

NAXALISM IN INDIA – INTERNAL SECURITY

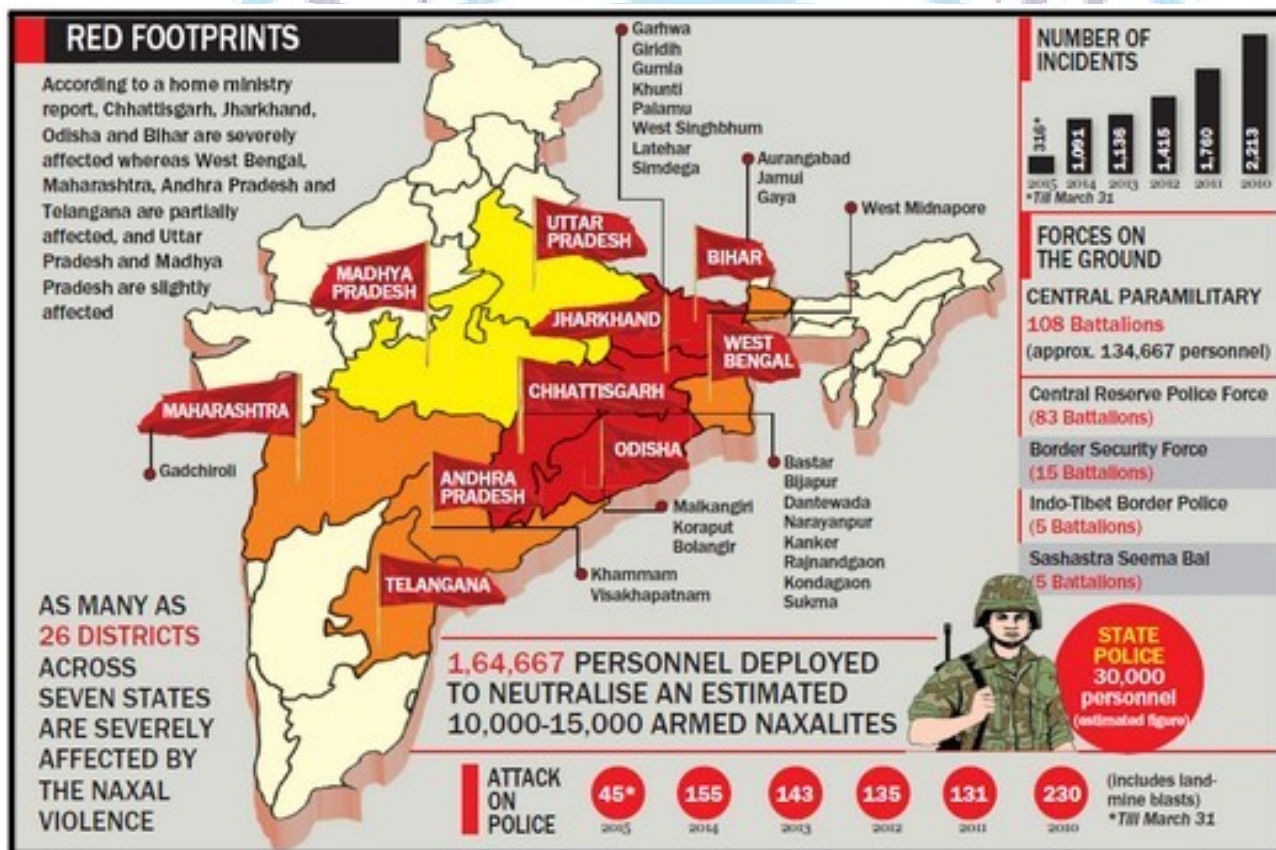
NEWS: Decline of Naxalism is a result of the government's multi-pronged approach combining robust security operations, and development initiatives focused on improving connectivity, infrastructure, and addressing the socio-economic grievances.

Decline of Naxalism in India

The decline of Naxalism is the result of a multi-pronged government strategy that combines robust security operations with development initiatives. Focus has been on improving connectivity, creating infrastructure, addressing socio-economic grievances, and countering ideology.

Historical Background of Naxalism – 1967

The roots of Naxalism can be traced to the Naxalbari uprising in West Bengal, led by Charu Majumdar, Kanu Sanyal, and Jangal Santhal, against local landlords. The uprising inspired the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) [CPI(ML)] in 1969, advocating armed revolution. The movement drew heavily from Maoist ideology, emphasizing class struggle and a “protracted people’s war” to overthrow what it perceived as a feudal and imperialist state.



Phases of the Movement

1. Initial Phase (1967–1980)

Rapid spread across eastern India but severely suppressed by the state through Operation Steeplechase (1971). Death of Charu Majumdar in 1972 led to fragmentation of the movement.

2. Resurgence & Consolidation (1980–2004)

Groups like the People’s War Group (PWG) in Andhra Pradesh and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) in Bihar revived the insurgency. Influence expanded across Central and Eastern India, forming the infamous “Red Corridor.”

3. Peak & Decline (2004–Present)

In 2004, PWG and MCC merged to form CPI (Maoist), creating a powerful insurgent organization. By late 2000s, violence had peaked, affecting nearly 180 districts across the country. Since 2010, sustained security operations and development measures have caused steady decline in influence.

Statistics of Decline

Violence Incidents – Declined by 81%, from 1,936 in 2010 to 374 in 2024.

Fatalities – Dropped by 85%, from 1,005 deaths in 2010 to 150 in 2024.

Geographical Spread – 'Most-affected' districts reduced to just six (2025) – Bijapur, Kanker, Narayanpur, Sukma (Chhattisgarh), West Singhbhum (Jharkhand), and Gadchiroli (Maharashtra). Total LWE-affected districts fell from 182 in 2013 to just 18 in 2025.

Target – Union Home Ministry aims for complete elimination of Naxalism by March 31, 2026.

Major Naxal Attacks

1. Jehanabad Jailbreak (2005) – Over 300 inmates freed in Bihar.
2. Dantewada Attack (2010) – 76 CRPF personnel killed in Chhattisgarh.
3. Jnaneswari Express Derailment (2010) – 150 deaths in West Bengal.
4. Darbha Valley Attack (2013) – 24 Congress leaders killed in Chhattisgarh.
5. Sukma Attack (2017) – 26 CRPF personnel killed.
6. Gadchiroli Bombing (2019) – 16 policemen killed in Maharashtra.
7. Sukma–Bijapur Attack (2021) – 22 security personnel killed.
8. Indravati Forest Clash (2025) – 31 rebels and 2 police officers killed.
9. Karreguttalu Hill Operation (2025) – 31 Maoists killed with no casualties on security forces.

Root Causes of Naxalism

1. Unequal Land Distribution & Agrarian Distress

Landless labourers and small farmers remain dependent on exploitative landlords due to weak land reforms. NSSO data: 60% of India's population holds only 5% of the land.

2. Forest Land Alienation

Weak implementation of laws like Forest Conservation Act & Land Acquisition laws has deprived tribals of rights. Displacement from mining and industrial projects without fair rehabilitation has created resentment.

3. Exploitation by Outsiders

Contractors, officials, and dominant groups exploit tribals, reinforcing alienation. Example: Dongria Kondh tribe in Odisha resisted Vedanta's bauxite mining project.

4. Poverty & Lack of Opportunities

High poverty in Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh fuels Maoist recruitment. Naxals recruit children, depriving them of education and childhood.

5. Inadequate Development

Remote areas lack roads, schools, hospitals, and communication facilities. Naxals sabotage development projects to retain control.

6. Administrative Apathy & Corruption

Misuse of PDS and diversion of food grains erodes faith in the state. Corruption fosters parallel governance structures run by Naxals.

7. Human Rights Violations

Salwa Judum militia declared illegal by the Supreme Court for rights violations. Allegations of custodial torture, fake encounters, and extrajudicial killings fuel Maoist propaganda.

Government's Multi-Pronged Strategy

1. Security Measures

Zero-Tolerance Approach – Establishment of 280 new security camps, 15 Joint Task Forces, 6 CRPF battalions (since 2019).

Modernization – COBRA commandos, Greyhounds (AP), Bastariya Battalion (Chhattisgarh).

Technology – Drone surveillance, AI-based intelligence, satellite imaging.

SAMADHAN Strategy – Smart leadership, Aggressive strategy, Motivation, Actionable intelligence, Dashboard monitoring, Harnessing technology, Action plan, No financing.

2. Development Measures

Forest Rights Act (2006) – Grants tribals land and forest rights.

Skill Development & Education – ROSHNI scheme, 48 ITIs, 61 Skill Development Centres, 178 EMRS in tribal areas.

Connectivity – Road projects (RRP-I, RCPLWE), mobile connectivity across LWE areas by Dec 2025.

Civic Action Programme – Medical camps, cultural activities, sports for youth engagement.

Aspirational Districts Programme – Holistic development across 112 backward districts.

Rehabilitation – Surrender policies, financial aid, skill training – 8,000+ Naxal surrenders in last decade.

Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Abhiyan – Development of tribal communities across 30 states & UTs.

3. Challenges in Combating Naxalism

Difficult Terrain – Dense forests like Abujmad give tactical advantage to Maoists.

Financial Networks – Naxals earn via extortion, illegal mining, and parallel taxation.

External Support – Links with ULFA and other insurgent groups.

Intelligence Failures – Naxals integrate with locals through village committees ("Sanghams").

Coordination Gaps – Weak synergy between central and state forces.

Human Rights Dilemma – Harsh measures risk alienating locals.

Urban Naxalism – Ideological spread through intellectual and activist circles (e.g., Bhima Koregaon case).

Way Forward

Conduct intelligence-driven operations (e.g., Operation Prahar). Choke finances through NIA and ED actions against extortion & illegal mining. Deploy drones, night vision, and counter-IED tech. Strengthen inter-state coordination on Andhra-Odisha model. Accelerate road, telecom, and banking connectivity. Empower Gram Sabhas under PESA & FRA to block Maoist parallel governance. Promote youth alternatives like Dantewada's "Education City" & Roshni scheme. Use folk art, local media, and radio for counter-narratives. Provide effective rehabilitation packages with skill training & seed capital.

Conclusion

Eliminating Naxalism requires a balanced approach combining hard power (security) and soft power (development and welfare delivery). Only by addressing root grievances while simultaneously shrinking their operational space can India achieve lasting peace in Naxal-affected regions.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-politics-of-insurgency-the-decline-of-naxalism/article69937785.ece>