

# Left Wing Extremism: A Grave Challenge to the Internal Security of India

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## Abstract

The dimension of security threats in 21st century underwent drastic shift from traditional to non-traditional threats in which the emergence of non-state actors plays a crucial role as they brought the battlefield in the nation itself. This compromised the security of the citizens at greater extent. In the back drop of this the author seeks to scrutinize the perspectives which played an important role in development of Left Wing Extremism, which become a greatest non-traditional threat ever faced by India. This ideology spreads to States; where social and political rights of the specific community were suppressed since years. But today, what started as a fight for rights has culminated into a predicament in the form of organization called Communist Party of India (Maoist) in 2004. This paper thus try to examine the factors which supported the growth of Left Wing Extremism, changes in approach of the Government from time to time and suggest policy options to deal with the problem.

*Keywords: Left Wing Extremism, Traditional, Non-Traditional, Non-State Actor, Strategy,*

## Introduction

India, which is seventh largest country geographically, has third largest GDP in term of PPP (purchasing power parity) and second largest standing army status, since its inception has been under continuous security threat. But over the period of time, format of security threat has changed from traditional to non-traditional. Unlike the decade or two ago, when the security threats India faced were by the armies of the enemy countries, in the 21st century emergence of non-state actors has come up as the biggest threat. It has changed both the dimension and the domain of the battlefield. Now the face of enemy is not different from our own citizens. This is the fight which our security forces are fighting in their own country with their own people. Today non-traditional threats have become more dangerous than the traditional one. They are draining much more resources of the nation than traditional threats did. It is well articulated that as India strives to become a strong regional economic power it may face formidable security challenges in the form of non-traditional threats in coming years. Some of the existing non-traditional threats are insurgency in J&K and North-East India, Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in central India, arms trafficking, drugs trafficking, human trafficking etc. In spite of having various facets of national threats, our Former PM Dr. Manmohan Singh expresses “The problem of Left Wing Extremism is the single biggest internal threat to the security of nation ever faced by our country”. In viewpoint of this we need to know about Left Wing Extremism in detail and

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discusses the present position of government on the same.

### **Genesis of Left Wing Extremism**

Genesis of Maoist naxalite insurgent ideology is rooted in the development and discrimination of these areas. As per our historian the advent of Aryans beyond Sapt Sindhu (land in north India comprising seven rivers) in their second phase (1000- 600 B.C) of expansion; brought them in contact with new people who lived in forest called vanvasi or adivasi and were also less developed than them. With the induction of Aryans; economy of this land changed from pastoral to agriculture. After that, accumulation of cultivable land became an important phenomenon and society got categorized for the same requirement. Brahmin, Kashtriya and the Vaisya (considered as upper caste) generally restricted cultivable land to them only. The Shudra (considered as lower caste) worked in the field of upper caste as a laborer. Aryan to British, almost over thousand years of history, ruler changed but condition of these sections of society became bad to worst. This is the same strata which got influenced with the ideology of Maoism later on. This ideology talks about equal distribution of production among citizens and overthrow of bourgeois/landlords dictates with grouped armed struggle by peasant and worker class. After independence when some states came under the direct rule of communist party whose ideological base was inspired from Marxism/Leninism/Maoism, they started to construct a just society by bringing all cultivable lands under the ambit of government and then distributing it among landless. It became the clashing point between landlords who possessed endless lands and peasants who worked on their land as a beggar. Here lies the genesis of LWE which today is weakening our country from inside.

The term 'Naxalism' derives itself from a small village, Naxalbari, in Darjeeling district of West Bengal, where an armed peasant uprising occurred in 1967 led by Charu Majumdar, Kanu Sanyal, Ram Prabhav Singh, Jangal Santhal and J P Inspector (all inspired from Mao). On May 18, 1967, the Siliguri Kishan Sabha, of which Jangal was the president, declared their readiness to adopt armed struggle to redistribute land to the landless. The following week, a share cropper near Naxalbari village was attacked by the landlord's men over a land dispute. On May 24, when a police team arrived to capture the peasant leader, it was trapped by a gathering of tribals led by Jangal Santhal, and a police inspector was executed in a hail of bolts. This occasion empowered numerous Santhal tribal's and other destitute individuals to join the development and to begin assaulting neighborhood landowner . On 25th May 1967 the rebel cadres led by Charu Majumdar launched a peasants uprising at Naxalbari after a tribal youth, who had a judicial order to plough his land, was attacked by goons of local landlords . Tribals countered and began compellingly catching back their territories. The CPI (M)- led United Front government took action against the uprising and in seventy two days of the confrontation a police sub-inspector and nine tribals were killed. The government at the Center upheld the crackdown. The episode resounded all through India and Naxalism or LWE was conceived.

### **Reasons for spread of the Left Wing Extremism**

The terrain in which Naxal operate is thickly forested, hilly remote and has limited approachable roads due to which people living in such remote areas take considerable time to reach district headquarter. With the result people reside in these area are living in very extreme economic condition, illiteracy rate is high owing to absence of educational institutes, Employment

Avenues are not present and due to relative absence of Government machineries; people are not much aware about the Government policies.

To put the Left Wing Extremism ideology in proper perspective one needs to understand the political, social and economic background to the conflict.

### **Political reason**

LWE clearly is the indianization of what happened in Russia during 1917 revolution under the leadership of Lenin and later in china under Mao Zedong. Political scientists coined the terms Leninism and Maoism respectively for those revolutions. More than often LWE is interchanged with the word Maoism because Charu Majumdar writing "Eight Historic Document" which formed the bases for Maoist ideology in India, itself inspired from Mao's ideology that says "Power Comes out from the Barrel of the Gun". It would be significant to note the proponents of the ideology are poor peasants and tribal people, who have been deprived of the basic necessities of life since centuries.

The main reason for the existence of naxalite ideology even in post cold war era is the failure in implementation of the Fifth and Ninth Schedules of the Constitution of India. The Fifth Schedule expresses that all notified scheduled areas of the nation which are forest reserve and possessed by scheduled tribes has to be managed by the governors of the states by appointing tribal advisory committees from among the tribals of that specific scheduled area.

The Ninth Schedule of the Constitution dealt with the equitable distribution of cultivable land, among India's landless peasantry by enacting land ceiling laws, which over centuries had come under the ownership of upper castes. Since land revenue is a state subject, the states were directed to legislate land ceiling laws and securing farmlands from proprietors. Those, secured lands then redistribute to landless farmer who for quite a long time worked under the most odious conditions on the fields of the landowner. In West Bengal, landlords tried to manipulate the land records and deceive the landless farmers and the government. This resulted in unrest in a village called Naxalbari.

Regrettably, these very schedules are explicitly expressed in constitution of India; in spite of this fact no state shows inclination to form tribal advisory council. Similarly although all states had passed the land ceiling law in their respective legislature but very few bothered to implement except West Bengal, Kerala and J&K (West Bengal and Kerala were ruled by the Communist Government when the legislature passed).

### **Social Reason**

The forested and semi-forested rural areas of the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Maharashtra, are populated mainly by the tribal (indigenous) people of India. Their ancestors live there since thousand years and depend upon forest and its resources for their survival. In past seven decades government relatively could not do much in terms of their development so that they can select other occupations for their survival. Instead these regions still remains development deficit in terms of construction of road, medical facilities, educational institution, employment, income, housing and all other basic facilities which are essential to get like citizen of other part of the country are getting. Moreover, now

government has started to displace them off from their land for mining of the mineral resources present in these forests. Government started the campaign SALWA JUDUM against the naxalite in this very region. They don't know what the real face of the enemy looks like, making tribals and their families the real victim of State and Naxalites cross fire. There were incidents of huge Human Rights violation during the campaign that is why Supreme Court banned this ideology in 2011. There were cases where villages were burnt, women raped, elderly peoples tortured by special police officers (SPO); who are recruited specifically to curb this ideology and soldiers of paramilitary forces. They are not getting justice when land-mafia, contractor and government official do atrocities on them for their self interests. The utter failure of the development strategy and lack of political accountability of the State was the ground on which the LWE was able to trespass their ideology leading to current conflicts

### **Economic Reason**

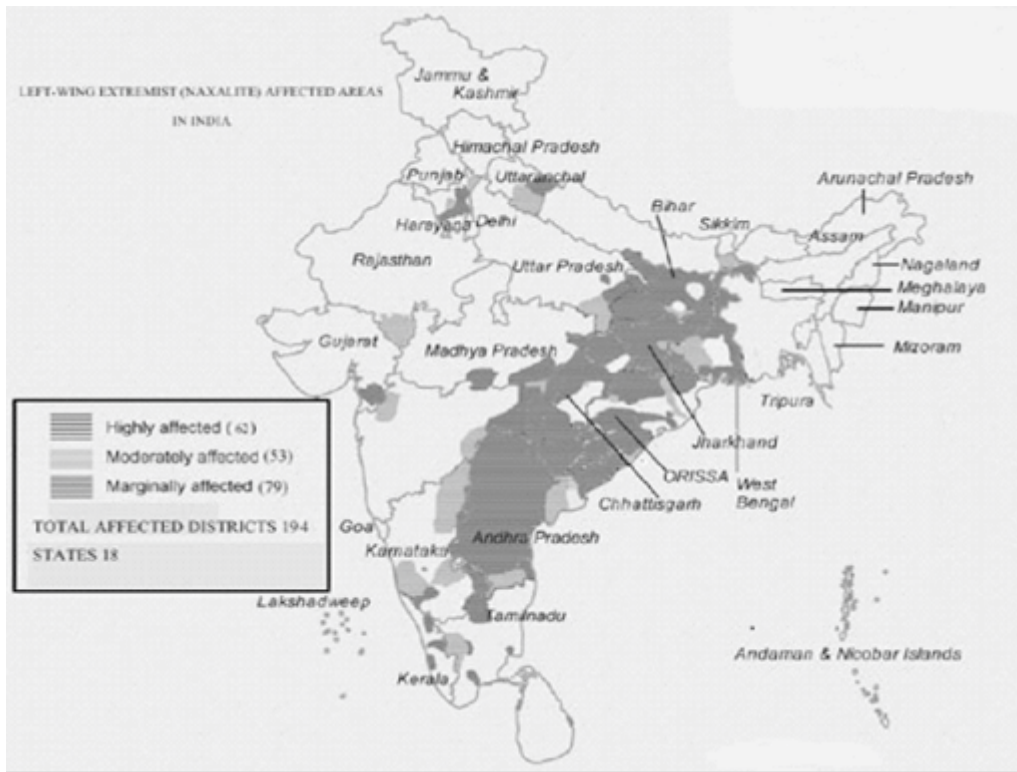
Tribals and peasants are poor and illiterate people. In the absence of educational institutions, they have no knowledge about other occupations, no awareness about their constitutional rights. They have only the lands and forests on which they can depend for their survival as their ancestor did. They use forest resources; cultivate fields for their food and shelter. Peasants used to do hard work in the fields of landowner and get meager pay in turn that were sufficient only for their survival but not for their development. Upper caste landowners abdicate their constitutional rights, land for tiller; forest dwellers cannot collect the tendu leaves and other resources of forest for its selling in market. They are restricted by contractor who has a nexus with politician and government officials. Whatever little access the poor had to forest, land, streams, normal fields, village tanks and other common assets; which can reduce their inevitable slide into poverty has come under attack by the Indian state in the guise of so-called development projects related to mining, industrial development, Information Technology parks, etc. Lack of justice and absence of Government accountability make these people pro-naxalite who filled the vacuum created by Government.

### **Left Wing Extremism – Extent and Magnitude**

Though the unrest erupted in small village Naxalbari but over the years the various states came under its ambit. Although different states have different set of genies for eruption of this problem but one thing remain similar i.e. socio-economic repression. Thus all those regions that had a history of social oppression of a particular section of a society are found to be inflicted with naxalism. Presently one hundred ninety four districts of eighteen states of India are affected with LWE. Out of these sixty two are highly influenced where the battle of domination is going on between naxalites and security forces. Dandakarneya forest area which covers Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Telangana become safe haven for naxalite. They are using this terrain for launching guerrilla attacks on security personnel. At some places they declared a liberated zone; where the presences of government or government machinery are negligible. Making a further deep dig in it reflects that the affected areas can be dividing into three parts (Map 1). First, highly affected which includes the districts of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Bihar and Jharkhand. Second, moderately affected which spans over some parts in Eastern Karnataka, Southern Uttar Pradesh, South-Eastern Uttrakhand, South Eastern Rajasthan and some small parts in Western Maharashtra. Third, marginally affected which

covers the areas like, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and some parts of Kerala.

Map: 1 LWE Affected Areas



Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal

### **Naxal's Strategy and change in Tactics**

#### **Approach of Annihilation**

*“We Shall Certainly Defeat the Government”*

The strategy of Naxalite is of a prolonged armed struggle. They are not aiming for acquisition and subjugation of any area. The ultimate goal of naxal ideology is to topple up the present form of political structure while establishing a political setup in which rejected section/ weaker section of society have greater say. Thus, they would spread their influence in other part of the country which is intentionally or unintentionally avoided by the government. On one hand, they are exploiting the weakness of government while the other hand they are enhancing their strength in various ways.

To achieve their stated aim, participation in election and democracy are rejected and all efforts and attention are firmly focused on revolutionary activities to undermine the State and seize power by hook or crook. They have also been exploring newer alternatives against the background of changes taking place in the agrarian situation including increasing resort to jail

breaks and attacking the express centers of state power like mobile tower, education institution and police stations etc.

### **Guerrilla Warfare**

This technique of war is always used by weaker force against stronger enemy. This model of fighting war has been in use since centuries. Guerrilla forces always take advantage of the terrain in which they are fighting. In initial phase, bases are built up in remote and rural area and in the second phase outskirts areas are converted into a Guerrilla Zone and finally into liberated area. Naxalite has completed their first phase and now striving for second phase.

### **Expansion of Revolutionary Red Zone**

The Naxalites have long been active in parts of the States of Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. Apart from their traditional strongholds, the Naxalites plan to establish its presence in the Western Ghat between Raigarh District of Maharashtra in the North and Wayanad District of Kerala in the South with Karnataka as its base. The Naxal outfit aimed at making Western Ghats as another red corridor, analogue to the main one along the Eastern corridor of the Country. The main objective is to establish the strategic and tactical base which could provide safe sanctuary from the actions of security forces and alternative to the existing red corridor.

Moreover, Naxalites aimed to create an Expanded Red Corridor stretching from Nepal to Andhra Pradesh as a liberated zone. The linkages between Left Wing extremist groups in the region are not new, though the idea of the liberated zone crystallized in August 2001, when the Indian Naxalites and the Nepali counterparts had a meeting in Siliguri. The leaders discussed various ways to make this corridor a continuous zone to facilitate the effortless ideology of extremists from one area in the proposed zone to a new.

### **Shift towards Urban Pocket**

Though initially ideology had strengthened itself in the forest area and in the areas marked with absence of governess, but these days the Naxal leadership feels that urban centers can become their trigger point if state machinery cracked down on their core areas. There has been news that they have made well entrenched bases in India's National Capital Region. According to some research reports there are indications that worker strikes in industrial city Gurgaon (Haryana) in 2011 were ignited by their cadres in which one manager was burnt alive and many workers were wounded. Kobad Gandhi, core strategist for naxal ideology was arrested in Delhi where he was hiding and strengthening their cadre base. In the meeting held in January 2009, the Central Committee decided a task of preparing an urban perspective document. The strategy focus on an approach called "SAARC" Survey, Awareness, Agitation, Recruitment, and Control. So far as the urban areas are concerned the Naxals have completed the stage of survey, Identifying the target group and political area of discontent. Now they are in the process of implementing the second and third stage of their strategy. This is well documented in Naxal plan entitled CPI (M) urban perspective.

### **Expanding Association**

These ideologies in any part of the world cannot survive without external support as this support

becomes oxygen for them. In the beginning Naxalites were limited to their respective areas but now in current phase they are establishing their connection with insurgent group of J&K, North-East, LTTE and Nepal Maoist, Not only this, they also support the secessionist ideologies in North-East and Kashmir. Naxal's new strategy seem to be of setting up bases in new regions by means of taking up such emotive issues as forcible displacement caused by Special Economic Zones, industrialization, infrastructure development projects, caste oppression and religious fascism. Naxalites intend to turn the Guerrilla War into mobile war and Guerrilla zones into base areas.

### **Need for effective Counter-Naxal operations**

As stated in naxalite related documents found by security forces during raids on their hideouts; their aim is to overthrow the present political structure through any means. They have adopted the strategy to first mobilize the people on local issues that concern them most. They are then armed with locally available weapons which are easy to handle before supplying them with sophisticated weapons. They are manufacturing their own explosive devices and have no shortage of weapons. Most of them are procured by looting the police and home guard armories. To achieve their stated aim they resort to violent activities which increased many folds during years 2005 to 2010. Although, since 2013 there is a declining trend of fatalities (Table 1) but because they are follower of Mao's ideology we cannot comfort our self with this little success. They may be buying time once again for strengthening themselves and make a comeback with even more violence as they did during year 2007-2009.

Moreover, LWE affected states housing estimated 10,000 armed cadres and about 50,000-60,000 of people militia or Sangham members, which badly impacting resident's lives on a large scale. A need for Counter-Naxal operation therefore is felt, as its fulfillment will bring about satisfaction of having a normal life and well being by end of LWE which at times becomes hindrance in growth projects.

The second aspect which needs to be emphasized here is that over half of the violent incidents and killings in these states are due to LWE which cannot be overlooked and hence the need arises for Counter-Naxal measures to be even more effective.

However, facing this problem at such a large scale the States continues to have a weak administration showing lack of institutional professionalism among politicians, ill equipped forces and deficient State's security capability. This problem was clearly evident on 25 May 2013, when an ambush laid down by Naxalites on the convoy of the Congress party killed thirty persons including State Congress chief Nand Kumar Patel, and Mahendra Karma, who supported the SALWA JUDUM. This has allowed Naxal insurgency to grow further in the region.

**Table: 1 Fatalities in Left-wing Extremism: 2005-2015**

#### **Year Wise Breakup**

<b>Years</b>	<b>Civilians</b>	<b>Security Force Personnel</b>	<b>LWE/CPI-Maoists</b>	<b>Total</b>
2005	281	150	286	717
2006	266	128	343	737

2007	240	218	192	650
2008	220	214	214	648
2009	391	312	294	997
2010	626	277	277	1180
2011	275	128	199	602
2012	146	104	117	367
2013	159	111	151	421
2014	128	87	99	314
2015	88	57	99	244
Total	2820	1786	2271	6877

**Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal**

### **Proposed Strategy to Counter Left Wing Extremism**

The time has come when we must give attention to our internal security situation with intend rather than debating on issues in whose jurisdiction (centre government or state government) naxals fall. The most challenging task before the government today is the exclusion of the naxal terror web in its totality which is a stumbling block for the progress of the nation. There is no ready-made plan to tackle this menace but coordination between centre government and state government would create a platform in which state machinery can execute their task efficiently. This will make an environment in which development programme can be implemented judiciously. For our intended aim we can divide LWE influenced area into two distinct parts. There are 62 hardcore district in red corridor which are supportive to naxal ideology and 132 district in which situation is particularly stabilized. We should formulate an “OUT TO IN” strategy for the districts which are less influenced with LWE ideology and start the development and defense program simultaneously. Holding and maintaining ground position in less influenced districts is must to reach out hardcore districts. For hardcore districts we need to reconsider counter-naxal strategy and make it more pragmatic in coordination with the change in tactics of the naxals. In this part, training of terrain adaptation for all security personnel and equipping them with state-of-the-art weapons are must. All this counter-naxal operations requires political will without which no operation can be done effectively. Prioritizing vote bank requirements over that of human lives is not likely to yield any fruitful result in counter-naxal operations. The supply lines of the Naxals have to be cut ruthlessly. Side by side, it should not be forgotten that social issues like development of under developed/backward and remote areas, employment opportunities, education, quality health services, safety and security of human lives and public assets are the top most priority on the part of the government. Such steps must be taken in a time bound manner with a clear and implementable approach.

To achieve success in anti-naxal policy we may consider following points.

- Operation should be people centric. People have to be the centre of gravity of the development programmes.
- Weapons of Security forces should be modernized, providing them state-of-the-art



technology.

- Soldiers must be experienced and trained in counter-insurgency and jungle warfare operation.
- Village defence committee must be well trained and equipped.
- Government machinery i.e. DC, SP, district forest officer must work as a team and formulate a cohesive policy which should be conducive to poor villager.

### **Conclusion**

In the last decade we considered LWE as a law & order and deprived socio-economic condition generated problem, mostly propagated by individuals who is affected from such hardship but now it has changed their format with inclusion of violence in their action as a strategy to counter the government efforts, which have a great bearing on our national security in the way it is spreading its wings. Socio-economic development of remote areas with precise WHAM (win heart and mind) operation by government agency and security forces will transform the attitude of the people who in turn will resist the Naxalite theory and pave the way to root out the problem. We should remember, if Sri Lanka can eliminate a deep rooted, well trained and suitably equipped armed LTTE, India can exceptionally well find badly prepared and inadequately furnished anti-national elements from its soil, gave the political administration shows its will definitely. This internal insurgency becomes more threatening to our national security than hostile neighboring countries. So, all available instruments of national power must now be utilized to eliminate these terror outfits from society.

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