MENTORA IAS

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Record fatalities, arrests, surrenders signal decline of Maoist insurgency

1. Context and Overview

- **Focus:** Decline of Maoist (Left Wing Extremism - LWE) activity in India.
- **Key Evidence:** Sharp fall in geographical spread, record levels of **surrenders**, **arrests**, and **fatalities**.
- **Data Source:** South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP).
- **Significance:** The reduction marks a major decline in one of India's longest-running internal security threats.

2. Key Indicators of Decline

Indicator	2025 Data	Comparative Insight
Surrenders	1,849 militants	Third-highest annual figure after 2016 & 2022
Arrests	836 Maoists	Highest in past five years
Fatalities (Militants killed)	333	Second-deadliest year for Maoists since 2003

- **Average (2000s–2010s):**
  - ~663 Maoists arrested/year
  - ~496 killed/year
- **Recent Trend:** Sharp rise again after 2020, indicating intensified security operations.

3. Trends Over Time

Chart 1: Number of militants who **surrendered** (2000–2025)
➡️ Peaks in 2016, 2022, and 2025 (1,849 surrenders in 2025).

Chart 2: Number of militants **arrested** (2000–2025)
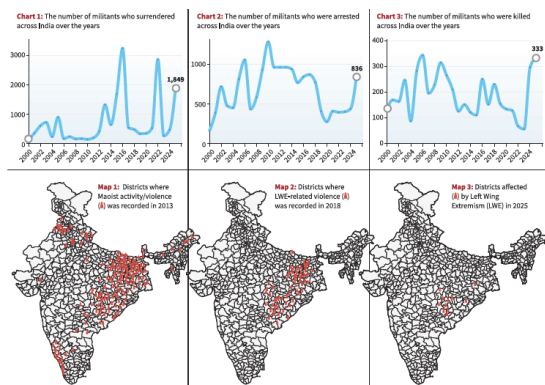➡️ Fluctuating pattern, peaking in 2025 at **836 arrests**.

Chart 3: Number of militants **killed** (2000–2025)
➡️ Notable rise in 2025 with **333 deaths**, one of the highest since 2003.

4. Shrinking Geographical Spread (The "Red Corridor")

Year	Number of Districts Affected	States Most Affected
2013	176 districts	Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh
2018	90 districts	Jharkhand (18), Chhattisgarh (17), Bihar (16), Odisha (12), Maharashtra (8), others
2025	45 districts	Reduced concentration mainly in **Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and parts of Maharashtra & Andhra Pradesh**

5. Regional Patterns (Map Analysis)

Chart 1: The number of militants who surrendered across India over the years

Chart 2: The number of militants who were arrested across India over the years

Chart 3: The number of militants who were killed across India over the years

Map 1: Districts where Maoist activity/violence (A) was recorded in 2013

Map 2: Districts where LWE-related violence (A) was recorded in 2018

Map 3: Districts affected (A) by Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in 2025

Map	Year	Description
Map 1	2013	LWE-related violence recorded in a wide "red corridor" spanning central and eastern India.
Map 2	2018	Noticeable contraction; violence limited to fewer central pockets.
Map 3	2025	Further shrinkage; Maoist activity confined mainly to select border regions of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha.

6. Interpretive Summary

- The **"Shrinking Red Corridor"** signifies the **accelerated decline** of Maoist insurgency.
- **State operations, surrenders, and arrests** have weakened organizational networks.
- However, **sporadic violence persists** in a few forested belts and inter-state border areas.
- The **data-driven trend** suggests a **transition from widespread insurgency to localized militancy**.

7. Broader Implications

- **Security:** India's internal security landscape has stabilized considerably.
- **Governance:** Focus can shift from counter-insurgency to **development and integration** in affected tribal and forested regions.
- **Policy Need:** Rehabilitation of surrendered militants and socio-economic development of erstwhile LWE areas.

8. Core Message
The Maoist insurgency in India has reached its lowest ebb in two decades — marked by record surrenders, heightened arrests, and a drastically reduced area of operation, signaling a historic phase of decline in Left-Wing Extremism.

HOW TO USE IT

The decline of the Maoist insurgency demonstrates the success of a **multi-pronged strategy** that effectively combined **robust security measures** with **developmental outreach and governance initiatives**. It serves as a model for tackling internal security challenges rooted in socio-economic deprivation.

Primary Relevance: GS Paper III (Internal Security, Disaster Management)
1. Linkages between Development and Spread of Extremism:

- **How to use:** This is the core concept tested. The data provides concrete evidence that the state's strategy is working.
- **Key Points:**
  - **The Security-First Approach:** The record numbers—**1,849**

surrenders, 836 arrests, and 333 Maoists killed in 2025**—are a direct outcome of intensified and more sophisticated security operations (e.g., better intelligence, specialized units like Greyhounds, fortified camps in deep forests).

- **Shrinking Geographical Spread:** The most telling indicator. Use the data: from **176 affected districts in 2013 to just 45 in 2025**. This shows the insurgency is losing its territorial base, which is crucial for its survival.
- **The "Carrot and Stick" Policy:** The high number of **surrenders** is not just due to fear but also because of well-structured **surrender and rehabilitation policies** that offer a way out. This weakens the insurgents' morale and recruitment.

2. Role of External State and Non-state Actors in Creating Challenges to Internal Security:

- **How to use:** While not a primary factor here, the decline shows that a primarily indigenous problem can be addressed by effective domestic policy, reducing the space for external actors to exploit.

3. Challenges to Internal Security through Communication Networks, Role of Media and Social Networking Sites:

- **How to use:** The state's success can be partly attributed to its effective use of technology and information warfare.
- **Key Points:**
  - Security forces have used technology for surveillance and intelligence.
  - Government campaigns have effectively countered Maoist propaganda, highlighting development work and surrender policies.

Secondary Relevance: GS Paper II (Governance) & GS Paper I (Society)
1. GS II: Government Policies and Interventions for Development in Various Sectors:

- **How to use:** The security gains are underpinned by developmental efforts.
- **Key Points:**
  - The government's **"National Policy and Action Plan to Address LWE"** has focused on **road connectivity, telecom infrastructure, school building, and healthcare access** in these regions. This addresses the governance vacuum that the Maoists exploited.
  - Schemes like **SPARSHA (Surrender-cum-Rehabilitation Scheme)** are direct policy interventions that have contributed to the high surrender rates.

2. GS I: Social Empowerment:

- **How to use:** The insurgency has its roots in the marginalization of tribal communities.
- **Key Points:**

- o The long-term solution lies in ensuring the implementation of laws like the **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006** and creating livelihood opportunities. The data on decline suggests that these efforts, though slow, are starting to show an impact alongside security measures.

The New Arc of India–Australia Collaboration

1. Context and Significance

- **Event:** Inaugural *Australia–India Defence Ministers' Dialogue* held in Canberra and Sydney.
- **Participants:** Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** and his Australian counterpart.
- **Significance:**
  - o First visit by an Indian Defence Minister to Australia in over a decade.
  - o Marks a shift from **strategic dialogue** to **operational cooperation** in defence ties.
  - o Reflects the deepening of the *Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)* established in 2020.

2. Key Outcomes and Agreements

A. Strategic Frameworks

- **Joint Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap** – to advance maritime cooperation and domain awareness.
- **Renewed Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation** – strengthening the 2014 framework.

B. Institutional Mechanisms

- **Annual Defence Ministers' Dialogue** – formalized as a recurring platform.
- **Joint Staff Talks Forum** – created to progress joint exercises, operations, and interoperability.

C. Operational and Technical Cooperation

- **Implementing Arrangement on Mutual Submarine Rescue Support and Cooperation.**
- **Progress on operationalising Air-to-Air Refuelling arrangement.**
- **Expanded information-sharing** and **defence industry roundtables.**
- **Indian shipyards** offered for Australian fleet maintenance and repair.

3. Evolution of the Defence Relationship

Phase	Nature of Cooperation	Key Features
Phase I: Strategic Convergence	Diplomatic & Strategic	Shared Indo-Pacific vision; Quad coordination; China's assertiveness as a common concern.
Phase II: Operational Deepening	Military & Security	Growing joint exercises (AUSINDEX, Malabar), intelligence and logistics cooperation.

Phase	Nature of Cooperation	Key Features
Phase III: Industrial & Logistical Convergence	Defence Industry & Technology	Collaboration on shipbuilding, maintenance, and secure supply chains.

4. Drivers of the Partnership
Structural Factors
- Shifting **maritime power balance** in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Coercive behaviour by China** across the region.

Pragmatic Factors
- Need for **self-reliant security arrangements** amidst uncertainties about traditional external providers.
- Drive for **bilateral logistics, submarine rescue, and industrial cooperation** to reduce operational friction.

Complementary Strengths

India	Australia
Strategic location in Indian Ocean	Technologically advanced defence systems
Expanding defence production (~₹1.5 lakh crore in FY 2024–25)	Advanced R&D and alliance-linked expertise
Cost-effective manufacturing under *Make in India* and *iDEX*	High-end platforms: P-8A Poseidon, MQ-4C Triton, "Ghost Shark" UUV

5. Strategic Importance and Signalling

- **For India:**
  - Expands reach in the **southern Indo-Pacific**.
  - Strengthens maritime domain awareness and industrial linkages.
- **For Australia:**
  - Diversifies security partnerships beyond AUKUS and the U.S. alliance.
  - Gains a capable, like-minded partner in the Indian Ocean region.
- **Institutionalisation:**
  - Annual mechanisms ensure cooperation **outlasts political cycles**.
  - Anchored in **shared democratic values**, **economic linkages**, and **people-to-people ties**.

6. Nature of Cooperation and Future Outlook
- **Nature:**
  - Incremental and reversible – focused on **interoperability**, **logistics**, and **crisis management**, not on binding defence guarantees.

Future Areas to Watch
1. Implementation of logistics and ship repair arrangements.
2. Expansion of classified information-sharing mechanisms.
3. Progress on joint defence-industrial projects.
4. Synchronisation of bilateral cooperation with **Quad initiatives**.

Potential Impact
- If consistently implemented, the partnership will become:

- o **Routinised operationally,**
- o **Strategically consequential**, and
- o A **stabilising force** for **Indo-Pacific maritime security**.

7. Conclusion
The India–Australia defence partnership has evolved from **dialogue to deployment** — reflecting a maturing strategic relationship.
Anchored in **shared values, mutual trust, and convergent interests**, it has the potential to shape a **rules-based, resilient, and multipolar Indo-Pacific order**.

<mark>How to use</mark>

Overarching Theme for UPSC
The India-Australia defence partnership is a **pragmatic and strategic response to a shifting global order**. It represents India's move from **non-aligned isolation to multi-aligned integration**, focusing on building resilient, self-reliant security architectures with like-minded democratic partners to counterbalance Chinese assertiveness and ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Primary Relevance: GS Paper II (International Relations)
1. Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests:
- **How to use:** This is the core application. The partnership is a key bilateral initiative with significant regional implications.
- **Key Points:**
    - o **From Dialogue to Deployment:** Highlight the evolution from

strategic talks to **operational cooperation** (submarine rescue, air-to-air refuelling, ship repair). This shows the relationship is maturing beyond symbolism.
- o **Strengthening the Quad:** This bilateral partnership is a **force multiplier for the Quad** (India, US, Japan, Australia). It adds substantial military heft to the group's vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- o **A Strategic Counter to China:** Frame the partnership as a direct, though not explicitly stated, response to China's coercive actions in the South China Sea, its naval forays into the Indian Ocean, and its debt-trap diplomacy in the region.

2. India and its neighborhood-relations:
- **How to use:** Australia is a key Indo-Pacific partner, and this partnership extends India's strategic reach.
- **Key Points:**
    - o **Extended Neighborhood:** This collaboration is central to India's "Act East" policy and its vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR).
    - o **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA):** The **Joint Maritime Security**

Collaboration Roadmap is crucial for monitoring Chinese naval movements in the Eastern Indian Ocean, a critical chokepoint for India's energy supplies.

Primary Relevance: GS Paper III (Security, Economy, Technology)

1. Security challenges and their management in border areas:

- **How to use:** While not a border issue, this partnership is about managing a broader **maritime security challenge**.
- **Key Points:**
  - **Diversifying Security Partnerships:** Reducing dependence on any single partner (like Russia) is a key national security objective. Australia provides access to advanced Western technology and platforms.
  - **Logistics and Interoperability:** Agreements like mutual submarine rescue and ship repair enhance the Indian Navy's operational endurance and reach in the Southern Indian Ocean and Western Pacific.

2. Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment:

- **How to use:** The partnership has a strong defence industrial component.
- **Key Points:**
  - **Synergy with 'Make in India':** The offer of **Indian shipyards for Australian**

fleet maintenance is a direct boost for India's defence industry and its goal of becoming a defence manufacturing hub.
  - **Complementary Economies:** Use the table to show how India's cost-effective manufacturing and large workforce complement Australia's advanced R&D and high-tech platforms (like the "Ghost Shark" UUV). This is a model for **Atmanirbhar Bharat** (Self-reliant India) through international collaboration.

3. Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology:

- **How to use:** The partnership involves high-end technology transfer and co-development.
- **Key Points:**
  - Collaboration on undersea drones (UUVs) and other advanced platforms under the **iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence)** framework can be highlighted as an example of indigenization through global partnerships.