

# THE MAOIST CHALLENGE

Relevant for: Security Related Matters | Topic: Linkages between development and spread of extremism incl. Naxalism

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The IED blast that claimed the lives of 15 security personnel and their driver in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra on Wednesday is a grim reminder of the challenge the Maoist movement continues to pose to the country's internal security. The dead men belong to the C-60 force, an elite commando group of Maharashtra police, modelled on the Greyhounds of Andhra Pradesh. The attack comes a year after Maharashtra police gunned down 40 suspected Maoists in the same region. Clearly, the Maoists want to send out a message that they still possess the firepower to take on the security forces and establish territorial dominance.

The geographical location and forested terrain has enabled the Maoists to establish a base in Gadchiroli, a tri-junction of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. However, the state police reportedly has infiltrated the Maoist organisation in the region and created its own network of informers. Maoist actions in the region has drastically come down unlike in neighbouring Chhattisgarh, where in April an MLA was killed along with four security personnel. In fact, the success in containing Maoist activities may have given a false sense of security to the commandos, who ignored the standard operating procedure when they drove out, all of them in a single vehicle, to confront the ultras who had torched the vehicles of a road construction contractor in the area. That they didn't suspect any possible ambush on the way also points to intelligence failure. The Maoists have always shown a remarkable capacity to regroup and strike back even in places they have faced severe crackdown: For instance, they had killed an MLA and a former legislator in [Araku](#) Valley last year, when it was believed that the movement had been crushed in Andhra Pradesh. It could also be that the state had failed to address the deprivation and underdevelopment that in the first place created an enabling climate for the Maoists to build a base.

The Maoist movement or CPI (Maoist), born out of splits in the communist movement in the 1960s, has reinvented itself many times to become an influential militarist political group. Its cadre base too has shifted from peasants in the 1960s to tribals in the 1990s and thereafter. However, a decade since the then prime minister, [Manmohan Singh](#), described them as the gravest internal security threat, the ultra-left political movement is now restricted to pockets of Central India. A focussed and co-ordinated effort by security agencies could further limit its footprint and finally end its violent run. That's both a political and administrative challenge.

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