

# MINDLESS VIOLENCE: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE THREAT MAOISTS STILL POSE

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April 28, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 01:50 am IST

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Less than two years ago, the Union Home Minister Amit Shah had told leaders and representatives of various States that the [influence of the Maoists had reduced from 96 districts](#) in 10 States in 2010 to just 41 by late 2021. Close observers of the Maoist insurgency had warned that despite the Maoists' decline, they were still active in South Bastar, the Andhra-Odisha border or in some districts in Jharkhand. The killing on Wednesday of a District Reserve Guard team of the Chhattisgarh police in [a powerful IED blast](#) followed by gunfire is reflective of the threat still posed by Maoists in the south Bastar region. The fact that these 10 personnel were returning from a counter-insurgency operation that they had conducted after a tip-off indicates that the Maoist attacks could have been a trap and points to a possible intelligence failure. With the Maoists known to ramp up attacks on security forces before the onset of the monsoon season, the killings suggest a failure in anticipating such an attack. It is incumbent upon the government to investigate the incident, plug security loopholes, find out the Maoist cadre responsible for the attack and to bring them to justice. But it is a task that is easier said than done as this is tough terrain in a region which could be the last stronghold of the Maoists.

The inability of the Maoists to graduate beyond a violent guerrilla-based movement that utilises the remote and inaccessible forested terrain of central India, and home to tribal communities, is largely because of their incoherent and outdated ideology that has found few takers even among the most marginalised of communities. Diligent security actions have certainly curbed their presence outside their stronghold even as the responsiveness and penetration of the Indian state into areas where governmental sway was hitherto absent, has had a mitigatory effect. Yet, it is not just the terrain and topography that have acted as the obstacles in defeating the Maoists in south Bastar. The alienation of a section of tribals caught in the crossfire between security forces and the Maoists has allowed the Maoists to tap into discontent and to retain a presence in the area. In the years of counter-insurgency, hard-edged strategies of creating wedges among the tribal population to defeat the Maoists have been counter-productive. The government must continue to try to win the support and confidence of the tribal people of south Bastar as that is the surest way of defeating the Maoist movement. Any military action that is hastily put together for retribution and which could target innocent tribals will only exacerbate the problem.

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