

Factors Behind the Decline of Maoists in India's Red Corridor

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Decline of Maoists in India Latest News

- Maoist insurgency, once dominant across the Red Corridor, is now limited to 18 districts.
- Experts attribute this decline to targeted development initiatives, continuous counterinsurgency efforts, internal divisions, rigid ideology, leadership crises, and loss of local support.

Overview of LWE

- Left Wing Extremism (LWE), or Naxalism, is among India's most serious internal security challenges.
- Rooted in **socio-economic inequalities and guided by Maoist ideology**, it has historically targeted security forces, infrastructure, and democratic institutions.
- Emerging from the **Naxalbari movement in 1967**, it spread across the "Red Corridor," affecting states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Maharashtra, and parts of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and others.

- While claiming to fight for marginalized tribal communities, Maoists have engaged in armed violence, extortion, infrastructure destruction, and recruitment of civilians, including children.

Decline of Maoist Influence in India

- Once a formidable internal security threat, the Maoist insurgency has shrunk from nearly 180 districts in the late 2000s to just 18 today.
- Incidents of Left-Wing Extremism have fallen by over 50% between 2004–14 and 2014–23, with fatalities dropping nearly 70%.
- Naxal violence peaked in 2010 with 1,936 incidents and 1,005 deaths but declined to 374 incidents and 150 deaths by 2024.

Key Reasons Behind the Decline

• Targeted Development and Security Operations

- Government-led development schemes, along with sustained counterinsurgency efforts, have weakened Maoist control in their former strongholds.
- Landmark security operations, such as the 21-day offensive in Narayanpur, have significantly reduced their operational capacity.

• Leadership Crisis and Strategic Missteps

- The resignation of long-time leader Muppala Lakshmana Rao (Ganapathy) in 2018 marked a turning point.
- His successor, Basava Raju, relied heavily on military offensives over political outreach, alienating the support base.
- Raju's death in 2025, reportedly due to internal betrayal, deepened the leadership vacuum.

• Internal Rifts and Political Isolation

- Internal divisions, highlighted by surrendered members, have fragmented the organisation.
- The CPI (Maoist) Politburo is now believed to have only four active members, further eroding decision-making strength.

• Loss of Public Support

- In areas like Dandakaranya, Maoists prioritised military preparedness over local development, causing the very communities they claimed to protect to suffer.
- Younger tribals and peasants increasingly favour education, jobs, and mainstream integration over armed struggle.

Changing Social Outlook

- Former insurgents, such as Ginugu Narsimha Reddy, now advocate peaceful solutions.
- Initiatives like fish farming in Gumla, Jharkhand, have inspired many to abandon violence, with over 150 families in Basia block joining such ventures.
- This shift reflects the waning ideological appeal of Maoism and the rise of alternative livelihoods in once Naxal-affected regions.

Challenges Ahead

- Critics claim that the persistence of Naxalism is the result of a systemic “**protection ecosystem**”:
 - political patronage enabled its rise;
 - state inaction allowed entrenchment, and
 - intellectual advocacy granted moral cover.
- Reducing it to a fight for tribal rights concealed its violence, coercion, and extortion, allowing political forces to appear humanitarian while enabling terror.
- As the Centre targets **elimination of the insurgency by 31 March 2026**, the real challenge lies in confronting those in politics, academia, and activism who enabled and legitimised Naxalism.
- Without this reckoning, security forces may win operational battles, but the war of narratives will remain unresolved.

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