



Internal Armed Conflict in India
Forging a Joint Civil-Military Approach

Lt Gen Rostum Nanavatty

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Review by A K 'Sam' Sharma

A Revolution in CI Ops..?

Though the writings of foreign classical experts like Trinquier, Galula, McQueen, Thompson and Frank Kitson have been alluded to, essentially the book retains its India-centric tone over tones, even as the opening chapter titled, "Internal Armed Conflicts in General", gives a broad brush to these conflicts the world over. The book is mostly about insurgency and counter insurgency to be specific. These are referred to in India as 'armed rebellion'. Based on General Nanavatty's first-hand experience in service, first as a regimental officer (2/8 Gorkha Rifles) and later as a formation commander in the Northeastern region - Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and South Assam (GOC 3 Corps), in Sri Lanka (Commander Parachute Commando task Force) and in Jammu & Kashmir (Northern Army Commander); the tome has a touch of reality and truth. It is based on the presupposition that internal armed conflicts within the country will continue and the armed forces will, perforce, have to continue to play a noteworthy role in their management and resolution. The General has attempted to associate the views of experts with his own experience and suggested ways in which the underlying principles of counterinsurgency operations can be applied in the Indian backdrop to create conditions necessary for the success of a campaign.

Deeply and rigorously researched when he was holding the Chattrapati Chair in the Pune University for two years, the author has tried to tackle three major issues—firstly, he has attempted to dispel the illusion that counterinsurgency is a matter for the security forces alone; secondly to emphasise the need for a joint civil-military methodology towards tackling of internal armed conflicts; and lastly, the need to devise a civil-military doctrine to address the issue. The first chapter delves into internal armed conflicts in general. Chapters II to VI look at and high-light lessons from the Indian experience and Chapters VII to X look into various courses of action and suggest a way forward.

Of special import is a chapter titled, "Fundamental Principles Revisited". In it the author discusses the five principles of government campaign in CI Ops. These are, that the government must function according to the law, deny external involvement, resurrect the institutions of the state government, ensure unity of effort and mobilise the population. From these, the author has derived specific principles to be followed by the security forces while tackling insurgency. The author has also dealt with applying these principles for creating conditions for success, with emphasis on synergy of operations and intelligence. He has also delved into examining the future 'prospects' for the internal armed conflict-prone J&K, Manipur, Nagaland, Assam and those impacted by Left Wing Extremism. How these scenarios actually play out will have to await the test of time.

The book was released by one of India's foremost soldiers, Lt Gen S K Sinha, (Retd) in a function organised by CLAWS. General Sinha emphasised the inescapable need for 'jointness', the principles of real-time actionable intelligence, use of minimum force, the need for winning the hearts and minds of the populace, and the requirement of bringing the dissidents to the talking table. These aspects have been discussed in great detail in the book. The author has also commented upon the policies adopted by the political leadership and the bureaucracy for conflict resolution and the weaknesses therein. He has thereafter highlighted concepts to tackle internal armed conflicts, laying out clear principles for a holistic government approach and the reorganisation of security forces to ensure greater synergy in operations. There is a military bias in his approach but given his background, that is understandable. He has raised many serious issues that need to be debated at length in the various fora of the Indian milieu and polity.

Though heavy on the intellect, and a 'no-nonsense type' of a book, it is easy to comprehend and very readable. Neither conflict nor theatre-specific, it is high on dogma and concept. This book could form the basis for revising and updating General Staff publications on counterinsurgency operations/ doctrine for sub-conventional operations. This erudite treatise should be made an essential reading for the politician, civil servant, law enforcer, and soldier. It is strongly recommended for the professional soldier and for those who have an interest in national security issues.

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