

Q1. A weakening insurgency may adapt rather than disappear. (300 Words)

Introduction

India has witnessed a historic contraction of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE), with LWE-affected districts declining from 126 in 2018 to 8 by December 2025. Yet, the end of territorial insurgency does not automatically eliminate the networks, grievances and ideological ecosystem capable of enabling its recurrence.

Changing character of Left-Wing Extremism

- 1. Territorial contraction:** LWE has shifted from a geographically extensive insurgency towards isolated residual pockets, reducing its ability to exercise sustained territorial influence.
Eg: MHA data show LWE violence fell 88% from 1,936 incidents in 2010 to 234 in 2025, while affected districts declined sharply.
- 2. Leadership and cadre erosion:** Sustained operations, arrests and surrenders have weakened the organisational hierarchy and fighting strength, compelling remaining elements to operate under greater pressure.
Eg: In 2025, security forces neutralised 364 extremists, arrested 1,022, while 2,337 surrendered, according to MHA.
- 3. From concentration to dispersal:** Loss of secure territorial bases can encourage remnants to rely on smaller, decentralised and less visible networks rather than large formations and established strongholds.
Eg: Police stations reporting LWE violence declined from 465 in 2010 to 119 in 2025, demonstrating its shrinking geographical footprint.
- 4. Greater importance of non-armed networks:** As armed capacity weakens, logistics, financing, propaganda, recruitment and other support activities become relatively more significant for organisational survival.
Eg: The National Policy and Action Plan, 2015 addresses LWE in a comprehensive manner rather than treating it merely as an armed law-and-order problem.
- 5. Exploitation of unresolved grievances:** Extremist mobilisation can survive by leveraging governance gaps, socio-economic exclusion and local grievances, even after armed dominance has diminished.

Eg: The government's LWE policy consequently combines security operations with development and protection of local rights and entitlements.

Emerging security challenges

1. **Risk of resurgence:** Areas recently freed from extremist influence remain vulnerable if the security-development vacuum reappears after intensive operations are scaled down.
Eg: The Centre created 30 Legacy and Thrust districts to continue support in areas no longer classified as LWE-affected and prevent relapse.
2. **Detection of dispersed networks:** Small and fragmented networks are harder to identify than territorial concentrations, increasing dependence on human intelligence and granular local policing.
Eg: MHA assistance includes intelligence sharing, police modernisation, training and fortified police stations to strengthen State-level capacity.
3. **Ideological persistence:** Declining violence may not automatically remove radical narratives and recruitment potential, particularly where communities continue to perceive exclusion or injustice.
Eg: The 2015 National Policy and Action Plan explicitly incorporates public perception, governance, development and community entitlements alongside security measures.
4. **Reintegration challenge:** Large-scale surrender creates the parallel task of rehabilitating former cadres so that unemployment, stigma or weak reintegration does not facilitate recidivism.
Eg: The Centre's rehabilitation framework provides financial assistance and stipends to surrendered cadres to facilitate their return to mainstream society.
5. **Centre-State coordination:** Residual networks crossing administrative boundaries require sustained inter-state intelligence and operational coordination, despite declining overall violence.
Eg: Since police and public order are State subjects, the Centre supplements States through CAPFs, intelligence-sharing and security infrastructure.

Strategy for preventing resurgence

1. **Hold and consolidate liberated areas:** Security gains must be institutionalised through permanent local policing, intelligence networks and accessible administration, rather

than premature withdrawal.

Eg: Continued support to Legacy and Thrust districts reflects the principle of consolidating gains even after an area ceases to be LWE-affected.

2. **Development saturation:** Roads, telecom, banking, education, healthcare and livelihoods should reach remote communities rapidly, converting improved security into a visible peace dividend.

Eg: The government's Seva Dera model in Bastar seeks doorstep delivery and saturation of government schemes in villages emerging from LWE influence.

3. **Rights-based governance:** Effective implementation of tribal and forest rights, responsive grievance redressal and participatory governance can reduce the social space available for extremist mobilisation.

Eg: The National Policy and Action Plan, 2015 specifically combines development with ensuring the rights and entitlements of local communities.

4. **Rehabilitation and social reintegration:** Surrender policies should combine financial support with skills, livelihoods, counselling and community acceptance to permanently detach cadres from extremist structures.

Eg: 3,927 cadres surrendered between 2024 and March 2026, highlighting the potential of rehabilitation alongside calibrated security pressure.

5. **Community-centred prevention:** Tribal youth must gain credible avenues for participation, cultural expression and economic mobility, reducing opportunities for renewed extremist recruitment.

Eg: Bastar Olympics 2025 recorded about 3.91 lakh participants, illustrating the use of large-scale youth engagement in post-LWE consolidation.

Conclusion

The next phase must therefore move from merely defeating armed formations to building irreversible peace and State legitimacy in formerly affected regions. A durable victory lies in ensuring that security gains translate into justice, opportunity and trusted governance.