



## Left-Wing Extremism

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This article is based on “**Lessons from Tekulguda**” which was published in The Indian Express on 08/04/2021. It talks about the challenges posed by left-wing extremism (LWE).

Recently, a combing operation in the Tekulguda region of Bastar, Chhattisgarh went terribly wrong and resulted in the death of 22 security personnel and many more wounded.

This tragic incident is a major setback to India’s internal security (IS) capability at many levels and highlights the challenge that **left-wing extremism (LWE)** continues to pose.

India has been dealing with three variants of the Internal Security (IS) challenge for decades and each has its own complexities viz. a proxy war and terrorism in Kashmir, sub-national separatist movements in the Northeast, and the Naxal-Maoist insurgency (aka LWE) in the Red Corridor.

The government has reasonably contained the first two challenges, but the Tekulguda incidents reflect that still, a lot needs to be done for eliminating LWE.

### **Note: Combing Operations**

- Combing operations are the joint operations done by allies or multi security agencies for cleansing an area. Example Army and Paramilitary doing combing operations in a particular region.
- It could be undertaken either to search for hiding insurgents or their arms cache.
- It is a deliberately planned operation and there are drills laid out for these operations.
- However, it has tremendous risk, as at any stage from anywhere, someone hidden and cornered, may fire at you and try to get away.
- The operations can be hampered by locals supporting the insurgents by blocking the movements of the Security Forces. The task becomes all the more difficult.

### **LWE: Background**

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- **Genesis of LWE:** LWE has its genesis in poor governance, lack of development in the tribal belt, and an oppressive/exploitative hierarchy of the state and society that has pushed the tribal population, the landless, to the margins of survival.
  - Making a beginning in Naxalbari in West Bengal and Telangana region in Andhra Pradesh in the 1970s, the movement has since spread to many states: Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Orissa.
  - This region, affected by LWE, is referred to as the **Red corridor**.
- **Associated LWE Groups:** The most prominent among the groups that have mushroomed in recent years are the People's War Group (PWG) and the Marxist Communist Centre (MCC).
- **Most Serious Threat:** In November 2005, then PM Manmohan Singh described the LWE challenge as the most serious security threat to India and exhorted the professionals to evolve appropriate responses.

## Issues Related to Dealing With LWE

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- **Leadership Issue:** In the current scenario, barring a few exceptions, many of the senior police officers (IPS cadre) who are parachuted into the central police forces at senior ranks have little or no platoon/battalion experience.
  - By training, the police officer is expected to be a competent Superintendent and to maintain law and order.
  - This is not the skill-set that is relevant when an officer has to “command” and lead his men into insurgency operations.
  - This led to armed personnel casualties. In the last three decades, around 15000 people have lost their lives owing to LWE.
- **Recruiting Tribal Youths:** It is not ideology and revolutionary zeal that is driving people who are engaged in LWE. Their main activity is extortion. For many, joining these groups is the only way to survive.
  - Further, these organizations hire vulnerable people who have low literacy levels, unemployed or low income, particularly the tribals, building up their cadre.
  - This creates a positive feedback loop of recruitment of youth into LWE.
- **Threatening Democracy:** They resort to violence through their guerrilla tactics and attempt to set up their own government in the local villages.
  - They threaten the locals before the conduct of elections and prevent them from voting. This violates the principle of participative democracy.

## Way Forward

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- **Progressive Works:** Effective steps to reduce ethnic and social inequalities, disparities in educational and employment opportunities, and for creating effective machinery for the redressal of public grievance, are absolutely essential to improve the environment in which extremist violence flourishes.
  - Steps to reduce economic deprivation and improve the delivery of essential services can erode the base of public support on which the extremist movements survive.
- **Para-Military Reforms:** The Kargil Review Committee (KRC) report noted that in wake of Internal security challenges that the country faces, the role and the tasks of the paramilitary forces have to be restructured particularly with reference to command and control and leadership functions.
- **Cooperative Federalism:** Given the complexities involved in India's national-security architecture, it is crucial to improve coordination between various federal and state security agencies.
- **Modernizing Police:** States play a vital role in maintaining law and order. So, emphasis should be laid on the capacity-building and modernization of the local police forces. Local forces can efficiently and effectively neutralize the LWE organizations.
- **Marginalization of LWE Groups:** States also need to adopt a focused time-bound approach to completely eliminate LWE groups and ensure all-around development of the affected regions.
  - States should rationalize their surrender policy in order to bring innocent individuals caught in the trap of LWE into the mainstream.
  - Apart from this, the Government needs to ensure two things; the security of the peace-loving people and the development of the Naxalism-affected regions.

### **Note: SAMADHAN policy**

The Government of India in 2017 announced a new doctrine, SAMADHAN. The doctrine was announced during the Review Meeting of Left Wing Extremism affected States

- S- Smart Leadership,
- A- Aggressive Strategy,
- M- Motivation and Training,
- A- Actionable Intelligence,
- D- Dashboard Based KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and KRAs (Key Result Areas),
- H- Harnessing Technology,
- A- Action plan for each Theatre, and
- N- No access to Financing.

### **Conclusion**

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The government has envisaged SAMADHAN policy to deal with the LWE. If implemented effectively, this doctrine can act as the one-stop solution for the LWE problem, as it encompasses the entire strategy of government from short-term policy to long-term policy formulated at different levels.

***Drishti Mains Question***

Frequent death of armed personnel in anti-insurgency operations highlights the setback to India's internal security (IS) capability at many levels and the challenge that left-wing extremism (LWE) continues to pose. Discuss.