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- ❖ **Russia-US Relations**
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**Published, Printed and Owned by**  
Babuddin Khan  
Third Concept  
LB - 39, Prakash Deep Building,  
7, Tolstoy Marg, New Delhi-110 001.  
Phones : 23711092, 23712249  
Fax No: 23711092.  
E-mail : third.concept@rediffmail.com  
Website: www.thirdconceptjournal.co.in

Designed by: Pt. Tejpal

## INSIDE

Editorial	
Curbing Maoist Violence	5
<i>B.K</i>	
Disquiet in Russia-US Relations	7
<i>Dr. Anilkumar B. Halu</i>	
Western Sahara: World's Last Colony	10
<i>Nizar Visram</i>	
Pakistan-China Nuclear Relations	14
<i>Harjit Singh &amp; Madhu Bala</i>	
Fatal Spiral of Senselessness	22
<i>Tomislav Jakic</i>	
Neo-religionism of the post-ideological Russia	24
<i>Anis H. Bajrektarevic</i>	
China's Policy toward Minorities in Xinjiang (1970 -1990)	27
<i>Pooja Pingua</i>	
Effects of Demonetization in India	32
<i>Reshma S</i>	
Affirmative action in India: Need to Retrospect	36
<i>Dr. Afifa Aisha Rahmat</i>	
Women Empowerment in India	40
<i>Dr. Geetamma.K</i>	
Water Resource Management in India	45
<i>Dr. Vikram Singh</i>	
Good Samaritan Compassions in Karnataka	50
<i>Chandrashekar.S.V</i>	
Application of Bio-Fertilizers	54
<i>Dr.T. Vijayalakshmi</i>	

## **Curbing Maoist Violence**

**B**rutal killing of 26 police personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) on 24 April by the militants of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) in an ambush in Sukma district, apart from sending shock waves throughout the nation, also raises many questions about capabilities of the central government as well as states of the Red Corridor in dealing with mounting Maoist menace. Media reports indicate that this was the worst attack on security forces in the region since the April 2010 attack when Maoists killed 74 men of the CRPF in the nearby Dantewada district. Recurring incidents of Maoist violence give rise to serious concerns about the ground situation in the tribal belts of Red Corridor states, where central forces along with the state police personnel are engaged in a nearly two-decade-old conflict with Maoists. Time has come to adhere to stern measures instead of replicating the ritual comprising—condemnation of the attack, pay homage to those killed in battle, look into what went wrong and propose solutions for the same. The Red Corridor is most affected by Maoist violence lie in a wide swath of mineral-rich, forested tribal lands, from Maharashtra to West Bengal, where the Maoist outfits cause the most terror deaths in India. Development projects along with infrastructure expansion in these mineral-rich areas have resulted in the displacement of about 21 million native people of which tribal population is about one-third.

Growing resentment amongst the displaced persons, especially tribal population, is reportedly exploited by the Maoists. Government's efforts to make further grounds into the Maoist heartland, opening up villages that have until recently remained cut off from the national mainstream are vehemently thwarted by the Maoists through indulgence in violence. More security personnel have lost their lives in Chhattisgarh (235) than in any other state between 2011 and 2015. With 72 security personnel killed in Maoist-related violence in just four months of 2017, it is already the deadliest year in the past seven years for Indian security forces. The construction of roads and mobile towers by the government in Red Corridor areas is being carried out under heavy security cover on a war footing which is justified as a part of the government's counter-insurgency strategy, allowing security personnel to deploy and control the area quickly. There have been reports about pitched battles between the security personnel and the Maoists, who are hell-bent on delaying the construction of these roads.

In the wake of Maoist attack of April 24 on the CRPF, observers in the know have raised serious questions about the institutional and strategic failures on the Indian State's part that have led to such massacres. These observers opine that the CRPF, which is country's largest counter-insurgency force comprising over three lakh personnel, needs revamping in terms of training and supply of latest combat equipment. While welcoming Union Home Minister's recent assertion that the Centre would rework its strategy to take on the Maoists, considering the absence of a coherent strategy or plan in the first place; security experts have also called out for the modernisation of the central and state police personnel and their greater deployment in the battle against Maoists.

Some security experts point out that a fundamental flaw in the anti-Maoist operations today is that the state police forces in most states are heavily dependent on the Central Government. The mindset seems to be that Maoism is the government of India's problem and, therefore, the Central forces should bear the brunt of extremist violence. It is suggested that there is a need for the Centre to take a look at the counter-insurgency template established by various State governments in the past. Under the leadership of KPS Gill and his effective counter-terror strategy, the Punjab Police managed to wipe out terrorism from the country in the 1980s. In the undivided Andhra Pradesh, the use of a specialised anti-Maoist force called the Greyhounds enlisted from the State police force, took down the Naxal menace in the state. State governments have to lead the line in this battle against militants, and the Centre must confine itself to a supporting role. Leadership, training and equipment are the three areas which need to be reviewed, other than the senior leadership question.

— BK