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ENTICING THE MAOIST GUERRILLA – INDIA'S COIN STRATEGY AND EVOLVING SURRENDER AND REHABILITATION POLICY

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ABSTRACT

Debates about the utility of different COIN models in the Indian scenario continue to evoke extreme reactions. Experts believe that Indian COIN efforts have invariably preferred trading “hearts and minds” approach with highly kinetic enemy centric tactics. It is argued that Indian security leadership feels that an enemy centric approach is best suited for Maoist insurgency, where the fear of population seceding from India is remote. India is blamed for not having a focused or a formal COIN strategy against the Maoist insurgency. It is only in the last decade that individual states have begun to harmonize their COIN responses with one another and with the Government of India (GoI) policies. A national surrender and rehabilitation policy were formulated in 2014; considered to be an important component of the new approach. Following federal guidelines, states have formulated their surrender policies. It may be myopic to assess these policies in isolation and these need to be evaluated in whole as a part of comprehensive COIN approach. The verdict till now is a mixed bag, while some states have tasted success with the scrupulous implementation of the new surrender policies, others have resorted to sham surrenders to shore up the numbers. Policies like surrender and rehabilitation can give a representative sense to the rebels that the government cares for them if they (rebels) are willing to shun the violent path. Proper implementation and timely disbursement of benefits add to the credibility of the policy and the government too. The multi-pronged approach of sustained military pressure, robust economic development program and a sensitive surrender cum rehabilitation policy stand to deliver favourable results in India's fight against Maoist insurgency.

Keywords: India, Insurgency, Surrender, Rehabilitation, COIN, Maoist, Naxalism.

INTRODUCTION

India has faced armed insurgencies right since its independence in 1947. It may be difficult to pick a year in the last 72 years when India was not fighting an insurgency in some form or some part of the country. Despite such a long history of fighting insurgency, Indian Counterinsurgency (hereafter COIN) strategies have often been called ad hoc, with one senior policymaker suggesting that Indian COIN strategies have evolved dynamically within the context and nature of insurgency (Yadav, 2018). These strategies have, at times, evoked extreme reactions. The appraisal of Indian COIN experience varies from being branded as ‘critical failure’ to one that compliments India of “never having lost an insurgency battle” (Rajgopalan, 2007). The *baiters* broadly consider India's ‘one size fits all’ approach key to its failure, whereas the *triumph* group attributes India's

success to its resilience in handling insurgency movements (Swami, 2010).

Much of the scholarly work on India's domestic COIN approaches have focused on Indian Army's COIN experience in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab or North-East (Rajagopalan, 2000 and Banerjee, 2009 and Staniland, 2003). Though the Indian army first began its COIN operations early in the 1950's against the Naga rebels, it was only in 2006 that the army issued its first formal doctrine on sub-conventional operations. The *iron fist in a velvet glove* approach of the doctrine which the Indian army claim to follow is invariably termed as a mix of enemy centric and hearts and minds approach (Singh, 2011).

However, India is blamed for not having a focused or a formal COIN strategy against the Maoist insurgency. Some experts believe, the fact that Maoist insurgency for

a long time didn't threaten the Indian urban elite and was confined to remotest regions of India, explains India's lacklustre approach to this insurgency (Karl, 2011). It was only when the Maoists started to expand into urban centres and began targeting the political leadership, did India realize the magnitude of this security challenge. The disjointed efforts in countering Maoist insurgency have given rise to a sense that this initial vacillation was responsible for the growth of Maoists from fringe entities to ones directly challenging the state. The problem till recently was seen as more having a socio economic dimension than a genuine security threat.

Maoist insurgency often touted as the biggest internal security threat to Indian state continues to be dealt without any assistance from Indian army. India's COIN strategy against the Maoists is predicated on the complex mix of State Police Forces and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF). Thus, a big part of India's COIN response is carried out without any formal doctrine. For the longest time, every state was fighting the left wing insurgency with its limited formula. It is only in the last one decade that individual states have begun to harmonize their COIN responses with one another and also with the Government of India (GoI) policies.

In past few years, the country has witnessed a marked decrease in Maoist violence. This has corresponded with an increase in the number of surrenders of key Maoist leaders. The downward trend in the violence is complemented by reduced fatalities of the security forces. The government of India attributes this success to the new 'holistic approach' in tackling the Maoist insurgency (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2019). For the first time a national surrender and rehabilitation policy was formulated in 2014; considered to be an important component of the new approach (GoI, 2019).

This paper is an attempt to study India's COIN strategies against the left wing extremists (Maoist) with a focus on the impact of both federal and state surrender policies on the COIN campaign. The paper begins with a brief background on the history of left wing uprisings in India and also at the evolution of Indian COIN strategies against the Maoist. Section two of paper focuses on the current COIN strategy which encompasses a liberal surrender and rehabilitation policy. I argue that since 2014 when GoI for the first time announced a national level surrender and rehabilitation policy, it has become an important and effective tool in the hands of state

governments. Section three of the paper attempts to assess the impact of the new national surrender and rehabilitation policy. I look at the implementation and execution of the surrender policies in the states of Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. The choice of these three states is natural as these states have been at the forefront of anti-Maoists operations. Based on the study of these three states, I conclude that a comprehensive surrender and rehabilitation policies can become critical components of any overarching COIN strategy, and these must be implemented with clear goals in mind. Seeking surrenders to just push the numbers invariably renders an effective policy redundant. It also tends to conflate the issues of poor implementation with that of poor policy formulations.

Brief History of Maoist Insurgency in India

There is a widespread belief that Left-Wing Extremism in India started with Naxalbari, in West Bengal in the 1960s. It was, however, what scholars have called the second wave of insurgency, the first being some twenty years ago in Telangana. The earliest Maoist strands can be traced back to a peasant rebellion in Telangana in the erstwhile Nizam state of Hyderabad in 1947 (Guha, 2009). A dissident faction of the Communist Party of India (CPI) organized the poor peasants and tribals against the exploitation by landlords (Jagirdars and Deshmukhs) and adopted Maoism as both its goal and strategy (Kennedy and Purushottam, 2012). The peasants and tribals were perpetually in debt and many committed suicides when the harassment of Jagirdars and Deshmukhs became intolerable. This movement laid down the framework of principals and strategies which the future communist insurgencies would also adopt. Indian communists very early in their struggle had adopted the Mao's ideology of 'People's War' as their mode of struggle (Kennedy and Purushottam, 2012). There was widespread violence both by the rebels and the state. The movement resulted in the deaths of thousands of tribals and peasants. This movement ended in the early fifties partly as a result of strong government action and also the decision of CPI to take part in the first electoral process of independent India (Sundarayya & Chattopadhyaya, 1972,101).

With the Indo China war of 1962, communists faced a severe credibility issue within the Indian masses. With the result, the Communist movement in India split during 1964 into two groups which later came to be known as Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist

Party of India- Marxist (CPM) (Singh, 2012). The extremists within the CPM favoured an immediate launch of revolutionary armed struggle, this resulted in the further split of CPM with the extremists forming their own CPI (Marxist-Leninist) in 1969. It is this wing of Communists which gradually evolved into what is today known as the CPI (Maoist), the flag bearer of Maoist insurgency in India.

Naxalbari Rebellion

In 1967, Charu Majumdar, who would later head CPI (ML), took the cause of agricultural labourers and sharecroppers against the repressive policies of 'Jotedars' (non-agricultural landlords) and started an armed insurgency in Naxalbari district of West Bengal. The widespread ideological appeal of the Naxalbari movement is the reason, why the name 'Naxal' has survived until today and is commonly used in addressing the Maoist insurgents. The insurgency with its growing ideological appeal soon spreads to other areas including Calcutta (Kolkata) where the university students took the cause of these labourers and started an urban armed insurgency against the state government. The Naxalite movement began to spread both vertically amongst sections of students/educated middle class and horizontally across other states. The movement caught the imagination of intelligentsia and press which started comparing it with the Huk rebellion of the Philippines and the Shining Path of Peru (Singh, 2012).

However, the aim and aspirations fell flat as insurgents failed to create mass support for the movement. The leaders of the movement had assessed that the insurgency, in Mao's words, would act as a spark which would set the entire prairie in flames (Gupta, 1968). The government responded with heavy use of force. Leaders of the movement were arrested. The movement was slowly marginalized and was all but crushed in 1972 by a concerted COIN campaign by West Bengal police with the help of the central government (Samar and Panda, 1978).

Current Phase

The Naxalbari movement was to inspire future generations of Indian left-wing extremist. The ideology of 'People's war' began to spread to other states when some of the comrades of Charu Mazumdar took the revolutionary ideas of Naxalbari movement with them to Telangana region in Andhra Pradesh and started mobilizing the masses for an impending struggle. In 1980 Kondapalli Seetharamaih formed CPI(ML) People's War

Group (PWG). He started an mass mobilization campaign and by mid-eighties the PWG cadres indulged in large scale violence and started targeting the government machinery (Singh, 1995).

Apart from Telangana, the Naxalite movement post Naxalbari had spread to other states. In the state of Bihar, Maoist Coordination Committee (MCC) was the most prominent Naxal group. The MCC was formed in 1975 as a break way group of CPI (ML). The Naxal movement also spread to Chhattisgarh which has a large tribal population. The Bastar region, which today is the hotbed of Maoist insurgency is a mineral rich region. The big industrial houses over the years have displaced tribals from their forest habitat without giving them proper compensation. A lopsided socio-economic development caused by indirect exploitation through environmental destruction and direct exploitation through cheating and duping provided an ideal setting for the Naxalites to take roots in the area (Singh, 2012).

In 2004 the insurgents took a monumental decision which changed the course of Maoist insurgency in India and transformed it into India's biggest internal security challenge. The PWG and MCC merged and formed CPI(Maoist) with Muppala Lakshman Rao alias Ganapathy as its General secretary (The Pioneer, 2012). The formation of CPI(Maoist) led to the convergence of resources and efforts which on one hand boosted party's ability to mobilize the masses and on the other enhanced the striking capability of its armed wing. The result was a quantitatively massive upsurge in the Maoist violence. In the last 15 years around 3000 security force members have been killed (MHA Report, 2019).

The Maoist influence has gradually extended over large parts of the country. Addressing the police chiefs of the country on 15 September 2009, the Indian home minister stated that 'Maoist ideology had its pockets of influence in 20 states across the country and that over 2,000 police station areas in 223 districts in these states were partially or substantially affected by the menace' (PIB, 2010). By 2014, Maoist violence spread to more than one third of the country. Government data reveals that a total of 802 members of security forces were killed in various insurgent related incidents between 2010 and 2015, whereas the number of insurgents killed by security forces in the same period stood at 494 (GoI, 2019). This showed a better kill ratio in favour of insurgents. The number of civilian casualties were 2162 between 2010 and 2015. There were more than 6500

Maoist related incidents in the same period). Adding to these grim statistics were the worrying trends of the spread of the movement. Maoist activities were witnessed in 203 districts of 20 states in 2011. More than 106 districts were categorized as “worst affected by Maoist insurgency” (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2019). The government figures of 2015 showed Maoist incidents in more than a dozen states, which did give the impression that a third of the country’s area was under some sort of Maoist influence. Apart from their traditional strongholds in central India, Maoists were seriously involved in mobilization activities in parts of Assam, Punjab and the southern states.

INDIAN COIN DILEMMA

Indian COIN Dilemma- The Debate Rages

There have been raging debates about the utility of different COIN models in the Indian scenario. Experts believe that Maoist insurgency posturing itself as a ‘people’s war’, mandates a more classic COIN build on the notions of competitive state building to address economic and governance deficiencies (Lalwani, 2011). They argue that it requires a population centric approach of winning hearts and minds rather than the enemy centric approach of highly kinetic operations.

Some feel that India’s counterinsurgency strategy is strongly influenced by the British campaign of winning ‘Hearts and Minds’ against the Malayan Communist Party (Lalwani, 2011). However, the Indian efforts at winning hearts and minds have been put into practice only when the successes were first achieved by kinetic operations (Sahni, 2010).

Indian COIN efforts have invariably preferred trading “hearts and minds” approach with highly kinetic enemy centric tactics. Though insurgencies have been contained these have not been wiped out completely. One western expert thinks that India has done tremendously well in managing the problem and not allowing them to get out of the hand (Staniland, 2014). Despite the substantial drop in insurgent violence, the insurgency is not dead in Kashmir and NE. The population in these areas remains largely unintegrated, a drawback believed to be inherent with the highly kinetic enemy centric approach.

It is argued that Indian security leadership feels that an enemy centric approach is best suited for Maoist insurgency, where the fear of population seceding from India is remote. The success of Andhra Pradesh in curbing the Maoist problem is attributed to enemy

centric drives of kinetic operations. The success Andhra Pradesh COIN campaign without a declared COIN model has allowed experts to draw their lessons from it. Government of India also advocates that other states fighting insurgency adopt the Andhra Model (MHA Naxal Report, 2018), without really explaining what this model is?

COIN Campaigns Against Maoists- Historical Perspective

Scholars believe that the first wave of Counterinsurgency in Telangana outwardly adopted the classical double pronged COIN strategy of strong police action combined with ameliorative development measures to win hearts and minds of the local population (Kennedy and Purushottam, 2012). However, it is interesting to examine that this rebellion was not even treated as an insurgency by the then government. The available materials indicate that the government at that time came to view this as a peasant rebellion, as British Indian history witnessed many such rebellions (Singh, 2012). The state response was brutal and unwittingly followed the path of a conventional COIN campaign. The government forces in Telangana resorted to harsh police action against the insurgents and their tribal supporters. In order to rob insurgents of the local support, the state government tried to forcibly relocate tribals from their forest villages into the ‘state camps’ (National Archives of India (NAI), 1948). The idea was to a) minimize the support to insurgents and b) create employment by giving them work at the new infrastructural projects which the state had started. This forcible relocation however failed in both its objectives. Thousands of tribals died in Telangana as a result of this relocation (NAI, 1948). The government also raised tribal militias in the form of ‘home guards’ and Village Defence Committees. These local militias were targeted by the insurgents and many were killed. On the other hand, members of these militias became a law unto themselves and killed many suspected insurgents in fake encounters. Half a century later in Chhattisgarh, the government extended support to such a vigilante group in the form of Salwa Judum which was banned by SC in 2011 on the allegations of human rights excesses against the tribals. It is interesting to note how the COIN efforts, despite the absence of a declared doctrine, tend to follow a course which seems more like pattern. A lot of similarities in strategy and tactics can be observed when Indian COIN is compared to other COIN models across

the world. Colin Jackson, a former senior policymaker in the U.S. Department of Defence, calls it a constraint of 'limited marbles in a pocket', those can only be juggled in limited number of different ways (Jackson, 2017).

Naxalbari COIN- A Kinetic Approach

The Naxalbari movement was crushed by the state government with effective support from the federal government. The government launched a joint operation by the army and the police, code named Operation Steeplechase, in the bordering districts of West Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa (Singh, 1995). The West Bengal police targeted committed student insurgents either by killing them or arresting them. The 'fence sitters' were promised jobs and encouraged to join politics (Krishanji, 1980). Some of the insurgents were absorbed as home guards with a monthly salary. These 'home guards' acted as valuable informers by identifying other insurgents.

By the end of 1972, almost all the top Naxalite leaders including Charu Majumdar and several others were arrested by the police. Around 8000 Naxal members and sympathizers were arrested. The poverty alleviation schemes of both centre and state governments also veered away a sizeable section of the rural population away from the insurgents. Many experts believe that the state's extensive and violent measures brought an end to Naxalbari movement (Oetken, 2009). However, the inability of state to wipe out the remaining traces resulted in insurgents moving to other states and with them travelled the idea of Maoism.

Current COIN Strategy – Kinetic Redux or People Centric?

The Government of India essentially treats Maoist insurgency as a 'Law and Order' problem which falls under the purview of Police and Public order (GoI Report, 2019). Police and Public order being 'state subjects' in Indian constitution, entails that the primary responsibility of handling Maoist insurgency rests with the individual states. The centre can extend assistance in the form of providing financial resources and deploying Central Armed Police Forces, which would essentially be in aid to state efforts. The government website lays down its approach to Maoist insurgency as holistic which involves improving security situation, ensuring rights and entitlements of local communities, improvement in governance and public perception system.

Various state governments have adopted their own individual strategies, thus choosing their own path to COIN. The current COIN strategy is state specific with

support from the centre in terms of manpower and resources. The strategy translates into increasing the troops presence in the critical areas and then saturate these areas with by maximizing troops presence who then prioritize kinetic action against Maoists (Shapoo, 2017).

There is a widespread appreciation that current patterns of insecurity dictate that stabilization must precede development. This is not an unreasonable view; it is obviously difficult to develop territory you do not control, and Maoists recognize that development can erode their control. Maoists have targeted 1241 economic targets between 2011 and 2015 including roads, power plants, telephone towers, food storage etc. to keep the population insulated from the relief and developmental efforts (MHA, 2016). The government, in 2009, launched a massive stabilization cum dominance drive by deploying more than 70,000 Central Reserve Police Forces (CRPF) across Maoist zones in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar and Orissa. This deployment popularly known as "Operation Green Hunt", a term coined by the media, was a step towards territorial stabilization which was to be achieved by dominating the area (D'Souza, 2009). The CRPF and state forces operate jointly forming concentric circles of responsibility. Once the area is dominated for a considerable period of time, it is believed, would lead to stability in the security situation and provide an opportunity for implementing developmental schemes. These 'Clear Hold and Develop' efforts are continuing with government pouring in more forces.

Various states have also tried to improvise on the past or existing COIN tools.

Chhattisgarh made one such improvisation in 2005, when it provided all out material and logistic support to an auxiliary tribal militia, Salwa Judum, to counter Maoists both militarily and ideologically. Salwa Judum comprised of local tribal youth and surrendered rebels. There were large scale accusations of extortion and repression against the Judum members. Subsequently, Salwa Judum was banned by the Supreme court of India in 2011. Another important addition has been the announcement of surrender and rehabilitation policies by almost all the states affected by Maoist insurgency.

NEW HOLISTIC COIN: A GAME CHANGER?

The Maoist violence seems to have ebbed in recent years. The government has scored some major successes

in the form of arrests and surrender of key Maoist leaders. The figures associated with key indicators of violence like a number of incidents, arrests and surrender also support the narrative that “insurgency is on the downward spiral since 2014” (Ahlawat, 2018). Figure 1 shows the trends in the number of Maoist related incidents. A senior official of Home Ministry, the department responsible for internal security in India, claimed that the number of the districts categorized as ‘Worst affected by Maoist violence’ has come down from 106 in 2014 to 30 in 2018 (Jain and Dash, 2018). The national surrender and rehabilitation policy announced in 2014 is being touted as a game changer. One official

remarked, “by looking at the number of surrenders after the policy was announced signifies that the Maoist insurgency may soon die out”(Press Trust of India, 2018).

The government claims that the surrender of cadres and leaders of CPI-M has become common due to the attractive nature of the new surrender and rehabilitation initiative. The policy’s objectives are to wean away misguided youth and hardcore Maoists and to ensure that those who surrender do not find it attractive to re-join the movement. This has resulted in over 6000 surrenders since 2014 (SATP, 2019).

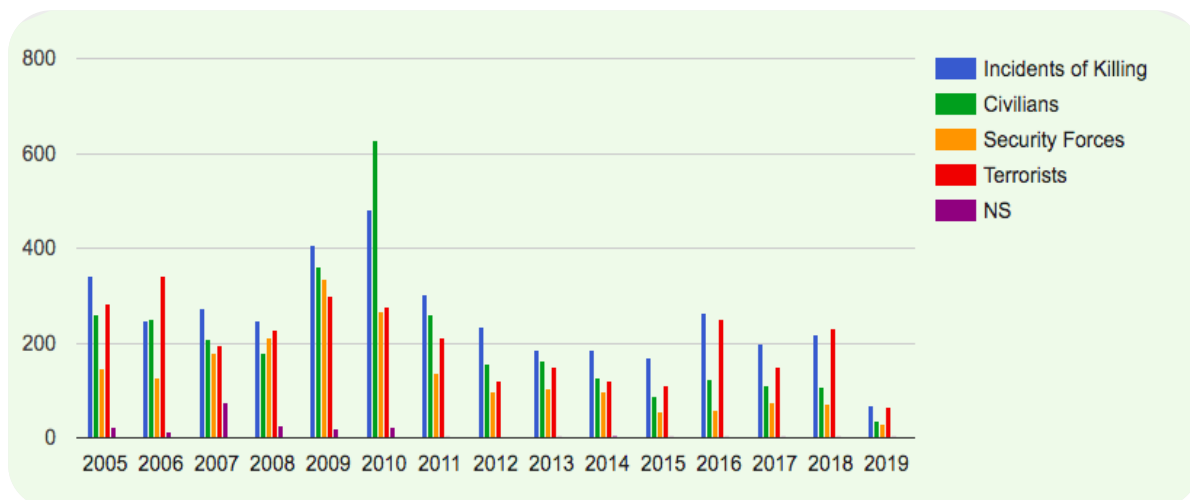


Figure 1. the trends in the number of Maoist related incidents.

Source: SATP.ORG

While there is no clear-cut or one reason as to why Naxals surrender, various media reports have described cases of individuals becoming disillusioned with the ideology, but for many it could simply be due to financial reasons. Many former Naxalites have criticised the exploitative attitudes of higher elites who live lavish lifestyles, while the cadres fight underground in remote forests (Gohil, 2009). The surrender and rehabilitation of Naxalites is now national policy and has resulted in success in some affected states but not all.

Surrender and Rehabilitation as a Part of COIN Policy

It is often argued that surrenders, amnesty and rehabilitation are critical elements of any political settlement involving state and rebels (Anderson, 2016). The issue of rebel surrenders is often perplexing; on one hand, it may rehabilitate and provide amnesty to the surrendered but at the same time there is a real threat of

their exclusion from the society. The latter can act as a push back against the motivation to surrender. Surrenders are invariably seen as an act of betrayal against the movement by the rebels and movement sympathisers (Anderson, 2016). Surrender and rehabilitation, however, have long been part of effective counterinsurgency strategies.

General Erskine, while fighting insurgency in Kenya in 1950’s emphasized the importance of surrender as a vital part of the military campaigns (Anderson, 2016). Surrenders offer a strong political aspect that at times acts as a humane varnish over the strong and harsh military conduct of a COIN campaign. Nandani Sundar, a well-known civil rights activist, argues that psychologically the surrender myth has several benefits for the counterinsurgent. It demoralises the insurgents as surrenders are seen as a rejection of the ideals of the movement (Sundar, 2017). It also makes them

vulnerable to a pointed police action predicated on the information given by the surrendered. Surrenders also taint the surrendered in the eye of his fellow villagers, which also catalyses surrendered incentive to provide information to the counterinsurgents (Sundar, 2017). Finally, the surrender myth counters the impression that police are repressive.

National Surrender and Rehabilitation Policy, 2014

Indian response to Maoist challenge has vacillated from the initial denial to recognize it as a serious to lately accepting it as the country's biggest internal security problem. The fruits of development, it was argued, had failed to pacify majority of the tribal populations not because they didn't prioritize development, but because these schemes lacked systematic focus on uplifting the living standard of the tribal population. The new holistic approach, the government claims, was devised to address these systemic failures. A comprehensive national surrender and rehabilitation policy was part of this holistic approach to address the systemic shortcomings in the counter Maoist strategy.

The GoI, for the first time, came out with a National Surrender and Rehabilitation Policy (2014) for the rebels in the Maoist affected state. Before 2014 also, there were guidelines for surrender and rehabilitation, but these guidelines were general and more focused on surrender of militants in J and K and North East. The Maoist surrender and rehabilitation policy, according to government, has evolved keeping in mind the specific geographic and social landscape to help those who want to abjure violence and join the mainstream (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2019).

The Government of India touts its surrender and rehabilitation policy as a part of multi-pronged conflict management and resolution strategy that is required to be implemented along with firm action by police against those who follow the path of violence (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2019). As a part of an overall policy to build consensus and evolve an acceptable and peaceful solution to violence perpetrated by left wing extremist groups, the 2014 surrender policy aims to;

- wean away from the misguided youth and hardcore rebels who have strayed into the fold of Naxal movement and now find themselves trapped into that net.
- ensure that the Naxalites who surrender do not find it attractive to join the Naxal movement again.
- The policy discourages tactical surrenders by those

elements who try to make use of the benefits extended by the Government to further their vested interests.

With the unveiling of new national surrender cum rehabilitation policy guidelines for Maoist, many states have come out with their surrender policies within the aegis of new central guidelines.

Assessment of the New Policy

The question often posed is whether greater attention to a well-crafted surrender and rehabilitation policy would complement the COIN operations by weaning away ideologically driven Maoist cadre or do such policies provide a breathing space to the cornered rebels? Some scholars believe that an isolated surrender and rehabilitation policy can be viewed as a sign of state weakness by the rebels, whereas a policy that is integral to the larger COIN strategy, serves the stated goal (Oetken, 2009).

Assessment of a policy or a strategy based merely on the deliverables is not a straightforward task and can lead to faulty conclusions. Any assessment of the current surrender policy has to take into account other extraneous factors which impact the decisions of the rebels to surrender. An appropriate example would be surrender of a top Maoist leader in Andhra Pradesh who took the step only because he was taken seriously ill and could no longer remain in the jungle (Ramana, 2013). Though in some cases the incentives of the policy may not be the deciding factor mere existence of a robust policy facilitates the decision making.

Moreover, the impact assessment of the policy cannot just be made on the basis of number of persons surrendered or decrease in the scale of violence. Such assessment are again fraught with inbuilt biases. A spike in the number of surrenders may have no impact on the extent of the Maoist influence or the strength of Maoists. It is possible that people who surrender are just the sympathizers and not the core cadres. Naxalites have often used surrenders as a part their strategy to lie low or as means to ease pressure on them. At the same time, a downward trend in the violence may purely be a result of kinetic operations leading to arrest and killings of Maoists or also a part of Naxal strategy of temporary "tactical withdrawal" (Spacek, 2014).

There have been instances in the past when drop in the violence was hailed as victory against the movement, which led to complacency. Taking advantage of this laxity within counterinsurgents, the Maoists struck back

and dealt heavy blows to the state. The number of people killed in Maoist violence fell from 734 in 2006 to 644 in 2008. This three year low period was seen as an impact of surrenders in AP and Chhattisgarh. However, the Maoists struck back in following years inflicting heavy casualties on the security forces. The number of persons killed in Maoist violence rose to 1011 in 2009, peaking at 1194 in 2010 (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2019).

As mentioned earlier the impact of a surrender and rehabilitation policy on a civil conflict is difficult to gauge just by looking at numbers. The devil lies in the details. If the number of surrenders is any indication then by now more than two-third of the total Maoists operating in the country are supposed to have surrendered. The surrender policy is aimed at active Naxals, as the recent government document underlines “to wean away the misguided youth and hardcore Naxalites who have strayed in the fold of Naxal movement” (GoI Report, 2019). Estimates put forth by the GoI assess that there were 8500 active Naxalites in the entire country in 2017 (Aljazeera, 2017). By 2018, the data reveals that about 6596 active Maoist surrendered before the various state police forces and central agencies in last 5 years, which should leave a little more than 2000 Maoists out there, willing to fight their ‘protracted war’ (SATP, 2018). The math simply doesn’t add up. Many states like Chhattisgarh have been accused of holding sham surrenders. In November, 2017, the federal government asked Chhattisgarh to “ensure that only genuine Maoist cadre surrender before the police, and to avoid spiking the numbers through surrender of *fake Maoists*” (Singh, 2017). The federal screening committee observed that 90 percent of the surrendered in Chhattisgarh do not fall under the category of Maoist cadre (Singh, 2017).

The abuse of surrender and rehabilitation policy for the shorter gains and fame has been the bane of previous surrender policies. The current national policy also faces severe prospect of such abuse. Since the unveiling of the new surrender policy in 2014, about 2642 Naxalites are reported to have surrendered in Chhattisgarh till 2018 (SATP, 2019). These surrenders have seen widely criticized by the civil society and the media as being sham. Civil rights activist have alleged that more than half of these surrenders are stage managed and there is a deep rooted nexus between the surrendered rebels and police official to share the money which is promised to

the surrendered (Sundar, 2017).

Odisha- Undoing Past Mistakes

The east Indian state of Odisha is touted as a success story, where the new surrender policy has lured many top Maoists out of their liberated zones in jungles to the open environs and surrender before the police. Though its too early to blow the triumphant bugle, Odisha’s performance is worth noticing. It also becomes an interesting case to study, as its previous surrender policy, which was announced in June 2006, hardly invoked any response from the rebels. Odisha’s performance in CI ops and obtaining surrenders was considered dismal. The failure of the policy, one scholar opines, was largely due to poor implementation of the provisions of the policy (Ramana, 2013). The reports alluded to non-delivery of the promised benefits to the surrender rebels as one of the key reasons for the failure of policy. Till 2010, more than 40 rebels had surrendered in the state but not a single one of them had received the promised benefit (Ramana, 2013). This discouraged many potential surrenders who had earlier shown inclination to lay down their arms.

Odisha seems to have learnt its lesson well. After the new surrender policy was announced by the state in 2014, Odisha has shown a remarkable improvement in the security situation. The surrender of key Maoists has dented the ability of Maoists to operate effectively. The decrease in the violence has been equally remarkable with state registering no insurgency related violent incident in 2018 (Figure 2 and 3). Between 2003 and 2008, more than 203 security personnel were killed by Maoists groups. In 2008, with the killings of 54 soldiers in just three weeks, Odisha was seen even by many as fast slipping out of the government’s control. However, in 2014, Odisha following the guidelines of national surrender and rehabilitation policy announced its own surrender policy. Under this scheme, state government provides around \$4000 cash, an additional \$500 for a surrendered weapon, a small piece of land, a grant to build home, money for education and training for skill development (ET Bureau, 2018).

The policy has been able to usher in a positive change in the lives of surrendered rebels.

In 2014, Nachika Linga, leader of Chasi Muliya Adivsi Sangha (CMAS), an alleged Maoist front, surrendered before the state government (ET Bureau, 2018). This, alongwith surrender of top Maoist leader Sabyasachi Panda, according to the state police, triggered another

surrender of a big chunk of local Maoists associated with CMAS (Nayak, 2018). The government figures reveal that since the announcement of the new policy, the recruitment of Maoists in Odisha has fallen to 10% of the total strength (Odisha Police Annual Report, 2018). Around 3000 Maoists and their sympathizers have

surrendered since the announcement of the policy, and many more said to be willing to surrender (Annual Report, 2018). The immediate disbursal of benefits to the surrendered Maoist has also resulted in sharp fall in the levels of recidivism. The state has also not witnessed any major Maoist attack in the last four years.

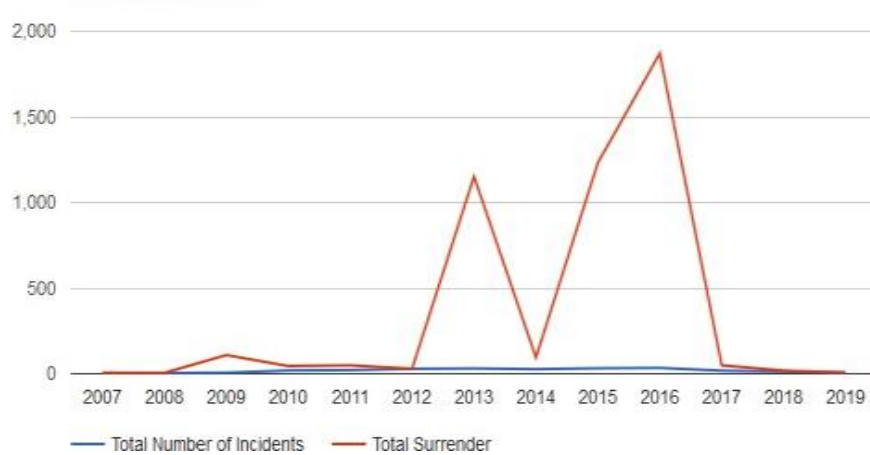


Figure 2. Yearly summer data (total number of incidents vs total surrender).

Source:satp.org

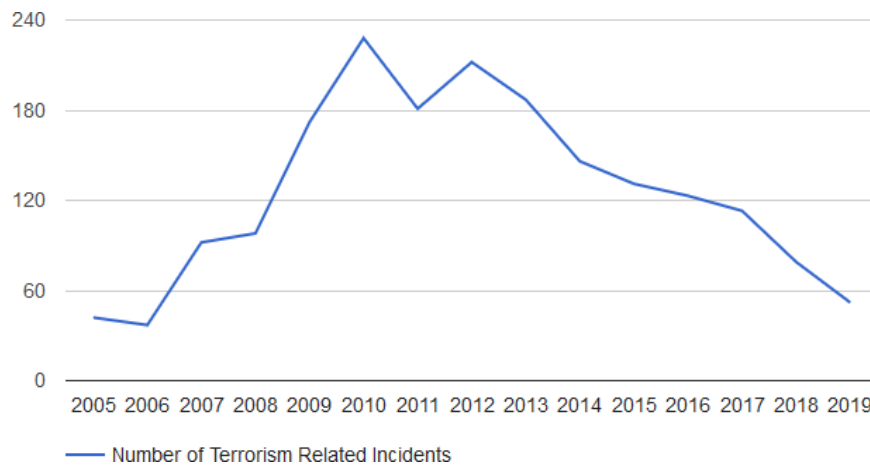


Figure 3. Total number of terrorism related incidents.

Source:satp.org

The Odisha police complimented its success in surrenders with increased military pressure on the Maoists. In May 2018, the state police launched a major operation against the Maoist which resulted in killing of half a dozen top Maoists and recovery of huge cache of arms and ammunition (Annual Report, 2018). Such kinetic operations are followed by reconciliatory messages sent out by authorities to the Maoist leadership to surrender. The mixture of such soft and hard polices seems to have worked for Odisha. Many

Maoists have been lured by better rehabilitation package and scrupulous implementation of the provisions of the policy by the Odisha government. Instances of Maoists from other state surrendering in Odisha are becoming increasingly frequent, which the state officials, say demonstrate the effectiveness of the policy implementation. In November 2017, two top Maoist from Chhattisgarh travelled to Odisha to surrender before the Odisha police (Das, 2017).

Chhattisgarh –A Case of Wasted Opportunity

Chhattisgarh is considered to be the hotbed of Maoist insurgency, where Maoists have traditionally exercised a strong hold over 40,000 square kms of forested area. The state has witnessed some of the most chilling violent incidents and attacks on security forces. Since 2005, more than 1000 security personnel have been killed by Maoists in Chhattisgarh (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2019). More than 3000 people including civilian and Maoists have lost their life since 2005. In Nov 2010, 76 CRPF soldiers were killed in an ambush in Dantewada district raising serious concerns about the effectiveness of state's COIN strategy. In the summer of 2013, the entire political top brass of the Congress Party, one of the two prominent political parties in the state, was killed by Maoists.

Despite the Maoist presence in Chhattisgarh since 1982, it was only in October 2004 that the state government announced its first surrender and rehabilitation policy. The policy was a non-starter with no takers amongst the rebels. The marginal success it claimed, was by conflating the surrender of over ground supporters with armed cadres. A little more than 100 armed rebels surrendered during those years. The multi-tier verification system underlined in the policy document made the entire process tardy and full of loopholes. However, in the last four years, after the unveiling of new surrender policy in 2014, Chhattisgarh has claimed huge success in the surrender of Maoist cadre. More than 2000 Maoists have allegedly surrendered before the Chhattisgarh authorities in past 4 years (SATP, 2019). The new surrender policy, officials claim, is fast becoming a game changer.

However, a deeper look into Chhattisgarh claims of success reveal a sordid story of professional ineptness and ill intended actions (Sethi, 2015). There have been numerous allegations of fake surrenders, exploitation of surrendered women Maoists, embezzlement of relief money, among others. Some civil society members have accused that Chhattisgarh government of running a surrender racket. A news report in a prominent media outlet, accused the Chhattisgarh police of running sham surrender ceremonies (The Wire, 2017). The report alleged that the police initially detained the villagers by issuing summons to them. Once in police custody, warrants were issued against them and then they were either forced or cajoled into surrendering by giving them an option of either surrendering or face imminent arrest. Many such incidents have come to light.

The case of Podiyam Panda, a former village headman, evoked widespread outrage and condemnation. Panda was picked up by police from his village on May 3, 2018, his wife was not allowed to meet him for more than a week. It was only when his wife filed a habeas corpus writ in the High Court of Chhattisgarh, that police claimed that Panda had surrendered on May 9 and was produced before Court after 10 days (The Wire, 2017). Panda's brother testified before the court that he had seen torture marks on the ex-village headman's body and claimed that Panda was coerced by police to testify that he had voluntarily surrendered (The Wire, 2017). Nandini Sundar writes that the surrender policy helps police keep people in detention indefinitely (Sundar, 2016). It has two main advantages both legal and psychological. Legally surrenders are used to cast a wide and indiscriminate net. Many villagers are first detained and then police use various tactics to lure them into surrendering. Some surrender, some are subsequently arrested, others are kept in police camps for weeks together before they are finally released. Psychologically surrender myth demoralizes the Maoists as it reveals internal discontent within the movement. The surrenders also have a negative impact on Maoist recruitment efforts as it reveals the chinks in the Maoist narrative.

In 2015, a state screening committee found that 75% of the surrenders forwarded by the police did not qualify as Maoist cadre and were ineligible for rehabilitation, this number went up to 97% in 2016 (Singh, 2017). In 2016 alone, around 1160 Maoists surrendered in Chhattisgarh and out of these more than a thousand were declared not being Maoists by the federal government thus raising serious questions about scrupulous implementation of the policy (Singh, 2017). The report by the government approved screening committee not only undermines the efficacy of even a well-intentioned surrender policy but also feeds into the Maoist narrative of police excesses, thereby delegitimizing the entire COIN campaign. Many experts apprehend that the surrender policy in Chhattisgarh may face same fate as one faced by Salwa Judum (Sundar, 2017).

Deciphering Andhra Success

Amidst the grim Maoist landscape of India, Andhra Pradesh (AP) seems to have charted a completely different course for itself and thus has a different story to tell. The state seems to have turned the tide against

the Maoists. It is today hailed as “the success story’ in the Maoist tragedy. AP which in 90s was the hub of Maoist violence has seen a dramatic drop in Maoist related incidents. The total number incidents in 2018 dropped to just 2 as against over 500 in 2005 (SATP, 2019) as shown in figure 4. The credit for the turnaround is generally given to the elite ‘Greyhound’ force, a specialized force trained to live and operate in the jungle as the guerrillas do and fight the Indian equivalent of the “bush war” (Singh, 1995).

A greater focus on the success of Greyhound (which they truly deserve) has led experts to label the AP model as an enemy centric kinetic approach. However, this success was possible only with robust community development programs and an extremely effective and open surrender and rehabilitation policy. The state government conceived various rural development and empowerment schemes with a focus on small captive schemes which could deliver in short duration and thus have an immediate impact. The government between 2004 and 2010 implemented various rural developmental schemes like ‘Remote and Internal Areas

Development Projects” (RAID), small irrigation projects and health insurance schemes. These developmental initiatives undermined the ability of Maoists to recruit and mobilize new members (Mazumdar, 2013).

The Government also came up with an elaborate surrender and rehabilitation package which resulted in surrender of thousands of Maoists. It instituted a comprehensive surrender and rehabilitation policy as early as 1993, which has been revised periodically. The policy is open- ended and surrenders are encouraged in a big way. The government lays great emphasis on surrenders, as ‘it shatters the myth of the Naxalism’ (Ramana, 2013). K Srinivas Reddy writing on the Andhra surrender policy observes “While the surrendered Naxalites stood as living examples of a life completely wasted, as they could not reintegrate themselves into the society, the suffering of the families, whose members were still in [the] Naxal fold provided another example for them not to mess with the Naxalites. This led to the distancing of several segments of the society, which would have hitherto been target groups, [from] being attracted [towards] the Naxal fold” (Reddy, 2007).

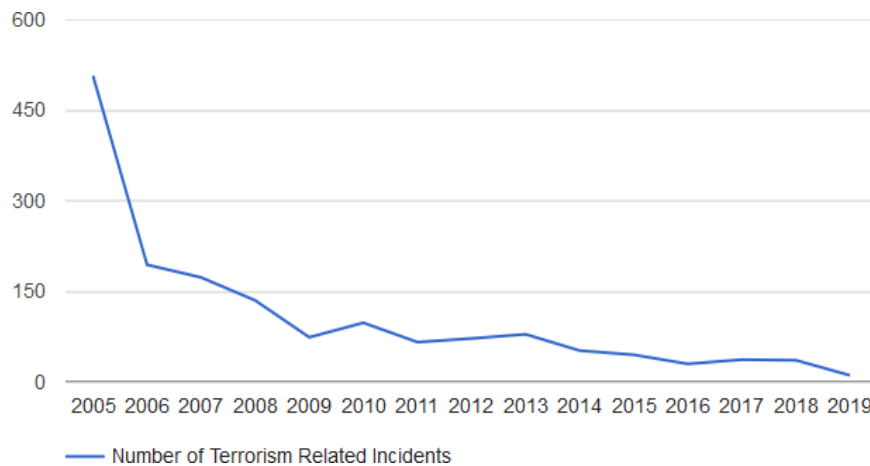


Figure 4. Decrease un the total number of terrorism related incidents.

Andhra experience shows that Naxalites would surrender in big numbers only when there is considerable operational pressure on the Maoists. In the classical understanding of revolutionary warfare, Andhra forces kept on squeezing the operational space for Maoists by vigorous military pursuit and cornering them from all sides but leaving an opening in the form of surrenders (Singh ,2012). As a result, in AP, there has been a very large number of surrenders. Another vital reason for success was that the Andhra government

learned from its mistakes. In April 2002, 46 Naxalites surrendered before the Chief Minister of AP. By August 2003, the government had rehabilitated only 20 of them and as a result some of the surrendered Naxalites reportedly re-joined the Naxalite ranks (Reddy, 2007). B V Ramana writes that AP government realized that the bureaucratic red tape could(a) nullify the gains of the efforts in securing surrenders; (b) persuade the surrendered Naxalites to think that the government has failed to keep its promises, and that they were justified in

joining the Naxalites to fight the state; and (c) demoralize the police officials who had painstakingly secured their surrender (Ramana, 2013).

The state government, thereafter, simplified the procedure and revised the guidelines which resulted in expeditious rehabilitation of the surrendered rebels.

As Figure 5 illustrates, over an 18-year period (between 2000 and 2018), a total of 6627 Naxalites surrendered to the authorities in Andhra Pradesh. Over 2,500 of them have been rehabilitated and assets worth nearly Rs 20 crores (approx. \$ 3million) was distributed to the surrendered rebels till 2012. The Andhra Government predicated its COIN strategy on the judicious mix of enemy centric and population centric approaches (Routray, 2017). Analysts believe that an active surrender and rehabilitation policy which was weaved very early into its COIN strategy played an important role in turning the tide against the Maoists (Routray, 2017). The state machinery gathered extensive information from these surrendered Maoists which they later utilized with devastating effects.

Year	Total No of Surrender
2000*	135
2001	323
2002	516
2003	447
2004	212
2005	658
2006	148
2007	129
2008	137
2009	48
2010	63
2011	89
2012	256
2013	80
2014	129
2015	114
2016	32
2017	60
2018	49
Total**	3627

Figure 5. Total number of surrenders from 2000 to 2018 (Andhra- Surrender of Maoists). Source: SATP

Some experts were leery of the triumphant claims made by Andhra Pradesh as well as the potential to model the Andhra success (Lalwani, 2011). These experts saw enough reason to believe that the Greyhounds did not defeat the Maoist insurgents outright but merely displaced them to neighbouring states and that the surrenders were used by Maoists to gain a breathing space. However, Andhra continues to hold on to its successes. The Maoist presence and their ability to strike has been eroded considerably. Its surrender policy continues to attract even those Maoists who have spent decades with movement. Though there have been cases where surrendered Maoists have resorted to criminal activities, such instances are far too less to adversely impact the gains made by the policy (Gupta, 2006).

CONCLUSION

The study of COIN policies in three states provide an important lesson that surrender and rehabilitation policies in isolation can prove to be rudderless unless these are not integrated into a comprehensive COIN strategy. It is only when faced with intense pressure from kinetic operations, have the Maoists come out to surrender before the authorities.

Orrisa has been able to achieve fair amount of success with effective implementation of its surrender policy. For Odisha to build on its gains, it needs to apply relentless and sustained military pressure on the rebels. Whether these gains are permanent is yet to be seen. Andhra experience has shown that unless there is an intense crack down on the top rebels, they do not feel the threat and thus are not persuaded or compelled to surrender. On its part, Chhattisgarh’s performance has been marred by frequent allegations of torture and sham surrenders. This lack of seriousness of purpose dents the credibility of both the policy and also that of the security forces. For the poor and illiterate who may not be able to differentiate between the policies of different states and different police forces, such unscrupulous tactics can also malign the surrender policies of other states too.

Indian counterinsurgency has to work with a dual objective of defeating the insurgents militarily and fully quell the insurgent impulses. These would need institutional overhauls. The conflict over the distribution of resources can be mended with economic development, but the bigger challenge would be to create a system where the tribal population feels that the government is representative not repressive.

Policies like surrender and rehabilitation can give such a representative sense to the rebels that the government cares for them if they (rebels) are willing to shun the violent path. Proper implementation and timely disbursement of benefits adds to the credibility of the policy and the government too. The multi-pronged approach of sustained military pressure, robust economic development program and a sensitive surrender cum rehabilitation policy stands to deliver favourable results in India's fight against Maoist insurgency.

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