



Unmasking Left Wing Extremism in India

This editorial is based on "[Grass-root democracy as a bulwark against Maoists](#)" which was published in The Hindu on 19/12/2023. The article argues that PESA, if implemented properly, can enable the tribal people to participate in the planning and implementation of development schemes and social justice, and also protect their rights and resources.

For Prelims: [Left-wing extremism](#), [Schedule Five](#), [Central Armed Police Force \(CAPF\)](#), [Central Reserve Police Force](#), [Border Security Force \(BSF\)](#), [Indo-Tibetan Border Police \(ITBP\)](#), [Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana \(PMGSY\)](#), [Van Dhan Vikas Kendras](#), [Panchayats \(Extension to Scheduled Areas\) Act, 1996 \(PESA\)](#)

For Mains: Left Wing Extremism, Reasons behind LWE, Steps taken by the Government and their Impact, Way Forward

Chhattisgarh's Assembly elections recently ended, with a key focus on tribal votes. Political parties strategically factored in the significant tribal population, comprising 34% of the state's total votes, as winning their support often determines the government formation in the region.

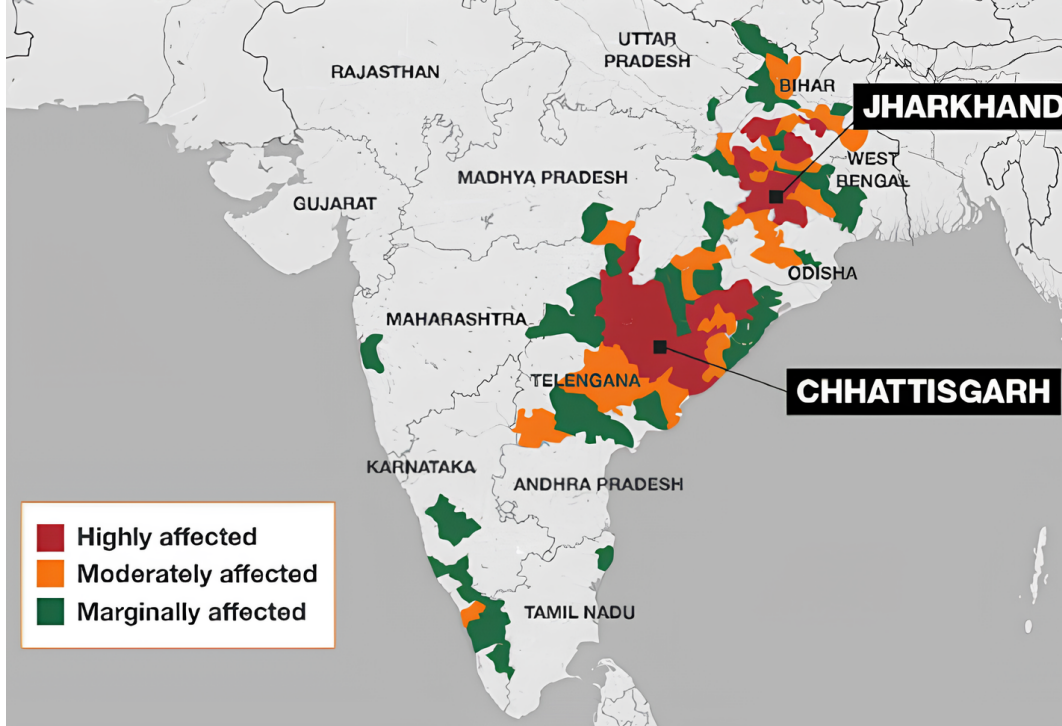
The tribal regions of Chhattisgarh, particularly in Bastar, are currently grappling with Maoist insurgency, with tribals serving as the primary base for the movement. Elections in these Maoist strongholds, classified as [Schedule Five](#) areas, have consistently been marred by violence, often exacerbated by boycott calls from the Maoists. This year's elections followed a similar pattern, reflecting the ongoing challenges posed by the Maoist insurgency in these regions.

What is Left Wing Extremism?

- **About:**
 - [Left-wing extremism](#), also known as left-wing terrorism or radical left-wing movements, refers to political ideologies and groups that advocate for significant **societal and political change through revolutionary means**.
 - LWE groups may target **government institutions, law enforcement agencies**, or private property to further their agenda.
 - The LWE movement in India originated in a **1967 uprising in Naxalbari, West Bengal**.
- **Presence of LWE in India:** According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, 90 districts in 10 states are affected by LWE, although in varying degrees.
 - The states are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana and West Bengal.
 - The most affected states are Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Bihar, where the LWE groups have a strong presence and carry out frequent attacks on security forces and civilians.

A map of India's Maoist conflict

A crackdown on Maoist rebels has led to a rise in the number of casualties in the country's tribal areas. Here are the regions that are most affected.



What are the Reasons behind Left Wing Extremism?

- **Inequitable Development:** Many of the **LWE-affected areas are among the least developed regions** of the country, with high levels of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, malnutrition, and social exclusion.
 - The LWE groups exploit the grievances of the marginalized sections of the society, especially the tribals, who have been deprived of their land, forest, and mineral rights by the state and private actors.
- **Governance Deficit:** The LWE-affected areas **suffer from a lack of effective governance, administration, and service delivery**. The state institutions are often weak, corrupt, or absent, leaving a vacuum that is filled by the LWE groups.
 - The LWE groups also use violence and intimidation to disrupt the democratic processes, such as elections, panchayats, and development schemes.
- **Ideological Appeal:** The LWE groups claim to represent the interests of the oppressed and exploited classes, and propagate a radical ideology that rejects parliamentary democracy and advocates armed revolution.
 - They draw **inspiration from the teachings of Mao Zedong**, the Chinese communist leader, and the Naxalbari uprising of 1967, which was led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist).
 - Some of the LWE groups also have links with other extremist and separatist movements in India and abroad.
- **Globalization and Cultural Displacement:** The impacts of globalization, including cultural changes and displacement, can contribute to a sense of dislocation and alienation.
 - Left-wing extremist movements may offer a sense of identity and purpose to individuals who feel marginalized by these global forces.

What Steps have been taken by the Government?

- **Security Measures:**
 - **Deployment of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs):** The government has deployed **CAPFs** like **CRPF**, **BSE**, and **ITBP** in LWE-affected areas to conduct counter-

insurgency operations and strengthen police presence.

- **Strengthening State Police:** The government provides financial and logistical support to states for modernizing their police forces, improving intelligence gathering, and training personnel in counter-insurgency tactics.
- **Establishment of specialized units:** Specialized units like Cobra Commandos and [Greyhounds](#) have been created to carry out targeted operations against Naxalite leaders and camps.

▪ **Development Initiatives:**

- **Integrated Development Projects:** The government has launched various schemes like the **Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP)** and [Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana \(PMGSY\)](#) to improve infrastructure, provide livelihood opportunities, and address basic needs like education and healthcare in LWE-affected areas.
- **Skill development programs:** The government provides skill development training to youth in LWE-affected areas to make them employable and reduce their vulnerability to Naxalite recruitment.
- **Promotion of sustainable livelihoods:** Schemes like [Van Dhan Vikas Kendras](#) and MGNREGA aim to create sustainable livelihood opportunities for tribal communities through forest-based activities and rural employment programs.

▪ **Ensuring Rights and Entitlements:**

- **Land rights:** The government is taking steps to address the issue of land alienation faced by tribal communities, which is a major cause of Naxalite grievances.
- **Forest rights:** The Forest Rights Act, 2006, recognizes the traditional rights of tribal communities over forest resources and aims to empower them through community forest management.
- **Grievance redressal mechanisms:** The government has established grievance redressal mechanisms to address the concerns of local communities and ensure that their rights are protected.

▪ **Other Measures:**

- **Civic Action Program (CAP):** Financial grants are allocated to Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) to undertake various Civic Action Programs in LWE affected areas.
- **Surrender and Rehabilitation Policy:** Rehabilitation package includes an immediate grant of Rs. 2.5 lakh for higher ranked LWE cadres and Rs. 1.5 lakh for middle/lower rank LWE cadres to be kept in their names as Fixed deposit which may be withdrawn after completion of 3 years subject to good behaviour.
 - They are also imparted training in a trade / vocation of their liking and paid a monthly stipend of Rs. 4000 for three years.
- **SAMADHAN Doctrine:** The solution to the LWE problem is not possible with any silver bullet. For this short term, medium term and long-term policies need to be formulated at different levels. Thus 'SAMADHAN' stands for:
 - 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
 - N – No access to Financing
- **SMART Police:** SMART Police is an acronym for **S**trategic **M**anagement & **A**lternative **R**esponse **T**actics, which refers to the application of data-driven approaches by police authorities.
 - SMART Police aims to improve the quality and efficiency of policing by using various sources of data, such as crime statistics, citizen feedback, social media, etc., to inform decision making and resource allocation.
 - SMART Police also includes alternatives to police dispatch, such as online reports, telephone reporting units, and false alarm reduction.

What has been the Impact of these Measures so far?

- The last eight years have seen a significant decline in left-wing extremism violence as well as the geographical spread of LWE.
- There has been a reduction in incidents in 2022 as compared to 2013. The number of incidents of violence perpetrated by left-wing extremists was 413 in 2022-23.
- There has been a **75% reduction** (397 to 98) in left-wing extremism-related deaths in 2022 as compared to 2013.
- In 2022 the resultant deaths and **casualties to security forces reduced by 33%** and by 68%, respectively in comparison to 2021.

What more should the Government do?

- **Effective Implementation of PESA Act:**
 - Ensure the proper and complete implementation of the Provisions of the [Panchayats \(Extension to Scheduled Areas\) Act, 1996 \(PESA\)](#). This includes issuing clear policy directives to empower gram sabhas as intended by the Act.
 - Address the **gaps in implementation that have allowed Maoists to exploit the situation** and work towards aligning the Act with the historical and traditional tribal way of life.
- **Tribal Empowerment and Representation:**
 - Actively **nurture tribal leadership by providing platforms** for their voices to be heard. This can be achieved through increased representation in local governance structures and political processes.
 - Acknowledge and **address the aspirations of tribal communities, ensuring that policies and initiatives are designed to accommodate their unique needs** and perspectives.
- **Development Programs:**
 - Implement **targeted development programs** that address the socio-economic issues faced by tribal communities. This could include infrastructure development, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities.
 - Ensure that development initiatives are participatory, involving local communities in decision-making processes.
- **Counter Maoist Propaganda:**
 - Launch **communication strategies to counter Maoist propaganda** and **expose the gap between their rhetoric and actual actions**. Highlight instances where the Maoists' agenda does not align with the welfare of the local population.
 - Collaborate with local media, community leaders, and influencers to spread accurate information and counter misinformation.
- **Negotiation and Conflict Resolution:**
 - Explore avenues for **peaceful negotiation with moderate factions** within the Maoist groups. Identify and address the root causes of their discontent to find lasting solutions.
 - Involve neutral mediators, civil society organizations, and respected community leaders in peacebuilding efforts.
- **Human Rights Protection:**
 - Ensure the protection of human rights, particularly in conflict zones. Any security measures taken should be in accordance with the rule of law, and efforts should be made to minimize collateral damage and civilian casualties.
- **Long-term Strategic Planning:**
 - Develop a **comprehensive, long-term strategy that focuses on sustainable development**, social justice, and inclusive governance. Such an approach aims to address the underlying issues that contribute to the insurgency.

Conclusion

The government is actively implementing strategies to eliminate Left-wing Extremism. According to the Union Home Ministry, **Left-wing extremism in India is in its final stage and is expected to be eradicated entirely within the next two years**. Key government priorities involve deploying central forces to counter Maoists, streamlining development efforts, and establishing security camps in regions where administrative penetration has been challenging.

Drishti Mains Question:

Evaluate the measures taken by the government to ensure the protection of human rights in Left Wing Extremism-affected areas. Discuss the challenges and propose improvements.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains

Q. What are the determinants of left-wing extremism in Eastern part of India? What strategy should the Government of India, civil administration and security forces adopt to counter the threat in the affected areas? **(2020)**

Q. The persisting drives of the government for development of large industries in backward areas have resulted in isolating the tribal population and the farmers who face multiple displacements. With Malkangiri and Naxalbari foci, discuss the corrective strategies needed to win the Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) doctrine that affected citizens back into the mainstream of social and economic growth. **(2015)**

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