

## Left Wing Extremism: UPSC Internal Security Notes

Left wing extremism (LWE) is one of the biggest internal security threats facing the country today. It is an important topic in the internal security topic of the [UPSC syllabus](#). In this article, you can read all about LWE, its origins, features and government measures to counter it.

### Left Wing Extremism - Introduction

Left wing extremism, also known by various other names such as naxalism and Maoism, is a form of armed insurgency against the State motivated by leftist ideologies. Left wing extremists are also known as maoists globally and as naxalites in India.

- There are several left wing extremist organisations in the country operating in many areas.
- They reject parliamentary democracy and are aiming at waging an armed revolution against the government.
- They follow extreme violence and also harm innocent civilians in many cases.
- Some groups also engage in parliamentary politics while at the same time, maintain underground cadres. Examples of such groups: Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Janashakti.
- Traditionally, during the early years of the movement, they handled weapons like bows and arrows, and country-made firearms, but now, they possess sophisticated weapons including rocket launchers and AK rifles.
- The common theme among all the groups is that they are anti-government, and desire a violent mass struggle.
- They try to get the support of the marginalised people in rural areas by espousing their cause and projecting their real and perceived grievances.
- The most important and dangerous among the groups is the Communist Party of India (Maoist)/CPI-M.
- The maoists derive their ideology from Maoism, a form of communism espoused by Mao Zedong of China.

### Maoist Modus Operandi

- The LWE organisations, in pursuit of their stated goal of overthrowing the government, resort to armed violence against anyone they perceive to be their enemy, and this includes innocent civilians also.
- They indulge in murders, abductions, extortions, etc.
- In many instances, they carry out high-profile murders and kidnappings to instil fear in their opponents and civilians.
- In many cases, they get the support of the tribal population in an area since they are seen as deliverers, in a situation where the authorities have failed to provide the basic amenities.
- However, the main sufferers in LWE are chiefly the tribal and poor sections of the population. The naxals do not hesitate to kill the tribal people themselves if they are suspected of being 'informers'.
- They routinely indulge in the killing of elected representatives at the local levels, in Panchayats, etc. to desist people from taking part in the democratic process. They also intend to create a vacuum in the low-levels paving the way for their entrenchment in a parallel system of governance there.
- In spite of their violent means and stated rejection of religion, they get sympathy from some sections because they are seen as selfless in the pursuit of 'delivering justice to the people'.
- In many places where they have dominant control, they collect taxes from the people.
- In LWE parlance, the naxals seek to 'liberate' areas.
  - Areas where they have a dominant position vis-a-vis the State are called liberated areas or zones.

- In guerilla zones, the maoists and the government have an 'equal footing'.
  - Places where the government has the dominant control are called base areas.
- The naxal ideology exhorts violence and guerilla warfare as the means to achieve their socio-politico-economic goals. The CPI - Maoist, primarily, wants to usher in a 'new democratic revolution' in India.
- The CPI - Maoist is banned under the [Unlawful Activities \(Prevention\) Act](#).
- An important feature of the LWE is the **Front Organisation**.
  - Most Maoist organisations have front organisations which are led by educated people, who sympathise with the maoist cause.
  - These organisations are important because they help the parent organisation in spreading their agenda, in propaganda and also in recruiting people.
  - They help the parent organisations to survive by escaping legal liability.
  - They also publish magazines and pamphlets espousing their ideology.
  - They serve as a cover for the parent naxal bodies by sanitising the bloodletting and making them more acceptable to the urban public and the mainstream media.
  - They take up issues such as corporate exploitation, human rights violation and tribal displacement.
  - Many young people are waylaid by these front organisations. They nurture romantic illusions about the Maoists and their work because of a lack of understanding of their complete ideology.

## Maoism

- Maoism is a form of communism developed by Mao Zedong.
- It is a doctrine to capture State power through a combination of armed insurgency, mass mobilization and strategic alliances.
- Mao called this process, the 'Protracted People's War', where the emphasis is on 'military line' to capture power.

## Red Corridor

- The Red Corridor is the region in the central, eastern and southern parts of India that experience severe Naxalite–Maoist insurgency.
- The districts affected by this and part of the Corridor are among the poorest in India.
- Most of the region has a high tribal population. The region is also marked by severe caste and economic disparities.
- Roughly, the Corridor stretches from the Indian border with Nepal and extends to the northern fringes of Tamil Nadu.
- The region also has a significantly lower literacy rate compared to the national average.

The naxal activities have a huge economic impact on the regions they are prominent in. Some of the recent destructive activities which have adversely affected the lives of the people are listed below:

1. 316 attacks were carried out on railways, telecom, transmission lines, mines, and steel plants between Jan 2006 and June 2009.
2. Human lives lost – it has been estimated that in the last 13 and a half years, approximately 8000 human lives were lost due to violence perpetrated by Naxalites.
3. Naxals have destroyed hundreds of roads, bridges, culverts, etc.
4. They have destroyed hundreds of mobile towers of BSNL, Airtel, Reliance in Dantewada, Bijapur, Sukma, Gaya, Aurangabad, Daltoganj, Raigad. All these districts are spread over states of the Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha.
5. They have looted money from various banks and the amount goes up to the tune of many millions.
6. Businesses and livelihood of local people are badly affected.
7. School children have been abducted and many schools and hostels have been blown apart.
8. Huge forest lands have been destroyed for setting up their temporary camps.

9. The ongoing conflict has affected domestic trade, tourism, industries and agriculture.
10. Naxals illegally collect money from Government schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act ([MGNREGA](#)) and the Public Distribution System (PDS).

## LWE - Origins

The origins of the LWE can be traced back to 1967 in the three areas of Naxalbari (from which the term naxal originates), Phansidewa and Khoribari in West Bengal's Darjeeling District.

- The initial uprising was led by Charu Majumdar, Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santhal, who were members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). The initial uprising was in the form of a peasant revolt.
- Two years later in 1969, the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) was formed.
- Although originated in West Bengal, the movement spread to the less-developed rural regions of southern and eastern India, in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Chhattisgarh.
- Today, almost all the naxal groups trace their origins to the CPI (M-L).
- The Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) was formed in 1975. This group merged with the People's War Group in 2004, to form the CPI (Maoist).

## Factors responsible for the rise of LWE

1. The chief reason behind the rise of the movement was the severe lack of development of these regions despite being mineral-rich.
2. They were largely tribal belts that were neglected by the government and also by the mainstream media.
3. There was gross ineffectiveness and mismanagement in the administrative machinery. Corruption was also rampant leading to misery for the people.
4. The alienation and social exclusion of large groups of people led to sections of them feeling a disconnect with the government of the day and also society at large.
5. The issue of Jal-Jangal-Jameen (water, forest, land) is at the centre of these revolts initially. Tribal people are routinely exploited for their mineral-rich land. There is illegal encroachment and the forest-dwellers are bereft of rights in their own land.

Such conditions made it ripe for maoism to take seed. Nevertheless, it should be said that violence leads only to more violence, and no lofty goal can justify the cruelties and inhuman activities conducted by the maoists.

It is the very same people who were supposed to be the beneficiaries of the naxalite movement that are the worst-affected by it. No development work by the government is allowed to succeed as it has now become a turf-war between the rebels and the State. Well-intentioned government schemes are not benefiting the tribals and other populace on account of the terrible violence perpetrated by the naxals.

## Regions affected by Naxal violence in India

According to the Home Ministry, the districts affected by LWE are in the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Maharashtra, Odisha, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.

However, in the past decade, owing to the severe government crackdown on the naxalite organisations, and the intense work of the country's security forces, particularly, the CRPF, the number of incidents of naxal violence has reduced. The number of people giving up arms and surrendering to the security forces are also on the rise.

Item	2009	2018
Number of incidents	2258	833
Deaths (security force + civilian)	1005	240
Number of affected districts	96 (2010)	60

## Government Measures to Counter Naxal Violence

The government has taken up a holistic approach to tackling the naxal problem. It has used security-related interventions coupled with developmental measures to root out the violent uprisings.

- The D Bandopadhyay Committee (2006) highlighted the lack of governance, economic, socio-political and cultural discrimination against the tribals as the chief reason for the spread of naxalism. The Committee recommended tribal-friendly land acquisition and rehabilitation as a means to counter this issue.
- In May 2017, the Government of India allocated Rs 11,000 crores to build road connectivity in 44 districts affected by Maoists activities.
- Under the current Government, by 2018, 1326 kms of roads were constructed in Bastar, Rajnandgaon, and Surguja areas, the highly Naxal infested areas of Chhattisgarh.
- 995 bridges were constructed and 138 of them were in the worst affected area – Bastar.
- The annual budget of the Public Works Department in Chhattisgarh was Rs 7795 crores in 2016-17.
- Roads and bridges were constructed in Sukma, another area massively hit by Naxalism.
- Local villagers are being provided with basic facilities like healthcare, education and more employment opportunities.
- Due to developmental activities and choking the funding of Naxalism, there was a spike in surrenders in Jharkhand from 676 in 2014 to 1442 in 2016.
- **Operation SAMADHAN**
  - 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.
  - The policy was initiated in 2015 as a multidimensional approach to tackle LWE.
  - The chief objective of the approach is to ensure participatory governance and protection of the rights of the tribal people.
  - Police forces in naxal-affected areas are fortified with more weapons, manpower, helicopters, UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles), etc. to be more effective in their fight against naxalism.
  - The government is also focussing on building better infrastructure and connectivity in the regions.
  - The maoists take advantage of the weak coordination among states in the inter-state borders and set up bases there. Hence, the government is setting up joint task forces to ensure better coordination and intelligence sharing among the states.
  - In the naxal belt, more fortified police stations are being set up.
  - The Indian Army or specialised forces such as the Greyhounds will train the police forces fighting the naxals.

- It is clear that the maoists do not want development to take place, which is clear by their targeting schools and communication channels. Whatever their goals, they are now armed insurgency groups intended only to capture power to serve their own interests.
- The government has initiated a host of tribal development schemes aimed at bringing social, economic, cultural and educational inclusion for the tribal population into the mainstream. You can get all the information on government schemes [here](#).
- For more on [economic empowerment of STs](#), click on the linked article.
- The government has to tackle certain challenges in dealing with the naxals. The naxal groups have frequently lent moral support to insurgent groups in J&K.
- It is also suspected that Pakistan's ISI is trying to influence these groups through the land border with Nepal. This has serious implications for the country's security. Proper intelligence inputs coupled with adequate fortification of security forces should be done.
- Along with these, sufficient and speedy development should be brought about in the worst-affected areas as only this will render the Maoists insignificant. As long as there is disillusionment with the authorities, such elements will always find sympathisers among sections of the people. Hence, to root out the problem in its entirety, proper inclusive development should be ushered in.