

Security and Insecurity

SECURITY IS RELATIVE. SO IS INSECURITY. BUT CHIDAMBARAM AND his cabinet colleagues never get tired to reiterate whenever they get a public occasion, the oft-repeated theme of security perception stemming from left-wing extremism or what is commonly known as maoist insurgency. Not that Chidambaram is ill-prepared for the rise of maoism, otherwise affecting, in his own admission, 60 odd districts across the country. In truth the maoists' political clout and ideological spread are very limited but Chidambaram and his friends always ask the people to get angry and panicky even when there is no appreciable maoist violence.

For bad or worse cross-border terrorism with islamic tag and Pakistan-backing is no longer a threat to national security and integrity. At least their low-key propaganda about Pakistan-fuelled terrorism, notwithstanding sporadic violent outbursts in Jammu and Kashmir, suggests so. Nor do home-grown terrorist outfits with religious and ethnic affiliation pose any security problem for the Delhi sultanate. The problem, they think, is basically with the maoists because they offer a class approach to the broad masses of the country without allowing any political space for obscurantist forces to flourish. While addressing a special session organised by the Bharat Chamber of Commerce in Kolkata last month Chidambaram accused the left-wing extremists (or maoists) of not coming to negotiating table eventhough his government was liberal enough not to insist on giving up of their ideology, or laying down of arms or disbanding of People's Guerilla Liberation Army as a pre-condition for dialogue. What all he wants is shunning violence for creating an atmosphere for negotiation. In other words he is actually advocating a kind of cease-fire. But the maoists responded positively to his earlier gesture and got Azad killed because of the government's sinister design. What Chidambaram didn't elaborate at the Chamber of Commerce function was how his paramilitary units in league with local police were conducting operations without a pause even for a single day and yet he was complaining about maoist intransigence. Any kind of negotiations can hardly take place in a situation of hot-chase.

Right now his forces have resumed joint operations in Bengal's flash-point—junglemahal, in violation of pre-election promises. The release of political prisoners has been a hanging fire in the junglemahal region ever since the new dispensation under the Trinamul Congress (TMC) came to power, dislodging the most hated CPM-government. But this new government is not behaving differently than its notorious marxist predecessor when it is the question of tackling left-wing extremists, thanks to Chidambaram's efforts to keep pressure on state government and maoists as well. The old vigilante group has been replaced by a new one and policemen have hardly changed in the changed context in treating naxalites. So the maoists of junglemahal are back in the news for their hit and run offensive. The authorities are again banning protest rallies and mass meetings with a view to denying the maoists some open political space which they desperately need to air their grievances publicly and overcome isolation.

Not that the poor, tribals or non-tribals, overwhelmingly support the maoists. In many places they are opposing them even by risking their lives. If they continue to indulge in individual killing in the name of punishing police informers and force ordinary wage earners to pay exorbitant levy as it happens in case of many primary school teachers in the junglemahal, the Chidambarams won't need much fire power to crush the movement.

The question of class enemy in maoist doctrine is somewhat bizarre as it was even in the early seventies. By not allowing any political party or group, parliamentary or otherwise, in the region which is not really a guerilla liberated zone in stricter sense, they are in reality digging their own grave, simply by compounding their mass isolation further. If they have a superior ideology, they have nothing to lose! If the Chinese brand of new democracy is their programme, they are actually deviating from it by blocking the possibility of a broad-based united front. Mao's United Front strategy was successful both nationally and internationally. It is not really the case with Indian maoists. How Chinese and Koreans fought to the last against the common enemy—America—uniting like brothers and sharing weal and woe with each other, is history. This year China and North Korea are celebrating the 50th anniversary of their historic coopeation and friendship.

The popular notion that maoists represent at best a fringe section of tribal communities in some backward pockets, yet to be touched by glittering extravaganza of modernisation, is increasingly gaining currency. After all it is not a party of tribals only, it has an alternate vision of world. Whether maoists like it or not history has shown that there has to be a balance, especially in a vast country like India with multi-cultural and multi-ethnic identities, that allows the radicalism of youth to be transmitted throughout the new doctrines that are created in order to avoid the process of creating a political attitude that is worse than what is to be overthrown in the first place. □□□

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