

# TACKLING THE MAOISTS: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON LEFT WING EXTREMISM

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

In a meeting with State leaders and representatives, Home Minister Amit Shah noted that the [geographical influence of the Maoists has reduced](#) from 96 districts in 10 States in 2010 to 41 now. The contraction is not surprising. Armed struggle has found few takers beyond select pockets untouched by development or linkages with the welfare state; and far from consolidating its presence — a prospect that seemed possible following the merger of two major Naxalite groups into the proscribed [Communist Party of India \(Maoist\)](#) — the organisation is limited to the remote and densely forested terrains of central and east-central India. Rather than mobilising discontents with the Indian state by projecting its weaknesses and ensuring inclusion and welfare, the Maoists have privileged armed struggle, invited state repression and sought to use this to recruit adherents. Such a strategy has led to some of India's poorest people, the tribals in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand in particular, being caught up in endless violence, and also caused severe losses to the Maoists as well as anti-insurgent security forces. This has followed the predictable path of most Maoist insurrections that retained armed struggle to achieve their aims — in the Philippines and Peru, for example — leaving behind death and violence rather than enabling genuine uplift of the poor. Despite these, the Maoists have not budged from their flawed understanding of the nature of the Indian state and democracy, unwilling to accept that the poor people, whom they claim to represent, seek greater engagement with the electoral and welfare system.

The Maoist insurgency still has potency in [South Bastar](#) in Chhattisgarh, the [Andhra-Odisha border](#) and in some districts in Jharkhand. These States must focus on expansive welfare and infrastructure building even as security forces try to weaken the Maoists. Frequent skirmishes and attacks have not only affected the security forces but also left many tribal civilians caught in the crossfire. A purely security-driven approach fraught with human rights' violations has only added to the alienation among the poor in these areas. The Maoists must be compelled to give up their armed struggle and this can only happen if the tribal people and civil society activists promoting peace are also empowered. The Indian government should not be satisfied with the mere weakening of the Maoist insurgency and reduce commitments made for the developmental needs of some districts of concern in States such as Jharkhand, as its Chief Minister has alleged. The Union government and the States must continue to learn from successes such as the expansion of welfare and rights paradigms in limiting the movement and failures that have led to the continuing spiral of violence in select districts.

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