

And Now Surgical Offensive

In politics and in diplomacy as well friends are temporary while foes are permanent. If there is no enemy, they can always create one. Bush will be remembered by the ruling elites in capitals across the globe for giving them a unique idea of combating 'stateless terrorism' for years to come. Faced with enormous internal unrest throughout the country for unprecedented price rise and the ever swelling ranks of the marginalised prime minister Manmohan Singh the other day resurrected the pet theme of cross-border terrorism originating from Pakistan, albeit the post-Musharraf democrats of Islamabad dismissed Mr Singh's remark as totally uncalled for, particularly at a time when both sides were engaged in pro-active exercise to improve bilateral relations. Then a day later India's external affairs minister shot back by ruling out any meaningful dialogue with Pakistan because of Islamabad's reluctance to bring the people behind the Mumbai attacks to justice. In other words rulers on both sides of the fence cannot rule peacefully without their traditional approach to 'external threat'. It is next to impossible for them to make a clear break with the past and show that they are really serious about peace. They will be jobless in a no-war situation. Previously they used to highlight cross-border terrorism in respect of Jammu and Kashmir only. It is no longer restricted to the confines of J&K only. So they think. In plain language they have now liberty to utilise 'external threat' to security to silence any voice of dissent.

If there are not many takers of cross-border terrorism threatening India's security they can whip up 'maoist menace' any time anywhere in the country. The security strategists in New Delhi have many ways to send the maoist party a tough message—and Manmohan Singh began exploring them even before he started his second innings. The reality of governing a country where about 50 percent live in poverty generally tends to reinforce left slant. But over the past five years the Congress-led united progressive alliance government has adopted a regressive agenda while escalating oppression by security forces against peaceful marchers and civil rights activists.

Not that maoists are militarily more sophisticated than Pakistan-based jihadists. Yet maoists, not the jihadists, are being demonised, day in and day out, in the media, by the government and the so-called main stream parties. The fact is that maoist violence has been defensive, possibly caught in a bind, in some tribal belts. And solution for the authorities lies in how to revamp the security establishment paving the way for a perennial state of civil war. They are now in the final stage of preparation for the launch of their "surgical" offensive against the Naxals (or Maoists), for which specialised training will be imparted to BSF and ITBP—two notorious paramilitary units, that are already trained in imperial brutality. The point is how to make them more brute to terrorise ordinary people, not terrorists.

Whether they like it or not, political right in India is in no position to confront the maoists politically. And political left, rather official left, is equally directionless to unleash political discourse against the maoists, lest they lose their

grip over the rank and file. Even in the seventies they stopped ideological debate arbitrarily apprehending erosion in their cadre-base.

Today their political bankruptcy is more naked than ever before. They are panicky, they are stepped in fear and apprehension about the future. They always talk of fighting the maoists politically without really showing any intention to open political dialogue with the maoists at any level. Healthy politics is not for them as they cannot think of an alternative for the dispossessed. So the ruling marxists of Bengal have created their own Salwa Judum in the form of 'village resistance committee' by mobilising out laws—harmads—to fight the maoists politically.

The Sultans of Delhi and their regional satraps always treat naxalite (or maoist) violence as a law and order problem, a countrywide security crisis which it is not. In reality they talk of security of vested interests that stand in the way of social and economic justice.

Whenever there are reports of maoist violence from any tribal area, they routinely resort to sabre-rattling by blaming it on some departments for non-implementation of 'development projects', specifically meant for tribals.

They project themselves as benevolent zamindars—landlords—of yester years. Meanwhile, tribals become mere statistics and academic pursuit follows. And in the end nothing changes and they think more of the same—operation. This time they call it surgical operation. It's a circumstance as old and common as time.

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