Left-Wing Extremism and Counterinsurgency in India: The ‘Andhra Model’

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Abstract: India has a long history of left-wing extremism. The largest and most powerful left-wing extremist group today is the Communist Party of India (CPI) (Maoist), which is active in many states across the country. Its ultimate goal is to capture power through a combination of armed insurgency and mass mobilisation. In recent times, the southern state of Andhra Pradesh has achieved notable success in counterinsurgency operations against the Maoists. This article outlines the ‘Andhra model’, which involves a mix of security, development and political approaches. It also examines whether this model can be replicated in other Indian states affected by left-wing extremism.

Introduction

The concept of insurgency and counterinsurgency has been discussed extensively by scholars during the modern period. Although, any single definition is unlikely to do justice to these terms, for the purposes of this article, ‘insurgency’ is described as a politico-military movement launched by organised non-state actors in order to weaken and/or overthrow a government and gain control of resources and territory. Such irregular wars may be traced back to ancient times (Jewish Zealots against the Roman Empire). Modern insurgencies include the 19th and 20th century nationalist struggles in European colonial empires, civil wars in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Asia during the Cold War and the domestic conflicts in the Balkans, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and South Asia, including Iraq and Afghanistan in the post-Cold War period. Left-wing insurgencies (including those in India) are included in this diversity of conflicts. There is no single reason for the rise and growth of insurgencies. State response to this phenomenon, i.e., ‘counterinsurgency’, is varied, but may be broken down into two strategies: security-centric (emphasising military approach to insurgency) and population-centric (emphasising a development and political approach to insurgency). Successful counterinsurgency campaigns are dependent on a judicious mix of both as the ‘Andhra model’ demonstrates with regard to left-wing extremism in India.

The roots of left-wing extremism in India may be traced back to the history of peasant struggles and uprisings during the pre-independence period. However, the peasant uprising in the village of Naxalbari in the eastern state of West Bengal in 1967 is considered to be the origin of left-wing extremism in India. The uprising was led by a section of leaders belonging to the CPI–Marxist or CPI–M. These leaders later split.
from the CPI–M to form the CPI–Marxist–Leninist (CPI–ML). The CPI–ML led an armed insurgency that spread from West Bengal to neighbouring states like Bihar and Orissa and to the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. The insurgency was brutally suppressed by state and central forces by the mid 1970s. Although, considerably weakened, the CPI–ML managed to survive as an organisation.

In the immediate aftermath of the failed insurgency, the left-wing extremist movement in India fractured into more than three dozen groups. These groups, including the CPI–ML, were collectively known as Naxals/Naxalites, the name derived from the village of Naxalbari. The Naxals claimed that they were waging a ‘revolutionary struggle’ to end the exploitation and secure the rights of the landless peasants, share-croppers, Dalits (untouchables) and Adivasis (tribal people) of India. On the other hand, governments at both central and state level have pointed out that left-wing extremist groups have often engaged in robbery, extortion, smuggling, intimidation and killings of innocent people, in the name of a ‘People’s War’. The current avatar of the CPI–ML is the CPI–Maoist or CPI (Maoist). The CPI (Maoist) was the culmination of a long process that began in the 1980s involving a series of mergers of smaller Naxalite groups with the CPI–ML. This was part of the general trend of consolidation of the Naxalite movement in India in recent times.

The CPI (Maoist) is the largest and most powerful left-wing extremist group today and active in many states across the country. The Maoists claim that their armed struggle is primarily in response to the forced displacement of tribals from mineral-rich areas and caste-based inequality and discrimination against Dalits prevalent throughout India. Their ultimate goal is to capture power through a combination of armed insurgency and mass mobilisation. Using this strategy, the Maoists have spread across several states, including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The Maoists have a particularly strong presence in the impoverished, tribal-inhabited, mineral-rich and forest-rich region that span parts of these states. This region has become known as the ‘Red Corridor’. The Maoists have succeeded in gaining partial to complete control of some of the remote forests within the Red Corridor. In 2011, 182 out of the 640 districts across India were affected by varying intensities of Maoist violence. In May 2010, the Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singh, declared that the Maoists pose the single largest threat to the country’s internal security.

As law and order is a ‘state subject’, the central government has encouraged individual states to take the initiative in combating the Maoists, assuring them of full cooperation and assistance. In recent times, most state governments have failed to check the spread of left-wing extremism. However, Andhra Pradesh has been relatively more successful than other states in countering the Maoists. What explains the success of Andhra Pradesh? What specific strategies have been adopted by the state? Is it an appropriate model for other states to embrace? These are some of the questions that will be examined here.

The next section discusses left-wing extremism in India in more detail. The third section of the article will analyse the experience of Andhra Pradesh. This section outlines the ‘Andhra model’, which involves a mix of security, development and political approaches. The fourth section examines whether this model can be replicated in other Indian states affected by left-wing extremism, particularly in the severely-affected states. The conclusion briefly summarises the main arguments and offers some suggestions and recommendations regarding policy formulation and implementation.
Left-wing extremism in India: the Maoists

Created in 2004, the CPI (Maoist) is committed to the principles of Marxism–Leninism–Maoism. It rejects the current parliamentary system and democratic politics in India. It believes that India is a semi-colonial, semi-feudal country under indirect neo-colonial rule of Western imperialists. Politicians, bureaucrats and industrialists are believed to be serving the interests of these imperialists, while ignoring the needs of the masses. The Maoists claim that economic liberalisation since the 1990s has pushed landless peasants, share-croppers, Dalits and tribal people further to the margins of Indian society. The only solution is revolutionary change culminating in the destruction of the existing political system and the establishment of a Communist regime in the country.

The tribals living in the red corridor are among the poorest in India. Across the country, land acquisition for industrialisation and mining activities have led to displacement of tribal people and peasants, who have accused state and central governments of either openly colluding with companies or turning a blind eye to their suffering. The perception that the Indian government is abetting companies that have been involved in forcibly driving tribal people off their land has played into the Maoist narrative of an exploitative state in cahoots with greedy capitalists. Maoist attacks on the rural landed elite, policemen, government officials, businessmen and politicians, all of who are deemed to be collectively exploiting the tribals, has bolstered their standing among some tribal populations. In the struggle between the State and the Maoists, the tribals have been caught in the middle making their already precarious socio-economic situation worse.

In keeping with the teachings of China’s revolutionary leader Mao Zedong, the CPI (Maoist) advocates the capture of political power through protracted armed struggle, based on guerrilla warfare and mass mobilisation. The three-phase struggle involves the Maoists gaining the support of the local population through organisation of mass agitation (Organisation phase), building bases in remote areas and escalating guerrilla attacks on military and political institutions and gaining control of the countryside (Guerrilla phase) and finally conventional fighting with the military aimed at seizing major cities, overthrowing the government and taking control of the country (Mobile Warfare phase). In most locations where they are active, the Maoists have found it difficult to move much beyond the first phase.

However, the Maoists have been able to inflict significant casualties among police and paramilitary forces using a combination of improvised explosive devices, landmine attacks, attacks on police outposts and ambushes. After the formation of the CPI (Maoist), left-wing extremist violence across the country increased. There was a steady rise in the number of fatalities across the country from 717 (281 civilians, 150 security personnel and 286 left-wing extremists/Maoists) during 2005 to a peak of 1,180 (626 civilians, 277 security personnel and 277 left-wing extremists/Maoists) during 2010.

Armed struggle is only one element of the Maoist strategy to capture power. They have also built links with legitimate political and social organisations throughout India hoping to reach a wider audience and mould public opinion in their favour. They have also established some front organisations, which have been known to disseminate propaganda, covertly raise funds for the insurgency and provide legal assistance and shelter to members of the CPI (Maoist). These organisations include the Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners (CRPP), Revolutionary Democratic Front (RDF),
The Maoists are suspected to have fraternal ties with some north-eastern secessionist groups of India and, until recently, were alleged to have links with Nepal’s Maoist guerrillas and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of Sri Lanka as well. Indian government officials and independent analysts estimate that there are between 10,000 and 20,000 armed Maoist fighters, with many more supporters and sympathisers across the country. The CPI (Maoist) is led by the party’s Central Committee. The Politburo functions under the direction of the Central Committee. Below the Politburo, the Maoists are organised into the Special Area Committee, North Regional Bureau, South-western Regional Bureau, Eastern Regional Bureau, Orissa–Chhattisgarh Regional Bureau, Central Regional Bureau, Central Propaganda Bureau, and the powerful Central Military Commission (CMC). The CMC oversees the People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA). The PLGA consists of platoons (main force), squads or dalams (secondary force) and people’s militia (base forces). The Maoists also have a separate intelligence-gathering unit. The majority of the central leadership of the Maoists belong to Andhra Pradesh, including General Secretary Muppalla Lakshmana Rao, alias Ganapathy (People’s Leader).

Until recently, successive central governments were content to let individual state governments deal with Maoist violence. However, the current central government has adopted a different approach. Beginning in 2009, the Naxal Management Division within the Government of India’s Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) was tasked with countering the rising tide of Maoist violence across the country. The government’s strategy involves a mix of security and development policies in the states that have been severely affected by Maoist violence. The first part of the strategy involves dispatching over 50,000 central paramilitary personnel, including Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel, to assist state police in the Red Corridor region in their fight against the Maoists. Specialised units of the CRPF trained in guerrilla warfare, like the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (COBRA), have been pressed into service. Security operations have been relatively successful in West Bengal, where the CPI (Maoist) Eastern Regional (ER) Bureau has suffered huge losses, including the killing of top Maoist leader, Mallojula Koteshwara Rao, alias Kishenji. The other half of the strategy involves assisting state governments in providing public infrastructure and services to the people. Development programmes including the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) (Rural roads construction), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NDRWP), Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) (Elementary education), Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidhyutikaran Yojana (RGGVY) (Rural electrification), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Programme (Malnutrition among children) and Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) (Rural housing) have been implemented. Many of these programmes were directed towards the tribals. This is in recognition of the fact that the Maoist challenge was not simply a law and order problem but a development issue as well.

Some have called this paramilitary offensive ‘Operation Greenhunt’ but the central government has rejected this title. The strategy has so far met with mixed success. Some areas have been ‘liberated’ from Maoist control and there has been a decline in number of fatalities since 2010, when the number of fatalities was 1,180 (626 civilians, 277 security personnel and 277 left-wing extremists/Maoists) to 367 (146 civilians, 104 security personnel and 117 left-wing extremists/Maoists) during 2012. However, other areas continue to be affected by Maoist activities and pace of development work...
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has been slow. The next step is to learn from the experience so far and fine-tune the strategy.

Andhra Pradesh stands in contrast to many other states affected by Maoist violence. The state government formulated and implemented its own counter-insurgency strategies, much before the ongoing central government offensive against the Maoists. Dubbed the Andhra model, it involves a mix of security, development and political approaches. Unlike some other states, Andhra Pradesh has seen a significant decline in the number of left-wing extremism-related fatalities. The central government has hailed it as a model for other states to emulate. In fact, the two-part strategy that the central government is currently using to counter the Maoists imbibes some of the lessons of the Andhra model. What is the Andhra model and is it replicable across other states?

Andhra Pradesh: left-wing extremism and counterinsurgency

The state of Andhra Pradesh has been a hotbed of left-wing extremism since the 1960s. In 1968, a tribal insurrection in Srikakulam district soon developed into guerrilla warfare against the government.\(^{30}\) It was led by members of the CPI (M), who would later join the CPI–ML. Even though the insurgency failed, it was seen as the first step in the ‘liberation struggle’. In 1980, the CPI–ML (People’s War Group) or CPI–ML (PWG) was formed in Andhra Pradesh out of the erstwhile CPI–ML. During the early 1980s, the PWG initiated the first phase of guerrilla warfare (organisation phase) utilising agricultural labourers associations and student and youth fronts in Andhra Pradesh.\(^{31}\) Discontent regarding rural development, land-related issues and exploitation of tribal people contributed to the steady growth of the PWG. State authorities contributed to the rise of the group by carrying out mass raids on villages, targeting suspected sympathisers and those providing shelter to PWG cadres. Soon, almost every district of northern Andhra Pradesh region of Telangana became affected by left-wing extremism. The leadership of the PWG was based in north Telangana, along the border with Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra.

In 1998, the PWG merged with CPI–ML (Party Unity) to form the CPI (PW). By 2003, the Nallamalla forests, spanning five districts in central Andhra Pradesh, had become the epicentre of left-wing extremism. Until a decade ago, 21 out of 23 districts of Andhra Pradesh were affected by left-wing extremism.\(^{32}\) Successive state governments vacillated in their approach to PWG/PW. This was partly because some leaders were either been sympathetic to the PWG/PW cause or hesitant to take action against the group fearing for their own safety. The number of fatalities related to left-wing extremism (including civilians, security personnel and left-wing extremists) rose from 875 between 1980 and 1990 to 3,600 between 1990 and 2000.\(^{33}\) These fatality figures were actually worse than other states over the corresponding period. The highest number of fatalities recorded in Andhra Pradesh in a single year so far has been 508 (198 civilians, 35 security personnel and 275 left-wing extremists) in 1998.\(^{34}\)

The high number of fatalities during the late-1990s was primarily due to strong police action initiated by then Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu during 1995–1996. He became chief minister in 1995. His Telugu Desam Party (TDP) had emerged victorious in state assembly elections a year back. Chandrababu Naidu focused on police action and development work as a strategy to counter left-wing extremism in Andhra Pradesh.\(^{35}\) His government allocated funds to modernise the state police force. During the period of 1996–2000, more than a thousand left-wing
extremists were killed as a result of the state police’s counter-offensive. However, rural development work during the same period was slow.

Chandrababu Naidu was not the first one to combine the security and development approach to Naxalism. During its brief time in power in 1989–1990, the Congress Party under the chief ministership of M. Channa Reddy had attempted to address the Naxalite challenge by combining counterinsurgency efforts with development work. The state government initiated the Remote and Interior Areas Development Programme (RADP). The goal of this programme was to accelerate infrastructure development (roads, irrigation, communications, drinking water and medical care facilities, etc) in rural areas. The government organised mass contact programmes, delegated powers to district administrations and entrusted work to local people, especially tribals. Additionally, there was a strong thrust towards capacity building and streamlining of the administration to make it more responsive and ensure better delivery of services to people. Even though the Channa Reddy government was short-lived, its socio-economic development approach to Naxalism would guide the actions of future Andhra governments.

In the summer of 2004, the CPI–ML (PW) offered a formal ceasefire to the Indian National Congress (INC) government headed by Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy (also called YSR), which had just defeated Chandrababu Naidu’s party in the state assembly elections. Some analysts believed that the ceasefire offer was a ploy by the PW to allow it to rearm and regroup following recent reverses. Nevertheless, it was accepted by the state government and peace talks followed soon afterwards. However, the talks collapsed by January 2005, with each side accusing the other of violating the terms of the ceasefire. In the interim, PW merged with Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) to form the CPI (Maoist). Following the collapse of the talks, the YSR government renewed counterinsurgency operations against the Maoists.

Since then there has been a steady decrease in Maoist activities in Andhra Pradesh. The number of fatalities across the state fell from 320 (132 civilians, 21 security personnel and 167 left-wing extremists/Maoists) during 2005 to 10 (6 civilians, 1 security personnel, 3 left-wing extremists/Maoists) during 2012. During the corresponding period other states have seen a rise in Maoist activities and left-wing extremism related fatalities. Even Muppalla Lakshmana Rao, the Maoist general secretary, has admitted that the Maoists had suffered a serious setback in Andhra Pradesh and forced to carry out a ‘tactical retreat’ into neighbouring states. The organisation’s leadership has been forced to relocate from its safe havens in the Nallamalla forests, which are no longer dominated by the CPI (Maoist). One indication of the success in containing Maoists is the absence of ‘swarming attacks’ (those involving more than 50 members) in the state since 2009. In addition, of the 33 districts categorised by India’s MHA as ‘worst-affected’ by left-wing extremism, only one district, Khammam, is in Andhra Pradesh.

Andhra Pradesh’s success in containing the Maoist violence is attributed to a set of security, development and political approaches adopted and improved over the last decade. This approach has been dubbed as the Andhra model.

Security approach
During the 2004 peace talks, the ban on the PWG/PW/CPI (Maoist) was temporarily lifted by the state government. Many Maoist leaders emerged from the remote forest where they had been hiding for many years. For perhaps the first time, the
Andhra Pradesh police authorities were able to put faces onto the names of the reclusive leaders of the Maoists and understand the party organisation and hierarchy. In addition, they came to know the routes used by these leaders to enter and exit the forests and their contacts on the outside. The state government was also able to infiltrate the Maoist organisation by recruiting informers from among some of the less ideologically-committed cadres who emerged from the forests. State intelligence agencies patiently gathered intelligence and shared it with different departments within the state police force. This information would prove invaluable once the peace talks collapsed and counterinsurgency operations resumed.

The YSR government also utilised a specialised unit, called the Greyhounds, to take on the Maoists. Created in 1989, the ‘Greyhounds’ are an elite unit of the Andhra Pradesh Police trained in guerrilla warfare. The members of this specialised force are recruited directly from the regular state police force following a competitive selection process. They are provided with higher pay, subsidised housing and insurance by the state government. The Greyhounds operate as small units for extended periods of time in the remote forest and hilly regions, where Maoists are suspected to be active. The members of these units are familiar with local customs, language, terrain and politics. The Greyhounds use sophisticated weaponry and technology compared to both the regular police and the Maoists. The assault rifles, light machine guns, mortars, night vision equipment and superior communications technology, including satellite phones, gives them an edge over the Maoists. The Greyhounds are currently headed by the Additional Director-General of Police (Addl. DGP Greyhounds) at Police Headquarters in the state capital, Hyderabad. This official’s jurisdiction extends across different Maoist-affected districts.

The Greyhounds were often used by the YSR government to pursue and eliminate prominent Maoist leaders, based on specific information provided by the Special Intelligence Bureau (SIB). The SIB was a separate intelligence wing of the state police. Most of the information supplied to the Greyhounds was gathered during the ceasefire period. The Greyhounds also cultivated a network of informers from among the villages in Maoist-affected areas. After the collapse of the 2004 ceasefire, the state government ordered the Greyhounds to intensify its operations. Since 2007, more than 40 prominent Maoist leaders have either been arrested or killed in operations conducted by the Andhra Pradesh forces, including the Greyhounds. Under sustained pressure, the entire top leadership of the Maoists had relocated from the Nallamalla forests in Andhra Pradesh to the Dandakaranya region in the neighbouring state of Chhattisgarh by 2008. From the time when the ceasefire collapsed in early 2005 until 2008, almost 9,000 CPI (Maoist) cadres were either arrested or surrendered in the state.

However, Andhra Pradesh did not depend solely on repressive tactics aimed at creating fear in the minds of Maoists and their sympathisers to contain the Maoist challenge. An important element in the counterinsurgency efforts involved regular police investigations, which frequently succeeded in unearthing information about Maoists and their activities. The police would follow up the investigations with legal pursuit of cases against arrested Maoists. In some cases, the accused or convicted Maoist testified as a witness for the state against his/her comrades. Routine police work, involving profiling, intelligence-gathering and criminal prosecution helped state authorities understand the Maoist organisation and created awareness about their objectives. A qualitative change in police attitudes beginning in the mid 1990s was also observed. Maoist sympathisers and cadres interested in surrendering realised that police officials would no longer act in a vindictive manner towards them by harassing
them or foisting cases against them. This approach paid dividends as seen in the surrender of Thota Kumaraswamy, alias Tech Madhu, the brain behind the Maoist’s rocket launcher development programme, in 2006 and Konapuri Illaiah, alias Sambasivudu, the Andhra Pradesh state committee secretary of the CPI (Maoist), in 2009. A specialised counterinsurgency unit, advanced weaponry, effective intelligence-gathering network and good old-fashioned police work involving criminal prosecution and conviction of Maoists have contributed to the successful containment of Maoist violence in Andhra Pradesh. In fact, the state’s intelligence agency has provided information to police forces of other states that has led to the arrest of several Central Committee and Politburo members of the Maoists, weakening the organisation nationally and hampering its ability to spread to new areas. It should be pointed out that other steps taken by the state government, such as overhauling the training regimen of police recruits, developing infrastructure (including fortified police stations and outposts in remote areas of the state) and investing in human intelligence assets, contributed to the success of Andhra Pradesh’s drive against the Maoists as well. The security approach was instrumental in containing Maoist violence in Andhra Pradesh. The state police appear in no mood to take off the pressure on the Maoists. Around the end of 2011, the state government announced plans for deployment of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to monitor Maoist activities in remote areas of the state.

**Development approach**

YSR combined the state’s counterinsurgency efforts with a strong focus on rural development. He was careful not to repeat the same mistake that Chandrababu Naidu made earlier. Slow progress in rural development work led to Chandrababu Naidu’s downfall in the 2004 state assembly elections, which had brought YSR to power. The state government implemented programmes related to poverty alleviation, employment generation and tribal welfare. Programmes like the Remote and Interior Areas Development (RAID), Integrated Novel Development in Rural Areas and Model Municipal Areas (INDIRAMMA) and Jalayagnam (irrigation project) were implemented by the YSR government to address socio-economic grievances, undermining the ability of the Maoists to recruit new members. Colossal sums of money were spent on these programmes and on subsidies related to distribution of free power to farmers, land allotments, housing schemes, education scholarships and group health insurance scheme (Arogyasiri). The government also spent money constructing new roads, primary health clinics, schools, etc. in Maoist-affected districts. The main focus of these programmes was Telangana, which had earlier served as a hub for Maoist activities in Andhra Pradesh. The development approach has been quite successful. In particular, the socio-economic transformation of Telangana has undermined the Maoists’ ability to engage in mass mobilisation.

Andhra Pradesh also attempted to address the problems faced by its tribal population. It is well documented that moneylenders, traders and companies have illegally occupied tribal-dominated lands, displacing them. Mineral-rich lands, inhabited by tribals, have been particularly targeted by these groups. State government resettlement and rehabilitation programmes have been criticised due to lack of adequate compensation for losses incurred by tribes people. Tribal institutions have been undermined and village panchayats (assemblies) have been rendered toothless over the years. Money allocated for development has been siphoned off by politicians, bureaucrats, middlemen and contractors. The YSR government attempted to address the plight of these
tribals through programmes like RAID. It also utilised Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs), created for the development of tribal-inhabited areas, for more effective delivery of services to the tribal population. The government realised that the socio-economic grievances of the tribal population had to be addressed if its rural development programmes were to be successful.

Recognising that poverty and hopelessness had forced many to join the ranks of the Maoists, the YSR government came up with a generous surrender and rehabilitation package for Maoist cadres. The monetary assistance allowed former cadres to begin a fresh life. Some Maoist leaders, suffering from various ailments while living in forests for months or years on end, accepted the surrender offer by the government. Some of the surrendered Maoists assisted the state government in their operations against the CPI (Maoist). The timely surrender and rehabilitation package contributed to Maoist reverses in the state. In December 2012, the state government announced cash rewards ranging from Rs. 100,000 (approx. $2,000) to Rs. 2.5 million (approx. $50,000), depending on rank of surrendered Maoist. These are the highest amounts offered by any Maoist-affected state so far.

The changing socio-economic conditions in Andhra Pradesh, following the economic reforms introduced in India in 1991, also undermined the Maoist insurgency in the state. For example, during 2004–2009, Andhra Pradesh registered the biggest improvements in economic freedom among India’s states, which helped almost double the state’s growth rate over the same period. The state’s agricultural and industrial growth rates during this period were also higher than the national average. Government spending doubled from Rs. 42.5 billion ($0.85 billion) in 2003–2004 to Rs. 103.7 billion ($2.07 billion) in 2008–2009, focusing on areas like irrigation and infrastructure. This helped improve the business climate in the state, encouraging investment and creating economic opportunities for the people. A growing information technology (IT) sector also created more opportunities for the youth. Improvements have been observed even in the Maoist-dominated northern districts, where conducting normal economic activity was very difficult during the 1980s. The weak economy resulted in high youth unemployment, which drove disgruntled youths into the arms of the Maoists. Since then, wages have risen across the state’s northern districts, especially after the Maoists were displaced. Districts like Mahbubnagar, well known for emigration due to lack of economic opportunities, are today attracting people from other parts of Andhra Pradesh and beyond. The changing socio-economic conditions in the state have resulted in more youths pursuing economic opportunities, making it difficult for the Maoists to sustain their movement.

The effective use of security-centric (counterinsurgency) and people-centric (development) policies by the government has been largely responsible for containing Maoist violence in the state. Tragically, YSR, along with five others, was killed in a helicopter crash in September 2009. However, his policies have been continued by the current government led by Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy. In a speech delivered at a conference of chief ministers on internal security in New Delhi in January 2012, he outlined how educated, unemployed youth living in remote areas were being identified by the district administrations and imparted with special skills required for employment. It was designed to ensure that vulnerable youths were not swayed by Maoist overtures. The Kiran Kumar Reddy government has also launched a skills development programme known as Rajiv Yuva Kiranalu for the youth to make them employable in the private sector.
Political approach

India has a long experience in dealing with insurgencies. Although, it has never outlined a specific counterinsurgency document, some authors have been able to discern certain overarching principles associated with its counterinsurgency strategy. Chief among them is the idea that counterinsurgency is ultimately a political and not military endeavour. The ultimate goal is to bring ‘disgruntled’ and ‘alienated’ elements, who have taken up arms, back into mainstream politics. As such, successive central governments have always attempted political reconciliation even as it engaged in counterinsurgency operations in Kashmir, Punjab, the North-East and the Red Corridor.

Andhra Pradesh has pushed for a political approach to the Maoist problem in the state. YSR had declared that left-wing extremism was a political issue since the Maoists wanted to wrest political power using arms. Even the most hardened critics of the Maoists recognise that a security-centric approach alone may not be enough to contain their activities. Although, development programmes are an integral part of the Andhra model, meant to supplement security efforts, it is also important to recognise that satisfying political aspirations, addressing economic grievances and improving governance requires a political approach.

This approach involved separately targeting the leaders and the cadres. The Andhra Pradesh based leaders of the CPI (Maoist) were encouraged to shun arms and participate in talks ultimately leading to their re-induction into the political mainstream. The government’s acceptance of the 2004 ceasefire offer was in line with this approach. The government knew that although it would be difficult to sway the ideologically-hardened veteran leaders, young, mid-level leaders and ordinary cadres may be more susceptible to the government’s overtures. Some of the surrendered Maoists, including tribals, were inducted into political parties by politicians, and a few even went on to become local level leaders standing for state assembly elections.

As mentioned earlier, some political leaders in Andhra Pradesh harboured sympathies for the Maoists. In some areas, the nexus between politicians and Maoists had long frustrated attempts by state governments to push for a harder line against the Maoists. By cooperating with politicians, Maoists gained access to money, medicine and arms. In turn, politicians used Maoist cadres to threaten and intimidate opposing candidates both within and outside their political parties. Although, such cases have not totally disappeared, in recent times there appears to be a consensus regarding the approach employed by the state machinery with regard to the Maoist challenge. While identifying socio-economic factors responsible for the rise of left-wing extremism in Andhra Pradesh, both government and opposition parties have identified the Maoists as a major security threat necessitating counterinsurgency operations. This unity of purpose has helped the state government respond to the Maoist challenge.

The YSR government also delegated more powers to district administrations, which recruited local people, especially tribals, to implement its rural development programmes. The state government also began a process of distribution of surplus and government-owned land among the landless poor and tribals. Improving governance and implementation of laws designed to protect the interests of the tribals were therefore significant elements in the overall approach. However, it must be pointed out that these policies did not always work uniformly across all Maoist-affected districts. Nevertheless, it was another important approach of the Andhra model. Together the three approaches have been dubbed as the Andhra model.
units, an effective intelligence-gathering agency, targeted socio-economic development programmes, an attractive surrender and rehabilitation package, political consensus, improved governance and ensuring the rights of local communities are the key elements of the Andhra model. However, it must be understood that the marked improvement in the security situation made it possible for the government to engage in both a development and political approach.

Today, Andhra Pradesh is relatively more peaceful than many other states affected by Maoist violence. Although, there are still isolated Maoist attacks from time to time, it is universally accepted that the Maoists have been effectively neutralised in the state. The fact that the state government led the counter-insurgency efforts with little security-assistance from the central government sets Andhra Pradesh apart from other states. Acknowledging the success of Andhra Pradesh, the central government has encouraged other states to follow in Andhra Pradesh’s footsteps. The central government’s current security and development strategy against the Maoists (highlighted earlier) has been influenced to a large degree by the Andhra experience.

Replicable in other states?

While the situation in Andhra Pradesh has dramatically improved over the last decade, some other states have witnessed a growing intensity in Maoist violence during the same period. In particular, the states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and Maharashtra witnessed an increasing number of fatalities since 2005. The governments of these states have found it difficult to stem the rising tide of Maoist violence. The most severely affected state is Chhattisgarh, where the CPI (Maoist) leadership has set up base in the remote forests of the Dandakaranya region of the state. This region, which includes parts of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa, is adjacent to north Telangana. Seven of the 27 districts of Chhattisgarh have been categorised by the India’s MHA as among the ‘worst-affected’ by left-wing extremism in the country. The rise in violence coincided with the assault on the Maoists in Andhra Pradesh and the relocation of the CPI (Maoist) leadership from the Nallamalla forests to the Dandakaranya region.

In light of the Maoist challenge, the possibility of replicating the Andhra model in Chhattisgarh and some other states has been discussed. As mentioned earlier, the central government has dispatched thousands of central paramilitary forces to address the Maoist challenge, while undertaking development work in Maoist-affected areas and providing economic assistance to state governments. Additionally, it has asked state governments to modernise their respective police forces, create an effective intelligence agency, share information with other Maoist-affected states and invest in rural development projects.

However, replicating this model will not be easy. One crucial missing factor is the ceasefire period in Andhra Pradesh, when the state machinery gathered information and intelligence about the Maoists who came out into the open, albeit temporarily. This information was utilised to devastating effect by the Greyhounds. Other states have not gone through such a phase. In fact, the Maoists have learned from their mistakes in Andhra Pradesh. In subsequent informal discussions on the possibility of ceasefire in other states, the Maoists insist on talks through intermediaries, instead of direct talks that would require their current leaders to come out into the open. As such, the groundwork for successful security operations against the Maoists is absent.
There are other obstacles to replicating the Andhra model. Chhattisgarh has utilised state-supported militias like the Salwa Judum (‘Purification Hunt’ in the local Gondi language) to deal with the Maoist violence in the state. Local tribal youths were inducted into the militia to counter the Maoist recruitment of tribals in the Dandakaranya region. However, this approach has resulted in untold misery and suffering among the tribal populace in the state by pitting them against each other. Whereas, Andhra Pradesh pursued a strategy of winning the hearts and minds of the state’s tribal, the Chhattisgarh government has used the state’s tribals as pawns in their fight against the Maoists. The resultant anger among the tribal people makes it difficult for the state government to cultivate local informants. Lack of effective intelligence-gathering network will undermine security operations.

The other problem for states like Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa is that the police force is inadequately funded and poorly trained. Until recently, they did not even have access to the kind of weaponry that the government of Andhra Pradesh provided to its police personnel. More funds need to be devoted to modernising the police force before it can effectively take on the Maoists. These states also don’t have a long history of using specialised units trained in guerrilla warfare. The Greyhounds of Andhra Pradesh were created in 1989 and over the years they perfected their strategy against the Maoists. However, the other states either do not have such specialised units or have only recently formed such units. It is unrealistic to expect these specialised units to neutralise the Maoists within a very short period of time.

Additionally, the massive rural development work that YSR initiated in Andhra Pradesh to complement the security offensive, have yet to be emulated by the governments of other states. The YSR government also spent huge sums of money developing a communications network in Maoist-dominated areas, which has not been replicated in other state. Partly, this is the result of mixed successes associated with the security operations, the reasons for which have been outlined earlier. Failure to replicate the successes achieved against the Maoists in Andhra Pradesh has led to slow and irregular implementation of rural development projects in states like Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Orissa has been slow. Many of the Maoist-affected states, especially Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa have seen little socio-economic change since the early 1990s. Whereas, the economy of Andhra Pradesh has generated economic opportunities for farmers, businessmen and young people, thereby alienating them from the Maoist insurgency, the same has not happened in other Maoist-affected states. As such, it has been difficult to uniformly apply the Andhra model across entire states.

It would also be unfair to attribute Andhra Pradesh’s success against the Maoists only to the efforts of the YSR government. The successful model of Andhra Pradesh is the result of more than two decades of work done by the political class, bureaucrats and police officials. As mentioned earlier, there has been some continuity in the approach of Andhra Pradesh state governments, beginning with the Channa Reddy administration through the current administration of Kiran Kumar Reddy. Over time, a consensus evolved among different actors regarding the feasibility of combining the security-centric and developmental approach. Additionally, this approach succeeded in empowering citizens, particularly tribals living in remote areas. Along with a political approach geared towards bringing Maoist guerrillas back into the mainstream, the security and developmental approaches succeeded in containing the problem to a large extent. This sustained effort over two decades was crucial to the state’s ability to
respond to the Maoist challenge. This factor is yet to be appreciated by other Maoist-affected states. The Andhra model will only be emulated if the other states think in terms of a longer time horizon.

Finally, weak state and district administrations and rampant corruption in Maoist-affected states have created socio-economic conditions that have contributed to the growth of left-wing extremism. Illegal mining is common in these regions and the Maoists extort money from companies, thereby assuring a steady stream of income allowing them to carry on their armed struggle.\textsuperscript{63} In states like Bihar and Jharkhand, there is little consensus between political parties regarding the dangers posed by the Maoists. Some politicians, and even political parties, have openly expressed sympathy for the Maoists in these states. For all these reasons, utilising the Andhra model for countering the Maoist violence in other states is unlikely to work.

Conclusion

Left-wing extremism in India has affected many states since the 1960s. Andhra Pradesh, where socio-economic conditions have contributed to growth of left-wing extremist groups, has been among the worst-affected. By the 1990s, the state had emerged as the hub of left-wing extremism in the country. However, since 2005, the state has managed to gain the upper hand against the Maoists. Using a mix of security, development and political approaches, dubbed the Andhra model, it has been singularly successful in neutralising the Maoists. The number of fatalities resulting from left-wing extremist violence in the state has dropped sharply from 2005. As the security situation has improved in Andhra Pradesh, it has become grimmer in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Orissa. The leadership of the Maoists has relocated to the neighbouring state of Chhattisgarh. The latter is now the epicentre of the Maoist movement.

The central government has suggested that the Maoist-affected states study the Andhra model and attempt to emulate it. However, this is easier said than done. Poorly trained and funded state police force, lack of specialised police units, weak and ineffective intelligence-gathering agencies, absence of a clear political mandate and/or political consensus against the Maoists, slow pace of development work, alienation within large sections of the tribal population and weak administrations make these states very different from Andhra Pradesh. Admittedly, Andhra Pradesh started off with many of these same problems. Given time and adequate modifications to local conditions, the Andhra model may still work in some states. However, simply replicating the model and expecting quick success is unrealistic and will not deliver results, as is clear from the experience of other states.

Notes


2. John Ellis, no. 1.


29. South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), no. 20.
31. Bidyut Chakrabarty and Rajat K. Kujur, no. 6, p. 49.
34. Ibid.
36. South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), no. 33.
39. Ibid.
40. South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), ‘Interview with Ganapathy, General Secretary, CPI–Maoist’ (text of interview by the CPI–Maoist General Secretary Ganapathy was released by Azad, spokesperson, CPI–Maoist in April, 2007), South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), New Delhi, 2013, at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/maoist/documents/papers/interview_ganapathy.htm (Accessed January 10, 2013).


47. Col. J.K. Achuthan, no. 35.


49. Ibid.


55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.


59. P.V. Ramana, no. 45.


61. South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), no. 40.