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Q20

Naxalism is a social, economic and developmental issue manifesting as a violent internal security threat. In this context, discuss the emerging issues and suggest a multilayered strategy to tackle the menace of Naxalism.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · GS III · 15 marks · Internal Security and Extremism

Linkages between development and spread of extremism.

Core demand of the question

- Examine Naxalism as a social, economic and developmental issue as well as a violent internal security threat
- Note emerging issues and suggest a multilayered strategy. (The official stem's 'gest a multilayered' is a printing slip for 'suggest'.)

Revision summary

Naxalism is rooted in tribal land, forest rights, displacement and State absence, and it is also an armed assault on constitutional authority.

Levy, IEDs and jan adalats are security threats, not social work.

The corridor has shrunk but residual pockets, IEDs and overground networks remain.

A multilayered strategy joins force modernisation with FRA/PESA, roads, schools, surrenders and clean local administration.

SAMADHAN-type security checklists fail if predatory officials and empty rights stay in place.

Introduction

Naxalism (Left Wing Extremism) began as an agrarian revolt and became a **protracted armed challenge** in forested, tribal and poorly administered belts. It is both a **development failure**-land, dignity, schools, mines-and a **violent internal security threat** that kills civilians, security forces and democratic workers. A multilayered reply must hold both truths. The question paper's 'gest' is **suggest**.

Body**Social, economic, developmental issue**

- **Adivasi and dalit margins: insecure forest rights**, land alienation, and social humiliation created a constituency that Maoist politics claimed to represent.
- **Mining and displacement** without consent or a fair share of royalties turned projects into recruitment narratives.
- **State absence**: schools, primary health, roads, and a non-predatory police were thin; the vacuum was political as well as physical.

- **Livelihood:** tendu, bamboo and informal forest produce versus a contractor-official nexus; **MGNREGA** and forest-rights titles are the lawful alternative to 'janatana sarkar' taxation.
- Treating Naxalism as **only** a gun problem repeats the neglect that fed it. Treating it as **only** a seminar on poverty ignores the gun.

Violent internal security threat

- Armed cadres, IEDs, attacks on police stations, and **jan adalats** that execute alleged informers are **crime and war on the Constitution**, not protest.
- Extortion of contractors and 'levy' on road and mine work is **organised crime** fused with insurgency.
- The aim is parallel power, not a petition. **Casualties among CRPF, State police and civilians** make it a core internal security problem under MHA's **LWE** division.

Emerging issues

- **Geographic shrink and residual pockets:** the 'Red Corridor' is narrower than a decade ago, but **south Bastar, some Odisha-Jharkhand-Bihar** junctions remain lethal.
- **Urban overground** networks, legal front organisations, and **social-media propaganda**.
- **Weapon and IED sophistication;** possible crime-terror logistics on the edges (arms, explosives), without equating every Naxal band with jihadist groups.
- **Surrender-and-split** dynamics: leadership ageing versus new local recruits over a mining clash.
- **Rights-and-security tension:** fake encounters would destroy the legitimacy that development needs.

Multilayered strategy

- **Security layer:** trained **CRPF/CoBRA** and **State police**, fortified police stations, road opening, IED management, and **unified command**-without occupying the village as an enemy.
- **Development layer:** roads (including **LWE** road schemes), mobile towers, banks, hostels, **PESA and Forest Rights Act** implementation in letter, and jobs in the same district.
- **Political layer:** panchayats that actually sit; space for democratic Adivasi politics so the gun is not the only voice.
- **Surrender and rehabilitation:** skill, stipend, and protection from revenge-tested State policies exist; they need honesty, not a photo.
- **Perception layer:** local-language outreach, and **prosecution of the contractor-official predator** who is the Maoist's best recruiter.
- **Centre-State:** MHA assistance, intelligence fusion, and State ownership; Naxalism is not only a Delhi graph of districts.
- **SAMADHAN**-type **doctrines** (smart leadership, aggression against violence, motivation, actionable intelligence, dashboard, action plan, no access to financing) are a checklist; they work only if the **FRA/PESA** limb is real.

Flow diagram

Causes land forest dignity -> Naxalism
Naxalism -> Violent LWE threat
Naxalism -> Development vacuum
Security CoBRA intel -> Naxalism
FRA PESA roads jobs -> Naxalism
Panchayat rehab prosecution -> Naxalism

Conclusion

Naxalism is a development wound and a violent challenge to the State. Emerging issues are residual lethal pockets, IEDs, and urban support, even as the map shrinks. A multilayered strategy is security that protects civilians, rights that undercut the narrative, roads and schools in the same block, and politics that is not a camp. Guns without justice recreate the cadre.

Facts & figures

LWE

Left Wing Extremism: official term for the Naxal/Maoist armed movement tracked by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

FRA 2006

Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act: titles that undercut alienation narratives if implemented.

PESA 1996

Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act: gram sabha powers in **Fifth Schedule** areas, often weakly applied.

CoBRA

Commando Battalion for Resolute Action: CRPF specialised units for LWE theatre.

SAMADHAN

MHA-articulated multi-pronged approach to LWE: leadership, intelligence, funding cut-off, and related pillars.

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