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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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**APPLICABILITY OF TENETS OF OPERATIONAL ART  
IN LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT OPERATIONS IN INDIA**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**MAJOR GANGADHAR NAYAK, INDIAN ARMY**

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## Executive Summary

**Title:** Applicability of tenets of operational art in Low Intensity Conflict Operations (LICO) in India.

**Author:** Major Gangadhar Nayak, Indian Army.

**Thesis:** The identification and application of the tenets of operational art in LICO in the Indian context by an operational commander are imperative to achieve the desired end state within the framework of the grand strategy of the government in general and the security forces in particular.

**Discussion:** The Indian government and the Indian Army have been engaged in LICO for over five decades. Although, the insurgency has been eradicated in few states with due diligence handling by the government and effective counterinsurgency (COIN) operations by the security forces, situation in other states still remain volatile. The armed forces have been operating without a detailed analysis and application of operational art. This facet is relatively new to the Indian Army. Although the operational art construct is being utilized in the conventional operations to achieve desired outcome, the tenets of operational art are yet to be fully understood and incorporated in LICO. A holistic view of the nature of insurgencies and COIN operations lends itself to apply the concept of operational art to achieve greater effects and results, ultimately leading towards the desired end state. Thus, it is paramount to understand the tenets of operational art and apply them in LICO for success of the campaign ultimately bringing the insurgencies within controllable level in the future. The applicability of operational art in the commander's campaign design and in the various lines of effort would ensure the desired result for the military and the government. This will only be possible with an in depth and thorough understanding of the aspect of operational art as applicable to LICO.

**Conclusion:** A thorough and deep understanding of the tenets of operational art as applicable to LICO in the Indian context will complement the multipronged approach undertaken jointly by the Indian government and the security forces to curb the spread of the insurgency. This would significantly facilitate in improving the overall security situation in the country, which may not be possible by employing a narrowly focused approach relying solely on political or military means towards the countering the insurgency.

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## ***PREFACE***

For over five decades, India has been confronting insurgencies in various forms and is engaged in active counterinsurgency operations. The resources and manpower employed in the Low Intensity Conflict Operations (LICO) have taken a huge toll on the Indian economy as well as the security forces. Although the security forces have achieved limited success, the inability to identify and apply the tenets of operational art have reduced the chances of greater attainment of politico-military goals.

The nature of insurgencies in three main regions of Jammu and Kashmir, North Eastern states, and Naxal dominated areas in central and southern India is different from each other. Therefore, a singular framework of military or political solution is not applicable in all three areas. However, the fact remains that the security forces are actively employed in all these regions fighting protracted LICO. LICO strategies encompass the full range of measures taken by a state to safeguard its political structure and economic growth, and to protect the country from subversion and lawlessness. The fundamental goal must be to identify and eliminate the conditions that have given rise to the conflict. Full integration of political, bureaucratic, military and paramilitary operations is necessary while recognizing that the true nature of the threat will lie in the political rather than the military arena. A strategy that fails to recognize the political aspects of the problem, but instead relies on purely military solution, will probably fail in the short term and is certain to fail over a long period. The operational level provides the link between strategic objectives. In LICO these are essentially political, economic, social, psychological, and the tactical employment of the forces. This vital connection is articulated through the conception, planning and execution of major operations and campaigns. Therefore, it is paramount to have a thorough understanding of the tenets of operational art as applicable to

the LICO and apply it during the designing and conduct stage to attain strategic and operational objectives and ultimately the desired end state.

This paper will advance the understanding of applicability of tenets of the operational art in LICO in India and make an earnest endeavor to bring about a paradigm shift in operational approach to fight LICO in the future.

This paper would not have been possible without Dr Mark Jacobsen, Ph.D, who allowed me to have ample leeway in planning my research and then very patiently reviewed my work and guided me throughout the completion of this paper. I am indebted and grateful for his guidance and continuous encouragements. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Lieutenant Colonel Joseph E. Cross, US Marine Corps, our military faculty adviser for painstakingly reviewing my work and helping me with wonderful insights to help in refining the paper. I would also like to extend my deep appreciation to my Conference Group for providing due guidance and insights on the topic.

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*The various kinds of dangers are:  
 that which is of external origins and internal abetment ;  
 that which is of internal origins and external abetment ;  
 that which is of external origins and external abetment ;  
 that which is of internal origins and internal abetment ;  
 Of these four kinds of dangers, internal dangers should be got rid of first; for it  
 is the internal troubles, like the fear from a lurking snake, that are more serious  
 than external trouble.*

— **Kautilya, 321-296 BC**

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades there has been a marked shift in the character of war from major combat operations to Low Intensity Conflict Operations (LICO). Low intensity conflict (LIC) is generally referred to as that form of warfare wherein the level of confrontation is deliberately kept below that of a conventional war.<sup>1</sup> In a strictly limited sense the term by itself indicates a type of warfare where the quantum of violence is restricted. LIC, in the past half century, has become the norm of international warfare. In the 1970s, LIC represented 80 percent of all wars. Three decades later, it has accounted for 90 percent of all wars. There is nothing readily apparent to indicate that anything is going to arrest this trend. It would be safe to assume that instances of such conflicts will continue to grow.

This is true in the Indian context too. While the nation has faced conventional wars on only four occasions since its independence in 1947, it has been faced with the difficult task of conducting counter insurgency (COIN) operations in various parts of the country for nearly five decades. The North East insurgency started in the mid-1960s which posed a unique challenge for the security forces. The insurgency in Punjab in the early 1980s and the events in Jammu & Kashmir (J & K) in the later part of the same decade brought a new dimension of challenge to LICO. The situation further deteriorated with rise of the left wing extremism/Naxal insurgency in the central Indian belt. Decades of COIN operations and thousands of precious human lives have

contributed little to resolving these conflicts. The map of areas of insurgency in India from 1960 to date is given as Appendix A & B respectively.

Insurgency in India as any other known insurgencies is primarily a political struggle and needs definite political actions to eliminate it. Every insurgency movement has its own characteristics and hence demands a different method of dealing with it. The approach is influenced by the aspirations of the people, geographic location, terrain, political and insurgent leadership, political environment, external support, time, and innumerable other factors. Hence, there is no set formula to deal with all insurgencies.

The proxy war unleashed by Pakistan in J & K has little in common with the insurgent movements in the North Eastern (NE) states or the Naxal insurgency. The Kashmiris, on whose behalf a so-called 'jihad' is being waged, have little or no control over the course that the movement is taking in J & K that is solely controlled by Pakistan's Inter-services Intelligence (ISI). The case in NE states is more of an ethnic, linguistic, and separatist movement whereas the Naxal insurgency is a conflict on an ideology and ethnicity. Thus, even after five decades of insurgent and terrorist activities in India by various groups often supported by few external states, the LICO have achieved mixed success. However, "two things remain constant to date in the Indian LICO: one, none of the insurgent groups has achieved their objective and two, only thing standing between them and success is the Indian Army."<sup>2</sup> The Indian Army have constantly achieving success in limiting the insurgencies.

COIN operations or LICO for that matter are complex and dynamic. Besides the political will and unity of effort on the part of all government agencies, LICO demands the very best in a field commander. Besides his professional acumen in conventional operations, he must be

endowed with a vision of the future. The operational commander must realize that LICO are a long drawn war and must identify his course to achieve this long-term goal. He must have patience so as not to be unduly influenced by tactical reverses, and he must have the ability to collaborate with other government and non-government agencies that are not necessarily placed under his command for the achievement of the ultimate goal of winning the war.

In the Indian context, the security forces have achieved limited success in LICO especially in Mizoram and Punjab. Despite these successes, operational art has rarely been associated with the design or conduct of LICO in India or elsewhere. There is, therefore, a need to analyze the design and conduct of LICO within the realm of grand strategy through a lens of operational art. Thus, the identification and application of the tenets of operational art in LICO in the Indian context by an operational commander are imperative to achieve the desired end state within the framework of the grand strategy of the government in general and the security forces in particular.

Even though various facets of operational art have always existed in some form or another, operational art as a subject is new to the Indian Army. Even in the United States, it took four years after the publications of the 1982 edition of field Manual 100 - 5 for the realization that operational level demanded the commanders to think critically as it differed distinctly from traditional linear thinking.<sup>3</sup> Hence, a reluctance to accept this theory is understandable. While examples of LICO of foreign nations may be discussed to analyze a particular facet, this paper shall primarily deal with identification and applicability of tenets of operational art pertaining to LICO in the Indian context.

This paper is aimed to advance the understanding of the identification and application of tenets of the operational art in LICO in India and make an earnest endeavor to bring about a

paradigm shift in the operational approach in fighting LICO in the future focused on fulfilling the goals set forth by the political and military leadership.

#### OPERATIONAL ART DEFINED

A working definition of operational art must first be addressed to lay the foundation for the thesis. As per the famous military theorist Carl von Clausewitz “War is the extension of policy by other means.”<sup>4</sup> This implies political authorities define the type of war the military will fight with restrictions to prevent military action from producing undesired political effects. The LICO also form part of this category. While the political aim devolves upon creating a favorable situation for realizing normality within the region, the military goal is to attain those conditions by sustainable military actions.

In simple terms, operational art is defined as the linkage between strategic guidance and tactical execution of orders.<sup>5</sup> Operational art in LICO requires tactical thought and short term planning to attain the intermediate and long term objectives.<sup>6</sup> The intermediate objectives are directed to achieve the higher strategic aim. Therefore, operational art in LICO can be quantified as undertaking definitive small steps and refining each approach before moving ahead with another step. The steps in operational concepts are correlated with the tactical or operational actions and initiatives. Thus, “operational art in LICO is the cognitive, cyclical process, using both strategic and tactical thought, to develop and refine an operational approach to guide the selection of appropriate tactical actions aimed at the simultaneous achievement of objectives step by step to achieve the desired end state with available means within the strategic commanders overall gambit of actions.”<sup>7</sup>

## INDIAN ARMY DOCTRINE FOR COIN/LICO OPERATIONS

The Indian Army doctrine for COIN/LICO operations has formalized the conduct of COIN operations and has emphasized that all military actions in COIN operations must be people-centric, conform to the laid down laws, use minimum force, and aim at restoring civilian control, while at the same time acting aggressively against those elements who receive external support and are bent on confronting the government and exploiting the laws of war.<sup>8</sup> However, the doctrine does not emphasize the practice of operational art in LIC/COIN operations.

According to the published Indian Army Doctrine for COIN operations,

Current Indian COIN thinking firmly reflects the conviction that insurgencies are primarily political problems that need a political solution and military operations can only assist in in setting the stage for the final political resolution. Operations by the army also reflect the assimilation of the attitude of minimum use of force and conduct of operations with immense limitations regarding employment of heavy equipment such as artillery and air support.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, although the doctrine emphasizes the conduct of the LIC/COIN operations, it does not mention the use of operational art in the planning or conduct of such operations.

## INDIAN SCENARIO

Broadly speaking, the tenets of operational art as applicable to LICO are no different than those applied in conventional operations. However, the operational commanders need to identify, analyze, modify, and execute the operations incorporating the operational art to achieve the desired effect within the overall strategic objective. The tenets are the direct offshoot of the ends, ways, and means. The operational commander should thus be able to accurately identify and apply these tenets in his campaign design through lines of effort in conducting the operations. The ways and means so applied must be in conformity with the ends desired. While the desired end state in the Indian context is spelled out by the political masters, the operational approach to fight LICO is vested with the security forces deployed in the concerned area or the region. The

military in general and the Army in particular is the lead agent of the security forces, and the state police and paramilitary forces operate within the overall campaign design set forth by the military operational commander.

## POLITICAL IMPERATIVES

In designing LICO the operational commander is faced with considerable political and strategic challenges. These will significantly affect the operational planning process and, certainly, the course of the operation.<sup>10</sup>

Completing the five-year term of office has indeed become a challenge for any of the Indian central governments. Absence of a clear mandate has led to political instability and has resulted in weak coalition governments, vested interests, political bickering, and an irresponsible opposition.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the central government remains preoccupied with measures for its own survival and has little time and political will to resolve an issue that is not an immediate threat to remain in power. Thus, the ultimate issue of insurgency is often left out of the crucial concern.

In a nation where political survival has itself become a great art, it suits many politicians in power to keep the issue of insurgency alive so as to ensure continued flow of central government assistance to the state. It further provides opportunities for corruption and, of course, an explanation for the lack of development in the state. The Assam accord of 1982 and the assumption of power in the state by the very organization that spearheaded the agitation did not help solve the issue for these very reasons.<sup>12</sup> Millions of Rupees that have been pumped into J & K for development purposes have ended up in the pockets of those few at the helm of an unpopular government that has de-facto lost the confidence of its people.

A lack of accountability is also noticeable in some of the states that do not maintain adequate police forces to ensure security of their citizens but turn towards the Union Government for the deployment of central police and para military forces, or even the Army whenever a situation develops.<sup>13</sup> Although it is desired that the primacy of the police should be the main theme of LICO, it is practically impossible in India. The operational culture for the Central Police Organizations (CPOs) differs from that of the Army. The existing ethos is oriented towards constabulary duties and a considerable cultural change is required to prepare them for the LIC/COIN operations.<sup>14</sup> The list of CPOs in India with their present operational employments is given at Appendix C.

The ills and limitations of the Indian political system notwithstanding, the solution to any LIC has to be found through the political and not the military process. To that extent, the political parties and their leaders are important. While a majority of the population in the Kashmir valley are supporters of various militant groups, either by their own will or coercion, it is the ruling National Conference Party that echoes the national sentiments and openly criticizes Pakistan. Despite all allegations made against it, it was the Congress government in Punjab that stood by the security forces and mobilized public support against militancy in 1984 till 1995 bringing an ultimate termination of the insurgent movement.<sup>15</sup> The men in uniform, no matter how dedicated, intelligent or committed that they may be, would lack contact with the masses and thus have their own limitation in mobilizing their opinion or winning over them. While the lack of governance or political bickering may have been the root cause of an insurgency movement, its real conclusion can only be ensured through an effective political process.<sup>16</sup>

The Malaya model of making strategic hamlets under a military commander for effective control of population and gaining intelligence of insurgents proved very effective to curb the

insurgency in Nagaland and Mizoram. While in Mizoram, it was followed up by the political process and initiatives, it was left vague in Nagaland until some political initiatives were taken in 2000 to negotiate with the insurgent leadership for a sustained ceasefire.<sup>17</sup> Operation BAJRANG launched by the Indian Army in 1991 in Assam succeeded in apprehending most of the agitating student leaders and bringing about normality in the state within a surprisingly short time frame.<sup>18</sup> This was, however, not followed up by a genuine political process that addressed the grievances of the population and today, even after two decades, the issue continues to be in a state of unrest with no effective solution in the foreseeable future. The military commanders in India continually strive to pressurize insurgent/militant groups, create favorable conditions for establishing normality, and provide a secure environment for transition. However, it is the political leadership that has failed time and again in taking initiatives in setting the political process in motion in order to bring an effective end to the problem.

#### OPERATIONAL COMMANDER'S WORKING PARAMETERS

Though the Kargil intrusions of April/May 1999 were an extension of the ongoing proxy war in the Kashmir valley, they took the form of a conventional battle as the intruders and their locations were well known to the military units operating in the area. The political directions to the operational commander in this case were, therefore, clear and unambiguous. The intruders had to be expelled, captured, or killed without the Indian forces crossing the line of control. Nationalistic fervors were whipped up by the media and international opinion won in India's favor. With such clear-cut aims, and the whole nation backing the cause, the commander was able to achieve his objective in a short time frame, albeit suffering heavy casualties.<sup>19</sup> This is, however, not the case with the commander who fights the LIC in the Kashmir valley, NE region, or Naxal dominated areas in India. He is confronted with political hurdles and indecisions that

retard his efforts to resolve the issue. Therefore, it is an immense professional challenge for the commander to exhibit artistry in overcoming these hurdles and making firm decisions keeping the overall national interests and long-term objectives in mind.

The operational commanders in India design the overall operational plan to fight LICO in their Areas of Responsibility (AOR) with the themes and concepts as pertaining to the specific insurgency. These concepts and themes facilitate the commander in visualizing the anticipated structure of his overall campaign. Therefore the campaign design within the gambit of operational art needs to be based on the concepts of End States, operational objectives, Centers of Gravity, Lines of Operation, Decisive and Culminating Points, and Sequencing, all within a framework of maneuver, and maintenance of precise tempo of the operations.<sup>20</sup> However, in the Indian context, these concepts need to be incorporated in the design with considerable constraints of rules of engagement, resources, and political directions.

#### TENETS OF OPERATIONAL ART APPLICABLE IN THE INDIAN LICO

The first of the tenets applicable in the Indian context is the '*End State*'. In simplistic terms the desired end state for any LICO is to bring back the region to conditions of accepted levels of violence. But, is it as simple as that? What exactly does it mean? It is in fact like stating the end state of a conventional campaign as military victory over the enemy. In any contemporary LICO, "the government must have a clear political aim and an overall plan."<sup>21</sup> In spite of insurgency plaguing the growth and development in India, clear and achievable end states have never been laid down for the operational commander to date, which leaves the commander in a state of dilemma in designing his campaign plan.

The end state for Indian LICO can be visualized by understanding the relationship

between means, ways, and risk. In the Indian context, the primary means is military and the ways are by conducting relentless surgical military operations against the insurgents. The risks involved are far too many as the commanders operating in the LICO regions are expected to mount operations under the tightest political control and provide results for the political arena without collateral damage, human rights violations, incurring casualties, and also without any active cooperation from the civil administration. To worsen the case, there is no definite political solution after the conclusion of the military phase.

The problem of defining an end state gets further accentuated in a situation as existing in J & K where insurgency is only a manifestation of the proxy war being waged by Pakistan, who in the garb of moral support to so called freedom fighters, is practically indoctrinating, imparting training, inducting them into the state, providing financial support, and essentially controlling the insurgency.<sup>22</sup> Poorly defined end states and strategic objectives will drive the operational commander to utilize his sense of vision to orchestrate the campaign design. Therefore, if the Indian government anticipates eliminating the insurgency in all regions, the end state has to be clearly spelled out by the government to operational commanders through the strategic guidance with a multifaceted and well-coordinated response mechanism encompassing all elements of national power.

The next important issue is the '*Center of Gravity (COG)*'. The COG is the foundations of capability what Clausewitz called the hub of all power and movement on which everything depends, the point to which all our energies should be directed.<sup>23</sup> A thorough analysis of COG will lead the commander to correctly identify the friendly and adversary's critical capabilities and critical vulnerabilities. The essence of operational art in conventional operations lies in being able to mass effects against the enemy's sources of power in order to destroy or neutralize them

while protecting friendly critical capabilities.<sup>24</sup> In theory destruction or neutralization of the enemy's COG is the most direct path to victory.<sup>25</sup>

The identification of the enemy's COG in a conventional operation is comparatively easy. For example, in the 1971 Indo- Pakistan war, the fall of Dacca resulted in the surrender of all Pakistani forces in East Pakistan and, in turn, resulted in an Indian victory.<sup>26</sup> It is imperative that an operational commander in LICO too identifies the COG of the militant / insurgent groups so that all his efforts can be directed at attacking or neutralizing them. Identification of the COG in simple counter insurgency campaigns such as those conducted in Brunei (1962 -1966), Dhofar (1970-75), or Punjab (1984) was relatively easy. It was correctly identified as the hearts and minds of the people as in any contemporary insurgencies. In complex scenarios in the Indian context such as J & K, Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, and the Naxal regions, the insurgent's vulnerability is hard to identify and even harder to attack.<sup>27</sup> In the scenario as existing in J & K today, while hearts and minds of the people is indeed very important, addressing the vulnerabilities of Pakistan, the sponsoring state, is equally important. Militant training camps across the borders could also be identified as a COG at some points of the campaign. Also, from another perspective, it could be the militant leadership - such as that of Lasker-e-Toiba or Jaish-e- Mohammad, the main insurgent groups in J & K. Similarly, in Assam where the main causes of the unrest are cessation and ethnic rivalries, it would certainly be difficult to identify the insurgent's COG. In such complicated scenarios more than one COG may exist. The correct identification of the opponent's COG is, therefore, a continuous process and the key to campaign design in LICO.<sup>28</sup> This needs to be understood and incorporated in the overall design of the campaign.

In effect there are multiple, diversified, and transitory COGs of the insurgency in India.

Thus, identification of the correct COG requires detailed knowledge and understanding the origin, progress, and the current state of insurgency of the concerned region. The local and external support to the movement as in J & K, real or perceived grievances of the people as in the Naxal insurgency, and the soft spots in the militant organization including their physical and psychological strengths and weaknesses as in the NE states of Assam and Nagaland may have to be analyzed to identify the precise COG. From the military point of view, the COG for J & K at present can be identified as safe bases of insurgents in Pakistan occupied Kashmir or the insurgent leadership. From the perspective of NE states the COG remains the insurgent leadership, and in the Naxal areas the COG would be integrating the population to the mainstream India with comprehensive economic reforms and development of the area.

It is equally important to identify friendly COG so as to protect it effectively from insurgent strikes. Salang Highway was the major supply route of the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Mujahideen strikes on this long and vulnerable line of communication cost the Soviets dearly and paved the way for their ultimate withdrawal. Similarly, the road Jammu-Srinagar-Leh, on which the bulk of the Indian troops deployed in J & K depend, and the single road and rail link to the NE states are indeed critical vulnerabilities from the Indian perspective. As part of the campaign design, these need to be protected as they serve as the lifeline for sustenance of the security components operating in the regions. Similarly the railroads in central and Southern India are critical vulnerabilities for the security forces as well as civilian traffic. The oil pipeline from Digboi in Assam to mainland India through the narrow Siliguri corridor is also a strategic COG for NE. Therefore, the operational commander has to identify and factor friendly COGs in his overall campaign design.

As stated earlier, LICO are bound to be lengthy and the insurgent organizations may have

multiple COGs, which too may change during the course of the campaign. The diversity of the COG in the Indian insurgencies could range from people to insurgency leadership, developmental projects, infrastructure development, the funding, and the sponsor state. The commander's artistry, experience, and vision are required to correctly identify the insurgent group's COG within the framework of strategic guidance and desired end state. This demands diligence, patience, planning, design, and flexibility. Correct appreciation and identification of the COG will ease the process of campaign design for the commanders.

The *operational objectives* are the goals that need to be achieved in order to reach the desired end state through attacks on the COG.<sup>29</sup> During LICO, operational objectives could be tangible or intangible. While the militarily achievable operational objectives could be tangible, other objectives to be achieved through economic or political domain could be intangible for a military commander. Thus, the commander needs to set realistic operational goals for his campaign while other issues could be left for the peripheral agencies to deal with.<sup>30</sup> Each operational objective is achieved through a line of operation, and this in turn leads to the COG. The commander's efficiency in addressing these operational objectives will enable him to achieve the end state. The operational objective in the Indian context depends on the area of operation, nature of the insurgency, and the modus operandi of the insurgents. These factors are analyzed in greater detail by the operational commander to select the operational objectives. In the Indian context, these could be preventing the guerillas from subversive acts; selectively eliminating the insurgent leadership, creating favorable conditions for political negotiations, integrating the insurgents into the mainstream or to winning the hearts and minds of the population of the area.

Once the operational objectives and lines of operation are identified, the commander

needs to decide what sequence he will use to eliminate the adversary's COG.<sup>31</sup> '*Sequencing*' does not necessarily imply watertight separation of various events. There would certainly be periods of overlap with simultaneous progress of events for sequencing. Sequencing in the Indian context will start with understanding the nature, cause, external support, modus operandi, and legitimacy of the insurgent movement. Once that is established, militarily achievable operational objectives are set forth ultimately aiming at breaking the insurgent's will to conduct coherent subversive activities or guerrilla operations against the state and security forces. On successful elimination of the group's COG, the sequencing transitions to the political stage favorable to the government ultimately restoring the legitimacy of the elected government. The above model was highly effective in Punjab and Mizoram where military operations destroyed the insurgent group's COG forcing them to settle for an amicable political solution favorable to the political leadership. The same is required to be implemented with greater vigor in other insurgency affected regions too.

The next important tenet applicable in the Indian LICO is '*Decisive Points*'. Decisive points are one such element first postulated by Jomini who envisioned them as "points capable of exercising a marked influence either upon the result of the campaign or upon a single enterprise."<sup>32</sup> In LICO this postulates to a series of tactical actions aimed at pulverizing the insurgent's COG which would ultimately force the group to either abandon the insurgency or surrender the initiative to the security forces. In a LICO scenario, this would involve military aspects such as the lines of communication, terrain features, as well as relevant non-military aspects such as economy and welfare.<sup>33</sup>

The operational commander in India needs to set definite decisive points depending upon the stage of insurgency. While the commander may employ controlled military force to

neutralize a military hideout or camp, he would have to apply his administrative and persuasive skills while dealing with humanitarian, political and other issues, which are equally important in LICO. In the Indian context, during the short tenures of operational commanders in LICO, it may not be possible for a commander who designs the campaign to see it to its conclusion of neutralizing the adversary's COG. In India, the common practice remains that every new incumbent sets his goals, often deviating from the overall aim of attaining the required decisive points. This diminishes the strategic/operational goals accomplished by the previous commander. Therefore, it is imperative that every commander during his tenure should identify attainable decisive points in consonance with the framework of the overall campaign design so as to ensure continuity and consistency of the campaign. While mid-course corrections necessitated by changed conditions would be necessary, nothing could be more damaging than departing from the overall campaign design for personal glorification.

The next important tenet as applicable in the Indian context is the '*Culminating Point*'. The campaign reaches the culminating point when the military operations have either achieved the military goal associated with the campaign or have expended their complete resources without much success. The latter is near nonexistent in the Indian context as military resources available for the commander are adequate, if not sufficient. In the former case, insurgents are likely to regroup and counter attack both militarily and politically. However, as experienced in the Indian LICO, this counter attack is often more political rather than military in nature. For example, the neutralization of militants in Punjab was followed up by the Punjab Accord and the revival of a political process in the state, which ensured people's participation in the affairs of the state with improved confidence of the people in the government machinery, resulting in a successful campaign.<sup>34</sup> On the contrary, LICO in Assam can be described as one of the lost

opportunities where the final counter stroke by the government has been halfhearted and ineffective. Operation BAJRANG by the Indian Army culminated in the apprehension of most United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) cadres and the signing of the Assam Accord.<sup>35</sup> However, lack of sincerity on the part of the state government in power and non-implementation of the provisions of the Accord have resulted in the resurgence of insurgency with enhanced political and military strategy. Therefore, in India, commanders are able to create conditions for a final counter stroke, but it is often beyond them to achieve the culminating point of insurgency without adequate political back-up, which has been a recurring theme.

Challenges in a proxy war scenario to attain the culminating point may be different and complicated. The close proximity of a sponsoring state may force the commander to extend the culminating point of the insurgency. 'Kargil' is an apt example. The period of 1997-98 saw normality returning to the Kashmir Valley, militant groups losing their writ over the population, and the movement itself nearing its culminating point.<sup>36</sup> The whole process was thrown back in time and militancy re-introduced in the valley with renewed vigor following the Kargil intrusion with increased 'fidayeen' attacks on security force's camps that hitherto were considered safe. With no dearth of young fanatic Mujahideens who were willing to wage a crusade for an unknown cause, Pakistan had little difficulty in extending the culminating point of the militancy in the valley--at least militarily. Thus, the final counter attack in this case too may have to be political and diplomatic, which the Indian government is unable to achieve to date.

Dynamic *maneuver* as a tenet in LICO cannot be overemphasized. Being dynamic does not necessarily imply frequent physical movement or change of the operational bases.

Dynamism lies in the minds of commanders at all levels. They should always be thinking of fresh ways and means of dealing with the insurgency. Dynamism also implies flexibility of mind

and an ability to deal with the insurgent groups through the entire spectrum of such warfare.<sup>37</sup>

Dynamism also implies a certain degree of unpredictability and avoiding a set pattern of conduct of operations at both tactical and operational levels.

The physical terrain configurations in various regions of India where LICO are underway are served with poor lines of communications and do not permit cross-country maneuver, thus restricting the commander's ability to exploit this important aspect of dynamic maneuver. The commander in LICO thus must consider the employment of maneuver not only in terms of physical action to change the situation but more fundamentally as a particular mindset.<sup>38</sup> The maneuver in LICO in India is applicable at the tactical level to outmaneuver the militants both in physical and mental terrain. The human terrain which provides essential facilities for survival and sustenance of the insurgency is also integrated into the overall tactical plan. Therefore, while the tactical commanders in India are expected to devise suitable actions to isolate and destroy the insurgents, this aspect is missing at the operational level.

The *tempo* of the operation is an integral part of the maneuver. "In LICO, it is maintaining the right tempo rather than a high tempo that is important."<sup>39</sup> Most LICO require time and patience for success. Therefore, deliberate planning is the key to success in LICO.

Presently, the insurgency-affected areas of J & K and the NE regions are saturated with security forces and, despite the high tempo of operations for nearly two decades, the situations are far from being brought under control. While a section of the population in J & K has always been sympathetic to the insurgent's cause, a good proportion of people have been alienated by the excessive tempo of military operations. Being a long drawn war in all regions of insurgency, it is frustrating for the security forces to continue to maintain a high tempo of operations without

much progress towards the desired end state.<sup>40</sup> It would rather be more desirable to address all operational objectives in the particular region through various means at the disposal of an operational commander while maintaining an appropriate tempo of military operations. While in some situations like in the Punjab insurgency, the commander sought to maintain an operational tempo that stretched the capabilities of friendly forces as well as those of the insurgents, on other occasions as prevalent in the NE states, the commanders elected to conduct operations at a reduced pace to allow political or other processes to shape the environment.<sup>41</sup>

*Terrain* as a tenet is most significant in the Indian context. The regions of insurgency are predominantly mountainous with tropical thick forests and, most importantly close to the international border with neighboring countries. These conditions provide ideal environments for the insurgent groups to thrive. From the operational art perspective, these deny adequate maneuver space to the security forces to conduct surgical operations without artillery or air support. This enjoins into the operational risk assessment of the commander and his intended line of operation. Thus, a comprehensive and systematic plan for deployment and designation of AOR for the security forces incorporating the terrain factor is equally crucial in the Indian context. This enables the tactical commander to out-maneuver the insurgents and gain both tactical and operational advantage of the terrain.

Having designed the operation, the commander in a LICO is faced with further challenges that stretches his ability to apply these tenets of operational art.<sup>42</sup> It is therefore imperative that subordinate commanders understand and are convinced by the commander's vision of the battle and the manner in which he expects to conduct the tactical operations against the insurgent organizations.

The tactical commanders remain the main thrust of the operational commander to orchestrate his vision into reality. The tactical commanders in India assume much of the responsibilities to conduct all tasks meticulously as per the guidelines issued by the operational commander. In the Indian LICO, tactical commanders have to gain and maintain the initiative through tactical tasks independently, which may not always be military in nature. As in the case of an operational commander, a commander at the tactical level, too, is required to operate on a wide spectrum that involves both military and non-military objectives, necessitating the understanding of operational art.<sup>43</sup> Hence, the tactical commanders equally should comprehend the overarching facets of operational art within the overall grand strategy for LICO.

All these tenets correctly identified during the design and applied synergistically can achieve the desired end state as required at the strategic level in India. However, the most important aspect of these tenets is in the conduct of operations. Conduct of operations is complex, multidimensional, and time consuming owing to the nature of LICO in various regions in India. Although there could be more tenets applicable, the main aspects given out are of relatively more significance in the Indian LICO scenario.

#### CONDUCT OF OPERATIONS IN LICO AND LINES OF EFFORT MATRIX

After identifying and incorporating the tenets in the campaign design, the next challenge is the optimal application of the operational art to achieve the desired politico-military end state. The application requires the commander's diligence, experience, tact, and time. Thus, these tenets have to be channeled into definite lines of effort.

While conducting operations, the facets of LICO are of paramount importance for the operational commander. While trying to bring an end to LICO, the operational commander is

bound to look into the aspects of intelligence, flexibility, synergy, laws and rules of engagement, psychological operations, and media operations in greater detail. However, the larger challenge is to identify the lines of effort to execute the operations to precision. The lines of effort are articulated to mitigate the actions by the insurgent/terrorist groups and establish legitimacy of the government. Thus, lines of effort are intended as a counter strategy to the insurgent's anticipated actions and strategy.

Lines of effort for an operational commander in India are the direct derivative of the insurgent/militant tactics of garnering support and sustaining the legitimacy of the insurgent movement. These tactics involve the mode of mobilizing the local populace by the insurgent organization, the violent and non-violent means used, and finally their strategy of garnering allies in the domestic and the international circuit.<sup>44</sup> The operational commander in LICO thus plans his actions after going into details of the organization using the operational art construct.

The modus operandi of the insurgents to mobilize the general mass in India hinges upon a variety of factors. The agenda ranges from religious belief in J & K to lawlessness, failure of government, and cessation movements in the NE states. The same template is not true for the Naxal insurgency, whose root cause lies in the tribal identity not in conformity with the mainland India. Thus, the operational commander is faced with multidimensional situations and agendas to deal in different regions. The strategic and political end state might focus on bringing back the normality to the states, but the operational and the military end state in these situations would primarily focus on identifying the critical factors facilitating the mobilization of the general populace supporting the movement.<sup>45</sup> Hence, the first line of effort for an operational commander is to design a comprehensive plan to bring an end to the mobilization of population towards the insurgent movement in the AOR. The security forces in India have achieved relative

success in halting the mobilization of population and inducing surrender of insurgents through military aided programs and raising local COIN battalions. However, a more circumspect and integrated approach is required in all regions to reach a state of zero mobilization.

The next facet is inventing the means to mitigate the violent actions of the insurgent groups. To overcome the challenges posed by disruptive non-state actors in violent domain to terrorize non sympathetic population, the security forces, and the political leadership, the operational commander evaluates the violent methods employed by the militant organizations. The terror has become the prime strategy for insurgency in India and insurgents are striking at every possible location to create cascading effects on the political and military circles.<sup>46</sup> The operational and tactical use of violence as an insurgent strategy has become increasingly commonplace, especially the use of terrorism. The Indian insurgent groups are using this method quite effectively, often accompanied by few non-violent means.<sup>47</sup> Dealing with this type of terrorist actions continues to be a critical failure at the politico-military level. Thus, methods adopted to counter this insurgent strategy will be a line of effort for the operational commander. In the Indian context, securing the lines of communication and negating the violent impact of insurgent actions on the population and the security forces by adequate security measures is the available approach to achieve success on this line of effort.

To counter the non-violent means of influencing the population and the region by the insurgents, the operational commanders in India are actively involved in identifying the over ground (OG) workers including the sympathetic population and the media who are the prime tools to spread and sustain the insurgency. Thus, counter media operations, counter propaganda, and psychological operations all within the gambit of information operations become the other line of effort for the commander. The Indian Army and other security forces have achieved

limited success in conducting effective information operations to maintain the legitimacy of the government and discredit the insurgents. The plan worked effectively in Punjab and Mizoram, and is garnering momentum in J & K and other NE states. However, this line of effort needs to be followed with vigorous intent to wean away the support for the insurgency.

The criminal-political-insurgent nexus is a live issue and calls for an understanding of the nuanced realities in Kashmir where LICO for some is now an industry, a means to coerce the system with the threat of resurgence of violence.<sup>48</sup> Hence, the next important facet is to prevent the insurgent group from garnering a nexus or coalition with any criminal or terrorist organization both domestically and internationally. This would effectively seal the group to gain allies for the cause and isolate them from the general population. The insurgent groups in J & K have a strong nexus with other Muslim fundamentalist groups operating in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Middle East. Likewise, the groups in the North East have a strong nexus with other organizations active in South East Asia. The operational commanders thus have to develop a line of effort to identify the criminal and insurgent organizations likely to collaborate with each other to carry out collective subversive activities against the population or the security forces. While the nexus with domestic groups can be monitored and nullified by strong civil-military cooperation, the Government of India is expected to deal diplomatically in bilateral and multilateral forums to isolate the Indian insurgent groups from their international support bases. This line of effort could hinge on selective elimination of fund raisers, the mediators, and criminal or insurgent leaders.

The above lines of effort are directly linked to the operational commander's ability to collect, collate, and disseminate accurate intelligence. The intelligence mechanism in India is in a chaotic situation. Although both civil and military intelligence agencies are operating in a

particular region, there is negligible or no coordination within the branches. This has created an intelligence void for the operational commander. For example, all government intelligence agencies had a forewarning of the planning of the 26 November 2008 Mumbai attack. However, due to non-coordination and non-sharing, the intelligence was never corroborated. The country had to pay the ultimate price for the error. Effective intelligence operations will ensure intelligence penetration of the insurgent or terrorist groups to systematically neutralize their leadership, which could be the COG in some cases such as in J & K and NE states. Thus, collection of effective intelligence in support of the campaign will form the next line of effort for the operational commander.

In LICO, the local population remains critical to the success of the campaign. The majority neutral population must be tilted in favor of the security forces to achieve the legitimacy of the government actions. The Indian Army in particular has achieved this aspect through Operation Sadbhavana in J & K and Operation Samaritan in the NE region. The campaign design encompassing the projects of winning hearts and minds of the local population have been a great success. The latest strategy in this block is the use of 'heart as my weapon' which literally means to win the goodwill of the population by a series of operational measures to discredit the insurgents; this has been a resounding success in J & K.<sup>49</sup> The misguided youth of the valley are now willing to return to the main fold as a result of this initiative. However, it is yet to be tried in the NE and Naxal regions.

The responsibility of garnering popular support is the collective responsibility of every person operating in the geographical area. A small isolated erroneous action can prove disastrous for the commander and alienate the population from the security forces. In India, frequent use of excessive force, retaliation to militant attacks that has resulted in civilian casualties and collateral

damage, and incidents of immoral behavior with the local population, whether committed or framed, has invited adverse media coverage. This has alienated the local population from the security forces and the government. There have been instances of committed and framed charges against security forces personnel, and these cases do not augur well for achieving the desired goal. In India, “the security forces continue to operate under a “No Win” situation and no commander expects a quick end result with excessive use of force.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, the next line of effort for the commander is to devise effective means to gain support of the local populace in support for the military and the government.

The next important line of effort is positive media campaign as part of the information operation, considered a force multiplier. The integration of all possible media to the lines of effort facilitates in measuring the effectiveness of the campaign. “With people as COG in most cases, the media connects them to the security forces and the government at one end and the insurgents at the other through its medium.”<sup>51</sup> Hence, the role of media in shaping indigenous and international opinion must be understood, appreciated, and exploited by the operational commander to his advantage in LICO in India.

The last but most another important line of effort is synergy, not only between various elements of the security forces deployed but also with the civil administration and intelligence agencies, which is the key to achieving the operational objectives. Presently, there is no or negligible synergy between the Army, CPOs, and the civil administration. This has created a lot of disorder as the efforts are not united and lack cohesion. Various attempts by the Indian Army have failed to accomplish any definite result. Therefore, political intervention and nomination of the lead agency is required to attain synergy, unity of effort, and unity of command. The synergy between all agencies will enable the operational commander to exploit all elements of national

power in furtherance of the strategic end state.

All these lines of effort primarily focus on achieving the operational objectives for the commander, which is in sync with the strategic objective and the end state. Therefore, the tenets of the operational art correctly identified and synergistically applied through clearly defined lines of effort can reach the desired end state as anticipated for the LICO in India.

## CONCLUSION

In centuries of warfare, operational art has been linked intrinsically to conventional warfare only and no comprehensive doctrine has evolved for its application in LICO.<sup>52</sup> The design, command and conduct of LICO is not only different from the conventional operations but is also much more complicated. It, therefore, demands the best in a commander's ability to translate strategic objectives into operational and tactical actions, which is the key to its success.<sup>53</sup>

The operational art usefully integrated into a LICO campaign in India would make the security forces proactive rather than reactive. The military commanders in India would rarely receive clear political objectives and this would continue to be the pattern in the future as well.<sup>54</sup> In spite of lack of a clear political aim, operational art will ensure due synchronization of political and military strategy and would enable the operational commander to set a definitive goal that produces a plan to accomplish the desired end state.<sup>55</sup>

The future insurgent will be better informed, armed with more lethal weapons and communications, and have greater operational and strategic reach. All these will take place when security forces are increasingly restrained in their operations due to international humanitarian and human rights laws. However, the state must define a sustainable approach in terms of

human and fiscal cost for the military commander to translate.<sup>56</sup> The operational commanders in LICO in India in the years ahead would, therefore, employ military force to attain strategic and operational objectives through the design, organization, integration, and conduct of campaigns and major operational and tactical battles.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, the operational art is a great tool for thorough and effective planning of operations in LICO in India. The success of the campaign will largely depend on the ingenuity of the operational commander to master this art to orchestrate his LICO campaign in order to achieve the desired result encompassing all elements of national power. The thorough and deep understanding of the tenets of operational art as applicable to LICO in the Indian context will complement the multipronged approach undertaken jointly by the Indian government and security forces to curb the spread of the insurgency. This would in turn assist in improving the overall security situation in the country, which would not be possible by employing a narrowly focused approach relying solely on political or military means towards countering the insurgency.

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## **Endnotes**

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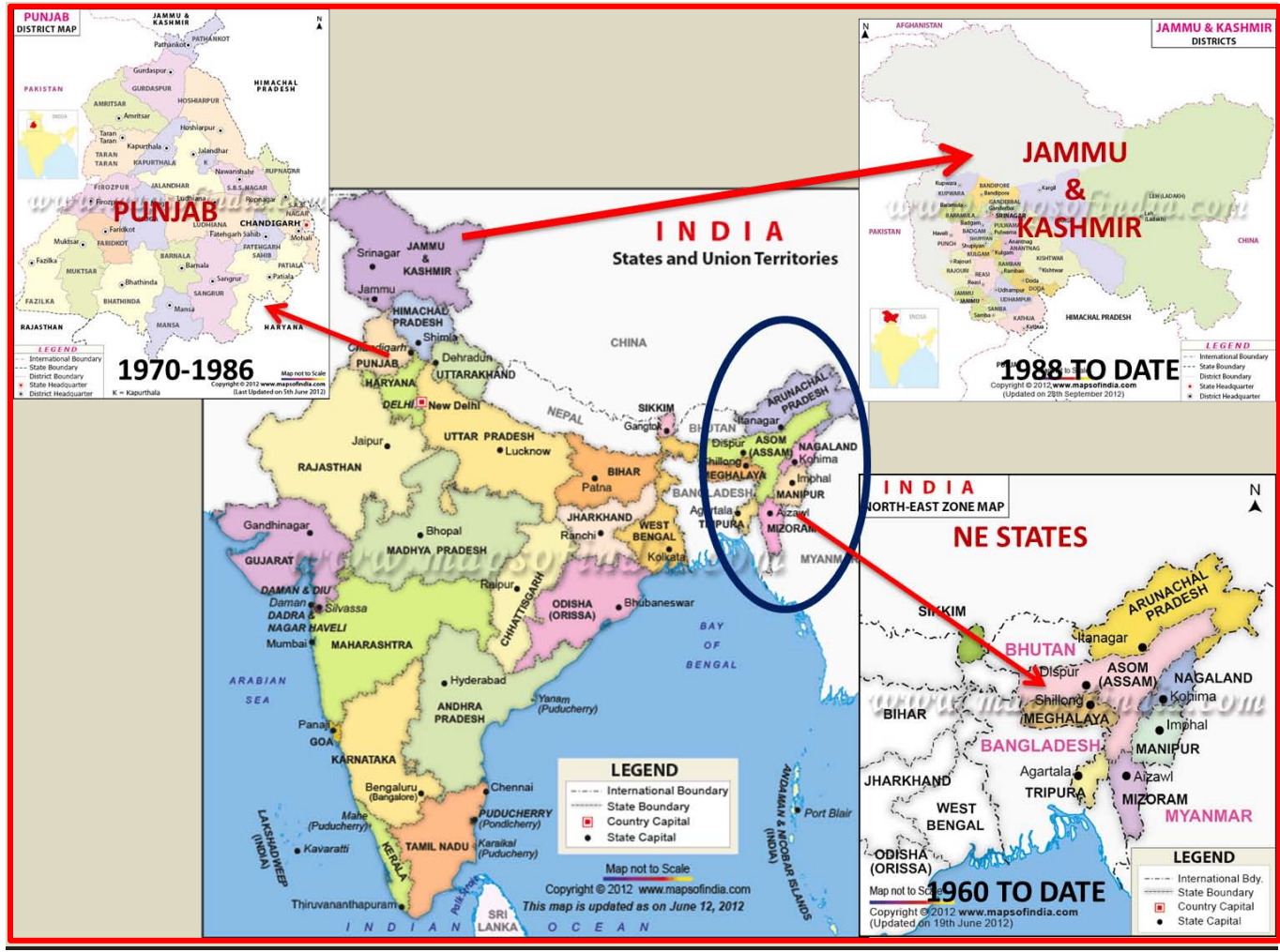
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### Appendix A

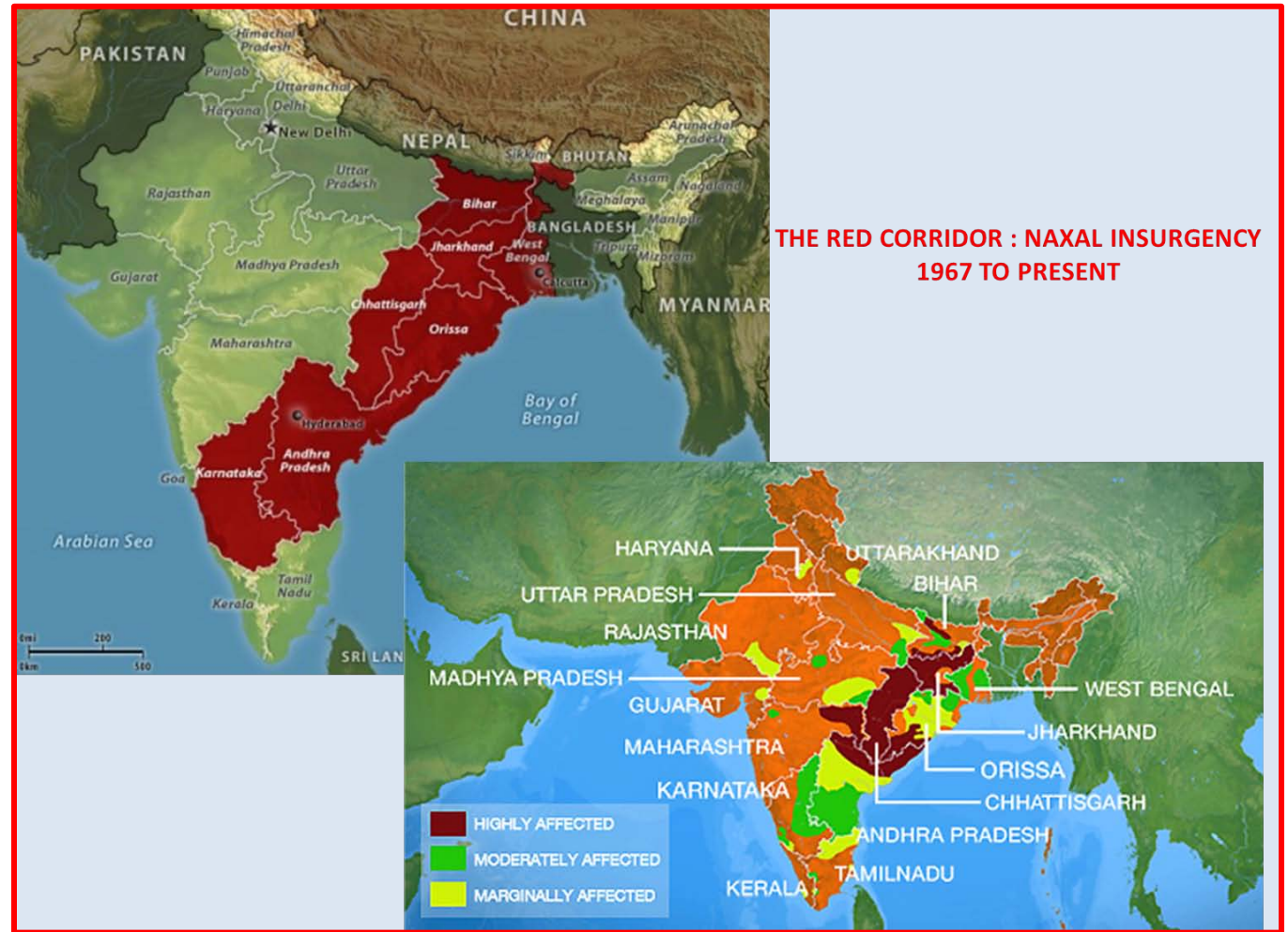
## AREAS OF INSURGENCY IN INDIA: J&K, NE STATES, AND PUNJAB



Source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com/>

Appendix B

AREAS OF NAXAL/MAOIST INSURGENCY IN INDIA



Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red\\_corridor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_corridor)

## Appendix C

### ORGANIZATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF CPOs IN INDIA

There are six Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) namely Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and National Security Guards (NSG) and one Central Paramilitary Force (CPMF) i.e. Assam Rifles (AR) under the Ministry of Home Affairs. AR, BSF, ITBP and SSB are the 'Border Guarding Forces' while CRPF assists the State Governments/UT Administrations in matters related to maintenance of Public Order and is also trained and equipped for assisting them in internal security/counter insurgency duties. The Rapid Action Force (RAF) and Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) are specialized wings of the CRPF to deal with riots and left wing extremism respectively. CISF provides security and protection to vital installations, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), airports, industrial buildings, museums, Government buildings, etc. NSG is a specialized force for counterterrorism and anti-hijacking operations. It is also entrusted with the task of securing high risk VIPs.

Source: Annual Report for the year 2012 of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.