

COMMENT

Of Insurgency and Communists

NORTHEAST IS AN ETHNIC cauldron. It's also a testing field of ethnic insurgency as different ethnic insurgencies with diverse ideological orientations have been working in the region, sometimes at cross-purposes for decades. It's also an area where the limits of ethnic insurgency manifest, particularly at this critical juncture, in more ways than one. Maybe, the powers that be seem to have decided to live with them with carrot and stick policy as they cannot wipe out so many violent political tendencies with violence. And most of these insurgencies are not inspired by any brand of communist ideology. In the seventies when the Chinese used to describe Asia, Africa and Latin America as the storm centre of world revolution communist insurgency with a definite goal of capturing state power, gained currency in most third world countries. Even in Europe Red Brigade made a sensation in Italy while sending shivers down the spines of the ruling elites. In the east Japan too witnessed such a phenomenon. It's no more. The situation has changed radically for the worse, forcing most communist insurgencies to wither away and paving the way for the forward march of non-communist insurgencies.

All of a sudden maoist insurgency in Nepal added a new dimension to communist project once again, albeit the prospects of the Nepalese maoist insurgency getting back what it has lost after the historic compromise or blunder—political superiority and military edge—seem bleak. It's in a process of disowning its own past. After Nepal it is India where maoist insurgency or what may be called communist insurgency in a broader perspective is a force to reckon with. Whether they could survive the military onslaught of the state is a different matter, it is communist insurgency they stand for with a definite ideological outlook.

For one thing communist guerillas are once again hitting the headlines in the Philippines. After a long period of battle setbacks, communist insurgents in the Philippines have grown stronger in 2010 by recruiting more young fighters and launching a number of successful attacks on government forces and establishments. Incidentally Filipino communists like their Indian counterparts dogmatically adhere to maoist ideology—or maoism whatever it means. The village and jungle-based insurgency has survived decades of brutal military crackdown and battle losses since 2002. Achieving 11 percent more attacks than in 2009, the rebels reestablished their authority in six rural strongholds that had been captured by the military earlier, and reportedly organised 413 ambushes, showing their enhanced military capability. Guerillas' improved fire power and military knowledge to manufacture improvised bombs used in ambush, recently led to killing of 172 security personnel (an increase by 9 percent), including 102 regular soldiers. Then the war was not a one-way traffic. Government forces killed 35 insurgents in 2009, captured 131 others, while more than 150 surrendered. After talks being frozen for six years, President Benigno Aquino III's government has resumed talks with the rebel negotiators, aiming to end one of Asia's longest running communist insurgency, dating back to the Huk guerilla warfare of the colonial period.

As for communist insurgency in India, the authorities are totally reluctant to start negotiations. The reason is simple : marxist insurgents are still too weak to bargain from a position of strength. But the resurgence of guerilla activities in the Philippines suggest among other things that communist insurgency cannot be crushed completely anywhere in the world. So long as they denounce gross income inequality, human rights abuses, marginalisation of the marginalised, and broader social injustices, communist insurgency in one form or another is bound to surface despite periodic setbacks. □□□