Left Wing Extremism in India

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Why in News: Ten personnel of the Chhattisgarh Police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) and the civilian driver of their vehicle were reported killed in an IED attack by Maoists in the state's Dantewada district recently

A brief about LWE in India

Left-wing Extremism (LWE), also known as Naxalism or Maoism, is a significant security threat in India, particularly in regions like Chhattisgarh.

It is an armed movement rooted in political ideologies that seek to bring about socio-economic changes through violent means.

The prevalence of LWE in India, often referred to as the "Red Corridor," remains a significant security challenge.

This region stretches across several states, including Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, and parts of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Maharashtra

Causes of left-wing extremism in India

1Inequitable development:

Thefailure of land reformsespecially land redistribution after independence.

Socio-economic inequities, unemployment, despair about the future.

Dishonest and self-serving dominant groups.

Political deprivationleading to hopelessness or a sense of powerlessness.

Lack of title to public land cultivated by the landless poor.

Governance deficit in the remote parts of Red Corridor regions.

Lack of food security– corruption in the Public Distribution System (which are often non-functional).

Disruption of traditional occupationsand lack of alternative work opportunities.

2Displacement of people:Eviction from lands traditionally used by tribals.

Forced Displacementcaused by mining, irrigation and power projectswithout adequate arrangements for rehabilitation. As a result, livelihoods were lost.

Large scale land acquisition for 'public purposes'without appropriate compensationor rehabilitation

3Discrimination against tribals:Poor implementation of laws prohibiting transfer of tribal land to non-tribals in the Fifth Schedule areas.

Non-regularisation of traditional land rights under FRA, 2006.

Hasty rejections of land grants to tribals.

Challenges posed by Left-wing extremism

Left-wing extremism poses significant internal security threats to India, leading to violent clashes and loss of lives among security forces and civilians. For example, Maoist rebels often engage in deadly attacks on security forces in remote areas

LWE in India disrupts social and economic development in affected regions, hindering infrastructure and welfare projects. For instance, the Maoists may target roads, schools, and other vital infrastructure to maintain control over their territories

Maoist groups have been known to force vulnerable individuals, including children, to join their ranks, exploiting them for their cause. This practice violates human rights and disrupts the lives of countless innocent people

LWE groups often engage in extortion and other illegal activities to fund their operations. For example, they may demand "protection money" from local businesses, leading to economic stagnation in affected areas

LWE contributes to political instability in India, as the affected regions struggle with governance issues and weakened trust in democratic institutions. This can undermine the overall stability of the country

LWE groups have been known to commit human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, abductions, and torture. These actions not only harm innocent civilians but also tarnish India's international reputation

LWE often exploits and alienates tribal populations in their strongholds, creating a cycle of violence and mistrust between the communities and the government. This makes it difficult to address the root causes of extremism and to foster long-term peace and stability

Government approaches to control LWE in India

The Indian government has employed various approaches to control Left-wing extremism (LWE), focusing on a combination of security, development, and political initiatives. Some of these approaches include:

The government deploys paramilitary forces, state police, and specialized anti-Naxalite units to combat LWE groups. These forces engage in intelligence-based operations, targeting Maoist leadership and dismantling their organizational structure.

The government focuses on improving infrastructure in LWE-affected areas, including building roads, schools, hospitals, and communication networks. Improved infrastructure helps establish the government's presence in remote areas and fosters economic development

The government implements various welfare and development schemes to address the root causes of LWE, such as poverty, unemployment, and social inequality. These initiatives aim to uplift marginalized communities and provide them with better opportunities

The government works to strengthen local governance in LWE-affected areas by promoting democratic participation and empowering local institutions. This helps build trust between the government and the affected communities

The government invests in training and capacity building for security forces to enhance their effectiveness in tackling LWE. This includes providing specialized training, equipment, and intelligence support

The government promotes coordination among states affected by LWE to ensure a unified response. This involves sharing intelligence, resources, and best practices to combat LWE more effectively

The government remains open to dialogue and negotiation with LWE groups who are willing to renounce violence and engage in the democratic process. This approach aims to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. For example, the government has introduced surrender and rehabilitation policies for LWE cadres willing to renounce violence and join mainstream society. These policies offer financial incentives, vocational training, and support for reintegration into society.

Issues associated with government measures

Security operations against LWE have sometimes led to human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and harassment of civilians. These actions can alienate local communities and create resentment against the government

Despite numerous welfare and development programs, their implementation in LWE-affected areas is often hampered by corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and a lack of coordination between various agencies. As a result, the intended benefits may not reach the affected communities

The security forces may lack specialized training, equipment, and intelligence support to effectively tackle LWE. This can lead to operational failures and increased casualties among security personnel

Excessive focus on security operations may overshadow the need for political engagement and dialogue with LWE groups. A purely militaristic approach could prolong the conflict and hinder efforts to find a peaceful resolution

While surrender and rehabilitation policies exist, they may not be comprehensive or effectively implemented. Inadequate support for reintegration, such as insufficient vocational training or financial assistance, can limit the success of these programs

Mistrust between the government and affected communities can hinder the implementation of development initiatives and security operations. Building trust is crucial for fostering cooperation and addressing the root causes of LWE

Political instability and opportunism can undermine efforts to address LWE. Politicians may exploit the issue for electoral gains, which can further complicate the government's response to the problem

The Way Ahead

The government should prioritize improving infrastructure, education, and healthcare in LWE-affected areas, like the successful implementation of development projects in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, which reduced Maoist influence

Empowering local governments to address grievances and deliver public services effectively, as seen in the Panchayati Raj system's success in reducing Naxalism in West Bengal, can help build trust between communities and authorities

Provide specialized training and better equipment to security personnel, similar to the Greyhounds force in Andhra Pradesh, which proved effective in countering LWE due to their specialized training and local knowledgeStrengthen measures to prevent corruption and human rights abuses, as demonstrated by the National Human Rights Commission's interventions in cases of alleged human rights violations by security forces, which can help restore public trust in government institutions.