

# THE GUN AND THE PEN: ON THE CONCLAVE OF STATE HOME MINISTERS

Relevant for: Security Related Matters | Topic: Security challenges and their management in Border Areas

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's [recent observations at a conclave of State Home Ministers](#) contained a possibly unintended explanation for why academicians, students and lawyers are languishing in prison on terrorism charges. He called for the elimination of all forms of Naxalism, be it of the gun-wielding variety or the kind that uses the pen "to raise international support" and "to mislead the youth". The remarks came alongside his emphasis on how the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act had given an impetus to combating terrorism. In effect, he has conveyed a disconcerting message that the police would treat armed militants and intellectuals alike, if the Government suspects a concordance in their outlook. Considering that the UAPA has been frequently and even unfairly invoked in cases that appear to have no nexus with terrorism, Mr. Modi's views raise a question whether his comments are a justification of sorts for the continued incarceration of many who do not seem to have indulged in any particular extremist act. Incitement to violence, especially mobilising support for armed insurgency, is indeed a grave offence, but unless there is a proven connection between the nature of the support given and an actual act of terror or a plot to commit one, it is difficult to treat the two things as one.

Recent judicial orders declining bail to activist Umar Khalid in the Delhi riots case, and Jyoti Jagtap of the Kabir Kala Manch in the Elgar Parishad case are good examples of how the police straddle the huge gulf between the nature of their participation in a protest or an event and an actual act of violence by invoking UAPA, and thus eliminating the need to have concrete evidence to show their involvement in a communal or Maoist plot. While this may highlight the potential for misuse of UAPA and the impediments to liberty found both in the law and in its judicial interpretation, it also has a distinct side-effect: the manipulation of political discourse in such a way that those who question the actions, methods and processes of the state that cause mass resentment are criminalised. It is in such a backdrop that the use of political catchwords such as 'Urban Naxals', a term that even Mr. Modi has used recently, should be seen. Far from being linked to any terrorist or Maoist conspiracy, the term is merely used to tarnish those with an alternative point of view. The Government arming itself with more stringent laws is only part of the solution to the threat posed by violent extremism. Looking for remedies to the underlying causes is more important than conjuring up conspiracies in the name of dismantling its support structures.

[Our code of editorial values](#)

**END**

Downloaded from [crackIAS.com](http://crackIAS.com)

© **Zuccess App** by [crackIAS.com](http://crackIAS.com)