Chapter 38

Fourth Generation Warfare and the Challenges in Military– News Media Relations in India

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ABSTRACT

Can there be a symbiotic relationship between the armed forces and the private conventional news media in a country with a democratic setup? What are the issues that come between these two entities especially in a complex scenario such as Fourth Generation Warfare? The objective of this chapter is to study these challenges in the relationship between the two institutions in the setting of fourth generation warfare in India. It presents areas of divergence that have been critical in the efficient symbiotic functioning of these two institutions.

INTRODUCTION

"Every war must end, but this tug of war between the media and the military with the information as its bone of contention has no end in sight. This love–hate relationship between the two is the greatest hindrance in the task of preserving national security," says popular journalist and Nehruvian scholar, Manikonda Chalapathi Rau (Saxena, 1997). A profound statement and one that is increasingly proving correct as Fourth Generation Warfare is ever more becoming a reality of conflict in the subcontinent – cases in point being the 26/11 Mumbai attacks and the January 2016 attack on the Pathankot airbase.

What Is Fourth Generation Warfare?

Major scientific and doctrinal developments spurred by socio-political transformation have constituted significant changes in the way wars have been fought. Most military engagements since the early 1990s (since the fall of the Soviet Union) are typically of the 'Fourth Generation' a generation in which the

"tactics of the weak confound the tactics of the strong*" (Wilson, Sullivan, & Kempfer, 2003)*. Today's international environment is defined by this reality. People, the world over, including India are witnessing sub-national 'non-state' actors use guerrilla tactics, insurrection, sabotage and terrorism to subvert nations and challenge the established international system and the very concept of the 'nation-state'.

Fourth Generation Warfare is a transition in the way wars are fought – traditional military might is avoided; the focus is shifted from high technology to ideology. Conflict shifts from simply destroying military targets and regular conventional forces to socio-economic, religious or political centres.

William S. Lind states, "In Fourth Generation war, the state loses its monopoly on war. All over the world, state militaries find themselves fighting non-state opponents such as al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. Almost everywhere, the state is losing. Fourth Generation war is also marked by a return to a world of cultures, not merely states, in conflict. We now find ourselves facing the Christian West's oldest and most steadfast opponent, Islam" (Lind, 2004).

Fourth Generation Conflicts in India

India has witnessed Fourth Generation Warfare in the form of Guerrilla Warfare and insurgencies since at least the past couple of hundred years. Indian military history is replete with incidents of guerrilla warfare and even insurgencies. The 'Mountain Rat' Shivaji is perhaps the most famous example of this style of warfare. Since the latter days of the British 'Raj', Terrorism, or Extremism as it was more popularly called then, became a not-too-infrequent headline in Indian newspapers.

Since 1967 India has witnessed non-conventional warfare within its boundaries. Starting with the Naxalbury movement in 18 May 1967 till present, India has fought its fair share of Fourth Generation war. Here is a case in point.

Jammu and Kashmir continues to be Pakistan's unsettled issue. In fact, from what India has witnessed over the past 60+ years, it has become its reason for existence. It has tried its hand in wrestling the contested state from the Indian Union through conventional military means in 1947, 1965, and 1999. However, what it has received in return is either an outright defeat or a debatable stalemate – but found no tangible progress. It then resorted to non-conventional means. Since the early years of the 1980s, Pakistan is making attempts to create chaos and disorder to destabilise India – to bleed India by a thousand cuts. Here is a quick look at the various Fourth Generation conflicts India has fought on its soil. India's internal security threats have been cancerous, spreading to over 50% of the districts across all its states either as insurgencies or in the form of terrorism (Vohra, 2008).

During the 1980s, the Khalistan movement in Punjab became the source of enormous loss of human life and socio-economic loss. The violence lasted for over a decade till the government was forced to take a controversial, yet decisive, military action. In the north-eastern arm of India, several states still continue to face unending insurgencies and struggle supported from ideologies across the border. The illegal migration of large masses of people from Bangladesh has created regional demographic imbalance and has become the source of communal tension as reflected in the states of Assam, Bihar and the north-east. Since the 1980s, religion has been leveraged to drive violence across the country – Sikh terrorism in Punjab and Islamic terrorism through various hard-line Wahabi fundamental groups and their networks across India.

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