



Left Wing Extremism: The Way Ahead



Vivekananda International
Foundation

Left Wing Extremism: The Way Ahead

VIF Task Force Report



Vivekananda International Foundation

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Notes:

1. In this Report, as relevant to the context, the acronym LWE is used to denote both the '*Left Wing Extremism*' and '*Left Wing Extremist*'.
2. By convention, the term '*Maoist*' is used to differentiate the armed insurgency and its violent chapter from the larger ambit of the LWE. The moniker 'Naxal' is a colloquial synonym of the term 'Maoist'.
3. Use of *figurative statistics has been deliberately avoided* in this Report as these are liable to varied interpretations and distraction from the focus of analyses.

Foreword

Left-wing extremism, also called Naxalism, or Maoism has been around since the late 60s. After 60 years, the movement may be down but not out. The UPA government had described the Maoist movement as the greatest internal security threat. In the last few years, the government has been proactive in dealing with the Naxalist violence. A judicious mix of security and developmental measures have put considerable pressure on the movement. According to government figures, there has been a significant decline in Maoist violence since 2014. As compared to 1089 incidents of violence in 2015, only 67 were reported in 2019. The footprint of Naxalism has sharply reduced from 90 districts in 2014 to 34 districts in 2019. Yet, it cannot be denied that the movement may be down but it is not out. Even as late as recent March 2020, Maoists looted a police station in the Sukma district of Chattisgarh.

The Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), which has a mandate of studying the national security issues in-depth, set up a task force of experts under the chairmanship of Lt Gen Gautam Banerjee, (Retired), to take stock of the current status of the Maoist movement and make recommendations for the policymakers regarding the way ahead. Gen Banerjee has been closely following the movement for several decades. Other members also have considerable experience and knowledge of the movement. The VIF is happy to publish the findings of the Task Force.

Despite the recent successes of the security forces and their success in containing the influence of left-wing extremism, there is no ground for complacency. Even today officials' outreach to the people living in remote areas affected by left-wing extremism is quite limited. The grievance redressal mechanisms is not functioning properly. The fear of Maoists remains prevalent. Extortions by the Naxals have not been eliminated. The awareness about the government's programmes and schemes is extremely limited. The outreach must be expanded and should be in local languages, which is seldom the case.

Security measures alone will not suffice. The root causes of the movement will have to be addressed. Good governance, a benign and caring administration and decent living standards are necessary for reducing the attraction and fear of the Naxals among the population. The rights of the tribals

and forest dwellers over the forest wealth and produce will have to be recognised and implemented. At the same time, there has to be unrelenting pressure on the violent cadres. The fight against Naxalism has to be both on the ideological as well as security and development fronts.

The efforts of the security forces have to be complemented strongly by a host of soft measures like the implementation of the forest dwellers act, stepping up developmental activities, improving connectivity and communication, and building infrastructure in remote places. A coordinated and long-term approach is required. The government officials must deliver development on the ground. They must visit the affected areas regularly and instil confidence among the people. They must have the confidence that the government will protect them from the Maoist extortions. The battle against Naxalism would not be won unless good quality governance is provided.

There is also a need to pay attention to the phenomena of 'Urban Naxalism'. There have been numerous instances that educated people, well placed in universities and other institutions, not only sympathise with the left-wing extremism but also endorse and even promote the overthrow of the constitutional system of governance in the country.

On the security front, there is a need to further increase the pressure on the violent Naxal cadres. Better coordination amongst security agencies, between security and development agencies, among the states and between the Centre and the States is required to eradicate the Maoist movement.

Gen Banerjee deserves special appreciation as he steered the Task Force and wrote its various drafts despite his illness. I want to thank him and the members of the Task Force for their efforts in producing the report.

The Task Force makes specific recommendations under separate headings like security, governance, development, media *et cetera*. The Task Force Report provides an objective assessment to the policymakers as also offers useful inputs. It is hoped that the findings of the Task Force would be debated and discussed.



Dr. Arvind Gupta
Director,

Vivekananda International Foundation

New Delhi

September 2020

Executive Summary of Recommendations

Note: The Summary is elaborated at Section 2, Part 2 of the Report. Perusal of these elaborations are necessary for full appreciation of the Report's Recommendations.

Civil Administrative Measures

Principal Considerations

- Left extremist motivations and destructive capabilities remain strong, and if the process of eradication of this menace is slackened, resurgence of a vicious level of insurgency may be expected.
- Law-and order matters and crimes need to be distinguished from armed rebellion against the State and dealt with distinctly.
- Factional fragmentation lends the insurgency to be isolated and neutralised piecemeal. Three categories to neutralise through optimised methods are: The over and under-ground cadres; armed insurgents; and the urbane anarchists.

People-Centric Approach

- Success in containing the Maoist insurgency has opened up opportunities to improve governance and public services. But for accrual of desired dividends, a profound attitudinal change is needed over the implementation of various Constitutional as well as administrative measures.

Better Governance

- It would be impractical to fulfil, in quick time, the wide range of promises made to develop the LWE effected areas. There is therefore an express need to better propagate awareness of the State sponsored societal uplift as against the futility of the Maoist ideology.

Government-Citizen Communication

- Media should also be used to disseminate, in local languages, the various welfare measures being undertaken by the Government and to promote positive image of the State among the people.

People-Centricity

- Every action, scheme and programme be reflective of the 'felt needs' of the people. People-Government understanding is needed to prevent the Maoists from hijacking the States' efforts to bring balanced progress.

People's Voice

- Continuous dialogue among the ground level administrative machinery and the local people, in the language and idioms they understand, is needed to instil cognisance of systemic hurdles needed to be tackled in fulfilment of their demands.

Displacement and Rehabilitation

- It requires the State functionaries to repudiate the LWE front organisations' conspiracy to mislead people by setting right examples of committed implementation of the rehabilitation schemes.

Surrender Policy

- States should intensify security operations, try to secure surrenders on case-to-case basis, and ensure that the rehabilitation policies are implemented with effect and then monitored closely.

Build-up of State-Citizen Trust

- Appraisals of the developmental indicators have to be substantiated at the ground level through beneficial results. These indicators would be: Governance down to the ground levels; State-people cultural outreach; peoples' participation in decision making; harness of forest and mineral wealth for industrial progress at the national level while maintaining the sanctity of the tribal rights and the local's lien; employment and enterprise opportunities; citizens' empowerment through ease of access to legal entitlements; and, enforcement of law and justice.

Grievance Redress Mechanism

- LWEs exploit local grievances to claim legitimacy. Lack of access and high cost of official grievance redress mechanism is the mainstay of their support amongst the rural masses. This issue need amelioration.

Controlling Urban LWE

- The LWE anarchists invariably use their freedom of expression to twist the issues just in order to demonise the State and then call for ‘bloody revolution’ to upturn the society and the system. It requires a dedicated agency to make the urban LWE ideologues accountable for their anti-national tirade and incitement of violence.

Disrupting LWE Logistics

- Sustenance of the PLGA in remote sanctuaries and that of the underground Maoist Militia cannot be any small undertaking, and that renders it vulnerable to disruption.

Discrediting Mischievous Propaganda

- The Government, while upholding lawful freedom, has to sponsor more appealing narratives to save people from LWE propaganda and its vicious effects.

Blocking the LWE Financing

- LWE financial system is so well entrenched that the rebellion can only be controlled by instituting special mechanisms to choke this life-line.

Socio-Economic Progress and Development

Peoples’ Needs and Priorities

- Steady resuscitation of nearly defunct primary and secondary health services, primary and secondary schooling and the public distribution chain needs to be continued in sustained manner.
- Similarly, sustained expansion of such public services like agriculture, animal husbandry, water conservation, roads, electricity and cell phone connectivity schemes need to be ensured for the State to regain its image.

State-Citizen Interaction

- The time is opportune to compulsorily enforce upon the State functionaries, some degree of discipline in attending to their rural duties.

Skill and Employment Generation

- Further, it is time now to graduate from just a few flag-ship skill development schools to regular and more accessible ones to cover larger numbers of youth.

Brisk Implementation

- Brisk implementation, even if in modest steps, of Economic and infrastructure development needs to be visible to earn the people's faith on own democratic system.

Upgrade of Counter-Insurgency Operations

Focus of Police Operations

Armed power of the State have yet to achieve the optimised level of their domination over the insurgency. It is therefore imperative that the Central and State police forces remain relentless in their current level of counter-insurgency operations to keep the insurgents on the back foot.

Emergence of breakaway factions has compromised the cohesiveness of the Maoist rebellion. And that offers an effective avenue for their piecemeal neutralisation by coordinated intelligence, police and political apparatus.

Escalation of Police Operations

- Having established an edge over the insurgency in rural areas, police forces have to further graduate to the next step to creeping re-occupation of the remote areas still under Maoists' control.
- A more dense counter-insurgency grid will be necessary to achieve the above mentioned upscale of police action the capability gap in area coverage will have to be filled by upscale of fire power, communications and fast reaction capability.
- To the above purpose, modernisation of the police needs to go beyond weapons, equipment, communications and technology to the building up of the policeman's mental, physical and psychological conditioning, his field craft and leadership.

- The vast spread of Maoist affected areas renders it practically untenable for the State to muster the required level of forces to achieve a satisfactory degree of continuous sanitisation against the Maoist threat. That shortfall of forces have to be covered by means of: Higher degree of synergy among the State police, the CAPF and the civil administration; denial of the rebels' logistics; choking of Maoist funding; and, penetration into Maoist base areas and their eviction to bring an end to the rebellious structure.

Defeating the Insurgency

- Should a conclusive defeat of the insurgency be aimed at, then it requires aggressive conduct of all-out operations to destroy the insurgents' base sanctuaries and to neutralise and disperse the armed PLGA units. Such kind of operations have to be executed by specially trained and equipped forces organised on army lines.

Preamble

A New Paradigm of Left Wing Extremist (LWE) Insurgency

First hand, ground-up reviews of the insurgency-affected areas of Central India are indicative of reckonable changes having taken place over the past few years – mostly for the better. The Security Forces have been able to substantially elevate their counter-insurgency capabilities and have been able to put a check on the rebel's so far unrestrained loot and bloodletting. Correspondingly, the Government's 'Integrated Action Plans' (IAP) to address the root causes of the rebellion have also begun to show modest progress. Besides, various government sponsored social welfare schemes, even if yet to be well implemented, have also started making a perceptive impression among the people.

More importantly, the exploitative and dismissive attitude of the local government apparatus as well as the outsider profiteering prospectors against accommodating the aspirations and grievances of the indigenous *Adivasi-Moolvasi* (the latter are those who settled over the last few centuries) stands corrected to much extent. The most salient result of these developments is that the rebellion's sympathy base is becoming less enthused in falling for the anti-state propaganda and the government's supposed provocations against the tribal societies. Recruitment to the cadre base has become a tickle, the rebel's highhandedness is often challenged and over-ground cadres are avoiding indulgence in illegal activities.

As a result, over the past couple of years, *there are clear signs of the LWE (its violent chapter being referred to as Maoist insurgency) stepping back from bloody attacks on State institutions into a self-preservation mode* and defending their domination over the base or core areas against penetration of the security forces. However, with an assessed 2000 to 2500 strong base of well-armed and motivated People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) cadres, its continued access to arms, explosives, ammunition and funds, and entrenchment of a nexus of interest group of beneficiaries of lawlessness, there is every possibility that the violent insurgency turns pro-active once again – as

indeed it has happened in the past.

Just as the Maoists have switched over to the self-preservation mode to defend their rebellious bastions and to prepare themselves for the coming phase of armed struggle, the State too needs to reconfigure, according to the changed situations, its means and methods of neutralising the insurgency. In so doing, a comprehensive ground-up review of the issue indicates that *much of the oft-repeated 'causes and remedies' of the insurgency need to be updated and contemporised* to be more relevant in today's scenario. This Report attempts to meet that purpose.

Task Force on Left Wing Extremism

The need to constitute a Task Force on Left Wing Extremism (LWE) arose from the fact that the situation is right for a mid-course orientation of the Government's policies and programmes aimed at neutralising the armed rebellion once for all. Accordingly, the Task Force has been constituted to take stock of the current ground situation and so define the way ahead to end the long festering LWE menace to the Indian nationhood. To that purpose, the Task Force has tapped the experiences of nation's top experts on the issue of LWE with the purpose of homing on to the possible *focus areas* for the coming phases of the Government's counter-LWE measures. Further to that purpose, strengthening of the *organisational capacities and the methods adoptable* to control LWE need to be delved into. Finally, the purpose of this exercise is met by the preparation of a *recommendatory brief* in the form of a *Task Force Report* for the policy makers to take note.

Issues to be Addressed

In accordance with the above background, the Task Force dwells upon the following aspects and the corresponding measures that would put an end to the long festering LWE menace to our nationhood:-

- a. Civil Administrative Aspects.
- b. Developmental Aspects.
- c. Counter-Insurgency Aspects.

Composition of the Task Force

The Task Force was constituted of the following experts of eminence on the subject:-

1. **Shri Sekhar Dutt**, SM, former Defence Secretary and Governor of Chattisgarh.
2. **Lt Gen VK Ahluwalia**, former GOC-in-C, Central Command.

3. **Brig BK Ponwar**, IGP, an internationally renowned counter-insurgency expert and the Founder-Director of the Counter-Terrorism & Jungle Warfare College, Kanker, Chattisgarh.
4. **Dr PV Ramana**, an academic who had been a Research Fellow at the Institute of Defence & Strategic Analyses (IDSA). A leading expert on the Maoist movement, he is currently a Policy Analyst.
5. **Col M Deshpande**, Internal security advisor to the Ministry of Home Affairs.
6. **Shri Subhrangshu Choudhary**, a close observer of the Maoist rebellion, he is the co-founder of CGnet 'Swara', a 'Democratization of Media' experiment based in Central India.
7. **Shri Druv Gupta**, a serving IPS Officer. He is an alumni of IIT Kanpur and a former Superintendent of Police in Chattisgarh.
8. **Dr Uddipan Mukherjee**, IOFS, Joint Director & PRO, Ordnance Factory Board under the Ministry of Defence and an observer of Left-Wing Extremism.
9. **Col (Dr) DPK Pillay**, a decorated war veteran is currently a research fellow at the IDSA.

Main sources of the Report come from first hand observations culled out from visitations to remote Maoist affected areas over many years and interactions with ground level functionaries, the vernacular press and the local people. Authenticated literature on the Maoist issue have also been taken note of.

Functioning of the task Force was coordinated by Lt Gen Gautam Banerjee, a former GOC Madhya Bharat Area and Chief of Staff Central Command. A Senior Fellow at the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), New Delhi, he is the author of many books and papers on matters of national defence.

Counter-Insurgency Measures Adopted and the Maoists' Back-Foot Quiescence

Section 1 : The Setting

The Maoist Resilience

Over the past four decades, the Naxal or the Maoist insurgency has acquired a resilience that allows it to resurface from time to time. Virtually wiped out in 1970, it began resurfacing in the 1980s due to continued apathy of the State towards the sufferings of the natives of the forested plateau lands which span across parts of nine States of Central India. All this while, the affected States saw the rise of Naxal's – or 'Maoists' to be more precise - as a mere law-and-order nuisance that did not necessitate any extraordinary action and that it would subside in due course of time. Anti-Naxal operations during this period was confined to routine policing, with occasional fire-fights when either party found themselves locked face-to-face with the other.

By the mid-1990s, taking advantage of the incongruence of political perceptions among the States regarding the characteristics and long-term implications of the rebellion and its causes and remedies, the Maoists had managed to regain influence among the neglected, voiceless and exploited natives of the remote, undeveloped plateau-forest lands of Central India. Resultantly, a new rebellious phenomenon began to rise, turning more and more violent as it found its fertile ground in remote undeveloped areas. By the second half of the 1990s, by their active recruitment, heists, loot of police weaponry and widespread extortion, the Maoist rebels had gained sufficient strength to expand their control over nearly the above mentioned plateau-forest lands, and to announce the establishment of Maoist 'liberated areas' where they ran their 'government', so to say. The State governments meanwhile remained in denial mode and did little to check the spread of the armed insurgency, some political parties even going to the extent of humouring them to serve their partisan ends. Regular warnings from the strategic community and occasionally from the Central Government of an impending crisis could not find their serious attention, the refrain being that they 'knew the situation better'.

Over the next decade plus, branches of the Maoist joined hands and spread their influence across what came to be described as the 'Red Corridor'. Practically unchallenged, they grew confident

enough to openly mock and defy the State, attack police forces and their loot their weaponry at will, enforce allegiance of the local State and non-state functionaries, and dictate the utilisation of the locally allocated funds. With much fanfare, their ideologues took to prediction of their movement's success in, as they put it, by destroying, through armed struggle, the 'rotten system' of constitutional democracy and all the 'evils' these represented. Thus, the first decade of the 2000s saw unprecedented degree of violence, extortion, kangaroo court executions and enforcement of 'Party Rule' in the Maoist's core areas of operations. The Indian State's sovereignty stood defied thus.

It took many years for the Central and State Governments to seriously converge in their concerns over the menace of violent anti-national LWE insurgency. Thus by a gradual strengthening of the security forces and corresponding political recourses to address the people's disenchantment over the governance deficits, the Maoist's free-run began to be contested, unhinged, and many times arrested. Since the early 2010s, concerted counter-insurgency measures from the Central and State governments had begun to gain a more focused impetus. Presently, there are encouraging results of the government's success in halting the Maoists' march, in many cases even displacing the insurgents from their strongholds. In another front, the government's agenda of socio-economic developmental began addressing the people's angst. The locals, mostly but reluctant supporters of the Maoist's methods, now found more amenable alternatives to redress their grievances.

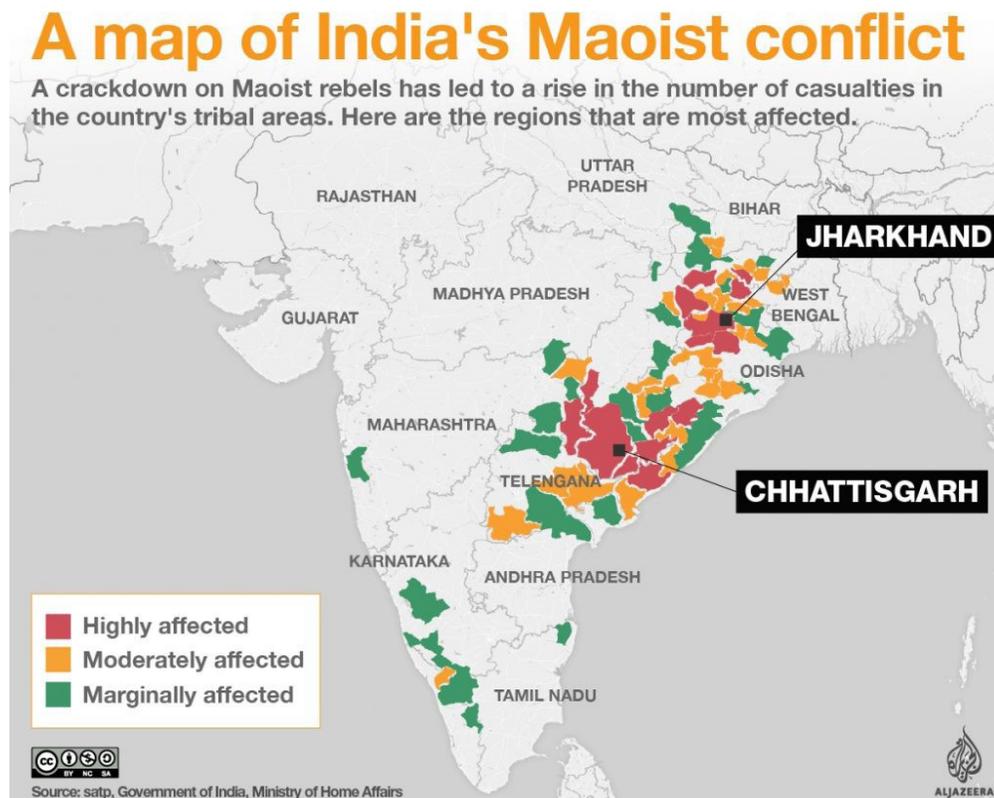
Consequently, when it comes to building up their tactical capabilities, the Maoist's cause has not been helped by a fall in recruitment, the State's arms and explosive control measures, surveillance of movements, accounting of public distribution of goods, and clamp down on terror funding and extortion networks. Doubtlessly, all these measures suffer from the ubiquitous systemic 'leakages' that afflict the State machinery, but even then, these measures have caused a substantial set back to the insurgency. The severely marginalised LWE ideologues, the fledging crop of new local leadership and the hard core insurgent cadres have therefore recused to a survival mode. *Active Maoists have ensconced themselves into certain 'core areas', resorting to armed confrontation with the security forces when these core areas as well as their sources of extortion are threatened.*

Notably, much against the run of the play, the Maoist insurgents have recently struck a series of vicious blows against the security forces patrols which had 'intruded', as they aver, into their 'liberated' and dominated areas. But such attacks are basically defensive actions to prevent the police forces from accessing and threatening the insurgent's main bastions of survival. Indeed, for a rebellion so well entrenched over the decades, it must take time for the root causes and grievances of the Maoists' supportive constituencies to be ameliorated, the insurgents to be rehabilitated, and the rebellion put to an end. Meanwhile, continuing to perpetrate sporadic violence and attacks, and retaining most of their hard-core cadres, weaponry, logistic and extortion networks, the fanatically committed Maoists wait for the State to turn complacent once again.

Defining the LWE Afflicted Areas

In their enthusiasm in bolstering their theme, a common mistake made by the analysts of LWE insurgency and its remedy is that the insurgency activities are clubbed with the rather ubiquitous practice of illegal exploitation of the people by local musclemen – the usual landlord-state functionary nexus - in backward and ungoverned rural areas. Actually, the practice of imposing illegal levies upon those engaged in any kind of trade in the name of ‘protection’, ‘speed’ or ‘festival’ money is prevalent in many parts of the country; Maoists are but the latest incarnation of past generations of such powerful dons. No doubt, the practice is on the wane against the rise of rights awareness, but its extinction is yet far, far away. Most of the erstwhile goons have found it expedient to outwardly convert to Maoism; notably, these might well remain operative under some banner or the other even when the LWE is extinguished or replaced by other versions of oppressive activities of the power wielders against the weaker sections. In fact, parts of North-Eastern States, West Bengal, Bihar, and to some extent Kerala, have already experienced that kind of transition in societal power wielding from one outfit to another.

This aspect is actually a societal and law-and-order matter which is conveniently but erroneously clubbed with Maoist actions. If *such matters are segregated from active Maoist insurgency and dealt through better enforcement of law and justice, a more concise scope of the LWE phenomenon may be better defined.* That would make it easier to direct the focus on dealing with the hard core Maoist insurgency. Accordingly, the Maoist affected areas are categorised under three heads in this Report.



Category A - Areas of Low Key Left Wing Activism

Depending on varying parameters of assessment, the Union Home Ministry identifies 90/58 districts in 11 States as LWE affected, 34/30 of these seriously. Of these, anti-national activities in the underdeveloped and remote areas of Madhya Pradesh, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Upper Assam, Kerala, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Tamil Nadu can be designated as law-and-order matters, to be dealt with by better governance backed up with effective policing. In these areas, the trend of leftist extremism is subsumed by more immediate popular wants and therefore remains at a tentative stage. As such, while being vulnerable to LWE instigated disturbances, these areas are more or less stable against the extremists' violent machinations. Similar should be the case with the urban areas like Delhi, Mumbai, Aurangabad, Nagpur, Gurgaon, Ranchi, Dhanbad, Aurangabad, Bhilai, Rourkela, etc.

With more effective administration, provisions for goods and services and policing, it would be easier to exorcise the LWE activists from expanding their influence in these areas, and even banish extremism altogether. Civic action and development in these areas would set the right example and raise people's confidence upon the State institutions.

Category B - Areas of LWE Influence

These are the areas where the LWEs wield considerable influence to pose challenges to the constitutional competence of the State. Here is a situation of active insurgency wherein the Maoists overrule the government in matters of their interests, even usurping many of the State functions at will and smothering any resistance by violence. Andhra-Orissa borders, Southern Orissa, Northern Telangana, Manbhum and Singbhum areas of Jharkhand, Birbhum-Jhargram area of West Bengal, North-Western parts of Bihar, South-Eastern UP, Western Ghats of Karnataka, and some other practically ungoverned areas fall into this category where active counter-insurgency operations are underway. Police forces engaged in restitution of the State machinery are the insurgents' prime target, while other arms of the public as well as private sectors are intimidated into submission to Maoist diktats through threats, and occasional examples of severe and violent 'punishments'.

Obviously, the Maoists' objective is to bring these areas under their complete domination and control wherein these so called 'liberated zones' would be run according to their professed ideals. Juxtaposing the oft repeated LWE strategy, these are the areas where the insurgency is trying to elevate itself from the phase of 'strategic defence' to that of 'strategic stalemate'. That is purportedly when the society will be run according to the LWE revolutionary practices while the State apparatus would stand marginalised, and finally ousted from the seat of constitutional governance. In fact, a couple of years back the LWE had been insinuating as to be close to that objective.

Presently, effective police action and popular support to the developmental schemes have arrested the Maoists' prospects of 'liberating' these areas. Thus confronted, and the insurgency has been forced back to evasive and defensive recourses. But the insurgents' armed power remains intact, their societal persuasion remains still strong and presence of their cadres on ground is more or less ubiquitous. *Relentless, resolute and more effective counter-insurgency operations are mandatory in these areas to keep the Maoist insurgents on the back foot.*

Category C - Maoist Dominated Areas

These are the remote, forested and hilly areas situated astride the Chattisgarh-Odisha-Jharkhand-Bihar-Uttar Pradesh and Chattisgarh-Maharashtra inter-state borders in Central India. Literally ungoverned, short of progress and remote in communications, these areas have been the traditional sanctuaries for Maoist insurgency. Here, in the vast spreads of in sparsely populated forests, the *insurgents run parallel governments, and assume control over local politics, as well as the government funded development works and public services.* To deny the State's presence in the region, they vehemently oppose any move by the government to create public infrastructure. Thus, open to unchallenged Maoist domination and control, State functions, including policing, is debarred from these areas under threat of savage, violent attacks by the PLGA platoons and companies. To that extent, the writ of the government does not run in these areas – a severe indictment for the Indian State. Areas falling into this category are 2-3 districts of Chhattisgarh and Orissa, the Chotanagpur Plateau, the Koyal Valley-Kaimur Range of Bihar and Jharkhand, two districts of Maharashtra, and Balaghat in Madhya Pradesh.

Of late, taking advantages of modernisation and training, police forces are breaking into some of these so far 'no-go' areas. In fact, few of the Maoists' bastions like parts of Dandakaranya, Bastar-Indravati Ranges, Saranda-Singbhum Ranges and Gadchiroli-Sundarnagar Ranges, have been subjected to intermittent police patrolling and some bloody encounters with the insurgents, thus threatening them in their own den. However, the Government is yet to take cognisance of the fact that should a defeat of the insurgency be the aim, then *it requires aggressive operations by specially trained and equipped forces to overrun and destroy the insurgents' base sanctuaries and to neutralise and disperse the armed PLGA units.* As past lessons of insurgencies the world over indicate, such forces are to follow the military ethos and be trained and deployed according to the military practices.

To sum up, the three above mentioned *categories of insurgency are to be countered by customised sets of solutions in the backdrop of geographical, political, administrative, economic and socio-cultural conditions.*

Counter-Insurgency Measures Adopted by Various States and the Results

Notably, under the overall ambit of a violent rebellion eulogised under a socialist façade, each

of the affected States have many localised versions of the root causes, objectives and methods of Maoist insurgency. Accordingly, counter-measures adopted by the States to bring the insurgency to the present level of crisis control have been varied in terms of emphasis and priorities. Needless to state, it will be useful to take a stock of such counter-measures before the campaign to neutralise the rebellion for good is charted.

Andhra Pradesh

Following full scale modernisation of its police force's operational, intelligence and logistic capabilities, the State had launched a concerted police action, with full political backing, to decimate the insurgent leaders as well as the over and underground cadres throughout the State. The link between the Maoists and their base of local supporters and sympathisers was severed by various hard as well as soft means. Besides, an effective surrender and rehabilitation policy was promulgated. These helped in laying out a robust intelligence network. The State police and its specially trained and equipped units managed to neutralise most of the top LWE leaders as well as the hard core armed cadres. The LWE front organisations were broken up by drafting the locals into the campaign. The effort was further substantiated by development and good-governance measures to address the grievances of the people including the tribal population who had been sympathetic to the insurgents' cause.

Notably, one fallout of the 'Andhra Model' of counter-Maoist campaign had been that many hard core Maoists dispersed to relocate to new areas of insurgent activities, particularly in Chattisgarh, Odisha, West Bengal and Jharkhand. To that extent, the Andhra Model not being complimented by the Maoist affected neighbouring States led to boosting the rebellion in Central India.

Having decimated the LWE structure, the State continues to sustain effective policing actions in order to prevent the insurgency from re-emergence. Further, it has been consistent in delivering on its promise of good governance and socio-economic programmes. *These steps have brought a high degree of permanency in solving Andhra Pradesh's LWE problem.*

Chattisgarh

After many years of political dithering, and with a new government assuming the helm, later followed by the next, the State changed its policy from being a reluctant responder to the Maoist violence to a serious counter-insurgency campaigner. Apart from strengthening the State police forces, specially trained and equipped counter-insurgency police units were raised, earnest resuscitation of a moribund intelligence network was taken up, and priority upgrade of road and telecommunications begun. On the social front, pioneering socio-economic schemes, including restitution of tribal rights and a robust food security programme for the benefit of the poor were

launched. These landmark schemes raised the people's confidence on the State machinery that led to reckonable undercutting of the Maoist's turf.

The results have been commendable. Rebel sanctuaries have shrunk to 2-3 districts while *LWE activities in most parts of the State are generally on the quiescent mode*. However, intermittent violence emanating from these sanctuaries remains a major concern.

Jharkhand

In Jharkhand, the counter-Maoist measures had mainly been driven by the CAPF in conjunction, when practical, with the vacillating policies of the State police hierarchy; the tribe dominated State politics having shown little urgency in that endeavour. Thus over the past decade, certain steady and deliberate police actions had led to some of the Maoists' forest sanctuaries being cleared, followed by initiation of various socio-economic development programmes even if the execution of these programmes continues to be rather tardy, sporadic and graft ridden.

During the recent years, violent incidents have declined substantially, surrenders have taken place, and the number of affected districts have come down to 4-5. As in Bihar, this decline too is attributable to money and influence induced divisions within the Maoist organisation that has led to its splintering into many mutually competing factions. Pan-India neutralisation of the experienced area leaders has also played a major part. A specific attribution can also be made to the State government's repudiation of political empathy with the Maoists tribals. Besides, various central government initiated development schemes and the attraction of political power and pelf at the local levels have played a key role in diverting the people from the Maoists' influence.

However, there remain much of the forested sanctuaries under the Maoists' control from where turf domination and sporadic attacks continue to be executed. These sanctuaries also provide for opportunities to the Maoists to sustain and scale up the insurgency at a time suitable to them. On the other hand, there is neither the inclination nor adequate capability for the State to clear out these remote sanctuaries. *Preventing Maoist from reclaiming the cleared areas and expanding their control, while keeping the State free from violent incidents, are the State Government's current terms of reconciliation* with the situation.

West Bengal

The leftist government took the problem seriously only after the Maoist became so bold as to flout their domination over vast tracts of the ruling party's turf and to launch large scale violent attacks on police camps. Build-up of the requisite counter-insurgency measures therefore took time to be effective. With the change in the State Government, a symbiotic convergence of social agenda among the LWEs and the local political cadres allowed the socio-economic schemes to

be executed with effect. Mutual convergence of welfare oriented agenda also made it possible for police action to be kept at a lower key. Besides, police capabilities were enhanced and an effective intelligence network, operated through grass-root party cadres, was successfully spread across the State. These two initiatives allowed the Government to extend its outreach to the so far neglected and undeveloped, forested tribal and poor habitats over which the Maoists had full domination so far.

The State's policies have induced most Maoist cadres to either give up or just shift their allegiance to the ruling party. Supplanted by a widespread and effective political set up which reaches far into the remote hinterlands, *the LWE organisation in West Bengal has been neutralised enough to be confined* to just one area bordering Jharkhand and Odisha.

Odisha

The backward, forested and mineral rich Adivasi populated districts of Odisha had been subjected to very high levels of Maoist violence aimed at paralysing what little existed of the administrative machinery in such areas. In that, the insurgents had, and still have, active support from the local population in preventing the State's usual practice of allowing exploitation of mineral assets in the areas, much to the exclusion of the local's share of benefits. All the while, besides undertaking protective measures, the State governments had shown comparatively lower inclinations to neutralise the insurgency by armed police action. Accordingly, the counter-insurgency measures have been allowed to proceed in a soft, accommodative manner in the backdrop of what development schemes are executable.

With much of the local's grievances in the relatively peaceful areas being more or less being addressed, the Maoists are no longer able to project themselves as the sole proprietor of the local population's interests. Besides, weakening of the leadership due to age and internal differences, splinter group politics and hard-soft police actions have restricted the Maoists to self-protection while buying time. Several key leaders had been eliminated while many have opted to surrender, as have been thousands of the cadres. Thus there has been a substantial decline in Maoist activities in the State. The worrisome fact is that as many as eight districts continue to be the Maoist bastions. *Combined with their contiguous bastions in Chattisgarh, a possible springboard for another resurgence of insurgency and violence in future remains in rebel hands.*

Bihar

The State Government in Bihar had been consistent in playing down the Maoist insurgency and had avoided countering it with hard power. But after a series of serious attacks including a jail-break, the reluctant State Government undertook to strengthen its police forces while placing emphasis on development and good governance. Identifying the poor law-and-order situation as the bed

rock of Maoist activities, a massive crackdown on criminals, including Maoists, was launched leading to effective prosecution and sentencing. Far-reaching development and infrastructural programmes were also launched alongside to cover the poorest and marginalised peoples.

The policy of police actions and development has *resulted in gradual assuaging the marginalised population's difficulties and resultant loss of Maoist's support base*. Violence has reduced considerably and the affected districts have come down to four.

Maharashtra

By timely strengthening of policing in its Maoist affected areas in its Eastern fringes – the Gadchiroli-Sundernagar Ranges - and implementing development programmes backed by an effective surrender and rehabilitation policy, Maharashtra has responded well against the menace of LWE insurgency. More remarkably, the State has imposed legal restrictions against the leftist provocateurs who have so far been operating behind the façade of ‘civil liberty’ – the ‘urban Naxals’, so to say. Thus, *besides sporadic incidents of violence, the LWE influence in the State is somewhat contained*.

Counter-LWE Measures Adopted at the Centre Level

The Union Government’s ‘National Policy and Action Plan’ entails adoption of a multi-pronged strategy in the areas of security, development, and community rights and entitlements. Accordingly, under a liberal interpretation of India’s federal structure, successive Union Governments have defined the Centre’s counter-LWE role as a provider of counter-insurgency resources like additional security forces as well as funds. Besides, the Union Government has also been offering intelligence back-up and advice over development policy matters for the States to sustainably reign-in the Maoist insurgency.

Civic Measures. Accordingly, the Centre has propagated application of policies aimed at development and empowerment at the local levels to wean the people out of Maoists’ influence and so pull out the rug from under the rebels’ feet. Recently, the Government has allowed financial grants for CAPFs to undertake welfare activities in the affected areas under a Civic Action Program (CAP). To upgrade mobile communication services in affected districts of 10 States, a scheme of Universal Services Obligation Fund (USOF) has also been initiated. Skill development schemes, extension of electricity to villages and establishment of new schools have also been sanctioned.

Skill Development and Employment Generation. Appreciating that generation of employment opportunities among the youth is at the heart of any solution to the rebellion, and that skill development is the platform for its success, special schemes in the LWE

affected districts have been implemented. *ROSHNI* (Ajeevika Skills) is a special initiative launched in 2013 for training and placement of rural youth from the affected districts in the nine States of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, Maharashtra, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. Resuscitated under the ‘Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana’, this Scheme formalises the efforts of the State as well as the Non-Government Organisations to run demand-driven vocational training courses to provide employment to the local boys and girls, with tie-ups with the industry (hospitality, textiles, computers etc.). A similar skill development scheme for the rural youth, the ‘Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna’, has also been launched in 2015.

Capacity Limitations of the State. Implementation of welfare and development schemes are limited by availability of fund and work output capacity of the executing agencies. As such, most of these schemes are still at the nascent stages of implementation. *Even then, there is much appreciation of the Government’s intents among the people.* People’s solidarity with the LWEs is on the wane.

Security Measures. Since development works can be executed only after the LWE dominated areas are duly sanitised of violent activities, the second measure propagated by the Centre has been *to provide additional police forces and funds for modernisation of the CAPF as well as the State police, besides a quantum upgrade of security related infrastructure,* leaving the States to coordinate the execution efforts. Besides, upgrade of the intelligence network and methods of timely dissemination of information sharing has been worked out. In similar vein, the activity monitoring and coordination mechanisms have been strengthened, and new Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) battalions have been raised with the rank recruited from LWE hot-beds.

The Strategy of SAMADHAN. Recount of the measures adopted by the Union Government in defeating the Maoist rebellion would be incomplete without a mention of the strategy adopted in 2017 named *SAMADHAN* – actually, this doctrine has universal application. The acronym SAMADHAN stands for *Smart leadership, Aggressive strategy, Motivation and training, Actionable intelligence, Dashboard based key performance indicators and key result areas, Harnessing technology, Action plan for each theatre, and No access to financing.* SAMADHAN is a profoundly galvanised improvement over of the 2011 and 2013 concepts of ‘Clear, Hold, Develop’ and the ‘Integrated Action Plan’ which aimed at: One, improved governance and economic development; and two, strengthening of the police forces. The SAMADHAN strategy entails the following measures; obviously, these measures have to be sustained over a long period to bear fruition:-

1. Use of trackers for weapons, and bio-metrics in smart guns.

2. Unique Identification number (UID) for Gelatin sticks and explosives.
3. At least one UAV or Mini UAV for each of the CAPF battalions deployed in the Maoist hotbed.
4. More helicopter support for operations to be used to rush-in supplies and reinforcement.
5. Joint Task Forces for operations along inter-state boundaries to be set up for better inter-state coordination and intelligence sharing.
6. 400 fortified police stations to be set up in the Maoist belt.
7. Fast tracking of stagnant LWE-specific police modernisation schemes including infrastructure building, communications and road-rail connectivity.
8. Review of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to ensure effective choking of fund flow to LWE groups.
9. Indian Army or specialised troops to train police forces to take on the Maoists.
10. Forces to be more proactive and aggressive in operations, rather than being reactive.

Constitutional Measures. By far the most telling initiative taken by the Union Government have been in terms of *institution of long overdue constitutional provisions*. Strengthening the Explosives and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Acts, passing of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and ban on the CPI (Maoist) and other organisers of radicalism who pose threat to the society are the examples of such measures. As for implementation of The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, States have taken over 5-7 years to formalise its rules of application. But it is also true that more or less all the provisions of this Act had been in practice since 2004 or so. Highhandedness against the forest dwellers on this account **was** no more prevalent after that, definitely after 2008, though the attitude among majority of the ground level officialdom remains stuck with colonial afflictions and greed.

Impact of Centre-State Cooperation

After dithering in indifference for many years, half-steps and ad hoc measures, the central and State governments have finally opted to reign-in the Maoist insurgency. Thus, through a combination of armed response and grievance redress measures, the gallop of Maoist insurgency has been reigned-in to a level where the vision of its possible halt has become apparent.

According to March 2020 Bulletin of the *Press Information Bureau*, Government of India, steadfast implementation of the National Policy and Action Plan - 2015 has resulted in consistent decline in the LWE related violence and its geographical spread in the country as indicated by the figures quoted below:-

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 (upto February)
Incidents	1089	1048	908	833	67	123
SF Killed	56	65	75	67	52	05
LWEs Killed	89	222	136	225	145	05

According to the *MHA's Annual Report for 2018-19* issued in August 2020, 3,749 people were killed in 10,660 incidents of Maoist violence over the decade in the 10 States of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The report goes on to asserts that over the last five years, there has been a significant decline in LWE violence as well as its geographical spread wherein there has been an overall 26.7 per cent reduction in violent incidents (from 1,136 in 2013 to 833 incidents in 2018) and a 39.5 per cent drop in LWE-related deaths (from 397 in 2013 to 240 in 2018). Similarly, the casualties among the security forces engaged in anti-Maoist operations have declined by 10.7 per cent (from 75 in 2013 to 67 in 2018), while the number of the insurgents killed has risen by 65.4 per cent (from 136 in 2013 to 225 in 2018). These statistics are also shown in graphic and tabular forms at *Appendix A*.

Maoist rebels still have enough armed strength to keep their shadow cast and to indulge in violent attacks to disrupt governance in their areas of presence. The State's purpose therefore will be met only if the considerable capacity of the insurgent forces to wage war against the State as well as the ideology sustaining it are comprehensively defeated.

A tall order this, but the idea has become much more feasible as compared to what the situation existed a couple of years back. With the attractiveness of leftist fanaticism on terminal decline one the one hand, and *the Indian State consolidating its governing mechanism on the other, the LWE in India is ripe for comprehensive neutralisation over the coming years.*

A Time to Adapt to a Favourable Situation

If there was any best opportunity to strike out the very roots of Maoism, then it is NOW. Most of the popular grievances over State apathy are being duly addressed, rebel recruitment has fallen, income from extortion has receded and the Maoists find it difficult to sell their provocations to incite the people.

However, though dormant for the present, motivation and core capabilities for LWE resurgence remain strong and *if the campaign for eradication of the menace is slackened, revival of a vicious level of insurgency may well be on the cards*. Indeed, there is also some justified doubt that most of the assuring statistics regarding the Maoist's supposedly diminishing strength and reduction in the violence it perpetrates are somewhat exaggerated. Whatever be the case, allowing the ruthless Maoists to hold the Indian nationhood to ransom would be a disaster beyond imagination, as some of the worrisome details of their violence, and the intent behind that, get exhibited at *Appendix B* attached.

Finally, there is much to be done yet to see to the end of the LWE menace to our nationhood. The Indian State needs to explore as to why the violent rebellion continues to persist and its root causes refuse to die despite the fact that vast amount of resources are being committed towards its amelioration. Indeed, *Governance down to the people's level still needs to be improved*. The cutting edge capacity of the State police needs to be enhanced. LWE finances needs to be choked off and a close watch on urban Naxalism is needed. There are also the areas to be focused at where not enough attention has been given so far - e.g. a *comprehensive communication and outreach strategy, effective actuation of tribal rights, assimilation of local culture, practices and languages, creation of employment opportunities for the youth, finer synergy between civic and armed actions and so on*. Besides, measurement of the developmental indicators at ground level have to be substantiated by practically beneficial results at the grass-roots.

Section 2: The Current Capacity of the Maoist Insurgency

Overview of the Maoists' Capacity

Taking-off with an overview of situation as it *currently* obtains in the red affected territories in the previous Section, this Section of the Report points out the likely capacity of the Maoist structure to scale up insurgency again to such high level of destructive results that had been witnessed during the past decade plus. Such an assessment is needed to home on to the Indian State's courses of action in the coming years to weaken and finally neutralise the Maoists' destructive capability. To that end, the Report begins with a brief revisit of the currently salient aspects of the three players' – the Maoists', the government's and the peoples' - *narratives*, just because therein lies the seeds of any final solution to the Maoist phenomenon. Lastly, the Section delves into the currently prevailing equation between the local and central governing systems as well as the existing level of synergic application of counter-insurgency measures.

Overview of the current situation is also needed because *even if the counter-insurgency measures have started to show appreciable results, implementation of civic action plans remain somewhat slow and tardy*. The main reason behind this situation is that timely fulfilment of the wide range of promises made to develop the LWE affected areas require higher rate of flow of funds and bolstering up of the works executing agencies. Presently, both requirements are well beyond our yet developing nation's resources and capacity. Further, the usual signs of complacency over their duties have remained ensconces among many of the ground level executives of the administrative machinery. Similarly, some of the government departments seem unable to shed their past callous ways in dealing with the people. Conversely, triggered by the governments' programmes and noble intents, many unsustainable expectations have been raised among the people. No doubt, there has been far-reaching improvements in the attitude of the State machinery towards its voiceless people, but even then, a summation of the prevailing dispensation indicates that it is also *time to ensure that any systemic relapse to the old feudal-colonial ways of administration is prevented from setting-in*.

This overview would delve into the currently observable situation as related to the, the *status of*

the rebellion, the government initiatives and the peoples' attitude in the insurgency affected areas, in that order:-

- A. The Rebellious Narrative;
- B. The Governance Narrative;
- C. The People' Attitude.

This Section would thus set the stage to further navigate towards a final way out of the long festering insurgency.

A. The Rebellious Narrative

The Maoists' Case

It is found necessary for the ground level State functionaries as well as the citizens to be reminded that the Maoists are a dangerous anti-national outfit. This reminder is necessary to arrest the trend of complacency that has set in where ever the Maoist violence - but not extortion - has shown a downtrend. Ideologues of the rebel outfit reject our Constitution, vilify our choice of democracy and system of jurisprudence, and profess their outfit's ideological allegiance to overthrowing what they view as a 'putrid governing system', through 'violent revolution', to install a 'just rule of the proletariat' (sic) - as they believe.

Presently, the smart, feisty and action-dedicated among these revolutionaries assume the mantle of local area commanders and squad leaders, and form the mainstay of the rebellion. These leaders continue to look for gullible followers to turn them into committed 'red' revolutionaries who will 'destroy the existing democratic order and usher in an egalitarian social system' run by their absolute autarchy. They stoke the locals' real and prompted grievances to form armed 'revolutionary squads' out of them in order to assail the various institutions of the State. In that quest, they are joined by the still considerable lot of poor, unemployed and angry victims of a skewed system wherein the so far exploited tribes (Adivasis) and old settlers (Moolvasis) continue to await redress of their most genuine grievances. Indeed, the Maoist rebellion has turned into a coalition of cadres coming from people ill-treated and exploited by the nexus of political-business-feudal predators, and educated, out-of-work revolutionary romantics.

After a decade of near-free run over the South-North continuum of sparsely inhabited jungle-plateau land that extends from Northern Andhra Pradesh-Telangana in the South to Nepal Border in North Bihar - what has been referred to as the 'Red Corridor' - *of late the Maoist insurgency is showing signs of being contained.* Since the past few years, strengthening of the police forces and

security infrastructure have begun showing results. The police forces are longer the sitting ducks to insurgent attacks and the degree of police presence has increased in areas which had earlier been abandoned to Maoists to dominate. There have also been some curbs on the insurgents' supply of arms, ammunition, explosives, medicines etc. and the leadership is in disarray, while fund raising has been affected by a dip in extortion as well as the Government's fiscal enforcements. Similarly, the Government's social welfare schemes are weaning the people away from the Maoists' influence.

Leadership Issues

At the Maoists' end, natural aging, surveillance over movement and communication, difficulties in organising peer group confabulations and motivational congregations, and neutralisation of a better part of key rebel leadership over the recent years has made clandestine access of the romantic Red ideologues to their local area based cadres quite difficult. That in turn has devolved active leadership of the rebellion from the hands of fire-brand revolutionaries from Bengal, Andhra and Bihar to the current generation of locally grown crop of cadres. The smarter among the local cadres have thus assumed the mantle of leadership at the ground level, even if they are yet to gain experience in the conduct of insurgent activities and to differentiate these with acts of local muscle-flexing. The objective of this lot is to impose their arbitrary diktats, garner funds and settle scores in areas where the State's presence is rather thin. In consequence, *charisma of the old generation leaders, who were literally worshipped by the cadres and even local people, does not pervade any more, nor does the pull of revolutionary fervour.*

Rise of Localised Control

Weakening of effective coordination between central party committees and ground based cadre has brought functional autonomy to these zonal and area commanders - the mainstay of rebellious activities - to carry out their activities as they find expedient. Thus, what was once nearly *a monolithic and centrally coordinated rebellion, has become characterised by the confines of separated blobs of islands within which local leaders steer the course of rebellious activities according to their own priorities, capacities and goals.* The Red Corridor has thus shrunk into such islands of more or less isolated activities where the rebels' objectives are determined by the scope for fund-raising, local rivalries, and cast, tribe and class loyalties. Therefore, with the exception of the deeply committed sections of the ideologically radical LWE leaders and the jungle-sanctuary based PLGA fighters that they control, in most parts of the insurgent influenced areas the veneer of lofty idealism of communist egalitarianism has, in practice if not in theory, been subsumed by the less exalted expediencies of the local agendas.

The current crop of Maoist gang-leaders are motivated more by power and money rather than by revolutionary fire. It is so that the lure of garnering funds has enticed the 'comrades' of Maoist ranks into over three dozen factions consisting of few hundred cadres or so. Formed under rather

high-sounding banners, these factions operate on partisan, local issue based agenda and change colour frequently, their real loyalty being towards money and muscle power. The rebellion today is therefore factionalised in terms of goals, methods and means, with over two dozen groups contesting among themselves for the lure of 'collections' and political influence, subverting rivals, and joining hands when under collective threat from States' counter-action initiatives. These continuously emerging, disbanding and merging factions adopt and revise, as a matter of local exigency, their own motivated ideas of sustaining the revolution, the key being in capturing the rival faction's 'market of collections' by the gun and muscle power. Of course, when cornered by counter-insurgency operations, these factions do cooperate temporarily in their fight against the State before going their own ways.

Generally, to avoid alienation, the Maoist factions are amenable to the locals' sensitivities, even to the extent of accommodating the communists' sworn 'class enemies' like government servants, land holders and traders, and focus their extortions on fleecing the outsider contractors, truckers, wheeler-dealers, and corrupt members of the public and private concerns. So *with regards to funding of the rebellion, reduction in scope for 'collection' for the Party and its apportioning between the many breakaway factions has led to problems of organisational sustenance, retention and recruitment of cadres, and procurement of arms, ammunition and explosives.* Besides, the failure to gain urban footprint and the money that could come thereof has added to the fiscal limitation. Urban recruitment has fallen also due to better opportunities to earn legally.

Features of Current Insurgent Activities

As a result of the above mentioned, the great 'Red Corridor' and the *chain of 'liberated zones' of Maoist dominated areas which spread across entire Central India few years back, has shrunk just to four odd groups of half-a-dozen operative sanctuaries, namely, the Raigada-Kasipur Ranges, Malkangiri-Kanger Ghati Ranges (Sabari River Valley), Latehar-Gotang Ranges (Koel Valley) and Gadchiroli-Sundarnagar Ranges* the number of seriously affected districts having come down to 58 or so, mainly 34 of these. More noticeably, over the recent years, the Maoists have not found the confidence of sallying out of their camps to attack police stations and armouries.

Presently, the insurgents have gone on the defensive. They confront the police forces only when their base areas, from where they sally out to organise activities, raise funds through their clandestine over ground cadres, and to exert influence over their faceless sympathisers, are under threat of being detected or overrun. Meanwhile, the supporters as well as the opportunists who behind the curtain of governance deficit have been the beneficiaries of transactional opportunists for graft and other avenues of illegal gains, are now under threat of government's actions. As a result, the 'Corridor' has shrunk into half a dozen or so *dispersed 'core' areas located in remote jungles where the hard-core PLGA continue to find sanctuaries and keep the rebellion alive.* When necessary,

armed insurgents do sally out from these ‘liberated’ strongholds to intercept security forces’ from intruding into their turf or to chastise those who refuse to be extorted.

From time to time, when their arbitrary diktats are challenged by the people, traders, miners, transporters or government contractors, the PLGA is activated to apply various kinds of violent means to bolster the dread of the hard-core over-ground cadres. It is the latter *who keep alive the system of clandestine LWE promulgations, incitement, extortion and show of power on the ground with the backing of armed PLGA*. Procurement and supply of logistic provisions to the jungle camped as well as transient cadres is also in their charter. The Area Commanders exercise overall control over all such groups under tentative mentorship of the radicalised urban intelligentsia who flourish in the social milieu of a democratic dispensation.

As stated, most Maoist-Police encounters take place when police columns ‘intrude’ into Maoists’ safe or base sanctuaries to challenge the insurgents’ in their core bastions, their camps and caches of weaponry and supplies. The instances of large groups from distant camps congregating to orchestrate swarming bloodshed of murder and loot have practically stopped. Similarly, the usually gung-ho armed Maoist groups have become wary of openly venturing out of their safe areas to conduct their *janata* (populist) programmes in defiance of the State. Business, particularly mining, having slowed down, the scope of extortion has shrunk. What little Maoist activity does go on outside their areas of domination, is undertaken, as stated, clandestinely through local over-ground cadres living among village and town communities, with muscle support from camp based armed groups, when needed. As it will be observed subsequently, the entrenched, mutually profitable *nexus between local politics, business, State employees and the beneficiaries of wheeler-dealer brokerage continue to remain in action*, thus providing the rebellion a purely materialistic avenue for sustenance as against the strength of their propagated ideology.

It is also observed that to discredit the more or less placid administrative system, Maoist insurgents attack what vulnerable State-apparatus that happen to exist, if nominal and sparse, in areas susceptible to their presence. Besides well publicised destruction of already dilapidated schools, health centres, administrative offices and such symbols of the State, they go about subverting the State’s authority through forcible enforcement of some populist and some arbitrary diktats upon the people, the administrative machinery and private employees, traders, contractors, and even the top mining concerns. In so doing, the Maoists try, with some success, to assume control of their areas of influence where the writ of the State runs only to the extent that the Maoists approve of – like permitting certain schemes in return for ‘levy’. For example, *grants for schools and health centres, Gram Panchayats, employment schemes and public works are selectively permitted to proceed so as to levy a share of funds, besides projecting themselves as facilitators in ameliorators of popular wants*.

Nevertheless, in the overall scene, the LWE activities in general and their domination over the fringe areas of red influence in particular have diminished considerably. Indeed, *should the present*

momentum of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP), and its related policy of 'Samadhan', is maintained, and if myopic inter and intra-state politicking over the counter-measures is contained, dissolution of the of the Maoists' rebellious cause might be in sight. So indicate the recent observations as recorded from grass-roots level.

A Tactical Retreat

Having been pushed back into from its rumbustious romp over areas controlled and dominated by them, the Maoists have been regrouping from the safety of their sanctuaries. The effort is to work among the masses on local issues, instigate dissent and protests, and garner funds. However, due to dearth of real causes, the government's responsive face and obvious economic limitations, such anti-state instigations have not been succeeding so far. Similarly, the Maoists' goal of expanding their dominance to cover new territories – Kerala – Karnataka – Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra – Madya Pradesh – Chattisgarh Tri-junctions, for example - have not made reckonable progress. On the other hand, Maoist grip over South-East Telangana, Northern Andhra Pradesh and Southern Odisha – Sambalpur, districts have turned somewhat diluted. So has been the case with the Maoist affected areas of Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Under these conditions, the LWE mentors have had to jettison their hope of escalating the rebellion to the 'strategic stalemate' stage, which had seemed to be within grasp in the early part of the 2010's. Finding it prudent to preserve the rebellion till better time comes, these *mentors have opted to avoid pro-active indulgence in violent activities against the State institutions and are focused on survival, sustenance and rebuilding of the movement.* These mentors have promulgated an extension of their time line of destroying what they describe as India's 'corrupt democratic system' through violent armed revolution, to the 2050s.

Recent observations from close to the ground indicate that the rebellious narrative is on the back foot. Albeit for the State, there is a long way to go yet, particularly as progress brings in its wake a corresponding rise in people's wants. Even then, it is important to appreciate that *there are hints of weakening of the rebellion, and that offers an opportunity to the Government to devise the next lines of action with some confidence.*

Keeping the Torch Lighted

There still remain in contention the bunch of committed LWEs who strain to keep the 'torch lighted' – for the 'good of the society', as they believe. New opportunities for rebellious escalation are awaited as what is viewed as a 'farce of democratic empowerment and cosmetic development' goes back to relapse to the old archaic ways, and when the 'fundamentally flawed system would collapse' (sic) for them to paint the country red. While remaining engaged in low-key, intermittent activities, *the PLGA camps and fighters are being protected from desertions and casualties while the*

dispersed cadres of the People's Militia have melted into the citizenry. The support cadres have opted to sit on the fence watching over the trend and performing only such party work which they can escape only at the cost of their ear, arm or even head. The last two type of cadres – People's Militia and over-ground support cares – have assumed the pretensions of being 'social activists' and 'development coordinators' on local issues, the trick being in crediting themselves over State initiated and funded schemes and then gain some remunerative clout at Panchayat or above levels.

Maoists' still remain *well stocked in weapons*; additional requirements are met by local manufacture and loot of arms from ambush of police movements. Since police posts and armouries are now better protected against attacks, some arms are also purchased from other anti-national, anti-social and black marketing groups. There is also the concerns over the Maoist attempts to acquire drones, rocket launchers and sniper rifles. Ammunition, radio sets and explosives continue to come from clandestine sources.

Rations come from an ever-leaking public distribution system, while other necessities are purchased from opportunist traders and middle-men out of 'tax collections'. These 'collection' in turn come through 'contribution for the cause' – actually extortion, ransom, bank loot and regular 'levy' on trade, works, mining, transportation and even development schemes – at gun point. Following the dictum of 'enemy's enemy ... my enemy', the Maoists had, for some time, even gone to the extent of allying with terrorists, separatists and criminals to get the wherewithal needed to sustain the rebellion. The 'levy' collected is used to run the outfit, but more than that, it is the main source of attracting recruits from the poor and unemployed, and retaining their loyalty. The stark fact is that *the cadres are motivated more by the access to bare necessities of living rather than what seems to them to be a vague and a perplexing rhetoric of 'Lal Salam'.*

Sparks of Maoist Reclaim

In order to counter the growing understanding that the Maoist movement was weakening, the new Maoist mentorship under Basavaraj (Namballa Keshava Rao) appears to have triggered the recent demonstrations of Maoists' ability to perpetrate 'spectacular' violence. Thus there have been some major attacks in the last two years – killing of MLA Bhima Mandavi in Chattisgarh in Apr 2019, and attack on C-60 force in Gadchiroli in May 2019, for example. After a long time, the attack on CAPF in Chhattisgarh's Sukma in March, 2020 highlights that shift in the Maoist strategy. Besides, there have been over 50 assessed Maoist-related killings so far in 2020. Meanwhile, sporadic incidents keep occurring when the extortionist cadres destroy construction equipment at various work sites, and demand ransom against kidnapping because of unpaid Maoist levy.

As indeed, the Maoists are continuously losing their support base and are limited to just a few pockets of influence, the sporadic high-level attacks confirm a tactical shift in the current Maoist strategy. The purpose is to point at the vulnerability of the State, to keep up the morale of its

cadres, and so revive the rebellion. *More stray attacks should therefore be expected.* Conversely, success of counter-insurgency operations are evidenced by the rising cases of insurgents' killings, arrests, busting of hideouts, and raids on clandestine factories and hidden stashes. That in fact, is all the more reason for the State to upscale its counter-insurgency measures.

Maoists' Urban Subversion

In the recent years, the LWE leadership has been active in forming up what is referred to as the 'Tactical United Front (TUF)' and 'The Urban Movement'. A collection of clandestine propagators of anarchy and violence, to 'purify' the society as they aver, this Front is meant to undertake the agenda of spreading dissatisfaction in the urbanised sections of the society, raise poisonously indoctrinated over-ground cadres, and engage them in disruptive works in large cities and other urban and semi-urban areas. In that, these Front elements take advantage of the usual fault lines in the urban environment.

The Front is rooted at the traditional pull of radical leftist thoughts among the young pseudo-intellectuals, particularly those who are active among the romantic minded youth in various educational institutions of controversial repute. The way-ward spirit of these hot bloods is nurtured under the tutelage of anarchist minded motivators who brandish themselves as social reformers to provoke poisonous afflictions. In that, they find much sympathy and some support among the urban intelligentsia, including students and teachers in schools, colleges and universities.

There also have been many attempts by the technically inclined LWE and their clandestine associates to set up underground workshops to manufacture rudimentary weapons and ammunition, though these efforts have not been enough to make any practical difference in the insurgents' armed capability. Besides, the Front has been targeting the trade unions, including those of the Defence Public Sector Undertakings and Ordnance Factories, and the unemployed youth to spread real and imaginary angst against the democratic State and the society. *The objective here is to render the Government dysfunctional and discredited by organising demonstrations, protests and crippling strikes at massive scales; that the objective remains far from fruition cannot be a matter of complacency for the State.*

Functioning over-ground behind the veil of political demands and democratic rights, the urban propagators of the LWE objectives are a difficult lot to persecute. At the same time, activities of these radical intelligentsia are dangerous in that they motivate creation of urban support base, boost fund collection, misguide industrial workers and recruit underground cadres. It is also a matter of serious concern that for this radicals no recourse is forbidden, including misguidance of minorities and collaboration with indigenous as well as foreign anti-nationals.

If the LWE's urban objectives are met, then the State might be crippled by industrial, agrarian and student unrest, and even urban terrorism. It is therefore incumbent upon the State to keep close watch over these elements and neutralise their mischief.

Main Props of the Insurgency

As the Maoists focus on sustaining the insurgency against the State's effective counter-measures by going into preservation mode with limited acts of defensive intent, sustenance of their current organisational capacity is served by the following means:-

- a. *Generation of funds* by means of various forms of extortion. Actual collection is carried out by hardcore over ground cadres. Any opposition is dealt with violence, and when necessary, armed cadres are also called up to deal with resistance. There is an elaborate system of collection, safe keeping, banking, distribution and accounting – in cash, kind, gold and various assets.
- b. *Vigorous activities of the urban organisations* behind the façade of what they propagate as social reforms, egalitarianism and justice. Members of these organisations are purportedly the 'human rights' activists who ironically are firmly converted to the notion of bloody 'people's war'. Nurturing violent inclinations and branding themselves as intellectuals, these brainwashed madcaps use their education and understanding skills to fuel LWE violence by means of diabolic propaganda and poisoned motivations to incite the gullible in perpetrating sabotage against the society and the State.
- c. *Exercise of vice-grip control over their cadres as well as the local habitants* by a mix of show of benevolence and care, eulogising implicit obedience, and holding out threat of severe punishment against intransigence.
- d. *Crediting themselves of forcing the government to bring in developmental schemes*. Local Maoist leaders have thus taken to the acts of overseeing the execution of government schemes and development works, and arbitrating on matters of scope versus demands. That permits them in building up funds as well as influence.
- e. Using ostensibly reformist *front organisations to provoke populist protests* against the local's difficulties, real or farcical, with the administrative machinery and legal bindings. Abusing the democratic dispensation and the spirit of legal provisions, these front organisations also pitch-in to recruit, shelter, arrange legal cover, and exploit free media to propagate false propaganda.

At the other end, there are certain chinks appearing in the Maoist set-up. Fading of the ideological motivation, falling into corrupt, arbitrary and inhuman activities, factionalism and emergence of splinter groups, trade in illegal money and unconstitutional practices, rising vulnerability of insurgent camps located in deep jungles, clamp down on logistic chains, modern age inclinations of the youth and erosion of popular empathy are *such chinks, which if marshalled wisely by the government, can spell doom for the grossly outdated phenomenon of LWE.*

B. The Governance Narrative

States' Counter-LWE Initiatives

A revolt that sprouts from the peoples' socio-economic disconcert takes a long time to be assimilated into normal, peaceful dispensation of mainstream life. Ironically, the Maoists' most effective ally had been the callously anti-people State-apparatus itself. In fact, arrogations of the State-apparatus by some of the local level civil functionaries in the past had made the Maoist terror look as lesser of the evils, and that distracted the common people's attention from the fundamental danger to Indian nationhood that the rebellion poses.

It requires a long time and effort, first, to bring about attitudinal changes among the governing establishment, and second, to give visible shape to an egalitarian system that responds, to the extent practical, to the people's concerns. Thus, as the Maoists' menace grew to worrying proportions, political and administrative systems in the affected States – Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh – were pushed into a process of learning to respect the *bona fide* rights and concerns of their so far neglected and exploited jungle population. That turn to a healthy attitude towards the local populace began sometime around the first half of the 2000's, and over the following decade or so, it brought about a gradual improvement in the service culture of the governing establishment. Sometime after 2011-12, the attitudinal change among the powers that be started showing results. Presently, the situation of people-government estrangement has been ameliorated to a considerable extent - albeit tentatively yet because old notions die hard just as old memories take time to fade.

On the ground, many people friendly schemes have been fielded which are demonstratively popular - even if the implementation is tardy in absence of robust funding, competent execution mechanism and sedate work culture. Introduction of such schemes have attracted popular appreciation thus leaving the rebellion short of anti-national causes to instigate the masses. However, governance in many parts of the affected States still remain afflicted by the maladies of corruption, callousness, discrimination, abuse and indecency, as perpetrated by the long entrenched ranks of rent seeking and exchequer plundering 'servants' of the people, so to say. Till these aberrations are controlled

down to tolerable limits, Maoists are unlikely to go out of business.

This background sets the stage to discuss the *effects on ground*, tentative but encouraging nevertheless, of the States' initiatives on Counter-Maoist front as discussed in Section 1 above.

Effects of States' Socio-Economic Initiatives

Even if in their early stages, the States' initiatives to ameliorate the long-standing alienation of the local *Adivasi*, *Moolvasi* and rural habitants have started to become visible. Thus, the issues of land alienation, disbursement of due compensations, exercise of forest rights and service-friendliness of the administrative machinery are better addressed now than ever before. Small but steady steps on development of roads, rural electrification, improvement of public distribution system, restoration of health centres and primary schools, youth skill development programmes, etc., all executed through local planning and participation, have started to restore the State's people-friendly image.

Each State has adopted measures to counter their Maoist narratives as these vary depending upon the local situations. These measures are more or less according to the counter-insurgency strategy devised at the Union level, with due customisation according to State-specific situations. The schemes therefore vary from State to State in terms of goals, scope and execution. In this regards, Chattisgarh, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh are making good progress, while Bihar, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh are trying hard to be steady in execution of the various progressive schemes. On their part, Jharkhand remains held in its habitual stoic, mollified mode, West Bengal has enticed the rebel cadres with the attractions of party politics, and Uttar Pradesh finds that its Sonebhadra based rebels are either lying low or have turned to petty crimes associated with mining, abduction, theft and such trades. It is *encouraging to see that there is regular politician-constituency dialogue, and the local administration and the police – callous, corrupt and dismissive earlier – are much amenable in their interactions with the common man.*

Meanwhile, having become fed up of harsh jungle life and constant running from the police, many LWE conveners have turned into brokers and middlemen in various government sponsored development schemes alongside petty politicals, Panchayats, contractors and corrupt government functionaries who have managed to remain active at the execution end. Ironically, the lure of political aggrandisement and having say in controlling fund have, *inter alia*, pushed the rebel cadres and outlaws in large numbers into the mainstream of societal life.

Of course, *there remain many concerns to address.* For one, the civil administrative machinery, particularly at the village, Panchayat, block and township levels, continue to suffer from structural woes, while the socio-economic schemes, by the time these reach the stage of delivery, are but shadows of what had been imagined. Besides, due coverage of State administration over distant and sparsely habited areas has still remained somewhat short due to lack of manpower,

on the pretext of Maoist threat etc.; these areas are left more or less for the police forces to tread intermittently. Spread of Primary Health Centres has improved a bit as have the doctors' and paramedics' attendance, but medical stores are mostly empty. Teachers of local schools are more regular in their attendance, though the quality of education imparted remains a casualty due to lack of numbers as well as competence of the teachers and the teaching aids. The Public Distribution System is working better where there is popular awareness and scrutiny, elsewhere the leakages continue in somewhat reduced scale.

Notably, the officially adopted concept of 'clear, hold, develop' in the Maoist dominated areas is functional only in one part. Most of the lesser rebel-infested areas have indeed been cleared, but these are held rather thinly and developed even lesser due to departmental inadequacies and administrative limitations. More seriously, the core areas of the rebellion remain 'liberated' unto the Maoists' rule more or less. *To that extent, there is a stand-off between the State, the police and the Maoists, each finding expediency in remaining within their delineated orbits, so to say.* The resultant stagnation of progressive programmes will no doubt be detrimental to the States' cause because the rebellion can be defeated only when the Maoists are denied of the very space that they have usurped from State control. The States' attainment of that situation is yet far away.

As stated earlier, a special kind of truly para-military force, organised and employed according to military norms, is needed to undertake the role of evicting and destroying the Maoists' bases and their PLGA sanctuaries through relentless offensive actions. Notably, the ethos and methods of these para-military units need to be distinct from the special police units raised by various police departments to operate in armed policing role with the standard CAPF units. Till now, however, there is no serious indication coming from the governments at the Centre and the States of their intent to evict and eradicate the Maoists from their so far overlooked strongholds and base areas.

As a happy irony, one remarkable effect of the Maoist violence has been to coat a silver lining unto the exploited lots of *Adivasis* and *Moolvasis*. One, in as many as nine States *the rebellion has brought the hopelessly dysfunctional administration to their senses.* The common man is no more obliged to behave like a sheep or slave, no more are the government employees so brazenly dismissive of peoples' concerns, and graft, nepotism etc. do not by rule go unchallenged. Two, with the State apparatus showing sensitivity towards the citizens and making visible efforts to govern better within the resources at hand, it is no more easy for the Maoists to attract their cadres to live in deprivation, take risks of brigandry and impose any concocted 'liberation' upon the people. *The Maoists' stale revolutionary panoply, aimed solely at capturing State power, which they have failed to find through ballot, no longer works as before.*

Effects of Active Policing

Policing, a department consigned to utter debilitation in the past, has shown remarkable

improvements. Since past few years, strengthening of the police forces and security infrastructure have begun showing results. The police forces are longer the sitting ducks to insurgent attacks and the degree of police presence has increased in areas which had earlier been abandoned to Maoists to dominate. There have also been some curbs on the insurgents' supply of arms, ammunition, explosives, medicines etc. and the leadership is in disarray, while fund raising has been affected by a dip in extortion as well as the government's fiscal enforcements. Similarly, the government's social welfare schemes are weaning the people away from the Maoists' influence.

Police forces are better manned and equipped through recruitments against vacancies, new raisings and execution of empowering schemes like 'Modernisation of Police Forces', 'Fortified Police Stations', 'Security Related Expenditure', 'Special Infrastructure Scheme' and 'Road Requirement Plans'. However, in the last two named, progress comes haltingly due to the unstable environment created by Maoists' levy and the State executives', traders' and contractors' graft. Police stations, camps and logistics are better protected, patrols are deliberately organised, communication network functions adequately and medical support has improved. Opportune attempts are made to lookout for manufacture and trade of illegal arms and ammunition, and explosive are better accounted for, though the clandestine trade continues unabated. Maoist related incidents and casualties have come down by nearly half as compared to previous three years.

In all these aspects, besides provision of additional forces and funds for police modernisation, the Central Government also backs up the States by sanctioning the raising of India Reserve (IR) battalions, setting up of Counter-Insurgency and Counter Insurgency and Terrorism (CIAT) schools, providing helicopter support, training of State Police by the Army, intelligence sharing, facilitating inter-state coordination, assistance in community policing and civic action programmes etc. The underlying philosophy is to enhance the capacity of the State governments to tackle the Maoist menace in a concerted manner.

In reality, Maoists' extortion cannot be eliminated in quick time. Even if countered with force, there will still be a degree of mutual acceptance of 'contributory' transactions between the over-ground collectors and their quarries. Practically, the contractors, miners, transporters, traders etc. cannot be protected for the development works to proceed everywhere and at all times from Maoist arm-twisting. On the other hand, execution of works are necessary to address the people's alienation from the State, besides permitting extension of the State machinery to the hither-to-fore neglected areas. In the interest of building up public infrastructure like roads and bridges, schools, Public Health Centres (PHCs) etc. therefore, the present effort should be to make extortion more difficult and risky to execute by strengthening the surveillance and intelligence networks.

There is much to be improved upon yet, particularly in matters of provision of administrative cover to forces deployed in distant areas. Adequate logistic capacity to maintain larger densities of operational bases and police camps to cover the hitherto void areas is therefore essential. Presently,

due to this void, there remain many remote areas where the State's footprint remains but tenuous and confined to occasional and carefully orchestrated police patrols. As a result, due to limitations of execution caused by the Maoists' planted explosive devices, extortions and arson of construction equipment, progress of road construction to connect isolated areas, as recommended by the district administration and the police, proceeds but slowly. Conversely, the PLGA's armed cadres remain safely ensconced in such areas while Maoist area commanders use these bases to flaunt their pantomime of 'people's government'. *Strengthening of counter-Maoist and policing grid with provision for adequate logistic wherewithal therefore remains a challenge to be overcome.*

Notwithstanding the difficulties discussed above, there is no denying that in the past two years the space of Maoists' control has been much constricted. The insurgents have been driven into just 3-4 main forested sanctuaries in Chattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkhand, and the insurgents' movement from one to another has become rather hazardous. But *since occasional police presence cannot stand for full extension of State authority, eviction of Maoists from their dominated hot-beds, followed by extension of appropriate level of public goods and services remains a major imperative in disabling the rebellion for good.*

Surrender Policy and Effect

A mere two per cent of the cadre joins the rebels' ranks for ideological reasons. Therefore, effective pursuit of surrender and rehabilitation schemes is one of the key measures to neutralise the Maoist insurgency. But surrenders in reckonable numbers would take place only when the police forces mount vigorous anti-Maoist clamp-downs. *In absence of intense crack-down, Maoist cadres have not faced the heat and therefore are not compelled or persuaded to surrender - Andhra Pradesh is an example.*

Even if the Maoist problem has spread to nearly pan-India dimensions, there is no national policy on the surrender and rehabilitation of Maoists, whereas the individual States' earlier surrender and rehabilitation policy has few takers. In Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand and parts of Maharashtra and West Bengal, wide scale, concerted, intense and aggressive police operations have been rare and far between and because of that the insurgents had not been put under pressure to surrender. In Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh the number of active underground cadres is low and so are the cases of surrender. Andhra Pradesh has an attractive surrender and rehabilitation policy and thus there have been surrenders in larger numbers. Notably, the declining number of surrenders and drastic reduction in rewards (head money) indicate a fall in the number of marked Maoist out-laws. There is also the matter of the monitoring the surrendered Maoists who often turn to clandestinely supporting the rebellion in order to save themselves from retribution; many even resort to exercising their violent image to further their greed.

A set of guidelines to wean away the misguided youth and hard core cadres who find themselves trapped in the rebellious set up has been issued by the Union Government. Yet to be reviewed for results, effective implementation of these guidelines would attract more surrenders and prevent the surrendered from returning to rebellion. Meanwhile, a uniform surrender policy for all the affected States is under preparation. *The biggest hurdle in effective implementation of the rehabilitation package has been the bureaucratic red tape*, which lets down the involved police officials and persuade the Maoists to distrust the State.

Political Vision of the Insurgency

Notably, none of the States' leaderships have set their sight on 'defeating' the rebellion *per se*, the preference is in 'assimilation' of misguided elements. Finding it impractical to attend to the rising torrent of grievances and demands in quick time against the hapless State's modest resources and capabilities, they would rather keep the rebellion tolerably controlled through just a modicum of armed police action under which progressive schemes can be undertaken in gradual steps. Accordingly, rather than just selling the idea of finding socio-economic prospects in an environment of peace and stability, fulfilment of which must take time, they are also intent on enticing the Maoist revolutionaries into the mainstream of the democratic system. In other words, the political inclination is to lure the misguided 'revolutionaries' into the usual hum-drum of local politicking among common interest socio-political groupings – and the societal as well as materialistic advantages that accrue from the electoral pantomime.

At the other end, commencement of democratic processes of local elections and State sponsored employment schemes have diluted the attraction of Red ideology. In the local context, these processes bring much power and influence, and of course, wealth, including the opportunities to garner regular as well as illegal profits from development schemes. That attraction is quite strong even for many of the hard core 'revolutionaries' to resist even at the cost of jettisoning the rebellious ideology. An encouraging fallout of progressive governance, this dilution in revolutionary fervour has also influenced the State's political vision.

Accordingly, the current political vision in all the *States envisage that the urge for socio-economic empowerment on one end and steady counter-insurgency actions on the other would subsume the Maoist rebellion at lesser costs to the society*. In their wisdom therefore, the State governments are sanguine that the current approach, as customised by each State to address their Maoist problems, is the most appropriate strategy. Arguably, in a subtle and sublime consideration, the State leaderships' vision appears to be right.

In nutshell, as the Government finds the insurgents losing territory as well as cadres in the recent past, the broad strategy of 'security-and-development' will be continued. Within these parameters, there is also some efforts to uplift the intensity of counter-insurgency operations.

Monitoring Mechanisms

At the Union Home Ministry level, the LWE situation and implementation of remedial measures is monitored by a Review Group chaired by the Cabinet Secretary. At these meetings, progress of all schemes are discussed including those of perception management and mobile communication. The situation is also reviewed at the occasional State ministerial level meetings and various specific sub-groups.

Politics of Insurgency

In partisan interpretations of constitutional provisions between the States and the Centre, counter-Maoist measures are variously defined as a matter of ‘public order’ (law and order) and ‘internal disturbance (internal security). On ground, with the State governments re in control of the civic as well as police measures while the Union Government pitches-in in terms of development funds and the counter-insurgency forces. To some extent, the arrangement lends to ill-utilisation of the Union’s resources, in that *the State governments avoid expenditure in building up their own security related infrastructure and resources, only to pass the burden on the Union Government.* For example, even after a decade and more, the States have done little to fill up their vacancies in police ranks, adequately modernise the State police and raise adequate police units of their own. Even effective the appropriation of development funds allocated by the Centre leave much to be desired.

On its part, the Union Government has been avoiding from subscribing to the States’ demands for allocation of additional forces. Besides, having raised the tranche of central fund allocations, the Union Government enjoins the States to undertake by themselves some of the progressive commitments that had earlier been passed over to the Centre’ lap. Consequently, the *resources provided to the police forces remain substantially lesser than what is necessary to weed out the insurgency.* For similar reasons, the policy of ‘Clear, Hold and Build’, wherein security forces sanitise disturbed areas for the civil administration to make up for government deficit, has offered but modest results. Nevertheless, with increased density of security forces the scope for Maoists to influence the people and to execute acts of violence have been appreciably limited as has been the case with declining recruitment into their ranks. Needless to state, *the Union and State governments’ counter-Maoist policies are still short of full synergy.*

In Sum

In sum, the State machinery has come a long way from its past insensitive, arrogant, dismissive, corrupt and callous manners of administrating the far flung and sparsely populated areas. There is no more of the social excesses and crass exploitation of the *Adivasis* and non-tribal *Moolvasis* and their ways of life. Further, in the State machinery there is the felt need to develop public infrastructure – as against just those needed to exploit the local resources, minerals basically - in

these so far undeveloped areas. Thus, *over the past few years, the aggrieved Adivasis and Moolvasis of the forest-plateau lands of Central India have begun appreciating the State machinery for its noble intents and efforts; the hatred of the police and patwari has been more or less assuaged. It is time for the State to harness its better image and take advantages of this positive development.*

Nevertheless, the State faces two kinds of challenges in bringing the Maoist affected habitations into the mainstream of national system. One, developmental intents need massive financing as well as an adequately accountable executive machinery. Both are depended upon the State's capacity to organise within its means in a prioritised manner, which may not satisfy the rather extensive and quick-time expectations of the people. Two, considering that the affected areas are rather sparsely populated and therefore have much lesser number of beneficiaries of upgraded public facilities, it would be difficult to commit disproportionate shares of the States' capacity to develop the insurgency affected areas at the cost of the populated bases of political power. A balancing act along with dialogue and perceptive exchange with the people will have to be devised by the State to find a median.

C. The Peoples' Attitude

In the past years, the dominant view was that Maoist insurgency was a struggle of the so far poor and neglected tribal population for the preservation of their rights and way of life. Interventions by the administration machinery and police force was viewed as acts of oppression and exploitation, which these were indeed in most cases. That impression continues to hold among many academicians, journalists social activists who have lost touch with the ground situation.

As the preceding discussion indicates, though the Maoist rebellion is yet to be overcome, it is currently on the back foot. People realise this turn of events. But due to long association and mutual camaraderie, they have developed a soft corner for the rebels, particularly because most of them are their own 'boys' who, fight for their cause. They realise that the Maoists have been able to bring their problems into national focus and have thwarted many of the government's exploitative schemes. They appreciate the service the Maoists have rendered in developing the women's empowerment movements like the 'Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sangh', translation of textbooks into local languages, preventing arbitrary land alienation and many such beneficial measures. But they also *realise that progress is possible only through a reformed State machinery and not through murder and extortion.* Most over-ground supporters and sympathisers have therefore become fence-sitters, and inclined towards the State administration.

On the other end, the State is regaining its credibility among the people who had earlier been subject of administrative apathy. Slow but steady efforts of the State over the past decade or so have made some good impression among the people. Institution of democratic process starting

with local elections at the village and town levels has weaned popular attention towards the more interesting pantomime of political hustle-bustle. People are thus cognisant of the Maoists' anti-state rhetoric only to the extent of raising their community issues when necessary. *Primacy of the constitutional State is better accepted among the people today; notwithstanding all its flaws, the State has started to regain its long lost credibility.*

There is a vast community of beneficiaries of the insurgency who earn their living by trade with the Maoists; besides, there are beneficiaries of corruption who thrive behind the veil of insurgency. Ironically, this nexus is also a catalyst for execution of progressive schemes for the benefit of the common man, whereas the Maoists, traders, contractors and executives, all stand united in garnering their share of profit. In other words, to the vast ranks of associates the rebellion has become a source of employment and earning. It will therefore be difficult, not even practical, to root out the rebellious environment in a reckonable time frame

Finally, it is an observable trend among the Maoists to impose conditions over the sanctioned public-good development works, in that, they claim to be the originator of the works. Further, acting as the people's 'true friends' they dictate the scope, design etc. of the sanctioned works, some justified and some not so, according to the inclinations of the majority among their local supporters. To that extent, Maoists use the State resources to bolster their clout among the simple, uneducated masses. The option for the State is to gradually tighten the chain of responsibility and accountability.

Right popular attitude towards the State and its rebellious section is a key factor in controlling the Maoists. However, right attitude is inculcated by persuasion of favourable intents and demonstrations on ground. *Since execution of progressive plans are time-intensive and therefore many times frustrating, intimate, noble intended dialogues and confabulations with the people at the ground level is an imperative.* Such interactions would help in cooling down the agitated minds, and foster appreciation of mutual expectations and concerns, while security and progress related counter-measures against the rebellion are underway.

Observations, Inferences and Recommendations on the Way Ahead

Preliminaries

Parameters of Planning for Future Counter-LWE Measures

With the ideology of leftist fanatics on terminal decline on the one hand and the Indian State consolidating its governing mechanism on the other, the LWE in India is ripe for comprehensive neutralisation. With more effective administration, public goods and services, and effective policing, it would be easy to exorcise LWE activities from perpetuating their diabolic influence in the so far affected areas, and even go on to banish extremism altogether. But even if on the defensive for the present, *the LWE motivations and destructive capabilities for resurgence remain strong, and if the process of eradication of this menace is slackened, revival of a vicious level of insurgency may well be on the cards.*

In Part 1 of this Report, the manner in which spread of Maoist insurgency was arrested over the last few years and its current status has been discussed. Going further, this Part analyses the key observations and inferences made in the preceding Part in order to deduce certain recommendations which the Union and State governments should adopt in planning and execution of the future counter-LWE measures. Coming from experienced analysts who are familiar with the situations at the ground level, diligent adoption of these recommendations is expected to neutralise the LWE menace to a negligible level, if not fully in the years to come.

Further discussion in this Part is organised under the following Sections:-

Section 1: **Imperatives of Civil Administrative Measures.**

Section 2: **Imperatives of Development Measures.**

Section 3: **Imperatives of Counter-Insurgency Measures.**

But before proceeding to the subjects of discussions, there are certain principal considerations to be taken note of.

Principal Considerations

Firstly, a common mistake made while analysing the LWE insurgency and its remedy is that Maoist activities are clubbed with societal muscle flexing of local dons which is a rather prevalent practice in many areas of the nation. Taking advantages of the limitations of State's law-and-order structure and using muscle power to indulge in social highhandedness and extortion in various forms has been a perennial problem in India which requires different kinds of solutions. Of course, with most out-laws finding it convenient to style as revolutionaries, there are commonalities and spill-overs between the two categories, but ideological differences keep such overlaps rather tentative. Therefore, if classified and dealt with commensurately, the counter-measures – administrative, developmental and police action - against the spread and depth of the LWE threat in affected regions would be more focused, concerted and effective. *Law-and order matters and crimes need to be distinguished from armed rebellion against the State and dealt with distinctly according to the penal code.*

Second, breach of the near-continuous 'Red Corridor' into separated forested perimeters has resulted in devolution of the control of insurgent activities into the hands of local Maoist dons. These leaders steer the course of the insurgent activities according to their localised priorities, capacities and goals – communism is not one of these. The Red Corridor has thus shrunk into such islands of more or less uncoordinated and isolated activities where the rebels' objectives are determined by the scope for fund-raising, local rivalries, and cast and class loyalties. As a corollary, there is much fragmentation of the LWE organisational structure into many factions whose influence, armed power, funds, methods and agenda have many variances. *Thus fragmented, the insurgents today are easier to be isolated and neutralised piecemeal, in sequence.*

Three, setting aside the activities of the ever ubiquitous out-laws in the society – extortionist and muscle flexing groups - the body of LWE cadres are to be distinguished into following *three categories:-*

- a. Clandestine, both *over and under-ground cadres*, the mainstay of LWE activities who operate amongst the people to provide for propaganda, information, logistic support, recruitment, fund collection etc.
- b. *The PLGA*, organised and employed in military fashion and located in deep jungle camps to provide armed support to the cause.
- c. Educated, *urbane anarchists* who provoke ideological disorientation among the masses, offer directions to the leaders in the field and support the rebellion in various ways, including provision of media, legal and fiscal support.

The three abovementioned categories of LWE are to be countered by specified sets of solutions in the backdrop of local geographical, political, administrative, economic and socio-cultural conditions.

These Principal Considerations and the related observations and recommendations for charting the way ahead in further neutralising the LWE threat to the nation are discussed hereafter.

Section 1: Imperatives of Civil Administrative Measures

Focus on People-Centric Approach

Existence of radical, violent leftist ideology is neither new nor a passing phenomenon; it will continue to exist in various forms as in tune with the times. But when it finds expression through the peoples' angst against the system of State administration then it assumes the proportions of a threat to nationhood. It therefore is well appreciated that the focus of counter-LWE measures have to be people-centric. For that to be effective *and manifested through desired dividends, a profound attitudinal change is needed over the implementation of various Constitutional as well as administrative measures.*

A lasting solution to the current form of Maoist problem cannot be imposed from the top, but has to come from the communities which offer opportunities to the Maoists to impose their will. It was the failures of governance which drove these communities to fall for LWE propaganda and sympathise with the Maoists' 'direct action' against the State and its citizens, to host the rebels among them and to provide for the recruiting grounds of insurgent cadres. Today, with the States' engagement with the people coming to fruition, this kind of collective inclination is changing, and the LWE's sheen is losing fast. This is also the time to engage with people and to take advantage of the splintering within the Maoist ranks. Thus there are opportunities to turn the situation more in favour of the State. For these opportunities to be utilised, there needs to be a multi-pronged strategy, key considerations of that strategy are discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

No doubt that over the past two decades or so, much has been done by the State to ameliorate the wide-spread popular disenchantment with the socio-economic administration that was alienated from the dwellers of remote forest-plateau lands of Central India. Happily, the causes and remedies of popular grievances have been identified and acted upon for due resolution. *But even as the State gradually earns the peoples' confidence and the menace of LWE is effectively addressed, there remains much to be improved upon and fine-tuned yet before the LWEs' unconstitutional run of violence and*

destruction is reigned-in. The task is further added to when as the existing problems are addressed, more expectations are bound to proliferate, thus offering new grounds for dissatisfaction.

Goal of Better Governance

Civil administration down to the people's level needs to be improved still. There are deficiencies in functioning of the pre-existing as well as the recently expanded delivery systems of basic public goods like the Public Distribution System (PDS), Primary Health Centres, Schools, tele-communications and transportation. These deficiencies relate to insufficient area and population coverage, tenuous supply of stocks, non-availability and non-attendance of staff, and tardiness in delivery of essential services. Besides, there is always the matter of graft and misappropriation. There are also the areas to be focused at where not enough attention has been given so far - e.g. communication and outreach network, effective exercise of tribal rights and forest management, main-streaming of the local culture, practices and languages, access to judicial and grievance redress system, opening up of employment opportunities for the youth, and so on. *The States' success in somewhat containing the Maoist insurgency has opened up opportunities to address those matters.*

Other measures to turn the situation in favour of peace and stabilisation are for the forest-dwellers to have access to a more sustainable life-style. Tribal life needs to be facilitated by local industrialisation, enterprise for value addition processing of forest products, and profit sharing with the forest-dwellers. This way a marginalised community can be turned into productive citizens of modern India.

However, given the State and Central Governments' capacities to generate resources – like finance, works agencies, audit, skilled labour, transportation networks, marketing mechanism etc. – attending to the abovementioned deficiencies in a desired time frame would be a tall order. Indeed, *timely fulfilment of the wide range of promises made to develop the LWE effected areas would require much higher rate of flow of funds and bolstering up of the works executing agencies. But after a stage, such investments would be beyond the States' capacities, particularly when the government's other socio-economic obligations are to be attended to.* Managing this mismatch should be a priority, the first imperative being in fostering the right understanding of the challenges among the people.

Government-Citizen Communication

There is observed a tendency among the ground level State functionaries as well as the citizenry, for them to retract into complacency whenever Maoist violence has shown a downtrend. In fact, even extortion seems to be condoned by the locals who remain mostly unaffected by it. Therefore, there is need for issuance of regular reminders to highlight that the Maoists are a dangerous anti-national outfit who aim at rending the free society asunder. There is an *express need to nurture awareness among the people about the futility of the Maoist ideology as against the promises of profound*

societal uplift offered by the various development schemes/programmes undertaken by the government. Also, much needs to be done in countering the mischievous propaganda and rumour mongering as are regularly belted out by the rebels to misguide the simple folk.

At the heart of the counter-LWE strategy there should be an appropriate communication platform to connect citizens directly to the State. Such a government-citizen connection should be harnessed to promote wider recognition of local culture and languages, elucidate on comprehensive understandings of the Forest Rights Act, habitat and resettlement rights and development plans, and the benefits that accrue from these. It should be stressed that these provisions do not require new laws to be effective but just the due application of the existing laws, maybe with few updates here and there.

In many instances, the State administration does not appreciate engaging with the media while the rebels are past masters at it. Print, radio, television, internet and social media should be used extensively to counter the LWE misleading propaganda, publicise their misdeeds and their anti-social activities such as destruction of roads, bridges, schools and public property. *Media should also be used to disseminate the various welfare measures being undertaken by the government and to promote positive image of the State among the people.* News and programme broadcasts, translation of government notifications and acts like the Forest Act, habitat and resettlement rights etc., all in local languages, mainly Gondi, Santhali etc., and information relevant to the common people need to be disseminated through wide area networks.

Local conditions have improved enough to promote cultural troupes to stage street plays and paint graffiti works using appealing words in local dialects. Engaging the women in cultural and song-and-dance shows, as the Maoists have done, is an effective way to educate the people about the true situation and their rights and opportunities thereof. Besides, public (Chaupal) discussions and feedbacks on issues of local import should also be organised. Notably, for all that, expansion of media and tele-communications network is needed, which in turn requires funding and staffing. As a low-cost but effective solution, the initiative adopted in Chattisgarh in engaging the *local 'Gotul Institutes'* - to build upon the traditional system of peer-to-peer learning among the tribal communities - may be replicated elsewhere with due customisation. This matter is elaborated in the following paragraphs.

People-Centricity

People-centric approach requires mutual understanding and bonding between the ruling establishment and the ruled masses. It is therefore imperative for the public servants to foster due understanding of tribal culture and ways of life as these prevail among the inhabitants of Maoist affected areas and the insurgents' support bases. Besides strengthening the State-citizenry bonds, development of mutual understanding would allow *every action, scheme and programme to*

be reflective of mature consultations over the 'felt needs' of the people and which would be beneficial to them in the short and long terms. Formation of the District Level Coordinating Committees (DLCC), headed by the Collector with heads of police, public works, health, education, electricity, revenue, PDS, and other involved department as members, has been a right step. Effectiveness of this initiative needs to be further optimised. Besides, the DLCC needs to be replicated at Block-Panchayat level where this has not already happened; but for that to be effective, provision for extending the required works related technical support needs to be formalised. This step would further enhance the people's trust upon the State administration.

Government officials of all departments must reside at their posts and be accessible to the local people –regular visitations of district level officials to the isolated settlements, as in British rule days, should be the norm. That would foster a much desired responsiveness of the State machinery. Here again, there remains much to formalise a system of 'administration at your doorsteps'

People-centric approach would prevent the Maoists from befooling simple folks to claim sponsorship, even ownership, of government undertaken schemes and development projects. *A beneficiary-functionary (people-government) understanding would also prevent the Maoists from hijacking the States' efforts to bring balanced progress, which they jeopardise by inciting partisan groups to interfere with the scope and location of planned development works.* Similarly, such understanding would sensitise the people regarding the Maoists' practice of imposing 'levy' to claim government sanctioned funds into their coffers at the cost of the scope and quality of common benefit schemes.

People's Voice

To note, traditionally most tribal communities have their own social institution – for example, 'Gotul' among the Gonds – for the purpose of teaching the young about their customs and as a meeting place for the elders to make collective decisions. Drawing on this tribal tradition and elevating it as a hub of social activities, it is possible to establish State-wide networks to connect communities between themselves as well as with the government and so to offer an informal platform for sharing news, observations, developments, cultural events etc. Supported by innovative communication networks, all of the activities discussed above could be managed and coordinated under the aegis of a network of *Gotul Institutes* in the form of 'social audit', suggestions and user feedback. That, in fact, would lay the foundation for according cognisance to the peoples' voice.

Activities of the Gotul Institute could include training in communications – Chattisgarh's CGNet for example - for the citizen journalists to record their experiences and observations on mobile phones, central editing of these, and rebroadcast through local-area mobile and radio networks. Such schemes should be set up and replicated to deliver a fresh ability for very low cost interactive community engagement through mobile phones. The system should also offer a platform for discourses in local languages, Gondi and Santhali mainly, over cultural, religious

and environmental issues, and balancing the possible incongruities with the need for industrial progress.

A continuous dialogue among the ground level administrative machinery and local people, in the language and idioms they understand, is needed to work up a practical understanding of the systemic complexities in instituting progressive measures and the limitations which have to be taken cognisance of by the government as well as the people. Intimate State-people interaction would thus belie false propaganda and rumours and so save the masses from misguidance spread by anti-national elements, while educating the local population regarding the sublime parameters of democratic functioning. With dissemination of sensible voices successfully managed, local habitants would not stand suspicious of industrial development and other modernising efforts in their areas. Finally, diligent promotion of people's voice would limit the cause of Maoists' recruitment and local support, and deny them the subterfuge of being the 'defenders of tribal rights' against a falsely purported 'exploitative' State and industry.

It is imperative that as the policies to improve citizens' engagement with the State continue, pressure also continues to be put on the Maoists by competent policing so as to leave no doubt that the extremists cannot win, and can no longer be safely ensconced in their forested bases.

Managing Displacement and Rehabilitation

Assumption of plateau land-forest areas for industrial activities is an imperative for the nation's progress, including creation of new opportunities for secondary trade, communications and public services infrastructure at the local levels. Generation of employment – the most critical need for the hour – is therefore contingent on harness of lands rich in natural resources. But that also causes the habitats to be displaced from the local peoples' traditional homes and fields of sustenance, sometimes over and over. Indeed, the State functionaries' cruel, callous and corrupt handling of rehabilitation measures in such instances has provided for the strongest motivation for the locals habitants to join the rebellion or support it over-ground.

Recently promulgated rules and entitlements for consensual relocation and due rehabilitation of the displaced have addressed these issues under the watch of the Supreme Court. However, by indulging in manipulations with the proposing, executing and controlling agencies of industrial projects, the leftist extremists have found another opportunity to incite the locals' angst and to instigate them to make impractical demands. This they do under the cover of various area based front organisations which function under the banner of the so called people's revolutionary *samiti's* (committees). *It requires the State functionaries to repudiate the LWE conspiracy through regular interaction with the beneficiaries of government policies, and render irrelevant their front organisations by setting right examples of committed implementation of the rehabilitation schemes for the people to appreciate.*

Surrender Policy

An attractive surrender policy is imperative in neutralising any home-grown insurgency. Accordingly, surrender policies have been formulated by each of the affected States. However, the results could be better. States therefore need to indicate stronger interest in obtaining surrender of the rebels.

Surrender becomes preferable when there is immense pressure against lawless activities; surrender of the rebel leaders has more telling effect upon the cadres. To encourage surrender, besides firm police action, social and filial pressure should be applied on the rebels. These pressures, alongside satisfactory rehabilitation package makes surrender preferable and palatable. Though the administration has shed its inhibitions in interacting with the insurgents' families and peers but presently that works only in fits and starts.

Notably, surrender without arms should be permitted only in very exceptional cases as it encourages fraudulent surrenders. Similarly, pampering the surrendered beyond their entitlements too is counter-productive as they are liable to turn overbearing upon the society.

State governments should show strong interest in obtaining surrenders and reinforce their surrender and rehabilitation policies; the idea of a pan-national surrender and rehabilitation policy is impractical and liable to abuse due to vastly different conditions. *States should intensify security operations, try to secure surrenders on case-to-case basis, and ensure that the policies are implemented with effect and then monitored closely.*

Build-up of State-Citizen Trust

The measures of good governance as discussed above, and more, must be focused on building-up democratic trust between the State and its citizens. For this, *honest appraisals of the developmental indicators at the ground level have to be substantiated by, not just tall promises, but through practically beneficial results at the grass-roots levels.* Needless to point-out, expansion of the State machinery and manpower to cover the capability shortfalls, implementation of progressive schemes and commensurate fiscal investments would create employment, and that would be a major step towards trust building.

Some of the key factors in sensitising the citizenry of their benevolent, rule-based and democratic homeland State are to be highlighted as follows:-

- a. Reach of the *governance system down to the ground levels;*
- b. Strengthening of State-people bonding through *cultural outreach;*

- c. Strengthening the institution of *Panchayati Raj* and peoples' participation in decision making;
- d. Appropriate *harnessing of forest and mineral wealth in bulk scale for industrial progress at the national level, while maintaining the sanctity of the tribal rights and the local's lien over the retail forest and mineral produces* which are associated with their traditional livelihood;
- e. *Generation of employment opportunities through development projects, industrialisation, enterprise for value addition of local produce and promotion of small trade, and facilitation of petty contractors and vendors.* Tribal women being quite enterprising, facilitation of entrepreneurship among them will wean them, and their families, away from the LWE influence.
- f. *Citizens' empowerment in securing their democratic rights through ease of access to legal provisions.* Tribal Land Rights Act and provisions of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution (Administration and Control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes) have to be implemented in all sincerity, and viewed as such. To that end, the peoples' ready access to grievance redress mechanism would have to be catered;
- g. *Adoption of practical measures to bolster the enforcement mechanisms to attend to judicial resolution of disputes, prosecution of legal violations, and infringement of sanctified norms and provisions.*

Grievance Redress Mechanism

Due to dispersed and low population density, added upon by high illiteracy, few disputes ever reach the courts. When some do, resolution becomes victim to the legal labyrinth which the simple folks fail to negotiate. *The LWEs thus exploit local grievances related to Jal, Jungle, Zameen, Izzat and Adhikar to claim legitimacy for their anti-national acts; indeed, the lack of access and high cost of official grievance redress mechanism is the mainstay of their support amongst the rural masses.* It will therefore be a measure of effective governance to find new methods for timely and fair conduct of judicial response to the local's issues and so counter the LWEs' appeal among the masses in the hinterland. There is thus a need to increase the number of civil and criminal courts in these areas. But before that, provision for adequate numbers of mobile courts, land tribunals and localised arbitration mechanisms would be a worthwhile recourse for the government to adopt in this regard. The ombudsman system should be tried out in dealing with the rising numbers of petty disputes and doubtful claims related to the development programmes.

Dispensation of justice also involves due disposal of the bailed under- trials including those who are not released for security reasons or lack of surety. Further, with an emphasis on counter-insurgency operations, criminal investigations have taken a backseat. Consequently, conviction rates of outlaws remain rather low. That shows the State in poor light. Finally, the administrative,

judicial and police staff need to be regularly sensitised regarding the sentiments associated with the issues of Jal, Jungle, Zameen, Izzat and Adhikar.

Some of the potentially fruitful measures to redress popular grievances in building-up State-citizen trust and are identified as follows:-

Bastar Dialogues. This is a process of State-citizen consultations which began in 2018 at the behest of the people themselves. Symbolic *padyatra*, cycle-yatra and interactions with locals on the way are the hallmarks of this kind of events. Maoists oppose such events of people's empowerment under threat of violence, but popular call proves to be stronger. Such events help communities to discuss ways of moving forward, clear their blinkered perceptions and authenticate the people-centric needs for the government to attend to.

Forest Rights Act, Habitat Rights. Effective implementation of this Act would be one of the most desired interventions to defang the LWE as this would expose extremists' claim to be the defender of peoples' rights. Translation and broadcast of the Act in local languages would help. Similarly, recognition of Habitat Rights for the entire region would help in allowing the locals to deal with the issues of industrialisation, mining and preservation of their sacred sites.

Economic Opportunities. Tribal lands are rich in biodiversity, traditional medicines, as well as forest products. With provisions for corruption-free harness of such resources through research, patenting and local processing of forest products, locals would benefit in terms of economy and employment. There being a growing sense among people that the conflict has run its course, the timing is good to strike at the roots of the Maoists' influence. Obviously, these measures have to be a Centre-State joint effort.

Controlling Urban LWE

Realising that they had not paid enough attention to building up an urban revolution, the LWE ideologues had formed a core group in 2007 known as the Urban Sub-Committee (USCO) to take forward the task of forming and strengthening their urban influence. Concerns over this aspect of anti-national machinations of the LWE has already been discussed in Part 1, Section 2 above.

Herein, the LWE anarchists use their academic and societal influence to guide the insurgency, and the violence that goes with it, through the medium of public facilities. But more than that, these anarchists also use their influence amongst the intelligentsia to provoke exaggerated public consternation over the usual chinks of any democratic society. To do so, they use various fora like clandestine gatherings and open seminars, public debates, newspapers and publications, books

etc. in trying to prove that the bloody path of revolution followed by autarkic governance must be the panacea. No doubt, fair calls for demands, debates, protests and landmark changes must be a hallmark of democratic function and criticism must be a necessary tool for improvement. But *the LWE anarchists invariably use their freedom of expression to twist the issues just in order to demonise the State and then call for 'bloody revolution' to upturn the society and the system.*

Posing as civil rights groups and activists, the urbane Maoists raise various issues of public affect to seek resonance with the targeted sections of the society and to find legitimacy for their activities. Their purpose is not just to demand for corrective measures but to destroy the entire democratic structure of the State through violent revolution and replace it with a communist, dictatorial one - and nothing short. Indulging in their subversive activities, they escape legal punitive action by taking advantage of the sanctified commitments as well as legal accountabilities of the government. Their titillating and provocative ideas do find many takers, particularly among the romantic young and middle class pseudo-intelligentsia, and thus the line between reformers and rogues get blurred. Obviously, dealing with the LWE anarchists within the ambit of law is no mean an undertaking. *It requires a dedicated agency to make the urban LWE ideologues accountable for their anti-national tirade and incitement of violence.*

Students, youth, industrial workers, and the working class in general are the target groups of the urban Maoists. If subverted in good numbers, *these groups can cripple the State institutions as well as the industrial sector for the LWEs to 'take over'*, as these fanatics perceive. To nip such destructive notions in the bud, *early indicators of emergence of urban unrest have to be notified* by monitoring the movements and activities of key extremists amongst the trade unionists, the so called civil rights groups and student activists, and the leftist intelligentsia.

Disrupting LWE Logistics

The LWE's urban turf is also the main source of its *over-ground, under-ground* and *insurgency* logistics. The first two mentioned relate to the logistics involved in organising propaganda material, banking and cash handling, purchase of surveillance, communication and medical equipment, inter-group communications, and finally, organising public events. These logistic supply chains would have to be kept under surveillance and choked effectively. More effective vigil is also necessary over hospitals, printing presses and working class colonies where the Maoists hide *incognito*. Given the numbers and spread of the suspect areas and limitations of the States' resources, this is easier said than done. But definitely, there is scope for taking deliberate cognisance of the LWEs' logistic supply chains and throttle these. Even if partially throttled, the effect on LWE activities would be severe.

As for the logistics of the Maoist insurgency, bulk purchases of food, medicine, clothing, batteries etc., and multi-mode transportation of such commodities over long distances form the main

plank of its operations. It is to be appreciated that *sustenance of the PLGA in their remote jungle sanctuaries and that of the underground Maoist Militia cannot be any small undertaking, and that renders it vulnerable to disruption.* This aspect will be discussed at a later stage.

Discrediting Mischievous Propaganda

Democratic freedom is much abused in India; this is particularly apparent through poisoned rhetoric, misguided public protests and even organised vandalism. *As regards LWE propaganda, the government, while upholding lawful freedom, has to sponsor more appealing narratives to save people from its vicious effects.* The purpose should be to highlight the benevolent ideals of Indian democracy and to expose as to how the Maoists have been impeding progress by their violent activities and dictatorial diktats, and so sabotaging the benefits of various welfare schemes and programmes from reaching the tribal population and the rural poor. To establish the State's credibility, dissemination of such narratives should be based on facts and mature understanding of the situations, and should be distinguishable from crass propaganda. Such government-citizen interactions should be conducted in local languages and presented according to local customs. Rumour mongers and 'fake news' addicts should be marked and called to account when necessary.

Blocking the LWE Financing

Financial support is at the root of rebellion. So far little attention had been paid to this fact. That is, even when Maoists have been extorting money from various sources - businesses big and small, including *beedi/tendu* leaf dealers, traders, industry, government contractors, transporters, the PDS, corrupt government officials and political leaders - reportedly to the tune of hundreds of crores annually. Presently, *the LWE financial system is so well entrenched that the rebellion cannot be controlled unless special mechanisms are instituted to choke this life-line.*

The matter of financial clamp down is a specialised undertaking; and it can be successful only to a point. Of late, measures have been, and continue to be, instituted to trace and dismantle the channels of LWE financing. Key measures recommended in this respect are as summarised in the following paragraphs.

Monitoring of the Sources. The mining industry, other industrial enterprises, road transporter companies, cellular services companies, government and private contractors engaged in big projects, government officials of the works departments, and officials controlling government allocated funds against various heads of the public services are the main sources of Maoist extortion. Illegal mining and compromised public works, in connivance with the Maoists, being *the key sources of LWE income, the mining sector and the Public Works Department PWD have to be subject to even more intimate scrutiny.*

Surveillance over Conduits. The main conduits for collection and flow of funds are the nominated cashiers functioning over-ground, banks, internal *hawala* and the network of cash couriers. Interception of the Maoists' extortion notices should be the goal in this respect. With some dedicated enforcement and intelligence work, these conduits could be rendered more hazardous for the rebels to operate safely.

Surveillance over Services Providers. LWE insurgency is sustained by clandestine diversion of medical supplies, tailoring material, print material, Public Distribution System (PDS) stocks etc. Keeping these under greater surveillance and choking these Maoist life-lines would cripple the insurgency.

State Level Intelligence Apparatus. In view of the key role in LWE insurgency played by the financial system, dedication of a specialised finance wing within the State and the Central intelligence departments is imperative to exclusively monitor the flow of money. Indeed, to maintain scrutiny of sources, conduits and the service providers as mentioned above, that wing would need a fusion of competent manpower and high-technology online systems to be able to deliver.

Public Servants' Role. Clamping down on LWE financing requires the *public servants to play more active role as the guardians of the State's interests*. Firm rejection of bad practices like paying extortion money, and preventing leakages into Maoists' coffers - by ensuring due inspection of schemes and scrutiny of public expenditure - need to be their motivation. The usual excuse of 'dangers in Maoist affected areas' to avoid due inspection of public works are no more valid in the current situation. Similarly, investigating, registering and getting conviction against anti-national activities need not be held hostage to the Maoists' threats. Provision for social audit mechanism would be another imperative.

Lastly, beyond the recommendations related to further invigoration of the States' current counter-LWE measures, there is the *need to innovate fresh governance initiatives to consolidate the advantages gained by the States*.

Section 2: Aspects of Socio-Economic Progress and Development

Peoples' Needs and Priorities

The aspects of socio-economic development aimed at bringing the so far marginalised habitants of remote forest-plateau lands of Central India into the mainstream of democratic, benevolent dispensation have already been studied, examined and acted upon since the early 2000s. Accordingly, The Union and State governments have initiated various development schemes to improve the economic conditions in such areas. The effort in that direction has rightly been focused on the popular needs and priorities. These include resuscitation of nearly defunct *primary and secondary health services, primary and secondary schooling and public distribution chain, as well limited expansion of such public services like agriculture and animal husbandry*. Besides, there has been some progress in *water conservation, road, electricity and cell phone connectivity schemes*.

State-Citizen Interaction

Similarly, the range and frequency of interaction between the people and the State administration has seen much improvements, thereby expanding the scope for mutual consultation and the locals' access to public goods. State employees are now seen more at their desks rather than in their town dwellings. However, the services still remain inoptimal because the officials' deep seated reservations against rural living, Maoists' highhandedness being another reason. To much extent, the fear is justified. The shadow of Maoists' attacks on State's public services infrastructure like schools, banks, Panchayat offices, roads, cell phone towers etc. continue to loom large. But then, *for the State to regain its image, the time is opportune to compulsorily enforce upon the State functionaries, some degree of discipline in attending to their rural duties*. For example, in many cases, regulation of attendance of the government employed staff has been delegated to local Panchayats, thus obviating the frustrating process of making complaints which are seldom acted upon.

Skill and Employment Generation

Employment being the panacea against the rebellion, much has been achieved in offering training and employment opportunities to the local youth, Non-Government Organisations being in the fore-front of that effort. This opportunity has motivated the youth to seek honourable employment rather than giving-in to jungle living, illegal gun totting and violence. It is time now therefore to *graduate from just few flag-ship skill development schools to regular and more accessible ones to cover larger numbers of youth*. The rural youths' discomfiture with urban employment needs to be assuaged by their placements in peer groups.

Economy and Infrastructure

Infrastructural and economic development schemes are limited by availability of fund and work output capacity of the executing agencies. Besides, it is difficult to apportion larger portions of government funds in order to develop sparsely inhabited regions as against the demands coming from population centres. As such, the *schemes enumerated above are still at nascent stages of implementation – optimal level of functioning is yet to be reached*. Even then, there is much appreciation of the government's intents among the people.

Brisk Implementation

Needless to reiterate, all the initiatives enumerated above have to be consolidated in terms of functioning and the coverage expanded in order to tap that favourable appreciation from the people. It is in this context that irrespective of the party in power, continuation of comprehensive socio-economic developments including employment generation schemes alongside the strategy of SAMADHAN, with due vigour and free from politics, apathy and corruption, assumes salience.

Section 3: Upgrade of Counter-Insurgency Operations

Focus of Police Operations

Over the past decade or so, the CAPF - with the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) formally designated for the role - have acquired adequate material capability as well as ground experience in conduct of counter-insurgency operations. That enhanced capability has, particularly over the past 3-4 years, led to effective denial of the Maoists' free-run of violence and their virtual control over the vast hinterlands. Doubtlessly, the present situation of the insurgents' quietude is a direct consequence of success of police actions. It is therefore *imperative that the CAPF, alongside the State police forces, continue to conduct relentless, firm and more effective counter-insurgency operations to keep the insurgents on the back foot.*

However, it requires more than just keeping it on its back foot to establish effective and lasting control over the insurgency. The armed power of the State have yet to work to fully optimised levels the must be needed to enhance the effectiveness of their domination over the insurgency - to the extent that the Maoists' motivation, wherewithal and logistics are crippled. Conversely, the matrix of the vast spread of Maoist affected areas, forested terrain, rudimentary communications and thinly dispersed population renders it practically untenable for the State to muster the required level of forces to achieve a satisfactory degree of continuous sanitisation against the Maoist threat.

To much effect, that shortfall of forces have to be covered by means of following broadly categorised measures:-

- a. Achievement of higher degree of *synergy* in conduct of counter-insurgency operations among the State police, the CAPF and the civil administration;
- b. Denial of the rebels' *logistics* - access to food stocks, explosives and ammunition, medicines, batteries and such items which come from ex-area sources;

- c. Choking of Maoist *funding*;
- d. Finally, penetration into Maoist base areas and their *eviction* to bring an end to the rebellious structure.

Synergic Conduct of Operations

The recommended measures envisage the *establishment of one or more central administrative authority in the identified Guerrilla Zones* on the lines of the commissionaires of the British days or Union Territories of today. This step will foster unity of purpose among the diverse orientations of the various States and streamline the measures that they prefer to adopt. Alternately, *Inter-state coordinating committees*, few of which are in existence in some form or the other, be formalised with the Chief Ministers as the joint chairmen and political representatives, State secretaries, heads of security forces, intelligence officials, and the Military Sub-Area representatives (for Internal Security and combat training advice) as members. These committees should meet at regular intervals to address all the counter-insurgency issues at the State level and promulgate binding directions.

Over the years, States have acquired enough experience to adopt measures to counter the Maoists' methods. Issues to be coordinated at this level should therefore aim at achieving more effective synergy in application of such measures, scope for which remains abundant. The effort should include:-

- a. Inter-state coordination during proactive conduct of operations by one or more States, so as to tape-up the measures such as inter-state border sealing, denial of escape routes, surveillance of hide-outs, interception of logistic conduits etc. - and even provision of additional forces.
- b. Similarly, intra-state coordination would include scaling up the aspects of intelligence build-up, countering false perceptions propagated by the LWEs, and clamping down of the Maoists' chain of logistic sustenance.
- c. Righting of the peoples' as well as the gullible Maoist cadre's poisoned anti-state perceptions. Measures such as involving the deployed security forces to identify local administrative problems, undertaking of civic action programmes, regular broadcast of the surrender and rehabilitation packages. The civil administration should reach out to the masses more often through village meetings, posters, newspapers, cell phone networks and radio to portray the benefits of the States' development schemes.
- d. Highlight of the inevitability of the Maoists' defeat should be a regular feature to encourage

the Maoist cadres to come over-ground and join the main stream of the democratic society.

Logistic Disruption of the PLGA

Except for the PLGA who live in remote jungle camps, most Maoist cadres live scattered among the people from where they can sustain themselves. In case of the latter, it will be impossible to choke their logistics. *But for the PLGA, its logistic dependence on such items which have to come from ex-area sources is its most vulnerable life-line.* However, the challenge in choking this clandestine life-line is a humungous undertaking because of the diffused network of multiple chains of supply. Beginning with the multiple sources and markets, dispersed supply chains of food stuff, medicines, batteries, clothing and other necessities to feed the insurgent camps remain active through multiple routes and methods of retail transportation. These supply chains are operated by covert Maoist coordinators with help of regular as well as casual carriers.

Clamping down on PLGA logistics would involve close surveillance of market centres, including stock verification, of the distributors, stockists and traders, many of whom do the business for profit. Besides, routes leading to the forested areas also need to be kept under effective watch. This kind of surveillance would require large manpower and modern equipment which the States have so far found to be ill affordable. Therefore, they have to bank on the civil police to detect contraband, as and when practicable, during their routine checking. Obviously, this option cannot work in fully choking the PLGA's logistic chain. But the fact to note is that even a partial clampdown on the insurgents' logistics would disrupt their capability to indulge in area domination and violence. *If the leakage of goods is curtailed and the logistic chain is even partially disrupted, it would force the insurgents to curtail their activities and even shift base, eventually leading to the cadres' disillusionment.* The affected States could therefore opt for the next best method, that is, to exercise logistic clampdown in selected areas, in turn; even partial disruption of logistics would weaken the Maoists' fervour.

The two crucial requirements to sustain violence are the ammunition and explosives. While the former is purchased from smugglers, outlaws and underground manufacturers and empty case fillers, explosives are either mixed by trained experts or purchased from miners in small lots. Effective stock verification of chemicals and explosive stockists therefore would help in controlling Maoist violence to a large extent.

Police Action

It is only after political disapproval, peoples' rejection and robust police counter-action, that the Maoist leadership will be forced to come to terms with the nationalist dispensation. Thus while routine counter-actions like area domination patrols, road sanitisation, mobile check points and information based probes should continue from Company Operating Bases (COB), it is also

the time to upscale these counter-insurgency activities to a larger scale and frequency. Having established an edge over the insurgency in rural areas where the Maoists so far had a free run of their dictates, *police forces have to graduate to the next step to creeping re-occupation of the remote areas still under Maoists' control.*

That would require some tactical and psychological orientation for which the time is opportune. To that purpose, modernisation of the police needs to go beyond weapons, equipment, communications and technology to the building up of the policeman's mental, physical and psychological conditioning, his field craft and leadership. It is here that the importance of hard professional training to defeat the insurgents gets highlighted. There is a need for all policemen deployed in Maoist affected areas *to be trained in each State's counter-insurgency training schools followed by refresher courses once in three years or so.*

A more dense counter-insurgency grid will be necessary to achieve the above mentioned upscale of police action. Deployment of forces or the COB Grids would be decided according to a host of factors, like strength of the CAPF as well as the insurgents, the terrain, surface communications and the attitude of the people. For example, in highly affected areas the areas of responsibility (AOR) of a CAPF battalion could be 400-600 sq km, whereas in less affected areas it can vary between 1000 to 3000 sq km or even more. Similarly, to be effective in area domination and reaction capabilities, the COBs need to have a minimum strength of 75 if not more, and for effective mutual support, the COBs and police stations should be within 20-25 km distance. The expediency of *ad hoc* parcelling of sub-units outside the regular control of unit headquarters need to be done away with, and for this to happen, security of static police stations and public facilities should be delegated to the State police. For effective control, the unit headquarters must be located within their areas of responsibility (AOR) presently which is not always the case. Since the strength of the deployable CAPF will never be adequate, *the capability gap in area coverage will have to be filled by upscale of fire power, communications and fast reaction capability* by resorting to technical surveillance, effective communication networks, and mobile reserves and reinforcements.

Upscale of counter-insurgency operations would call for *unity of effort among the police units, district administration and neighbouring States.* Conduct of synergised operations would entail that at a specified time, full force of a State as well as its neighbouring States are deployed for isolation and intelligence gathering in the target area, followed by execution of deliberate operations for a period of say, 48 to 72 hours – the recently executed 'Operation Hakka' in Chhattisgarh is a fine example. More such operations at much larger scale need to be conducted.

Emergence of *breakaway factions has compromised the cohesiveness of the Maoist rebellion.* And that offers an effective avenue for their piecemeal neutralisation by the nation's intelligence apparatus, in conjunction with local political functionaries, to divide and decimate the malaise which is actually

a brigandry cloaked under a comparatively more romantic label of ‘Maoism’. As the areas get secure, socio-economic activity would follow, political activists would expand their constituencies and authentic, appealing public motivational interaction would open the peoples’ eyes against the Maoists’ misdeeds.

Coup de Main of Counter-Insurgency

The government’s current counter-LWE policy is to keep the rebellion below the limits of tolerance and allow it to simmer down over time to a state of irrelevance. But *should a comprehensive defeat of the insurgency be aimed at, then it requires aggressive conduct of all-out operations to destroy the insurgents’ base sanctuaries and to neutralise and disperse the armed PLGA units. Experience indicates that such kind of operations have to be executed by specially trained and equipped forces organised based on army lines. Obviously, either the Army or specially raised para-military units officered by the Army have to be assigned to that role*

Conclusion: A Time to Stem the Red Menace

Maintaining the Momentum

The Indian State's response during the recent years in subduing the long festering, widespread and well organised Maoist rebellion is no mean an achievement. Due to that response, the rebellion is perhaps retreating back to Stage 1 of the classical Maoist strategy. But even that stage of rebellious existence cannot be a matter of comfort for the Indian State; there are major concerns to attend to. Salient observations in this context are as discussed in the following part.

Fundamentals

Essentially, the LWE problem is a people's revolt against callous and exploitative governance which has permeated into the body of the State functionaries since the colonial times. Therefore to begin with, the following factors, which should influence the State's future actions, have to be appreciated and dealt with fortitude and foresight:-

1. Societal ailments of corruption, nepotism, class discrimination, and bureaucratic highhandedness cannot vanish in just few years or even decades. Nobility of character, social responsibility and nationalist culture, traits which are the fundamentals of good governance and the citizens' confidence upon the State. *State and district level functionaries, those who have to attend to the peoples' needs, have therefore to inculcate these traits.* India's innate cultural demeanour of *Janata Janardan* needs to be propagated and wrong doings like graft and unaccountability subject to societal condemnation as well as legal accountability.
2. Rising aspirations of an aware people bring to the fore, the questions of development, resources at hand and environmental considerations – all packaged with the usual instincts of human manoeuvrings. To wit, alienation of land for mining, roads etc. would invariably trigger opposition and politicking among some interest groups or the other. Causes of rebellion would therefore remain in simmer. These would be kept under control only by

pro-active governance, and regular, substantive dialogue between the leaders and the masses.

3. Government sponsored schemes remain afflicted with substantial gaps between pronouncements, implementation, project cost and fund allocation. Besides the institutional limitations, dilution of societal discipline too cause such gaps. Here again, *stricter rules of accountability among the State functionaries, and open dialogue and feedback from private stake holders* including the dissatisfied locals are needed to make a difference.
4. There is a multifarious industry, illegally run by vested interests, that thrives on Maoist rebellion – like trade in weapons, food, medicines, clothing and tailoring, bottled water, batteries, kerosene etc. Some efforts have been made by the States to control this industry, but that is more by default than by alacrity. *Enforcement against clandestine supplies to the Maoists needs to be more robust.*
5. Maoists' fund collection continue unabated. In fact, larger allocations to development schemes have opened new sources for the Maoists to extort from. These collections are utilised to procure weapons and equipment, besides luring recruitment. *Many of the contractors, transporters and the mining industry are complicit, many times finding working relationships with the rebels,* and sometimes with the purpose of raking higher profits on the pretext of disturbances. This matter needs serious consideration.

Policy Preferences

As lessons from prominent insurgencies tell us, as a matter of strategy, to be rid of the menace of insurgency, the *rebels have to be confined into limited areas, closed-in and physically assailed in their dens.* An army oriented, truly para-military force can perform that kind of offensive task.

The other alternative is *to let the rebellion simmer at somewhat tolerable costs to the nation, prevent it from expanding, gradually upstage its cause by offering progressive incentives to the people, and finally, subsume the estranged cadres into the mainstream of national discourse.* As stated, leaderships of the affected States prefer this option, simply because there is no way but to gain time for the resources and processes of the States to come up close to that level when peoples' expectations can be met more readily.

Lastly, there are a couple of suggestions which need serious consideration. One, for better synergy of LWE counter-measures, either the Centre could *assume administrative control over the insurgency affected areas or create Union Territories to administer the disturbed areas.* Two, the Central allocations for development and security – particularly the allocations against police modernisation - be linked to the States' accountable contributions towards such expenses.

In sum, it is fair to consider that *if the present rate of progress, policing and administrative performance is maintained, there is a fair chance that the Maoist rebellion would be reduced to a 'limp', to occasionally stalk the national life but no more.*

A Note of Caution

This Report is a result of intimate, ground level observations of the present situation wherein the States' concerted police action and socio-economic measures have pushed Maoist insurgency, the flag bearer of LWE, on to the back foot. But before an impression gains ground that the LWE is just waiting to collapse after another round of counter-insurgency campaign, certain words of caution would be relevant:-

- a. The LWE ideology, howsoever irrelevant in the present context, will find enough mad-caps to linger on. Maoist insurgency is definitely down, though it is yet far from being out. Under pressure, the Maoists are trying to find footing on new grounds - Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Uttarakhand, for example. Further, there are efforts to find sanctuaries in the North-East and Karnataka-Kerala junction. Generally, unable to provoke popular dissatisfaction over regional issues, the Maoists have so far not succeeded in spreading their influence to such areas. But left on their own, they could find such opportunities to incite popular dissent in the future.
- b. The huge numbers of weapons looted by the Maoists remain unrecovered. There is also no indications that they have any shortage of ammunition. The PLGA is equipped with good weapons and training; its lethality remains intact. Capabilities of the district police are yet to be built-up to the matching standards.
- c. Optimistic interpretations of statistics are liable to paint rosy pictures. But everything is not under control. More than a dozen 'Jan Adalats' and three major attacks on the CAPF have been reported since 2019. Intermittent targeting of public infrastructures, railways tracks, schools etc. goes on. Within their 'liberated' core areas, the Maoists govern while the constitutional government remains banished.
- d. Even if the LWEs are on tactical retreat, only few of the hard core members have surrendered. Public perception in core areas has not turned in favour of the government enough. In the two hot beds of LWE - Jharkhand, and Bihar - there have been virtually no improvement. Pace of the promulgated development schemes have to be increased to tackle this situation.
- e. Hyper-Urbanisation is emerging as a threat in-being. Urban migration has led to the people missing out on settled lives and to live in slums. The deprivations might give rise to such social and industrial disconcerts that could lead to insurgency and terrorism. Urban LWE

militias could also indulge in cyber-attacks. The concerns persist and concerted efforts have to be made to preserve social stability.

- f. Noticeably, after a longish period of reticence, a new sequence of Maoist activities have started showing since the second quarter of 2020 - in the forms of ambush against police patrols and arson of the contractors' construction equipment against non-payment of levy. These are the Maoists' reaction against: firstly, consolidation of grid deployment and domination patrolling by the police forces; and secondly, growing instances of the peoples' and contractors' disregard of Maoist orders. As mentioned earlier, affliction to a general sense of complacency among the public and private functionaries is allowing the insurgents to flex muscle. This trend needs to be guarded.

Concluding Remarks

Past four years of the States' containment measures have told upon the Maoist leadership, finances, morale, recruitment, and sympathiser base. But ingrained as it is into the entire socio-political system and its vast multitudes of beneficiaries, the menace refuses to be extinguished. Government's actions to further control the anti-constitutional attacks on the society must therefore be enhanced.

Socialist aspirations among the marginalised and the poor have a long history. Such aspirations are eternal and therefore, among some sections of the populace, the causes of rejection of the prevailing system is expected to continue to rise and wane with times. It is in that context the surveillance over international leftist organisations who preach violence – like the *General Programme of the International Communist Movement*, and closer home, the *Maoist Communist Party (MCP)-Manipur* and its mutations in some of the other States - need to be maintained.

Needless to State, popular rebellion of some kind or the other, under different names, have been a part of the Indian past. To an extent, the democratic dispensation accommodates such dissent as long as these do not take anti-national hue. Maoist rebellion, however, stands vitiated by its ideology of capturing State power through violence. And that necessitates its neutralisation in order to preserve our nationhood.

Appendix A

(Refer to Part 1, Section 1, 'Counter-LWE Measures Adopted at the Centre Level')

Decline in Maoist Violence

According to the *MHA's Annual Report for 2018-19* issued in August 2020, a recorded 3,749 people were killed in 10,660 incidents of Maoist violence over the past decade in the 10 States of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

The report goes on to state that over the last five years:-

- a. Reduction in violent incidents - 26.7 per cent (from 1,136 in 2013 to 833 incidents in 2018);
- b. Drop in LWE related deaths - 39.5 per cent (from 397 in 2013 to 240 in 2018);
- c. Decline in security forces casualties - 10.7 per cent (from 75 in 2013 to 67 in 2018);
- d. Rise in Maoist insurgents killed - 65.4 per cent (from 136 in 2013 to 225 in 2018).

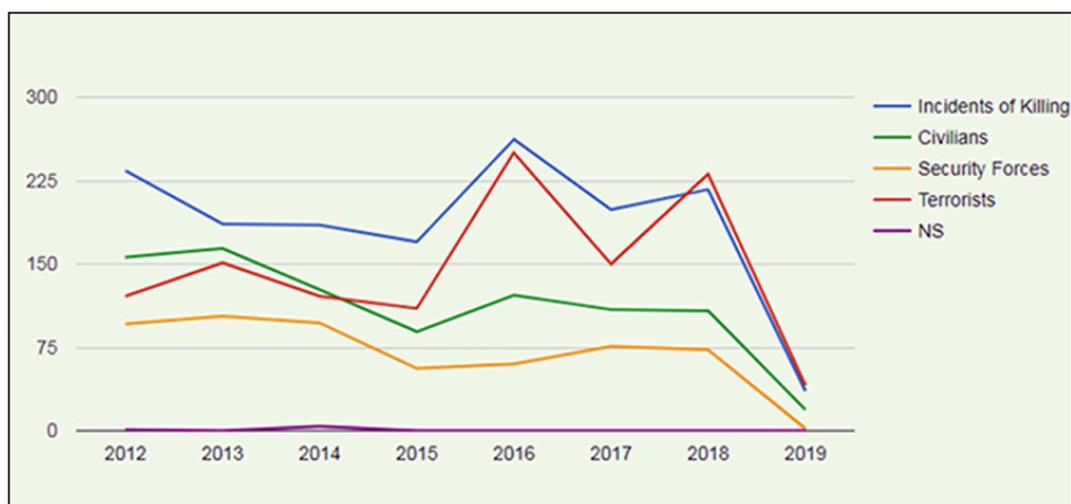
Consistent decline in the LWE related violence over the last five years is as indicated by the figures quoted below:-

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 (upto February)
Incidents	1089	1048	908	833	67	123
SF Killed	56	65	75	67	52	05
LWEs Killed	89	222	136	225	145	05

(Bulletin of the *Press Information Bureau, Government of India, March 2020*)

To questions in *Rajya Sabha* on measures taken by the Government to tackle Maoist Violence, the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs stated that implementation of the National Policy and Action Plan - 2015 has resulted in over 38 percent decline in LWE violence in the country over the last five years, 2014-2019. In similar vein, the *Annual Report, 2018-19 of the Ministry of Home Affairs* stated that compared to the five years of 2009-13, there had been a significant decline in LWE violence as well as its geographical spread during the following five years of 2014-18, the incidents and deaths caused having been reduced by 43.4 per cent and 60.4 per cent respectively (*Press Information Bureau, Government of India, March 2020*).

Statistics are also shown in graphic form below (*Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi, December 2019 & March 2020*):-



Appendix B

(Refer to Part 1, Section 1, 'A Time to Adapt to a Favourable Situation')

Landmarks of Maoist Rebellion

Escalating in gradual manner right since the later 1990s, the Maoist rebellion, with the objective of toppling the democratic system, turned by the early part of the 2000s into a well organised and viciously violent insurgency. Till then and even late into that decade, the State politics had been reticent, in varying degrees, in painting the rebellion as just a law and order issue that would soon run out of course. All this while, the State institutions were continued to be targeted for destruction, and political activists, common citizens and commercial establishments disagreeable of the Maoist ways were subject to large scale murder and extortion. State power was challenged by launching massed attacks on police patrols and installations and looting their weapons and equipment.

Once forced to adopt counter-measures, most of the decade of 2000s went in the States gearing up their police forces to confront the insurgents with effect and control the LWE mayhem. Thus during the past two decades, beginning from a modest gear-up, strengthening of the States' counter-insurgency capabilities took shape gradually from *ad hoc*, uncoordinated and informal counter-measures to the formally structured ones. After 2008 or so, the effort received a boost with the steady crystallisation of the various schemes to modernise the police forces and equipment. Other schemes instituted were: upgrade of police infrastructure, Central grant of security related expenditure, strengthening of intelligence mechanism, ban on the Communist Party of India (Maoist), formalisation of inter-state coordination mechanism, raising of additional police units, building roads to remote areas and so on. Correspondingly, action programmes to help the States to build civic infrastructure including skill development schools through special assistance from the Central Government were also initiated.

After a decade plus of action and counter-action, the implementation of the Government's twin strategy of police action and socio-economic development finally succeeded in arresting the

Maoist insurgency by 2018 or so. Sporadic incidents however continue.

Between its peak years of 2002 and 2018, the Maoists have launched numerous massed attacks on police stations and patrols, State institutions and its employees besides murder of defiant commoners. These attacks have led to single-event casualties ranging from a few to as high as 80 or so and loot of large numbers of police weapons and ammunition. For this Study, record of all of these incidents is not needed; in any case, such statistics are available in various publications including those of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. However, in order to underline the dangers of the Maoist's routine of violence and extortion, certain illustrative events of the insurgency are listed in the following paragraphs; the list cannot be exhaustive.

1960s–1970s

- 1965–66. Communists gain ground in the [Naxalbari](#) region. Peasant Cells created throughout the region.
- March, 1967. Peasants seize land from *Jotedars* and start harvesting crops.
- April 1969. The Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) formed by the All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) at a Congress held at Calcutta.
- August 1970. The *Government* launched 'Operation Steeplechase', by the Army and the police in the bordering districts of West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha. The Naxal movement was completely decimated.

1980s–1990s

- April 1980. Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) People's War, commonly called as People's War Group (PWG), founded by Kondapalli Seetharamaiah.
- February 1992. Killing of Bhumihar community in Bara village, Gaya, Bihar.
- September 1993. The MCC, the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) People's War (People's War Group) CPI (ML–PWG) and the CPI (ML) Party Unity merged to form the All India People's Resistance Forum (AIPRF).
- April, 1996. *Central Government* launches the *Security Related Expenditure* (SRE) scheme to upgrade the States' counter-Maoist capabilities.
- December 1997. Dalits sympathisers of Maoists killed in retaliatory massacre by upper

caste Ranvir Sena in Laxmanpur Bathe village in Bihar.

- August 1998. The Party Unity merged with CPI (ML) (People's War Group) renaming it as 'People's War'.
- March 1999. 34 people belonging to Bhumihar community killed in Senari village in Jehanabad district of Bihar.

2000 - 2010

2002

- The People's War Group (PWG) intensifies its attacks against politicians, police officials, land owners and business establishments in response to a July ban imposed on the group by the Andhra Pradesh Government.
- The Maoist Communist Center (MCC) rebels too intensifies their armed campaign against the police forces following the killing of their leader by the police in December. The Government responded by tightening security and neutralising suspected PWG members through the State police. An estimated 140 people were killed in fighting between the PWG and government forces throughout the year. According to Government reports, 482 people have died during the conflict in 2002.

2003

- January 2003. The Revolutionary Communist Centre of India-Maoist (RCCI-M) merged with the MCC to form the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI).

2004

- Sporadic, low-intensity fighting between the PWG and government forces continued for most of the year. A three-month cease-fire, announced by Andhra Pradesh Government in late June, led to failed negotiations between the Government and the PWG.
- September. Merger took place between the CPI (ML-PWG) of Andhra Pradesh and the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) of Bihar, thus giving birth to the Communist Party of India (Maoist), or the CPI (M).
- More than 500 people were killed in sporadic, low-intensity fighting, most victims being the members of the police forces or the Telugu Desam Party.

2005

- Rebels continued to employ a wide range of low-intensity guerrilla tactics against government institutions, officials and security forces. Two mass scale attacks against urban government targets were launched.
- February. Maoist mass attack on a school building in Venkatammanahalli village, Tumkur, Karnataka.
- August. *Government of Andhra Pradesh* outlaw the Communist Party of India (Maoist) and various mass organisations allied to it.
- September. *Standing Committee of Chief Ministers of Naxalite Affected States*, headed by the Union Home Minister, met for the first time.
- November. Maoists attack Jehanabad Jail in Bihar, free 250 comrades and take hostage of prison guards and kill their officers.
- Fighting was reported in 12 States covering most of South, Central and North India. More than 700 people were reported killed over one-third being civilians.
- In Chhattisgarh, *Salwa Judum*, an anti-insurgency operation, which was aimed at countering the Maoist violence in the region, was launched.

2006

- Maoist attacks continued through all the affected States, primarily on government and police targets as well as on rail and road transport. In Andhra Pradesh police forces were successful in maintaining control and combating Maoist rebels while Chhattisgarh was most affected.
- March. Rebels attack police camps in Orissa's Udayagiri town and free 40 prisoners from the sub-jail.
- April 2006. The Prime Minister marks *Maoism as the biggest challenge to India's internal security* and advocates a coordinated effort under a *Unified Command structure* to deal with it. A high-level coordination centre set up.
- The *Government formulates a 14-point policy* to deal with the Maoism on two fronts — security and development to eradicate social disparity.

- December 2006. Preparation of *holistic security and development plans* to address the issue in a comprehensive manner, finally completed in 2006, after eight year's delay.
- 500 to 750 people were estimated killed, half of them rebels and one-third civilians.

2007

- March. Around 200 Maoist cadres attack the Rani Bodli police station in Dantewada district, in which 55 out of 79 police personnel were killed and a large quantity of ammunition was looted. Further, the Maoist shot dead Member of Parliament Sunil Mahato of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) Party from Jharkhand State. Congress leader Komati Prakash of Andhra Pradesh was shot dead.
- Maoist attacks on government and police continued, majority taking place in Chhattisgarh. Here, over 400 Maoists attacked a Chhattisgarh police station, seizing arms and killing dozens.
- Anti-Special Economic Zone movements began in November and civilians were forced to choose between Maoists and the State.
- In all, 650 people were killed (240 civilians, 218 police personnel and 192 Maoists).

2008

- February. More than 150 Maoist cadres attack the Nayagarh police station, armoury, and a police training centre, killing 15 policemen and looting a large amount of arms. Simultaneously, they also attacked the police stations in Daspalla and Nuagaon towns.
- June. Greyhound police commando boat sunk in the Balimela reservoir in Orissa killing 38.
- Majority of the fighting took place in Bihar, Orissa, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand being the most affected. Maoists spread their operations to other States too. Total fatalities were 794.

2009

- February. The Central Government announced a new nationwide initiative to be called the *Integrated Action Plan (IAP)* for broad co-ordinated operations aimed at combatting people's sympathy with the Maoists.

- April. Maoists attack bauxite mine in the Koraput district, killing 10 CAPF personnel.
- June. Maoists free four of their cadres from Lakhisarai district court premises in Bihar. *Government bans the Communist Party of India (Maoist).*
- Coordinated *joint operation launched by the CAPF and state police forces* in the border areas of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra. Results were limited due to lack of clarity on the chain of command, task allocations and coordination.
- September. In a gun battle between the CRPF and Maoists, over 50 rebels killed and 200 captured. 20 policemen were reported missing.
- Same month, the *Prime Minister admitted that the Maoists had growing appeal* among a large section of Indian society, including tribal communities, the rural poor as well as sections of the intelligentsia and the youth. He added that “Dealing with left-wing extremism requires a nuanced strategy – a holistic approach. It cannot be treated simply as a law and order problem.”
- October. Maoists attack a police station in Gadchiroli district, Maharashtra, killing 17 policemen.
- November. CAPFs launch a massive codenamed *Operation Green Hunt*, deploying 50,000 troopers with the objectives of rooting out insurgents and bringing stability to the regions.
- To address the problem of coordination, the *Annual Chief Ministers’ Conference* on Internal Security started.
- The Home Minister offers to hold talks with the Maoists if they were willing to give up violence. But during a *72 days cease-fire*, Maoist continued with their violent activities. Overall, in 180 districts of ten States, 998 were killed in over five dozen Maoist attacks.

2010

- February. After Maoist leader and chief spokesperson, Koteswar Rao alias Kishenji offered the cease-fire, the Maoists attacked a joint patrol party of the West Bengal police and the CRPF in Lalgarh.
- As a counter to the Government launched ‘Operation Green Hunt’, Maoist insurgents attacked the Silda Police Camp in February, killing 24 personnel of the Eastern Frontier Rifles. Indiscriminate firing by the Maoists in Jamui district of Bihar killing 12, injuring 12 and burning 25 houses.

- In April, Maoist ambush killed 74 personnel of the CRPF and two policemen. Fifty others were wounded in the series of attacks on security convoys in Dantewada district in the State of Chhattisgarh.
- In May, six villagers murdered by slitting their throats. A Maoist landmine destroyed a bus in Dantewada district, killing up to 44 people including several Special Police Officers and civilians. Later that month, the Maoists caused the derailment of a Kolkata–Mumbai night train killing at least 150 persons - but the Maoists denied this. Next month in Narayanpur, Chhattisgarh, 26 policemen were killed in a Maoist ambush.
- Five CAPF personnel including three from the BSF were killed in Chattisgarh during a search operation in August. Later the same month in Bihar, Maoists ambushed a CAPF-police team, killing 10, wounding 10 more, taking 4 prisoners and looting more than 35 automatic rifles. They freed three of the policemen after the Maoist leader Kishenji met their family members.
- September. Maoists killed three policemen and took four hostage in an ambush in Chhattisgarh. The hostage policemen were let off after they promised to never take up arms against the insurgency again.
- October. Maoists attempted to derail a train on Singrauli-Bareilly route by removing fishplates and sleeper. At the same time, they triggered a landmine in the border area between Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra, killing three and wounding two of the ITBP. In all, Between 500 and 600 people were killed this year.
- November. The *Integrated Action Plan (IAP)* and the *Road Requirement Plan (RRP)* are initiated.

2011-20

2011

- June. The Prime Minister stated that “Development is the master remedy to win over people”, adding that the Government was “strengthening the *development work in the 60 Maoist-affected districts*.”
- July. The Supreme Court declared the *Salwan Judum* militia to be illegal and unconstitutional, and ordered its disbanding.
- 10 battalions of *Commando Battalions for Resolute Action (CoBRA)*, 34 *India Reserve (IR) Battalions* and three *Specialised India Reserve Battalions (SIRBs)* raised during the period

from 2008-11 and deployed for counter-insurgency.

- 20 *Counter Insurgency and Anti-Terrorist (CIAT) Schools*, to be set up in the LWE affected States, approved Under the 11th Five Year Plan. Another scheme to build 400 *Fortified Police Stations* also approved.
- November. Maoist top leader, *Kishenji*, and six Maoists killed by the CRPF in a gun battle.

2012

- June. 17 suspected Maoists killed and seven arrested in an encounter with the CRPF. Six CRPF personnel injured.
- July. 36 Maoist rebels, including a leader with a bounty of Rs. 30,000 on his head, arrested in Visakhapatnam.
- October. Six CRPF men killed and eight injured in landmine blasts and gun battle in Dumaria police station Gaya district, Bihar.

2013

- April 2013. New *Surrender & Rehabilitation Policy* was formulated.
- May. Maoists attack in Darbha Valley, Chattisgarh results in death of 25 Congress leaders including the former State minister Mahendra Karma and the Chhattisgarh Congress chief Nand Kumar Patel.
- June. Five policemen including Pakur (Jharkhand), Superintendent of Police were killed in an attack.
- December. Seven policemen killed by landmine blast in Aurangabad district, Bihar.

2014

- February. Six police personnel, including a SHO, killed in Maoist attack in Chhattisgarh.
- March. 16 People including 11 CRPF personnel, four Policemen and one Civilian killed in ambush at Gheeram Ghati in Sukma district of Chhattisgarh.
- May. Seven police commandos killed in Maoists landmine blast in the forests of Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra.

2015

- *National Policy and Action Plan – 2015*, an improved version of Integrated Action Plan, is promulgated.

2017

- January. Maoists set on fire 15 vehicles and machines engaged in road construction works in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district.
- February. Eight policemen killed in land mine blast in Koraput, Odisha.
- March. Four Maoists, including a self-styled zonal commander, killed in a gun battle with security forces in Banskatwa forest in Bihar's Gaya district. Maoists kill 11 police commandos and injured three police officers in Chhattisgarh after ambushing their convoy. Six suspected Maoists killed in gun fight with security forces in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh.
- April. Maoist rebels ambush CRPF troops guarding road construction in the Sukma district of Chhattisgarh. 25 killed and seven injured in the attack.
- Ministry of Home Affairs promulgate the concept of *SAMADHAN* to root out the Left Wing Extremism.

2018

- January. Village Sarpanch of Chindugarh in Bastar district of Chhattisgarh gunned down. Four police personnel, including two sub-inspectors, killed and seven injured in a gun-fight with Maoists in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district.
- February. Two personnel of the Chhattisgarh police and a civilian killed and six others injured in a gunfight with the Maoists at Bhejji in Sukma district, Chhattisgarh. One Maoist Killed in another exchange of fire at Errabore.
- March. 12 Maoists including their Telangana secretary, and one Greyhounds constable killed in an encounter Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district. In another encounter in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district two BSF personnel killed. Maoist blast kill nine CRPF personnel in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district. Odisha police kill four Maoist insurgents in a shootout in Odisha's Narayanpatna district.

- April. Police kill three Maoists in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district. Later, 40 rebels are killed in a three-day gun battle with police in the same district. Fighting in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district kills seven Maoists.
- May. Six policemen are killed by a roadside bomb in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district. Maoists kill two of their own in Bihar's Buxar district on suspicion of them being police informers.

2020

- March. 17 personnel of Chhattisgarh Police killed in a Maoist ambush in Sukma district's Elmaguda forest during a security operation. 15 personnel are wounded and 16 weapons looted.
- *Sporadic killings of policemen and commoners branded as 'informers', and arson against road construction (for not paying up the 'levy') are being reported from May onwards.*

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The Vivekananda International Foundation is an independent non-partisan institution that conducts research and analysis on domestic and international issues, and offers a platform for dialogue and conflict resolution. Some of India's leading practitioners from the fields of security, military, diplomacy, government, academia and media have come together to generate ideas and stimulate action on national security issues.

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