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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

After Naxalism, What Replaces the Red Corridor?

 INDIAN EXPRESS

20 August 2026

SECURITY & DEFENCE

SOCIAL ISSUES

GS2

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After Naxalism, What Replaces the Red Corridor?

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INTERVIEW ANGLE

"The editorial argues state capacity, not security operations, is now the binding constraint in the former Red Corridor. What specific institutional capabilities does sustained development in these areas actually require?"

 Every fact web-verified against primary sources

THE LIFT LINE

Winning the security war against Naxalism was the visible half of the problem. Building the state that should have been there all along is the half that actually determines whether it stays won.

WHY THIS EDITORIAL MATTERS FOR YOUR EXAM

This editorial offers a rich GS3 internal-security and GS2 governance analysis of the post-insurgency development challenge, a recurring theme in India's internal-security and regional-development policy discourse.

GS Paper 3: Internal security, Left Wing Extremism, development-security nexus.

GS Paper 2: State capacity, governance in underdeveloped regions, welfare-scheme delivery.

CONCEPT	MEANING	WHY IT IS TESTABLE
Red Corridor	The belt of central and eastern Indian districts historically affected by Left Wing Extremism	The geographic focus of this editorial
Development-security nexus	The idea that insurgency and underdevelopment are mutually reinforcing, requiring simultaneous, not sequential, policy attention	The editorial's core conceptual framework
State capacity	A government's institutional ability to deliver governance, services and infrastructure effectively	The dimension the editorial argues now requires the primary policy focus

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

India's **Left Wing Extremism (LWE)** insurgency, rooted in the 1967 Naxalbari uprising, expanded over subsequent decades into a significant security challenge across parts of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, and neighbouring states, historically termed the **Red Corridor**. Sustained, intensified security operations in recent years have substantially reduced LWE's territorial control and operational strength across most previously affected districts.

THE ANALYSIS

- 1. Security success and development success are distinct achievements.** Reducing insurgent activity removes one obstacle to development but does not itself build the roads, schools and institutions that regional development requires; treating security success as sufficient risks stalling at an incomplete transformation.
- 2. The vacuum-filling challenge is inherently harder and slower than the security phase.** Building durable state capacity, infrastructure and functioning local governance in historically underserved regions requires sustained multi-year investment, unlike the more concentrated operational nature of counter-insurgency campaigns.
- 3. Historical state absence, not just insurgency, was the original driver of instability.** Since the Red Corridor's **vulnerability** stemmed substantially from the state's historical failure to provide basic governance and opportunity, addressing that root cause is essential to preventing renewed instability of any form, not just a residual LWE threat.
- 4. Residual security vigilance remains a legitimate concurrent concern.** Even as development becomes the primary focus, pockets of residual insurgent activity or the risk of new forms of instability mean security vigilance cannot be entirely deprioritised during the transition.
- 5. This connects to India's broader regional-development equity challenge.** The former Red Corridor's transformation is also a test case for India's capacity to extend genuine development to its most historically underserved regions more broadly.

DATA AND INSTITUTIONS VAULT

PRELIMS-GRADE FACTS:

The Naxalbari uprising (1967), in West Bengal, is widely cited as the origin point of the Naxalite/Left Wing Extremism movement in India.

LWE-affected districts have historically received targeted central assistance through schemes like the Special Central Assistance for LWE-affected districts.

Do not treat “Naxalism dismantled” as synonymous with “Red Corridor development challenge resolved”; the editorial explicitly argues these are separate, sequential challenges, with the second still substantially unaddressed.

THE DEBATE

FOR (shift decisively to development-first policy): With security gains substantially secured, continued heavy security-operations focus risks diverting resources and attention from the now-primary development challenge.

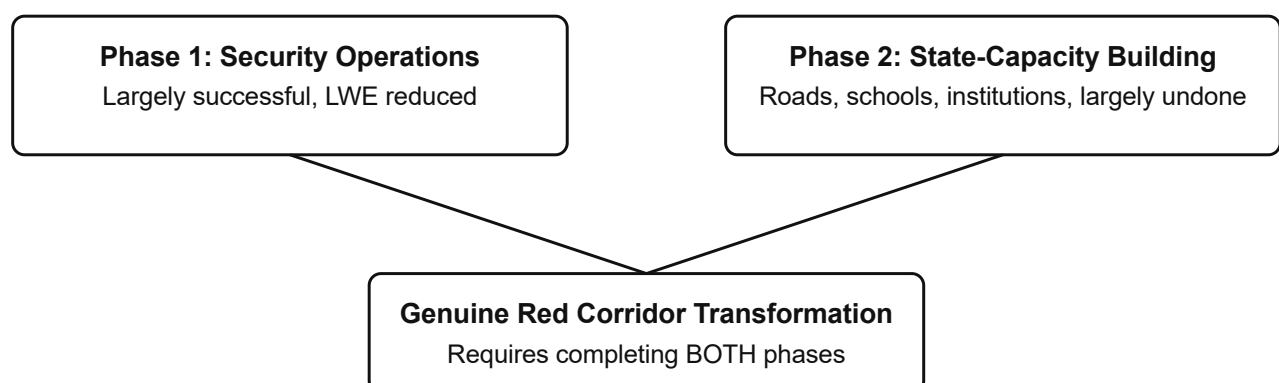
AGAINST (maintain vigilance, avoid premature declaration of victory): Declaring the security phase effectively complete risks under-resourcing continued vigilance against residual insurgent activity or new instability in a still-fragile transition period.

Balanced verdict: The most effective approach likely sustains a reduced but continued security presence while decisively reallocating primary policy attention and resources toward development infrastructure and state-capacity building, treating the two as concurrent rather than strictly sequential priorities.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS

When a long-running security challenge shows substantial improvement, resist treating the improvement as the endpoint. Ask what underlying conditions originally enabled the challenge to develop, and evaluate whether those conditions have themselves been addressed, or merely suppressed by security measures that could, in principle, need to be sustained indefinitely if the underlying conditions remain unresolved.

DIAGRAM-IN-WORDS



TAKEAWAY BOX

Winning the security war against Naxalism was the visible half of the problem. Building the state that should have been there all along is the half that actually determines whether it stays won.

Naxalbari uprising (1967); Red Corridor states: Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar; Special Central Assistance for LWE-affected districts.

Does the state owe a special developmental obligation to regions it historically neglected, beyond the general obligation it owes all citizens?

Connects to past UPSC Mains questions on Left Wing Extremism and the development-security nexus in India's internal security discourse.

*“Reducing insurgent activity is necessary but not sufficient for transforming a conflict-affected region.”
Discuss with reference to India's Red Corridor.*

Source: After Naxalism, What Replaces the Red Corridor? — Ujiyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

● KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE

Indian Express argues that with Left Wing Extremism (LWE) largely dismantled across most of its former stronghold areas, the government's harder and more consequential task now is filling the vacated administrative and developmental space with roads, schools, livelihoods and functioning institutions, transitioning the former Red Corridor from an insurgency-management challenge into a genuine, sustained development corridor.



SUPPORTING

- Security operations against LWE have succeeded in significantly reducing insurgent activity and territorial control across most previously affected districts, shifting the primary policy challenge from counter-insurgency to state-capacity building.
- A vacuum left by receding insurgency, if not filled by functioning state institutions and development infrastructure, risks either socio-economic stagnation in already underdeveloped regions or renewed vulnerability to alternative forms of instability.



COUNTER

A counter-view holds that residual security concerns in pockets of the former Red Corridor remain genuine, and that declaring the security phase effectively complete risks premature disengagement from areas where insurgent remnants or new forms of instability could still re-emerge without continued vigilance.



WAY FORWARD

The editorial's position is that the government's policy focus must now deliberately shift toward sustained investment in roads, schools, healthcare, livelihoods and functioning local governance institutions across the former Red Corridor, treating this as the essential next phase, not merely a lower-priority afterthought, following the security phase's substantial success.


MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK
QUESTION

Examine the challenges of transitioning former Left Wing Extremism-affected regions from a security-operations focus to sustained development, with reference to the Red Corridor. (250 words)

INTRODUCTION

Indian Express examines the post-insurgency policy challenge in India's former Left Wing Extremism-affected Red Corridor, arguing that with security operations largely successful, the government's harder task now is building genuine, sustained state capacity and development infrastructure in these long-neglected regions.

BODY

India's Red Corridor, spanning parts of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and other central and eastern states, was for decades characterised by significant Left Wing Extremism (Naxalite) insurgent activity, driven substantially by the state's historical absence in providing basic governance, infrastructure and economic opportunity in these regions. Sustained security operations over recent years have significantly reduced LWE's territorial control and operational capacity, a genuine policy achievement, but the editorial's central argument is that reduced insurgent activity does not automatically translate into improved living conditions or functioning governance for residents of these regions; it merely removes one specific obstacle to development, security risk, while leaving the deeper, longer-standing development deficit unaddressed.

The editorial frames the current moment as a critical transition point: having achieved substantial security gains, the government now faces the comparatively harder and more resource-intensive task of building durable roads, schools, healthcare infrastructure, livelihood opportunities and functioning local governance institutions across regions that have historically lacked them, work that requires sustained multi-year investment and administrative capacity-building rather than the more concentrated, time-bound nature of security operations.

CONCLUSION

A complete Mains answer should distinguish between security success (reducing insurgent activity) and development success (building durable state capacity and economic opportunity), since the former Red Corridor's ultimate transformation into a genuinely stable, prosperous region depends on sustained progress on the second dimension, which is inherently slower and more difficult to achieve than the first.

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