwarting civil administration from time to time. It is again a case of dual power of transitory nature.

In truth the concept of dual power gets a fresh lease of life after the escalation of war in Lebanon where Israel and Hizbullah—a Shiite militant outfit—trade deadly strikes at the moment while the people of southern Lebanon can do little except to minimise sufferings in silence. The Lebanese people of southern provinces of the country have somehow reconciled themselves to live with two centres of authority.

Pakistan is now a classic example of dual authority in the tribal belts along Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The British failed to tame the fiercely independent Pushtuns living in tribal agencies bordering Afghanistan. They used to rule nominally these areas through their political agents (maliks as they are called locally) without ever trying to interfere in day to day administration. With 80,000 Pakistani troops engaged in confrontation with Islamic radicals along Pakistan-Afghanistan border, Waziristan—the much disturbed tribal agency—today looks like Pakistan's own Kashmir, plagued by continuing violence and blood-letting. Not only are the Pakistani militants now stronger than ever, their alliance with the resurgent Afghan Taliban has been substantially strengthened much to the dismay of the trouble-shooters of Washington and Islamabad. The depth of insurgency vis-a-vis the absence of Islamabad's controlling authority can be gauged from the fact that Pakistani army convoy can move through Waziristan only with an escort of helicopter gunships. And in Afghanistan the ousted Taliban are virtually the other rulers in the rugged mountains where Kabul's mandate does not work. Fighting is a way of life for most young Afghans today though after 30 years of fighting 'Afghanistan has lost two generations of middle class talents'. For all practical purposes US troops are leaving the Afghan

theatre leaving it to NATO forces to manage this unmanageable land. Not that NATO forces will be able to abolish dual power structure in Afghanistan anytime soon unless both sides agree to compromise.

Dual power also exists in India's another close neighbour—Sri Lanka. Truce between Tamil Tigers and Colombo government may be fragile but the very idea of initiating peace process under international monitoring suggests among other things that Colombo cannot exert its influence and administrative authority over a sizeable portion of the territory. In Iraq it is not yet a case of dual power but the way insurgency is developing will soon plunge much of Sunni Iraq into a dual power arrangement. Russians may not like it but they have no option but to tolerate a situation of dual power in Chechnya.

Dual power essentially signifies deepening political crisis for a society that has to face such a tragedy. The problem is that ordinary people in most cases die in cross-fire. But larger reality remains around. When large segments of population remain dissatisfied and marginalised dual power through insurgency or otherwise seems to be the logical culmination. *██████*