

**Internal Armed Conflict in India: Forging a Joint Civil–Military Approach**, by Rostum K. Nanavatty, New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2013, pp. 246, INR 595

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Though the Indian Army has been committed to counterinsurgency operations for the past 60 years, Indian policymakers are yet to formulate a joint civil–military doctrine for resolution of internal armed conflicts. The lack of the same is evident from the internal security situation obtaining in the country. Rostum Nanavatty's *Internal Armed Conflict in India: Forging a Joint Civil–Military Approach* is based on his vast experience as a young regimental officer to an Army Commander, varying from the North-eastern region—Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and south Assam—to Sri Lanka, and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Nanavatty has correlated the views of experts and suggested ways in which the fundamental principles of counterinsurgency operations can be applied in the peculiar Indian context to create conditions necessary for the success of a campaign. The book is India-centric, based on the premise that internal armed conflict in India, irrespective of its causes or its goals, will persist and that the military will continue to play a significant role in its management and resolution.

The author has very appropriately divided the book into three parts: the first part discusses internal armed conflict in general; the second part looks at and draw lessons from India's experience; and the last part examines various options and suggests a way forward.

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In part one, the author explains the various terms relevant to internal armed conflict, followed by the influence of globalization on internal armed conflicts, its impact on national power and external involvement in internal armed conflict. He adroitly tabulates the evolution of fundamental principles of counterinsurgency and compares the same in the British, the US and Indian armies. He highlights the commonality in their doctrines; yet there are variations in perceptions and emphasis.

In part two, the author notes that India has witnessed protracted nature of such conflicts, essentially due to the government's inability to capitalize on the successful conduct of operations by the security forces: to build civil counterinsurgency capacities within the state; to provide good governance; and to arrive at a mutually acceptable political solution to the problem. He examines the current external environment, followed by an analysis of the current internal armed conflicts in India, aptly summarized in tabulated form.

The author has covered the gist of the Indian Constitution related to internal security, highlighting the demarcation of responsibility: dealing with external threats is the job of the Union government, while internal threats to law and order are dealt with by the state, albeit with the former's assistance. However, there is some ambiguity regarding armed rebellion exceeding threat to public order as given in the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). While the CrPC is precise in the manner in which armed forces are to be employed in aid to civil authorities, it does not cover their employment in internal armed conflict situations. These are contained in the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA). The author has very rightly summated its necessity, correlating the existence of a similar act in the United Kingdom (UK) for Northern Ireland. The apprehension about AFSPA is due to misinformation and lack of understanding—if there was no insurgency, there would be no requirement for the army in those areas; if there is no requirement for the army, then there is no requirement of AFSPA. He has illustrated some of the aberrations and how they have been dealt with as per the law.

Nanavatty then comments on the proliferation of the Central Armed Police Force (CAPF). He refers to their 'proliferation' because the government yields to temptation to establish a discrete force in response to each new operational requirement. The establishment of this 'type' force can prove to be inflexible, uneconomical and impractical—there is always the danger of having too much or too little of a type force. He has also covered, in detail, the organizational and functional deficiencies

which impinge on effectiveness of CAPF in counterinsurgency. He argues against the recommendations of the *Group of Ministers Report on National Security, 2000*, that the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) progressively take over a counterinsurgency role nationwide. He questions whether the CRPF will attain the status of an effective counterinsurgency force while retaining its other policing skills, and would it be able to do so devoid of military leadership and ethos.

The Assam Rifles have proved their capability, more with less, of achieving success in their counterinsurgency role. However, organizational, management and operational changes have begun to impact this potent force. Recommendations for the Assam Rifles' assuming the exclusive responsibility of guarding Indo-Myanmar border based on the principle, 'one border, one force', is a retrograde step as it will preclude them from participating in counterinsurgency operations for which they are ideally suited. Similarly, suggestions to cease their affiliation with army will surely sound the death knell of an effective counterinsurgency force.

The author stresses on the need for a re-look at the role of the army as delineated by General K.M. Cariappa in 1952 and the Army Doctrine of 2004: 'defence of the country against external forces' being the primary aim and 'assisting government agencies to cope with proxy war and other internal threats and provide aid to civil authorities' as its secondary role. He opines that the army views the latter as secondary, thus being less important, and does not favour involvement in internal security operations. By categorizing its internal role as secondary, it unwittingly downgrades the importance of this function, leading to less-than-appropriate levels of preparation in terms of organization, equipment profiling and training, thus forcing army to improvise and adapt for this role. The author suggests that the army re-define its role and also incorporate countering internal threat as its main role.

The author analyses the evolution and development of village guards, 'I' battalions, Rashtriya Rifles and infantry battalions (Territorial Army) (Home and Hearth), and conduct of military operations in counterinsurgency campaigns. Commenting on special operations, Nanavatty emphasizes that the military in India is neither authorized nor responsible to execute special operations, particularly in operations other than war and internal armed conflict. Civil government officials lacking knowledge, skills and tools are entrusted with the authority and responsibility for special operations, while the military, which has the knowledge, skills and tools, is denied such authority and responsibility.

It suggests lack of confidence on the part of the political executive in the ability of the military to think in strategic terms. The author suggests that special operations in internal armed conflicts, being sensitive in nature, need politico-military sanction at the highest level, but once approved, the authority and responsibility for their execution should be delegated to senior military commander in the theatre.

The author summarizes India's response to insurgency as militarily stout, administratively weak, and politically absent. He emphasizes the near-total absence of civil counterinsurgency, a major lacuna in conducting an effective counterinsurgency campaign. Further, the absence of a joint civil–military national counterinsurgency doctrine prevents the government from fully exploiting its vast resources and responding to the security of the state in a coherent, cohesive and consistent manner. It stems essentially from contradictions inherent in centre–state and civil–military relations. Even the Constitution is ambiguous on how the responsibilities for the 'defence of India against internal threats' are to be precisely shaped between governments at the centre and in the state.

Nanavatty opines that it is imperative to formulate, articulate and adopt a joint civil–military doctrine involving the three key arms of the government—the civil administration, the police and the army—for the conduct of a counterinsurgency campaign. Equally important is the need for the political executive to understand, appreciate and approve of such a doctrine and demonstrate the will to apply it in practice.

In the last part, Nanavatty examines various options and a way forward. He suggests revised fundamental principles for the government's counterinsurgency campaign. He argues that the government should not hesitate in introducing emergency legislations to deny insurgents taking advantage of existing rules. He recommends that punitive military operations should be an integral part of India's declared doctrine. The author further suggests revised fundamental principles for security forces operations with the aim of security forces operations being to 'secure the people'.

While advocating restructuring and reorganization of the security forces for counterinsurgency, Nanavatty emphasizes operational cost-effectiveness and not empire-building; intensifying the existing force structures to minimize turbulence and disruption; and resisting the temptation to raise type forces for every new exigency: the role of each type force must allow flexibility in its employment. He has suggested that state police forces should raise properly trained and equipped village

defence committees over which they must exercise effective command and control. It is a very pertinent suggestion since the involvement of locals will facilitate better intelligence and denial of support base to the insurgents. The author has also suggested review of the composition of border-guarding force and functioning under the Ministry of Defence.

The suggested re-organization includes establishing an Internal Security (IS) force providing government a flexible and calibrated response, thereby diminishing dependence on the army for internal security operations. At the same time, the author cautions that this could lead to undesirable proliferation of forces. In order for the IS force to be capable of high-intensity counterinsurgency operations, it must possess the character and ethos of the army, be led by army officers, and function under command and control of the army. The two possible models of Rashtriya Rifles and Assam Rifles have been analysed, though it could create division within the army—one force preparing for a conventional war which may never come and the other perpetually embroiled in low-intensity operations. Nanavatty recommends the re-organization of Headquarters Director General Assam Rifles (DGAR) into Headquarters Internal Security Command (ISCOM), headed by a general officer commanding-in-chief (GOC-in-C), and the establishment of an independent Headquarters General Officer Commanding Internal Security (GOC [IS]), under an officer of rank of Lieutenant General who will be responsible for advising the state government on the conduct of security forces operations. He then outlines two possible options for command and control.

The author summates that right-sizing the army may be a better option than establishing a dedicated force. Right-sizing the force needs deliberation since boots on ground are important, but technology needs to be incorporated more vigorously, and a greater focus is needed on small team operations instead of merely increasing force levels. Similarly, raising GOC (IS) and ISCOM and retaining the arrangement of command and control under the headquarters regional army command does not sound logical.

In the last chapter, Nanavatty suggests the re-organization of the Ministry of Home Affairs; he also proposes a structure and organization for management of internal armed conflict at the national level. He follows it up by evaluating the existing structures and organizations for management of internal armed conflict at the state level, and proposes restructuring and reorganization at the same level for management and

resolution of internal armed conflict in India as part of a joint civil–military doctrine.

Though the author has briefly covered left-wing extremism, but given its proportional and dimensional spread, it merited much more elaborate coverage as well as suggestions for tackling the same, including the possible role of the armed forces.

Overall, the book is an excellent treatise on internal armed conflict in India and is a comprehensive work. It is the product of rigorous research and decades of experience of the author. It is prescriptive and essential for practitioners—politicians, civil servants, policemen and soldiers—and should serve as a catalyst for formulation and articulation of a joint civil–military doctrine.