

ADDRESSING NAXALISM AND LEFT WING EXTREMISM THROUGH GOOD GOVERNANCE, DEVELOPMENT, SECURITY ACTION, AND READINESS TO TALK

*M.M.K. Sardana**

[Abstract: In the game of politics for power, Political Entrepreneurs would undertake to lend voices to the causes of those groups of society who give them dividends in their endeavour to capture power. Their rivals would take advantage of those groups whose voices remain unheard and are losing their patience and are being denied access to their legitimate rights and aspirations and are handed over humiliations instead. Such a set of political entrepreneurs, through a cloak of ideology, convince the disadvantaged groups to forsake democratic processes for seeking redressal and instead take to arms for wresting their due. Naxalism and Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in India has thrived on the unmet aspirations and continued deprivations of sections of people under successive governments. Their influence has continued to increase geographically and they have been challenging mite of the states through organized violence. Naxalite and LWE movement has been growing over the last six decades in maintaining continuity through periods of discontinuity. This paper argues that the state would not be able to curb the movement unless the root causes are addressed through the processes of good governance reaching the benefits of development to targeted groups, measured responses in areas where the mite of states is challenged followed by bringing about governance as soon as such a response is successful and by creating channels for dialogue processes even when violence activities are being met with appropriate response from the state. Good governance, development, security response and dialogue process should proceed simultaneously and with primacy to good governance.]

Democracy presents a free market for political entrepreneurs to compete with one another riding on the crests of ambitions, deprivations, frustration etc. of the constituents of the system with a view to accessing the most precious commodity; power. If the society is as diversified and skewed as in India the political entrepreneurs would have an uphill task of negotiating with the complex array of constituents whose aspirations/deprivations may not be harmoniously aligned and thus a set of interplay of pulling and pushing forces will keep the free market of democracy volatile as regulated by the Constitution of governance as adopted by the society. The constitution adopted by the society committing to democracy is also a compromise arrived at by the constituents in the society.

* The author is a Visiting Fellow at the Institute.

Constitution thus remains under strain as the inter se equations of constituents change under the flux of time and thereby is subjected to amendments to give meaning to the newer and emerging demands of constituents who are dominating at the relevant point of time. Thus the regulatory system to regulate the market of power itself becomes accommodative of the dominant players and their allies. Those of the players who are able to take hold of power are required to govern the society for a specified period and bid for power afresh. Groups of players getting hold of power garner the support of apparent majority in the society but fact of the matter as evidenced over successive elections in India, is that the power wielders have seldom got a positive mandate of more than 40 per cent of the members of the society participating in the election process. Core group among the power wielding combinations who undertakes to run affairs of the society is per force required to be representative in character to accommodate interests of the stakeholders, not necessarily having identical set of interests. In short, the government, elected representatives and members of the society are in continuous state of conflict of varying potentials and intensities. Political entrepreneurs in the ruling group would desire to manage the conflicts through a set of policy formulations and implementation tools with the twin objectives of holding on to the power and retaining power at the time of seeking fresh mandate. Political entrepreneurs competing to wrest power on the other hand would play on the existing and potential conflicts to garner support of the society increasingly. The latter set of entrepreneurs would seek to play on the failed and unfulfilled aspirations and or increasing deprivations of the constituents with a view to wrest power. In the sea-saw game of this description, in a highly dispersed and hierarchy and caste ridden society like India, there may be marginal groups among the society whose voice remains unheard and aspirations trammelled and deprivations getting enhanced. Such set of members of the society would over a period of time get alienated from the prescribed system of democratic governance and would thus be subject to manipulations by the players in the market of power to an extent that these groups would be made to see that their salvation lies by annihilating the enemy of their class i.e. ruling elites who are perceivably causing obstacles in the way of their aspirations and are subjecting them to continued state of deprivations. Such groups

are motivated by a set of political entrepreneurs to a collective action in the name of political ideology seeking to subvert the ongoing political system through an armed uprising. Dipak K. Gupta¹, analyzing economic as well socio-physiological dimensions of human motivation concludes that political grievance is a necessary factor but not a sufficient cause of terrorism. There may be a wide range of social, political, economic grievances in the society but these may not necessarily lead to violence. Political violence takes place when a political entrepreneur gives voice to frustration formulating a well-defined social construction of collective identity, and, paints in vivid colour the images of 'US' and 'Them'. The ruling elite because of a variety of their engagements are not sensitized when legitimate grievances are emerging and these groups acquire a mind-set that unless they raise their pitch, their voice would not be heard. Such a mind-set is inflamed when a sense of humiliation and hopelessness dawns upon them. May be the ruling elite through a positive and or coercive action addresses the grievances without uprooting cause of the grievance paving way to the recurrence of the grievances with larger impact and spread over a larger area and population bearing an open area for a collective action by the aggrieved members nurtured on distrust occasioned between the ruling set and the revolting set.

Successive governments in India have not been able to overcome objective conditions of poverty, high economic and income disparity and exploitation of the impoverished. Thus the situations conducive to revolutionary and radical politics have continued to prevail. Over the years past deficits are being juxtaposed against disadvantages inherent and perceived in the present initiatives; conflict intensifies². Annual Report of Ministry of Home Affairs categorically states that the problems of Left Wing Extremism (LWE) insurgency have been prevalent in certain parts of India for a few decades now, the problem assumed serious proportions during the last decade or so. In terms of geographical spread, the worst affected states are Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Bihar. The Report goes on to state that the LWE

¹ "Exploring roots of terrorism", Dipak K. Gupta <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu>

² "India's experiment with revolution", Ajay K. Mehra, Heidelberg papers in South Asia and Comparative Politics; W.P. No. 40, September 2008. South Asia Institute, Department of Political Science, University of Heidelberg

problem also exists in certain pockets of the states of Maharashtra, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The Report acknowledges that LWE groups active in many states of India³.

Joseph Flaubi Gomes⁴, in his study on the Political Economy of Maoist conflict in India, has pointed out that historical land Institutions have been responsible for the obtaining land inequality which is the very robust reason for the Maoist conflict and even where some land reforms measures have been undertaken, class based antagonisms and embittered social relations continue to be experienced to result in conflicts.

According to this study lower incomes of the disadvantaged sections also give rise to conflicts. Economist Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in his address at the Chief Minister's meet on Naxalism on April 13, 2006 acknowledged that Naxalism is not merely a law and order issue and in many areas, the phenomenon is directly related to underdevelopment. Prime Minister went on to point out that it is not a coincidence that tribal areas are the main battle ground of Left Wing Extremism today. He acknowledged that exploitation, artificially depressed wages, iniquitous socio political circumstances, inadequate employment opportunities, lack of access to resources, under developed agriculture, geographical isolation, lack of land reforms- all contributed significantly to the growth of the Naxalite movement. Prime Minister detailed that the continued unrest had enormous social cost in pushing back development and growth and poses challenge to the Indian state and threat to democracy. Thus the Prime Minister went on to advise Chief Ministers to focus on good governance. The observation of Prime Minister was in the nature of admission by the state that governments, past and present, have been failing in their primary task of ensuring a decent and dignified living despite adequate provisions and guarantees in the Constitution, giving rise to intensified conflicts in larger swaths of territories. Yet instead of terming that Naxalism/Left Wing Extremism as the single biggest challenge facing the process of development; the phenomenon was termed

³ "Annual Report (2012-13)", Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

⁴ "The political economy of the Maoist conflict in India: an empirical analysis" by Joseph Flaubi Gomes, Department of Economics, Universe dad values III de Madrid

as the single biggest internal security challenge ever faced by the country. Accordingly emphasis was placed on the deviant nature of LWE cadres and growing militarization calling for equally stern response from the state in modernizing the Police on the pattern of successful Andhra Pradesh greyhounds and investment in such ventures was deemed essential to turn the tide in favour of the Government⁵.

Seven years down the line, when Prime Minister addressed the All Party Meeting on Naxals violence on 10th June 2013, following the brutal attack on congress leadership and workers and their security personnel in Chhattisgarh on 25th May 2013 he reiterated the resolve of Government to further fine tune the ongoing two-pronged strategy to deal with the challenge from Left Wing Extremism⁶. Thus there has been no perceptible change in the status on the ground during all these years. Authorities revisit their strategies after each successful extremist attack. Every major extremist attack drains support from the thinking that considers the extremists as estranged tribes who can be brought back to the mainstream by a humane state through development approach. Disinclination of the CPI-Maoist towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict leads to a gradual consolidation in the coalition of the willing favouring the use of security forces to expand and implement the writ of the state. The two pronged approach of Government is perceived as mask for an overtly security force-centric strategy to annihilate the extremists. Development programmes undertaken by governments in the centre and the states remain a challenge for implementation affected by bureaucratic inertia, political myopia as well as challenges posed by extremists.

The proportion of money being siphoned off by the political-bureaucratic-contractor nexus in the burgeoning war economy remains substantial⁷.

Resultant effect of above factors is the strategy of winning hearts and minds gets converted to strategy of attrition with the deployment of raw state of coercion and enemy centric campaigns to suffocate insurgency through a saturation of forces.

⁵ "PM's speech at the Chief Minister's meet on Naxalism", April 13, 2006

⁶ "PM's opening remarks at the all Party Meeting on Naxal violence", June 10, 2013

⁷ "Countering Left Wing Extremism in India", conceptual ambiguity and operational disconnect by Bibu Parsad Routray and Shanthie Mariet D'Souza. ISAS-In rights No. 2123-8th July 2013

Through the deployment of such a strategy, Naxalite movement emerging in 1967 and spreading in West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and Andhra Pradesh, was suppressed in 1972 by the state and paramilitary forces⁸.

Once the movement stood suppressed in 1972, the state did not avail of the breathing space in addressing the root causes whole heartedly which had resulted in the uprising in 1967. Existing fault lines, though identified, continued to beg attention of the successive administrations; which was not to be. Not surprisingly there were eruptions in *Srikakulam* (Andhra Pradesh), embers of which spread to eastern Madhya Pradesh (present Chhattisgarh) and Central South Bihar (now Jharkhand) in the 1990s. Through a sophisticated military response, the state was able to halt the heat of movement in Andhra Pradesh. Root causes of the movement continued to elude the efforts of the state and resultantly left wing extremism expanded to nearly one third of the districts and covering more than 50 per cent of the states of the Union with linkages to the Maoists in Nepal. At one stage, one could map a North South red corridor. Nevertheless, one can figure out creation of a Compact Revolutionary Zone (CRZ) which has been deepened by the continued fact of acute deprivations in the face of somewhat overall reduced level of poverty.

Forces and processes unleashed by globalization have, on the one hand, aggravated the existing land related tensions and widened the displacement-rehabilitation hiatus in rural India, and, on the other, have heightened the fear of displacement⁹. State's capacity to contain the conflict through ameliorating economic measures remained below optimism and these too were stymied by leakage at the cutting edge because of inefficient, inept and corrupt bureaucracy on the one hand and corrupt cadres of the mainstream political parties. Such a state of affairs has been allowed to come about in independent India despite various safeguards provided in the Constitution in favour of disadvantaged sections of the society and a duty cast on the administration to run the affairs of the state for the uplifting of such disadvantaged sections. There have been 110 known instances of violet peasant

⁸ "India's Approach to counter insurgency and the Naxalite Problem" by Sameer Lalwani,
www.ctc.usma.edu

⁹ *Op cit 2*

uprisings in 117 years from 1783 to 1990 and in each case there was a systematic mobilisation under a committed leadership. Mobilisation could not have taken place without consultation among the peasants in various forms and at various levels and also after going through nonviolent means of seeking justice through petitions, deputations and peaceful demonstrations. The Indian poor has been through organised struggles over generations and has remained undeterred despite its status remaining almost unaltered. The continued pauperization of the peasants, the inability of Indian Republican State to effectively enforce meaningful land reforms to mitigate the woes of the small, marginal and landless cultivators and the complicity of the state with the landlords in oppressive exploitation of the peasant has kept the possibilities of peasant movements, peaceful and militant, alive after independence¹⁰. Ideological fuel and leadership provided by the left wing political parties has sustained the movements and have provided channels interconnected nationally to make their grievances brought to the fore and keeping their concerns on the national agenda of the mainstream politics and no one in the ruling echelons can ignore them at least. Over the years, left movement in India has also gone through many changes, splits, mergers and demergers. A large section of left wingers are in the mainstream politics and are participating in the processes of Democratic & Parliamentary system and have even been in governments, both at the centre and states. However CPI (Maoists), formed on September 21, 2004 after the merger of People's War Group and Maoist Communist Centre maintains that parliamentary democracy is an exploitative system and there is no hope of their getting justice from the political administrative system. It is totally opposed to the electoral process and advocates violent revolution as the only means of realising political objectives¹¹. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, CPI (Maoists) continues to remain the most dominant and violent LWE group, accounting for more than 80 per cent of the violence and killings. Govt. of India has included this outfit with all its formations and front organisations under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. CPI (Maoist) has close fraternal ties with many North-East insurgent groups, especially the

¹⁰ *Op cit 2*

¹¹ "Executive summary of genesis and spread of Maoist violence and appropriate state strategy to handle it" by D.M. Mitra, study sponsored by Bureau of Police Research and Development, Ministry of Home Affairs

RPF/PLA of Manipur. Most of these outfits have linkages with external forces inimical to India. The party has expressed solidarity with the J&K terrorist groups. These ties are part of their 'Strategic United Front' against the Indian state. The party has close links with foreign Maoist organisations in Philippines, Turkey, etc. The outfit is also a member of 'co-ordination committee of Maoist Parties and organisations of south Asia; which include Nepalese Maoists'¹².

On the face it, the Naxalite movement appears to be national in character; yet the movement looks different in its intensity and even in objectives and also in relation to the relatable root causes in different regions and pockets. Date lines that punctuate India's left wing extremism-have more than their share of differences. Like any other political formation, it may be natural that Maoists adapt themselves to specific set of dynamics. Stark variations assume added significance and pose difficult questions for those who portray LWE as a single movement that will destroy the Indian state and those who advocate a homogenized approach to deal with the issue. Initially; The Maoists/LWE groups gain initial popularity by raising concerns of the poorest and most exploited; it takes them little time to evolve into a dictatorial power structure and enormous vested interests, and elements of corruption, brutality and mindless power thrown in. Similarly sometimes it suits mainstream political entrepreneurs and their officials to exaggerate the 'menace', for it becomes a pretext to ask more funds and justify repression. At other terms, it is convenient to downplay the issue to convey a sense of success in dealing with it. On paper, the state vacillates between treating it as a socioeconomic issue as well as a law and order problem. In practice, it relies almost exclusively on a police solution. Strikingly, there is no mention in government documents or even in left liberal discourse of the one critical element that is necessary to deal with Naxalism -- local level political management¹³. A lot of negative connotation has been attached to the term 'dialogue' both by government and those in the forefront of LWE. Despite their tall claim, Naxalites have not been able to take over even a single district head quarter and the government has not been able to contain their geographical spread, the

¹² "Annual report (2012-13)", Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

¹³ "Complicating the 'Naxalite' debate" by Prashant Jha, <http://kafila.org/2009/10/22/complicating-the-naxalite-debate>

poor are at the receiving end where both the sides claim to represent them. Absence of initiative from both the sides towards entering into local level political management may be reflective of intention of both the side not to seek solution with the common purpose of making gains out of the development outlays and thereby developing linkages which become handy to mainstream political entrepreneurs. In a study sponsored by The Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPRD), respondents in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand indicated that left wing extremism has had serious impact on the political scene of the states. The study points out that in the states like Chhattisgarh, the nexus is mostly confined to individual politicians; in Jharkhand; all political parties have been accused of nexus with the extremist for electoral gains¹⁴. P.V. Raman in his paper¹⁵ has also remarked that in various states, the Naxalites have formed purely opportunistic linkages with political leaders belonging to mainstream political parties. It is a 'mutually beneficial' partnership for the two, and is particularly visible at the grass-roots level. The Naxalites help the mainstream political leaders at the time of elections and also intimidate on their behalf their rivals. On their part, the political leaders help the Naxalites by arranging for logistic and 'bailing out' arrested Naxalites sympathisers and even influencing government policies towards the Naxalites. Ramana's paper goes on to cite specific instances regarding different states where such alliances at grassroots level have come to his knowledge. Besides, Raman highlights, the enormous amounts extorted by Naxalites from public sector and private sector corporates operating in their areas besides subjecting Tendu leaf contractors for similar levies. Unless the issue of nexus between the mainstream political entrepreneurs and the LWE is addressed by the political parties at their apex levels, the two leg approach of the government is not going to achieve anything substantial on a sustainable basis. Rather such an approach as is being practiced presently will maintain and strengthen vested interests who are being benefited with the intensifying hiatus and bringing further miseries to the people of the affected areas.

¹⁴ "Political Dynamics in Extremist Affected Areas-study" by BPRD-centre for Development and Peace Studies, Guwhati

¹⁵ "Maoists admit: support down, strength & weapons depleted", Ashutosh Bhardwaj, Indian Express, (DLIED) September 19, 2013

Government agencies in the wake of their apparent perception of decline in violence since 2010 may see no merit in establishing dialogue processes with the LWE in the hope of squeezing the enemy to total submission. These agencies may also be encouraged by the admission of Maoists of their losses in cadres, arms, area and leaders in recent years¹⁶. Yet it needs to be recalled that decline in violence since 2010 and emerging crises in leadership is in line with the characters of the four decade long Maoist conflict which is characterized by continuity and discontinuity. Reversal of violence move by Maoists could be towards using the period for recruiting, recuperating, striking new alliances and looking for newer ways of raising funds and acquiring weapons¹⁷. Such an apprehension is borne out by the past trends in the movement and also because of stagnant nature of development outcomes despite heavy outlays as the nexus between local level mainstream political entrepreneurs and LWE is allowed to go unaddressed. The crises of leadership because of depletion in its strength as a result of security force's success is real but in a guerrilla organisation a large number of leaders remain available who are not yet known or come in the forefront who can fill the vacuum. During the transition stage, the inter organisational and intra organisational conflicts are inevitable but such conflicts of within have the potential of showing flares of violence resulting in Maoist related casualties and bringing into the fold of the movement newer areas; new base of popular support and issues complicating further the situations arising out of LWE. Past trends of the movement when there have been intermittent or organizational conflicts indicate that such conflicts actually smoothens the fulfilment of larger Maoist goal of 'area domination' or 'area wise seizure'¹⁸. There is already an evidence to suggest that the Maoist forces are making inroads into several untouched but strategically vital locations. *Telangna* seems to be on the Maoists radar once again. Noticeable movement of CPI (Maoist) armed cadres in forest areas of *Adilabad, Khammam, Karimnagar, and Warangal* districts have taken place. Maoists have a look North East Policy and it is reported that Maoist organisational activities have been felt in 22 police stations of upper

¹⁶ "Reds in retreat, business standard", September 28, 2013

¹⁷ "Contemporary Naxel Movement in India", Rajat Kannur, IPCS Research Paper 27

¹⁸ *Ibid*

Assam to impel the Chief Minister of Assam to seek the inclusion of seven districts of upper Assam in the list of integrated action plan. Beside, fraternal ties have been established between CPI (Maoists) and two vital insurgent groups of Manipur. Maoist's activities have been observed in Assam-Arunachal border and also in Nagaland with links with local insurgent groups. Maoists are reported to be working on the agenda of connecting to the commercial hubs in western India and running the movement in the southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. Maoists have been working systematically to work out strategy including urban areas in the movement. There are also reports of developing relationship between CPI (Maoists) and Pakistan based LET which would be of vital concern to the security agencies.

Maoists have also been realising that for their type of movement international support is also crucial and they have been developing such contacts since 1995 with the Maoist groups from Philippines, Turkey, Germany, France, Holland and Italy in order to seek visibility¹⁹.

So far the two legged strategy of government has been with reference to the areas affected by the intensity of violence which is a flawed approach. It needs to be appreciated that Maoists movement has -- organisation stage, Guerrilla warfare stage and mobile warfare stage. All three stages are being felt over the country. If *Dantewala* and *Bastar* are going almost on the mobile warfare stage, urban areas are perhaps at the organisation stage. An anti-insurgency strategy comprehensively devised should be holistic with separate sub strategies for different areas. Present two leg approach is primarily concerned with area which are already in the mobile warfare phase. Undoubtedly the might of the Indian state would ultimately squeeze the Guerrilla outfit from such zones who when squeezed out would fan out to the areas falling in other two stages where they can grow and where the current political system is being questioned by some group which believes that an alternate solution is good for the society. The counter insurgency plan should include a way of addressing political issues and should not be limited to solution through Police

¹⁹ *Ibid*

forces²⁰. It is important to convince the people through action and deeds and neutralize the belief that revolutionary politics is necessary and relevant. Such a task is essentially in the realm of political entrepreneurs organised as political parties, and practicing mainstream politics. Such an exercise would also require the mainstream political parties to extend their reach to the group believing in alternate solutions and violence and counteracting them at least in the areas which have not yet entered mobile warfare stage. Even for areas covered under mobile warfare stage, strategies need to be kept ready for political processes as soon as military action provides a breathing space so that ameliorative measures are put in place on long term and self-sustaining basis in order to deny space to violence based political action.

It has been brought out in preceding paragraphs that LWE in different regions arises out of region/area specific causes and has varying intensity. Development of the three phases of violence based political ideology would also be developing depending upon region based issues. Mainstream political class in India have nothing much to quarrel about the Maoists objectives as evidenced by their political documents particularly in relation to land reforms, fair wage for labour, recognition of right to work as fundamental right; improvement of farming methods, removal of gender discrimination in matters of wage and right to ownership of land etc²¹. The difference between the two sets is that the Mainstream political parties aim to accomplish the objectives through constitutional means and the other set perceives that constitutional means have failed to make meaningful progress towards the stated objectives and seek the path of violence. Further, the government's diagnosis of the agrarian problems faced by the rural poor appears to be deceptively similar to that made by Maoists and yet the two are locked in violent conflict across swaths of the country. Government recognize that the land and other agrarian issues of the rural poor are much more alive in the LWE affected areas. LWE parties, taking advantage of lack of political initiatives of the mainstream political parties, have found a space to give voice to the affected section through arms and making them

²⁰ K. Srinivas Reddy, City Editor, Hindu, Hyderabad at a seminar on the Nexal Problem-organised by The Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies

²¹ "Maoism in India, Ideology, Programme and Armed Struggle", EPW, July 22, 2006.

believe that normal constitutional processes have failed in extricating them out of their miserable existence. It is also admitted by the government that LWE is in response to failure of administration in their engagement at the grass root levels by allowing the systems at the grass root levels to become non responsive to the felt and legitimate rights and demands of the people. Prime Minister in his statement of 2006 mentioned about lack of good governance for such a state of affairs leading to the alienation of the people and thus their becoming amenable to the Maoist's influence. However, no strategy has been worked out to improve the governance system at the grass roots levels. Consequently, the well intentioned development programmes are not serving the intended beneficiaries and are continuing to serve the nexus of political honchos and their henchmen with the grass root bureaucracy. For improving the governance system at the grass root level, the lead has to come from mainstream political parties by weeding out their parasitic cadre and deploy in their place workers who have clean image and have the commitment for reaching the benefits of the development programmes to the target groups. Dedicated political workers would be able to check the malpractices of grass root bureaucracy and others as well. Even towards this end, mainstream political parties would have to create conducive working environment for their dedicated cadre besides identifying such quality workers.

The task is herculean but mainstream political parties have to have consensus among themselves to pool their resources constructively keeping aside their narrow sectoral interests aside. Government would also be required to shed the taboo of shunning talks with the Maoists as a part of the strategy of creating conditions for good governance. Political differences ultimately would be resolved through talks even in atmosphere when some elements among the LWE groups would persist with violence and perhaps to such groups, government would also continue to give adequate response. There are large tracts which have not yet entered the mobile warfare phase and thus there is ample scope of demonstrating that people's confidence can be won back through meaningful political engagement and by providing good governance.

If good governance follows the areas cleared by the security agencies out of the zone of mobile warfare phase, the task ahead of the security agencies for freeing the remaining areas would also be eased. On the contrary, if good governance eludes the freed areas, the problem for the security agencies will remain complicated.

It remains uncertain if the mainstream political parties are in a position to rise to the task of establishing consensus among themselves and present a united resolve to win back the confidence of estranged sections of the population and establishing the desired standard of governance at the grass root levels ensuring them their rights in a dignified way. More uncertain is if the mainstream political parties are able to field committed workers at the grass root level who are up to the challenges ahead. If the dialogue process with the left wing groups builds up confidence between the two, even the development burden and the task of implementation of legislations like *Panchayat* (Extension to Scheduled Area) Act, 1996 meant to empower rural people can be entrusted to the presently estranged cadres of LWE as talks start getting headway. History of LWE movement does point out that there remain large sections such as CPI, CPI (M), CPI (ML) etc. who may opt for mainstream politics.

The way the mainstream political entrepreneurs stand today, there is not much optimism of a national consensus emerging for creating conditions for optimum good governance at the grass root level as expeditiously as is warranted and thus the 'menace' of LWE and its potential to expand geographically is likely to continue. Governments of the day would be required to take a lead in giving primacy to the task of good governance; development initiatives and military action in that order and further encourage well-meaning citizen groups, media, academicians and like for establishing talks with the other side even without seeking complete halt to violence, reserving right to exercise its right of giving measured response. After all governments at the centre have never shied away from talking with Pakistan and China despite their aggressive stance against India. Democratic governments have been functioning in North East and yet the engagements with insurgent groups continue to take place through informal channels. It does not therefore stand to reason that a blind spot is maintained in showing the willingness to enter into

dialogues with the LWE groups. If the government of the day is able to demonstrate some success in winning back the confidence of estranged groups through the four pronged (good governance, development, military action and dialogue process) approach with primacy to good governance, the other groups in the mainstream politics may also lend their support as everyone wants to be participant of a success process.