

Unconventional and Irregular Warfare, Warrior

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In the foreseeable future, unconventional and irregular warfare is going to be one of the main challenges to nations and defence forces. Religious persecution, economic deprivation and political imbalances are being used as rallying points and to whip up the feelings of alienation amongst common people. As a result, young men and women and even children are prepared to commit acts like suicide bombings. This has changed the concept of waging and fighting war, under such conditions.

The enemy is fighting at human level with mostly hand held weapons. Pitched battles are few. The adversary is using guerilla warfare tactics and it is difficult to find and fix his cadres. He is expert in the use of explosives and hit and run tactics. He is prepared to die for the cause that made him take up arms. The battles are in cities, towns, villages as also jungles and mountainous terrain.

The tactical fighting is mostly at platoon, section and squad levels. While the government forces have an overall edge, at distances of 75 to 100 yards and less, the fight is more or less equal. The adversary has similar weapons and has advantage of knowing the streets, houses, roof tops, terrain and is able to easily mix and melt into the local population.

High level of junior leadership and motivation at platoon and section levels is, therefore, the key to fighting this kind of warfare. A section comprises 10 to 12 soldiers. It is similar to a sports team, which invariably has 11 players! A section should, therefore, think and act like a sports team, with the section commander as the captain of the team. It is the section level fighting which needs to be mastered and honed. Days of *Taan Shashtra* (On guard) and charge in line are over. A much more versatile, quick thinking, *Shikari* (game hunting) type of approach is instead needed.

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We have to, therefore, select a soldier for new qualities of quick thinking, initiative, stealth, fearlessness and nimble footing. He should be able to master multi functionalities (field craft, weapons, explosives, communications, observation and intelligence). He has to know the socio, political and religious sensitivities of the population involved and create an image of tough and no nonsense attitude but at the same time be sensitive to human beings and human rights. He cannot afford to loose self control in conditions when he or his buddies are facing grave provocation.

Similarly, the training of captains, lieutenants and JCOs would require re-orientation. It is the leadership and decision making at their level, that would produce required results. They will have to be encouraged to think and plan for themselves and take on spot and speedy decisions. No looking back over the shoulders! It shall have to be ensured that witch hunting is not resorted to when mistakes are made and things go wrong. This will kill the initiative of younger leaders. A new sense of discipline shall have to be inculcated, from clicking heels and saluting type culture, to following drills, orders and getting on with the task in hand, but at the same time keeping human rights and collateral damage in view. They will also have to be good at public relations.

Warfare is not going to be that much about higher planning and giving set piece orders. Political and cultural suaveness, listening to juniors, intuition, study of local social, and religious milieu would be of great help. It shall have to be ensured that people on the ground remain calm and do not indulge in human rights violations.

We need first rate small units equipped with light weapons, trained and motivated, somewhat on the lines of the National Security Guard (NSG). Helicopter support shall have to be integral to formations fighting insurgency and terrorism. This is critical for mobility, which will be terrain independent and will enable outpacing the enemy.

Excellent signal communications will be required within the platoon and section, down to squad level, if not individual soldier. This will ensure that their actions can be coordinated, latest information is passed on and effectiveness can be maximised.

Intelligence will play a crucial role. While technology will help, cultivating local sources for humint will provide good results. There will be a need for intelligence fusion centres, so that intelligence from all sources can be evaluated and disseminated with speed.

Information warfare including dealing with the press will play an important role. This will help in weaning away the support given by local population to the terrorists, and in obtaining intelligence and getting balanced press coverages to mould public opinion.

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