



## The long battle against Maoist

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**(Mains GS 3: Challenges to internal security (external state and non-state actors) & Linkages between development and spread of extremism)**

### **Context:**

- The long war against India's Maoists is over five decades old now and it shows no signs of ending anytime soon.
- In the April 3 encounter between security forces and the Maoists in Sukma, a Maoist stronghold in Chhattisgarh, 22 jawans were killed — seven from the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA), a unit of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), and 15 from the Chhattisgarh Police.

### **Maoist trying to build sympathy:**

- One CoBRA jawan, Rakeshwar Singh Minhas, who was held hostage by the Maoists, has since been released.
- This followed a message from the Maoists to a Bijapur-based journalist that mercy would be shown to Mr. Minhas if the government nominated a team of mediators to negotiate his release.
- A team of local people, who later went deep into the forest area from where the Maoists were operating, spoke to the rebels and prevailed upon them to release the jawan.
- What persuaded the extremist group to show this gesture after their cruel act of killing the 22 men is anybody's guess.
- It was possibly their attempt to broadcast to the world that they are not all that violent or merciless as portrayed by the administration rather they are in fact humane and compassionate, fighting only for a cause.

### **Determination and tactics:**

- The ease with which the Maoists are able to strike at security forces and indulge in indiscriminate killing from time to time has confounded many analysts.
- The frequency of attacks may fluctuate depending on the preparedness of the extremists and the strength of the establishment's retaliation.
- But the tactics of the Maoists have not changed greatly.

- They usually spread misinformation about the numbers of Maoists on the ground in a village as well as their location.
- Communication equipment in the hands of government forces has not greatly improved over the years which make them more vulnerable for ambushes.

### **The problem:**

- The Maoists can never match the government's resources and professional prowess despite the assistance they receive in terms of weaponry from various sources.
- Gory incidents like the recent one in Chhattisgarh have often led to the quick charge of lack of intelligence and planning on the part of the government.
- But the criticism conveniently ignores the ruggedness of the terrain from where the extremists operate and the intoxication that anti-establishment propaganda offers to almost all members of the group.
- What works to their advantage is the fact that many States cannot give undivided attention to the task of eradicating extremism.
- All that the Central and State governments often do to step up their operations is to deploy more policemen and pour in more money and improve technology, but this has an impact only for a short span of time. There is an element of fatigue that afflicts both sides.

### **Development helped but partially:**

- A lot of people have ceaselessly put forward the argument that rapid economic development of a region alone would lure people away from extremist ideology.
- Advocacy in favour of amelioration of living conditions is hard to dismiss.
- To be fair, the governments involved, both in the States and at the Centre, have taken the plea seriously and implemented several development schemes in these areas.
- However, this has helped only partially.
- Andhra Pradesh is perhaps an exception where the magic of development has succeeded, especially in Srikakulam district.
- Civil servants who have served in that area say a dedicated leadership at the district and grassroots levels is one explanation for this transformation.

### **Inducting local youth:**

- Inducting local youth into the security forces helps in fighting the extremists.
- Over-dependence on Central forces is counterproductive. For able-bodied locals to comprise security forces is commendable.
- The Greyhounds, raised in Andhra Pradesh in 1989, is an eloquent illustration of this.
- History will remember the results it produced under the phenomenal leadership of K.S. Vyas, a courageous IPS officer who unfortunately paid with his life for the valour and dynamism that he had displayed.

### **The Maoist objectives:**

- The objective of the Maoists is to drive a wedge between the security forces and the government so as to sow disaffection against the government.
- Another aim is to serve a warning to the government that it has no option but to concede all the demands of the extremists.
- It is another matter that these demands, such as the formation of a 'people's government', are secessionist in nature, which no constitutionally elected establishment will ever concede.

### **Conclusion:**

- A broad policy of economic development, military restraint and gradual attrition and rejecting indiscriminate violence in the Naxal theatre is the democratically prudent and morally just course of action.
- Inducting Local youth and technology upgradation of the security forces along with exposing relentless propaganda of maoist will possibly work in the long run to curb left wing extremism.