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India's Experiment with Revolution

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India's Experiment with Revolution¹

Ajay K. Mehra²

INTRODUCTION

The Marxist-Leninist-Maoist revolutionary politics that began in India in 1946 in the Telangana region of what is now Andhra Pradesh has survived a violent rollercoaster ride to afflict half the Indian states in six decades. It's appeal draws a motivated leadership and cadres even as India liberalizes its economy and the processes and political economy of globalization are on. The Soviet Union as the source and inspiration of the Marxist revolution and world communism does not exist any more; and the People's Republic of China has embraced the model of capitalist economic growth, tying up with the world market economy. This invites an analytical critique of the phenomenon.

Even though the theoretical foundations of Marxism, Leninism and Maoism have lost their relevance and appeal and the possibility of an international communist revolution too have disappeared, the 'Indian revolution' thrives on the objective conditions of poverty. High economic and income disparity and exploitation of the impoverished continue to exist in India and create situations conducive to revolutionary and radical politics. Further, the processes and dynamics of globalization have been creating dichotomies and conditions conducive to

¹ I first worked on Naxalism on a project from the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Kandy, Sri Lanka in 1995-96. I revisited the issue from the perspective of terrorism on an advice from Prof. Paul Wilkinson. This paper is an extension of the interest I developed then. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Prof. Kingsley de Silva, Prof. Paul Wilkinson and my friends Prof. Partha S Ghosh, Prof. Jorge Heine and Prof. E. Sridharan, who commented on the earlier draft of this paper. I would also like to thank the South Asia Institute, particularly Prof. Subrata Mitra and Dr. Clemens Spiess for showing interest in the paper as well as the anonymous referee for making useful suggestions.

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revolutionary politics and building support base for it. As the Indian state and society are being dragged them into vortex of a developmental dilemma, where the past deficits are being juxtaposed against disadvantages inherent and perceived in the present initiatives, conflict intensifies.

Naxalism³, India's Maoist revolutionary politics, has had a roller coaster graph in different parts of the country till the parties began consolidation in the 1990s to emerge as a crucial factor – politically from their perspective and as a security threat from the government's viewpoint – in a large part of the country in the new millennium. Historically, a clear delineation of the contexts and objective conditions of the 'revolutions' in different parts of India, at different periods during the past six decades and their lack of cohesion as well as periodic fragmentation is crucial to the understanding of the current status of the revolutionary politics in India – its ideological as well as combative strength, support base, legitimacy and prospects in the years to come. Politically, the liberal democratic state in India needs to be critiqued to understand why a movement of this kind originated and has expanded to the present extent and the movement too deserves a socio-political audit from democratic perspective. Equally necessary is a critique of the economic policies that have created islands of deprivation, which have over the years emerged as pockets of support for the Maoist movement in the country.

THE ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

The leaders of the Communist Party of India (CPI), who had organized the peasants in the Telangana region during the 1940s and had spearheaded the first Marxist-Leninist-Maoist 'revolution' in India since 1946, would neither have visualised an end to their revolutionary dream within five years, nor would they have realised multiple splits in the decades that followed in the Indian communism.⁴ The parliamentary foray of the CPI and 'the revolutionary bonafides of the leadership'⁵ in the party were one set of paradoxes within that led to the first split in the communist movement in India in 1964, the differences between the USSR and China signifying a split in the international communism being the other.⁶ In fact, while maintaining the ultimate rationale for revolution despite

³ Naxalbari movement (1967-72), according to Sumanta Banerjee (1984:i): '... has continued to symbolize any assault upon the assumptions and institutions that support the established order in India.'

⁴ The strong division within the CPI in 1950-51 between the supporters of the Soviet and the Chinese lines had a highly doctrinaire approach to revolution emanating from respective experiences, in which the Indian situation must fit in. The first Indian revolution was thus withdrawn on the advice of Stalin in 1951. (Banerjee 1984:66-67, Sundarayya 1972:308). The factional doctrinaire debates led to the future splits in Indian communism and continuing fragmentation in the revolutionary politics. For a comprehensive discussion see Banerjee (1984:64-80) and Sundarayya (1972).

⁵ The controversy erupted in 1964 regarding two letters (now in the National Archives of India) written by S. A. Dange, then general secretary of the CPI, after his conviction in the Kanpur Conspiracy case to the governor-general-in-council in 1924 in which in exchange for his release from the jail he pledged support to the government and expressed his willingness to serve as a police-agent. (Ahmad 1970: 344; Nandi 1971: 109-13; Ray, 1988:125).

⁶ The reaction against 'revisionism' in the party twelve years after the CPI began participating in the parliamentary politics led to the creation of the CPI (Marxist) – so named by the Election Commission of India – at the Seventh Congress of the CPI held in Calcutta from October 31 to November 7, 1964. The new communist party describes its birth and politico-ideological existence 'the struggle against revisionism and sectarianism in the communist movement at the international and national level, in order to defend the

being part of the mainstream parliamentary politics, which has emerged as an important arena of issue-based democratic contestation since 1952, has continued to be a major dilemma as well as *raison d'être* for fragmentation of the left revolutionary movement in India.

However, the ideological, organizational, strategic debates and paradoxes within the communist movement in India persisted. They surfaced in West Bengal in the 1960s. The mobilization of the peasants and the tribals in the state against their exploitation and for revolutionary politics since the 1950s by the CPI was taken over by the CPM after the 1964 split. However, the CPM too decided to have a go at electoral politics in 1967 general elections after an intense debate organizationally with the plea that situation in India was not yet ripe for revolution. The results of the 1967 general elections, in which the Congress experienced reverses nationwide as well as in the state and the CPM became a part of the coalition government in West Bengal, followed the Naxalbari revolt on March 3, 1967. Obviously those tasting power and those working passionately in the field to bring about a 'revolution' differed, causing another split in the party in 1969, when the supporters of the revolutionary path separated to form the CPI (Marxist-Leninist). Thus the second round of 'revolution' too was suppressed within a decade.

However, the revolutionary ember had been smouldering throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, which consolidated during the 1980s in Srikakulam (Andhra Pradesh). The exploited hill tribes (the *girijans*) there were mobilized by a non-party school teacher; the communist parties stepped in later, indicating the existence of socio-economic conditions which make the logic of revolutionary politics acceptable to a large number of people living on the margins over a long period of time. Like the Telangana movement, the Naxalbari movement the Srikakulam movement too remained locale-specific and despite spurts of violence in the tribal areas in eastern Madhya Pradesh (now Chhatisgarh) and central and south Bihar (now Jharkhand) in the 1990s, the militarized activities of the People's War Group in Andhra Pradesh remained the main causes for concern for the State and Union governments. No wonder, it has elicited highly militarized, though not very successful, responses from the Indian state.

The spread of Maoist insurgency to 194 of the country's 612 districts across sixteen states, its linkages with the Maoists in Nepal that threatened to create a north-south red corridor, till the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) came over ground and decided to join the emerging parliamentary politics and their consolidation in a compact revolutionary zone (CRZ) came with a decade of liberalized economic policies and the first wave of globalization in the country. This makes two things clear. First, liberalization of the economy might have reduced the level of poverty; pockets of acute deprivation in the country continue to exist for the revolutionary politics to survive.⁷ Second, the forces and processes unleashed by globalization have, on the one hand, aggravated the existing land-related tensions and widened the displacement-rehabilitation hiatus in rural India

scientific and revolutionary tenets of Marxism-Leninism and its appropriate application in the concrete Indian conditions.' <http://www.cpim.org/>

⁷ India's poverty ratio was 45.3 percent (47.4 percent rural and 35.5 percent urban) in 1951-52, climbing to a whopping 56.7 percent (57.6 percent rural and 52.9 percent urban) in 1965-66. It continued till 1978 and began declining in 1983. The Planning Commission computed India's poverty ratio in 2004-05 at 28.3 percent (29.2 percent rural and 26 percent urban), which has risen from 26.1 percent in 1999-2000 (27.1 percent rural and 23.6 percent urban), showing that still between one-fourth to one-third of the Indian population live in penury (Datta 1998 and Planning Commission). Despite the reduction of poverty from around half to near a quarter, the number of poor, both rural and urban, is still disconcertingly high and the income disparity between the rich and poor is widening.

and, on the other, have heightened the fear of displacement without adequate livelihood-based compensation. These processes as well as insensitive and rough handling of spontaneous but impassioned protests, parliamentary at times, violent on occasions, have created support bases for extremist politics of the Maoist kind.⁸

CONTEXTUALIZING THE INDIAN REVOLUTION

The 'revolutionary' movements and traditions in India were not post-colonial modernization-driven phenomena, they date back to the late Mughal period and the British rule (Guha 1983:6). The changes brought about by the British in the system of land tenure and revenue since the grant of diwani in Bengal in 1765 to the East India Company after the battle of Buxar retained and perpetuated the exploitative structures of the earlier systems. The East India Company strengthened the existing structures of intermediaries designed by the indigenous regimes and created its own, e.g. zamindari system under the permanent settlement, to extract surplus and revenue from agriculture (Parthasarathy 1986:20-21). While it affected the peasants in general, the tribals amongst them were worse affected, because their existing systems and values were virtually dismantled with rapid changes. They neither developed an alternative system of values, nor could they cope with the market and the delicate balance of prices and build up diversified agricultural base to fall back on in times of slump or famine (Duyker 1987:5-6).⁹ 'Rents constituted the most substantial part of income yielded by property in land. Its incumbents related to the vast majority of agricultural producers as landlords to tenant-cultivators, sharecroppers, agricultural labourers and many intermediate types with features derived from each of these categories. The element that was constant in this relationship with all its variety was the extraction of the peasants' surplus by means determined less by the free play of the forces of a market economy than by the extra-economic force of the landlord's standing in local society and in the colonial polity' (Guha 1983:6). The stratum of zamindars, inamdars *et al*, endowed with 'land titles' formed one strong basis of indirect British rule, a stratum that assisted and participated in the drain of agricultural surplus (Bergmann 1984:1). Not surprisingly, 'agrarian disturbances in many forms and on scales ranging from local riots to war-like campaigns spread over many districts were endemic throughout the first three quarters of British rule until the very end of the nineteenth century' (Guha 1983:1).

In none of the 110 known instances of violent peasant uprisings in 117 years, from 1783 to 1900, was the rebellion spontaneous or undertaken in a fit of absent-mindedness; in each case they followed systematic mobilization under a committed leadership. Mobilization for rebellion could not have taken place without 'consultation among the peasants in various forms' and at various levels – clan elders

⁸ For debates on how developmental dichotomies in the form of displacement-rehabilitation hiatus and other forms of inequities and contradictions have fuelled Maoism see, Mehra (2006), Mohanty (2006b) Chakravartty (2007) and Bhaduri (2007). Mehra correlates the continuing and expanding 'hiatus' to the areas affected with Maoism, Mohanty analyses the implications of Orissa's Kalinganagar episode, Chakravartty presents an incriminating report against the CPM-led West Bengal government of a citizens' team's visit to Singur, where land was acquired for the Tata group's car project. Amit Bhaduri (2007:552-53) describes this process as Developmental Terrorism and asserts that such policies and processes create conditions conducive for Maoist rebellion.

⁹ In case of Santhals, a tribal group in the forefront of the Naxalbari movement, the overall socio-economic changes brought about by the East India Company between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries created a situation under which they were pushed into a debt-trap as they paid more for their purchases than their modest earning. Eventually, they were torn from their meagre holdings, which were mortgaged for loans at exorbitant rates of interest. The Hul (Santhal insurrection) of 1855 was precipitated by these factors (Duyker, 1987: 6).

and caste panchayats, neighbourhood conventions, larger mass gatherings, and so on (Guha 1983:3-9). Importantly, violent or militant revolt was not the first option of the agitating peasants, as they tried to obtain justice by deputation, petition and peaceful demonstration before they took up the arms.

Since the poorer rural sections, landless labourers, tenants, sharecroppers, smallholders formed an essential part of the mass basis of the Indian National Congress in its struggle for *swaraj* (self-rule) and *poorna swaraj* (independence), the Congress officially included agrarian reform in its programme in 1935, and later demanded even more radical changes in the agrarian structure, e.g. cooperative agricultural production (Bergmann 1984:1). But continued pauperization of the peasants, the inability of the Indian republican state to effectively enforce meaningful land reform to mitigate the woes of the small, marginal and landless cultivators and the complicity of the state with the landlords in oppressive exploitation of the peasants kept the possibilities of peasant movements, peaceful or militant, alive after independence. Further, most militant peasant movements in post-independence India have operated within the ideological framework of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, because a Marxist leadership, working with the peasants of the area, came in with a visible and organizationally supported leadership and an ideology that strengthened the rationale for the struggle against the exploitative landlords and the state structure, both of whom supported and perpetuated each other, giving the movement the required aim, programme and a leadership (Guha 1983:9).

THE PRECURSORS

The emerging trajectory and context of the current Maoist ‘revolution’ necessitates a review of the precursors, which have a common lineage and persisting issues.

The Telangana Movement: The Telangana (erstwhile Hyderabad state) peasant uprising led by the Communist Party of India in 1944 was rooted in the social fabric and political economy of the region. The domination of the *deshmukhs*, revenue collectors with magisterial powers, who survived regime changes to be entrenched as landlords (*dora*) with absolute control over their ‘*parganas*’ (administrative units consisting of twenty to sixty villages) and over the lives of peasants in their domain, eventually led to the uprising in the Telangana countryside in the 1940s. Revenue collection being the primary objective of the successive regimes, functional autonomy to the landlords vis-à-vis their *praja* (subjects) gave them unlimited powers, which was further aggravated by the prevalence of revenue collection in kind, which was paid in cash to the state, giving indispensability to the *deshmukhs*. The *Doras* also took on the role of merchants and usurers and perpetuating the practice of servile labour, reducing a vast majority of sharecroppers and landless labourers to a life of slavery (Thirumali, 1992:477-81). The ‘dalits’ – washer men, cobblers, potters, etc. – had to offer free service to them, others had to send one male member daily for household work under the *vetti* (forced labour) system. The *Doras* also physically exploited the women (Thirumali 1992; Ranga Rao 1979:152 and Sundarayya 1972:11). Inflation and food crisis in the wake of the Second World War created indebtedness. Taking advantage the *Doras* seized land, adding to landlessness amongst the peasants.¹⁰

¹⁰ The iniquitous situation in the Telangana region is described by S. C. Dube (1955:72) who found that in 1951-52 one family in a village in the region owned 800 acres, eight others approximately 100 each, twenty more about forty acres, and another 169 no more than five acres each. One holding of four acres of dry land and six acres of wet land was in fact being

The CPI infiltrated into and gradually took control of the Andhra Mahasabha, founded in 1928 against domination of the Telugus by the Urdu-speaking Muslim elite and the Marathis in the Nizam-ruled Hyderabad state, transforming it into a radical organisation. The grain levy campaign launched by them in 1941 galvanized the rural masses.¹¹ The movement turned violent in 1946 when people of Jangaon Taluka resisted the attempt by the *deshmukh* to seize the harvest of a woman. The CPI's Central Committee then launched a militant mass struggle, mobilising and organising the masses by championing issues like *vetti* and illegal and exorbitant exactions from tenants with the threat of evictions. Consequently,

.... the peasantry in about 3000 villages, covering roughly a population of three million in an area of about 16,000 square miles had succeeded in setting up *gram raj* (village rule) on the basis of fighting village panchayats.

The landlords were driven out of their houses and their lands were seized by the peasantry. One million acres of land were redistributed under the guidance of people's committees. All evictions were stopped and the forced labour service was abolished. The daily wages of agricultural labourers were increased and minimum wage was enforced.

The people could organise and build a powerful militia comprising 10,000 village squad members and 2000 regular guerrilla squads, in defence of the peasantry.... (Sundarayya 1972:4).

The military moved in after accession of Hyderabad to India in 1948 and severely suppressed the communists. The landlords and rich peasants switched their support to the Congress, as the Congress became the main advisor to the brief martial law administration and later participated in the civil administration. The CPI relaunched its guerrilla warfare following a serious reconsideration, but they could not sustain it. Significantly, popular support too started dwindling after Acharya Vinoba Bhave toured Telangana in 1951 and launched *bhoodan* (land-gift) movement.¹² Eventually, internal contradictions leading to Soviet advice resulted in withdrawal of the movement by CPI in 1951 (Ram 1971:52; Sundarayya 1972:308; Banerjee 1984:66-67). The withdrawal of the popular support due to dilution of the rationale of the movement proved critical to its withdrawal. The abolition of the *jagirdari* system by the government and initiation of land reforms, howsoever imperfect, weaned away the masses from the movement.

Naxalbari and the Spring Thunder over

shared, and cultivated jointly, by seven families. As many as 110 out of 380 families had no land at all. Also see, Pavier (1981:43).

¹¹ The Nizam's regime had imposed a compulsory levy of grains from the peasants, which too helped the landlords. The Andhra Mahasabha's campaign against it in 1941 proved to be the launching pad for the Telangana movement.

¹² The Acharya was Gandhi's disciple and a *Sarvodaya* (upliftment of all) leader, who discovered the *bhoodan* movement during the Telangana campaign. Invited to Telangana by one of his colleagues, Bhave asked the landowners for a contribution of 100 acres of land in a village to meet the landless peasants' requirement, which came forthwith. The internationally acclaimed *bhoodan* movement of the 1950s and 1960s was thus born. It made tremendous impact in blunting the Telangana 'revolution' and was appreciated for its innovativeness and concern for the poor, though it fizzled out by the 1970s due to contradictions such as contribution of barren land by many donors.

The tribal-peasant uprising in Naxalbari in West Bengal's northern frontier district Darjeeling (March 3, 1967) was also precipitated due to the exploitation by the landlords. It reflected existence of mass discontent carrying seeds of such unrests despite warning signals given by the Telangana movement (Mohanty 1977:31). The CPI/CPM had been mobilizing, indoctrinating and arming the tribals and peasants for a decade. An attack on a *jotedar's*¹³ granary flared up after clashes with the police in Naxalbari, Phansideva and Kharibari Police Stations (PS) of the Siliguri subdivision.

The disquiet in Darjeeling district reflected that land reforms enacted in the 1950s, were not implemented effectively.¹⁴ The ceiling provisions of the 1954 Act made 17,000 acres available for redistribution of which only 7,500 acres had been redistributed till 1967, leaving over fifty percent of the cultivators in this area holding one to five acres of land. Most such cultivators ended up as sharecroppers, cultivating *jotedars'* land on a year-to-year basis and dividing the harvest with him. But whereas the West Bengal Estates Act of 1954 provided that the cultivator-sharecropper should get two-thirds of the harvest, in reality the produce was being equally divided. Since he received his share only in kind (paddy), which was insufficient, he was forced to borrow both grains and money from the *jotedar* for living, seeds, fertilizers, festivals and other special occasions, who charged high interest keeping the sharecroppers in a state of serfdom.

The leaders remained active in the area, mobilizing people against exploitation and leading agitations against exploitative policies, despite a ban on the CPI since 1950. Kanu Sanyal (1974: 21-27) outlines evolution the Naxalbari movement:

- (i) 1951-54: organisational stage, in which 'the peasantry of Naxalbari, advanced through clashes to get them organised.'
- (ii) 1953-57: was the period of worker-peasant alliance and 'a united class of workers and peasants'.
- (iii) 1955-62: was a very significant stage when responding to the call given by the West Bengal *Kisan Sabha* (Peasants' Organisation) 'to regain the possession of *benami*¹⁵ land' the sub divisional *Kisan Samiti* (peasants' council) in Naxalbari 'gave a call to confiscate the entire produce of *jotedar's* land', unless the *jotedar* could furnish proof of their ownership before the peasant committee. A call was also given to the peasants to arm themselves to protect their crop from the *jotedars* and the police.

¹³ Landowners who had been leased out lands for specific periods by the British government under the Acts of 1859 and 1879.

¹⁴ 'The 1954 Estates Act of West Bengal had prescribed a ceiling of 25 acres of land for each household. But the loopholes in the Act were large enough for the big landowners to escape the ceiling provisions'.

Ninety-nine percent of Darjeeling's 1,256.6 square miles is rural, with the lowest density of population in West Bengal. Its population in 1971 was 756,677; Siliguri subdivision, in which the three PSs lie, had a high (58.59 percent) tribal population. In each of the three PS areas in 1971, a very small number of *jotedars* – four percent in Naxalbari, seven percent in Kharibari and six percent in Phansideva – cultivated more than fifteen acres of land. The number of those with larger holdings was even smaller, with a high number of landless and nearly sixty percent of the population as non-workers. Further, Close to ten percent of 219,848 population of the Siliguri subdivision were wage-labour in tea plantations, mining, forestry, etc. They formed an important part of the Naxalite movement. The Communists had cleverly built a strong peasant-worker bond through the Bonus Struggle of 1955 (Mohanty 1977:32-37).

¹⁵ *Benami*, literally 'without name', refers to the reaction of the landlords to the Land Ceiling Act, whereby they transferred 'surplus' in the name of family members, in a fictitious name, even in the names of pets.

(iv) 1962-64: During the fourth stage, despite the India-China war, the peasants refused to be infested by chauvinism.

Two major splits in the Communist movement in India in 1964 and 1969 were consequences of radicalization of the splitting unit; each split resulting in the parent unit being accused of 'revisionism', making compromises for the sake of power, and so on.¹⁶ Even during this phase of painstakingly organising peasants in the region, the CPM leadership differed sharply on the strategy to be adopted, which reflected at two levels. First, the key leaders such as Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal, though agreeing that 'Chinese path is the path of liberation in India; (and) agrarian revolution can be completed through armed struggle', disagreed regarding strategy as discussed by Charu Mazumdar in six (later eight) documents outlining the strategy for revolution (Sanyal 1974:21-27; Mukherji, 1979:42-45). Later consensus advocated seizure of land from the *jotedars*, cultivate the land and share half the produce from plantation workers' land.

The unanticipated windfall of power in 1967 had a section of the CPM feeling that India was not ripe for revolution and witnessed the CPM-in-government negotiating with the CPM-in-revolution. The group led by Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal was engaged in negotiations with Home Minister Jyoti Basu and Land Revenue Minister Hare Krishna Konar. Konar's Cabinet mission to talk to Mazumdar and Sanyal in May 1967 was unsuccessful. Despite Jyoti Basu's instructions to the police not to enter the rebel strongholds, the movement took a violent turn, inviting retaliation from the police. The Naxalites ignored three appeals by the West Bengal Cabinet to surrender by 4 July 1967, the key leaders were arrested and by September, the situation was 'brought under control' (Mukherji 1979:42-57; Mohanty 1977:44-45). But the administration did immediately take up 'those aspects of land reforms which could be tackled "completely and quickly" and thereby restore confidence among the panic-stricken people in the affected areas'. By September, the government claimed to have distributed 984.22 acres of land among 686 persons (Mukherji 1979:57), but the land distribution by the bureaucratic machinery created a number of fresh anomalies (Mukherji 1979:57-73).

The CPM split in 1969. The new-born CPI (ML) resumed the movement in December 1969, which turned more party-based, conspiratorial and violent, relying increasingly on terror by its guerrilla squads, neglecting mass mobilization of the peasants and focus on agrarian issues. The government retaliated, crushing it by mid-1972. Despite frequent labour unrests in West Bengal industries during the late 1960s and marked increase in the left-supported student agitations, which proved precious for the Naxalite movement in carrying forward the agrarian struggle, the Naxalite movement did not have a significant urban impact.

The Srikakulam Movement

The revival of the tribal-peasant movement against the miseries of the hill tribes in Srikakulam, the northernmost district in Andhra Pradesh, in 1959 with the formation of the *Girijan Sangham* (Hill People's Association) indicated persistence of the issues of the 1946 movement. In 1965, the Sangham organised a meet of 300 representatives of the agricultural workers of the area, conscientizing them of their

¹⁶ The CPI-CPM split also split the social base of the party, which explains the involvement of the CPM in revolutionary politics since 1964. The CPI retained the intellectuals, the so-called 'fellow travellers', and trade unions particularly in the organised sector and the professions, the CPM took away the organisations of the poor peasantry and agricultural labour (see *The India China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India, New Delhi*, 1963).

rights. The process continued till 1967, when a schoolteacher Vempatapu Satynarayana organised the *girijans* of Parvathipuram taluk of the district into a non-violent movement against exploitation, which invited the attention of the prominent Andhra Communists, who persuaded him to join the CPI. For a decade, till the outbreak in Naxalbari, he frustrated himself by organizing peaceful agitations with some success on the wage issue. The organised violence by the landlords and complicity of the state administration and the police with them turned him and his *girijan* followers to violent action. He was eventually killed in a police 'encounter' in 1970 (Calman 1985:45-48).

Srikakulam district had 43.1 percent of the total population either as cultivators or agricultural labour and non-working population amounting to nearly half of the total population according to 1961 census. An increase in agricultural labour in proportion to the cultivators indicated that big farmers grabbed the land belonging to small cultivators. Even though transfer of land of the tribals to others is forbidden by law, the big landowners managed to obtain informal mortgage of their land, reducing them as labourers on their own land and their annual per capita income to (1968) Rs. 135 (\$ 18). Worse still, the vulnerable tribals were continuously losing their land to the plains people, who were moving to the hills to grab land, forcing the *girijans* into indebtedness. The legislations to prevent indebtedness failed singularly in their purpose. The tribals since 1952 also suffered from limits imposed by government rules and sometimes by corrupt local officials on tribal access to forest land for the collection of forest produce and for cultivation. Sometimes the process of reserving forestlands was forcing the tribals to leave their homes (Calman 1985:21-38).

The death of a tribal on October 31, 1967 at the hands of a landlord eventually provided the spark. Between early 1968 and late 1970 the revolutionaries had mobilized almost the entire tribal population in Srikakulam. Their attacks killed at least 34 landlords. 'In ... July 1969, the revolutionaries controlled nearly 300 villages out of the 518 in the Agency. The ... Ryotanga Sangram Samithis, ruled over the region, tried the moneylenders in Praja Courts (People's Courts), annulled debt agreements, redistributing land and conducted military training among the people' (Mohanty 1977:53).

The Maoist movement in Andhra Pradesh lost its punch by the mid-1970s. First, in a concerted action the police declared Srikakulam a disturbed area and succeeded in killing and arresting a number of Naxalites.¹⁷ Second, the Maoists' annihilation tactics proved disastrous in plains, where the movement was organisationally weak, and boomeranged. In the hills it did not remain confined to *dalams* as hundreds of *girijans* participated in brutal killings (Calman 1985:79). The movement had nonetheless succeeded in setting the social agenda in the area. Aside from trying to give immediate relief to the *girijans* and introducing developmental schemes, the government addressed the landlessness among the *girijans*. Only 139,000 acres of the 527,000 acres of the Integrated Tribal Development Agency Project Area of Srikakulam is cultivable. By 1979 3.9 percent of the cultivable land (5,543.67 acres) was restored. But the entrenched power structure ensured that the beneficiaries were wealthier vested interests (Calman 1985:99-125). By the late 1970s, the peasant labour associations (*Ryotu Coolie Sangham*) with the CPI (ML) launched a movement for redistribution of land and illegally occupied wasteland by the landlords (Bergman 1984:116-17).

¹⁷ On June 7, 1969, the Andhra Pradesh government declared the Agency (tribal dominated) areas in Srikakulam district as 'disturbed areas' under the Andhra Pradesh Suppression of Disturbances Act of 1948 giving the police, the officers of the rank of Sub-Inspector and above sweeping powers of arrest and using fire arms against suspected 'revolutionaries' (Calman 1985:77-78).

The state repression during the national emergency (1975-77) completely crushed the Naxalite movement. After their release from prisons in 1977 many of the Charu Mazumdar's colleagues left the party and formed their own groups. Two groups, led by K. Seetharamaiah and C. P. Reddy, were from Andhra Pradesh. The third group led by Vinod Mishra and Reddy's group were active in Bihar too (Mohanty 1991:30-31). This explains organisational part of the re-emergence of Naxalism in Andhra Pradesh by 1979. In fact, K. Seetharamaiah, the founder of the PWG (on 22 April 1980), gave Maoism a new life when he discarded the Charu Mazumdar line of total annihilation of class enemies as only form of struggle and laid stress on floating mass organisations and taking up of economic struggles to spread the movement (Das 2000).

THE PARADIGMATIC SHIFT

A definite ideological, organizational and strategic paradigm shift in Naxalism in the new millennium has brought in greater organizational cohesion and more concerted action with an apparent ideological clarity (Mohanty 2006a). In the preceding period the Maoists developed and perfected guerrilla tactics and employed terror, both measured and arbitrary, against the state and suspected traitors and the state stuck to its law and order perspective on the problem, which resulted in increasing brutality of the police in either eliminating the Naxals and their sympathizers in fake encounters, or putting them through custodial torture. The merger of several Maoist groups into three main groups during 1999 and 2003 has been the most salient development in the expansion and consolidation of the Maoist movement in recent times.

The process of mergers and consolidation that took place between 2003 and 2004 has resulted in the emergence of three major Maoist groups – CPI (Maoists), CPI (ML)-Liberation and CPI (ML). Several small ones still operate independently. The merger of the two most militant groups – CPI-ML (People's War) and the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) – to form CPI (Maoist) on September 21, 2004, which at the moment is the largest and the most powerful Maoist group, has been the most noteworthy development in recent times. With the formation of People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) of nearly 3,500 fighters equipped with sophisticated arms and well-formed organizational structure, the CPI (Maoist) has developed an edge. It takes forward the Charu Mazumdar line, rejects parliamentary politics, describing the current stage as 'New Democratic Revolution' (a variant of the 'people's democratic revolution' of the 1970 programme), aims at achieving agrarian revolution by liberating 'the rural areas first and then having expanded the base areas – the centre of democratic power in rural areas – advance towards countrywide victory through encircling and capturing the cities.' (Banerjee 2006a:3160).

The CPI (ML)-Liberation, on the other hand, began in 1977 with S. N. Sinha in central Bihar focusing on mass organization and expanded by floating organization like the Indian People's Front during the 1980s and 1990s under the leadership of Vinod Mishra. Since it has not given up parliamentary option, it has participated in the electoral processes, successfully in some cases. It has also floated mass trade union, peasant, women's and students' organizations. The current leadership of this outfit is continuing with its approach of raising people's issues by participating in the mainstream political process.

The CPI (ML) is being led by Kanu Sanyal of the Naxalbari fame. His Communist Organization of India (ML) merged with CPI (ML) Unity Initiative, the Unity Centre, CPI (ML) Janashakti and some groups of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Kerala to create a stronger organization following the theory of 'mass revolutionary trend' developed by T. Nagi Reddy and Chandra Pulla

Reddy.¹⁸ Other mass organizations attached to it are Raitu Coolie Sangham (Peasant Labour Organization), Andhra Pradesh Federation of Trade Unions, People's Democratic Students Union and Sthree Vimukti Sangathana (Women's Liberation Organization) and their news organ *Class Struggle*. Along with its support organizations such as Indian Federation of Trade Unions and All India Kisan Mazdoor Sabha, which have been active in several States, the CPI (ML) has continued to be a significant force in the universe of Maoist politics in India, engaging itself in both underground activities and issue-based political mobilization in the mainstream political sphere (Mohanty 2006; Ramana 2006).

The mergers and consolidations, very significant from the perspective of organizing and strengthening the revolutionary politics, have sorted out the prevailing ideological incoherence that introduced the splintering tendencies in the movement. The commonalities in the three streams have made coordination possible despite inherent dogmas, which is reflected in the conference of South Asian revolutionary parties organized by the Naxals in 2003.¹⁹ Since only the CPI (Maoist) completely rejects parliamentary politics, the rest of the two groups could coordinate their activities. However, there are still some Maoist groups active under different names. Obviously, though the focus now has shifted from personalities to ideologies, issues and methods, there are still personality-based outfits, which make India's revolutionary collage rather confusing. This naturally puts a question mark on the cohesiveness of the CRZ and the red corridor from Nepal to the south of India despite a large number of areas in this stretch under the control of various Naxal groups.

In Mohanty's (1977) assessment the Naxalite movement in its first decade:

- i was a pre-organizational movement; (Mohan Ram 1971:69)
- ii practised ideological parallelism to a large extent mechanically applying formulations of the Chinese revolution to contemporary India;²⁰ and
- iii pursued strategy by that was a narrow construction of revolutionary strategy and was not always one of revolutionary violence.²¹

¹⁸ T. Nagi Reddy and Chandra Pulla Reddy, veterans of the Telangana movement, contributed the theory of 'mass revolutionary trend', which appears to be aimed at keeping the revolutionary politics conjoined with the mainstream parliamentary politics. The two Reddys were for mass organisations to help the party, but were not for violent mass action till the people have requisite political consciousness.

¹⁹ The Fifth Regional Conference of the South Asian Revolutionary Internationalist Movement Parties and Organisations in July 2003 lauded the formation of the Co-ordinating Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA) and reiterated Mao's assertion: 'The seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds good universally, for China and for all other countries'. http://www.awtw.org/back_issues/fifth_South_Asia_Regional.htm

²⁰ Kanu Sanyal often quoted Mao that 'Without a people's army the people have nothing' and arguing that their revolution was a struggle for state power, stressed the need to prepare the party and the people militarily to the fullest extent. Later he introspected that the movement failed due to its ignorance of military affairs (Ram 1971:69).

²¹ Sanyal felt that Mao's political and military theories needed deeper study. He stressed mobilization, arousing and arming of village defence groups (with conventional weapons) and their training in guerilla warfare for making revolution successful. Charu Mazumdar went against the Maoist wisdom of mobilization for guerilla warfare and emphasised guerilla action by a handful of cadre to annihilate the class enemy (Ram 1971:70-113).

In a recent reassessment, Mohanty (2006:3163) feels that in spite of 'significant changes in all three respects', 'some elements of each dimension persist'. The pre-organizational character of the Maoists remains due to the underground nature of the parties. The ideological parallelism and revolutionary strategy are reflected in violent actions by *dalams* (squads), at times under pressure of being pursued by the paramilitary forces, which is later regretted by the central leadership. This reflects prevailing perplexity and mystification in organizational, ideological and strategic aspects of the Naxal movement despite its impressive expansion since 2000, greater organizational and ideological cohesion and concerted and pinpointed attacks on the police, government establishments and public property, counter movements (Salwa Judum in Chhatisgarh), traitors and the police informers.²² Sumanta Banerjee, revisiting Naxalism after two decades, is more forthright about the decline of the ideological fiber in the Maoist movement, whose 'courageous' battles against a vicious state machinery, 'self-sacrifice by thousands of guerrillas', and efforts by dedicated cadres to initiate land reforms 'in their areas of control', has often been marred by 'lumpen' acts like extortions, and ruthless killing of innocent people suspected of being police informers and 'degenerated into the Naxalite practice of killing (often brutally by hacking or slitting throats) rich peasants and small farmers, petty government employees, members of political parties, or anyone suspected by the party activists of being agents of the police (including even their own comrades who dared to question their acts).' (Banerjee, 2006a: 3159-60).

BEYOND CONSOLIDATION

The organizational consolidation and ideological and strategic cohesion has given the Maoists greater punch in battling the Indian state and facilitated their expansion and consolidation. Whether or not a CRZ is being created by them from north (touching the Nepal border) to south (all the four southern States are affected in some degree or the other), which will necessitate greater degree of cohesion and coordination, Naxal expansion from a few to sixteen states, though only about eight states would be severely affected, (see Table 1) clearly shows its growing clout.

²² The Government of India places the Naxalite militia group trained in guerilla tactics at 25,000; overground support base, sympathizers and hideouts in thick forests make them lethal.

Table 1: Districts Affected by Naxalism with Intensity in 2007
(Total Districts 612; 31.7% Affected)

S. No.	State (Districts)	Highly Affected	Moderately Affected	Marginally Affected	Total	%age Affected
1	Andhra Pradesh (23)	12	07	04	23	100.00
2	Bihar (39)	16	03	13	32	82.00
3	Jharkhand (24)	14	04	05	23	95.83
4	Chhattisgarh (18)	07	01	06	14	77.70
5	Orissa (30)	08	05	09	22	73.33
6	West Bengal (18)	04	03	10	17	94.44
7	Maharashtra (35)	02	04	01	07	20.00
8	Karnataka (27)	01	09	02	12	44.44
9	Madhya Pradesh (48)	--	02	04	06	12.5
10	Uttar Pradesh (70)	01	02	03	06	8.57
11	Tamil Nadu (29)	--	02	06	08	27.58
12	Kerala (14)	--	--	03	03	21.42
13	Uttarakhand (13)	--	05	04	09	69.23
14	Haryana (20)	--	02	05	07	35.00
15	Rajasthan (32)	--	03	--	03	09.38
16	Gujarat (25)	--	--	02	02	08.00
Total	16 (465)	65	53	77	194	41.72

Updated October 31, 2007 Source: Institute of Conflict Management, New Delhi

The above data indicates that violence by the Maoists has affected 192 districts (nearly one-third of the 610 districts in the country) in sixteen States (nearly 42 percent of 383 districts in the affected States) in various degrees; sixty-five (14 percent) of them highly affected. Andhra Pradesh is the worst affected with all the twenty-three districts in the State having different degrees of Naxal activity, out of which twelve districts (52 percent) are highly affected. Jharkhand has 95.83 percent (23 out of 24) of its districts affected, out of which 58 percent (14 out of 24) are highly affected. West Bengal, which virtually eradicated Naxalism by 1972 after having been the cradle for the second spurt of Maoism in the country, has the third highest affliction among the affected states – seventeen out of eighteen districts. Bihar, with 82 percent of the total districts affected and 41 percent (16 out of 39) of the districts highly affected is the fourth highly affected state, followed by Chhatisgarh. Not only has the intensity of the violence increased in most of the affected states, three states (Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat) have been added in the list in the past two years and the number of affected districts has jumped up from 157 to 194. The sixty-five highly affected districts are spread over in nine of the sixteen affected States. Even if we take into account the politics on Naxalism, i.e., some of the states using the ploy of Naxalism to get more funds from the Union government and circumspection on the methodology of the ICM data, the situation is still grave. Chhatisgarh (43.7 percent forest 31.75 percent tribal population), for example, one of the worst affected states, is projected to be nearly sixty percent under the Naxalite control by 2010 at the present rate of their expansion.²³

The key to the Maoist operation in the affected states is the population under deprivation such as the Scheduled Tribes (*adivasis* and *girijans*) and the Scheduled Castes (*dalits*), who are not only their natural constituency, they also provide the cadres and foot-soldiers for the revolution. Both the Telangana movement and the Naxalbari movement sparked virtually in similar ways with the peasants and tribals being mobilized against exploitation, enslavement, indebtedness, deprivation and humiliation in two extremely backward rural areas. The Maoist spread since the mid-1980s in a pattern along a group of states, which has allowed organizational consolidation as well as coordination, show that these crucial factors facilitating their growth have continued to exist and perpetuate, particularly in the rural areas. No wonder, Maoism continues to be a rural phenomenon, the arena where maximum exploitation of and most cases of atrocities on the *dalits*, *adivasis/girijans* and other marginalized and weaker sections takes place.

²³ 'Maoist Assessment: 2006',

<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/maoist/Assessment/index.html>.

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<http://www.sai.uni-heidelberg.de/SAPOL/HPSACP.htm>

Table 2: Crimes Committed Against Scheduled Castes (2006)

Sl. No.	State/UT	Incidence	Percentage Contribution To all-India Total	Estimated Mid Year Population (in Lakhs) #	Rate Of Total Cognization Crimes	Ranks as per Total Cognizable Crimes	Rank as per Percentage Share
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
STATES							
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	3891	14.4	807.24	4.8	3	4
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	0	0.0	11.74	0.0	-	-
3	ASSAM	282	1.0	291.62	1.0	17	15
4	BIHAR	2043	7.5	913.30	2.2	7	5
5	CHHATTISGARH	444	1.6	229.90	1.9	8	11
6	GOA	4	0.0	15.51	0.3	24	24
7	GUJARAT	995	3.7	550.80	1.8	9	9
8	HARYANA	283	1.0	231.63	1.2	13	14
9	HIMACHAL PRADESH	92	0.3	64.46	1.4	11	17
10	JAMMU & KASHMIR	2	0.0	117.25	0.0	28	28
11	JHARKHAND	333	1.2	293.14	1.1	14	13
12	KARNATAKA	1730	6.4	563.49	3.1	4	6
13	KERALA	364	1.3	336.79	1.1	15	12
14	MADHYA PRADESH	4214	15.6	672.13	6.3	1	2
15	MAHARASHTRA	1053	3.9	1045.70	1.0	16	8
16	MANIPUR	0	0.0	25.72	0.0	-	-
17	MEGHALAYA	0	0.0	24.83	0.0	-	-
18	MIZORAM	0	0.0	9.59	0.0	-	-
19	NAGALAND	5	0.0	21.41	0.2	25	23
20	ORISSA	1153	4.3	391.96	2.9	5	7
21	PUNJAB	184	0.7	260.80	0.7	20	16
22	RAJASTHAN	3910	14.4	628.2	6.2	2	3
23	SIKKIM	2	0.0	5.81	0.3	23	27
24	TAMILNADU	991	3.7	654.52	1.5	10	10
25	TRIPURA	14	0.1	34.36	0.4	22	21
26	UTTAR PRADESH	4960	18.3	1850.21	2.7	6	1
27	UTTARANCHAL	68	0.3	92.62	0.7	19	18
28	WEST BENGAL	13	0.0	861.30	0.0	29	22
	Total (States)	27030	99.9	11005.85	2.5		
Union Territories							
29	A & N ISLANDS	0	0.0	3.96	0.0	-	-
30	CHANDIGARH	2	0.0	10.21	0.2	26	26
31	D & N HAVELI	2	0.0	2.50	0.8	18	25
32	DAMAN & DIU	1	0.0	1.80	0.6	21	29
33	DELHI	21	0.1	162.29	0.1	27	19
34	LAKSHADWEEP	0	0.0	0.67	0.0	-	-
35	PONDICHERY	14	0.1	10.47	1.3	12	20
	TOTAL (UTs)	40	0.1	191.90	0.2		
	TOTAL (ALL-INDIA)	27070	100.0	11197.75	2.4		

Total population including Scheduled Caste Source: <http://ncrb.nic.in/cii2006/cii-2006/Table%207.1.pdf>

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data on atrocities against the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes over the years shows correspondence between high rate of targeted violence (which can be taken as an indicator of exploitation that goes beyond physical atrocities) and Naxalism. Most of the States affected with Naxalism have a high rate of atrocities on dalits.²⁴ Andhra Pradesh (14.4), Bihar (7.5), Karnataka (6.4), Madhya Pradesh (15.6), Orissa (4.3), Uttar Pradesh (18.3) are among the States with very high rates of *dalit* atrocities, while other affected States too show significant cases of *dalit* victimization. Interestingly, Rajasthan and Gujarat always having high *dalit* related atrocities and Haryana with significant such incidents are the recent entrant in the Naxalite affected list. Frustrations of the *dalits* and lower OBCs further mount as they do not get redressal from the system, as not only the law and order machinery biased against them, judicial pronouncements, particularly in the lower courts, too display caste bias (Shukla 2006). Indeed, *dalits* have used the mainstream political participation for a share in power, restricting *dalits* joining extremist politics, discriminatory and exploitative social structure as well as inadequacies of the mainstream political mobilization (Mehrotra 2006) has a section of them succumbing to Maoist politics.

It would be significant in this context to refer to the curious case of Bihar, where reactions to the Maoist organized *Lal Sena* (red army), in which *dalits* dominated, led to the formation of other caste senas (armies) – *Ranvir Sena*, *Sawarna Liberation Force*, *Brahmarsis Sena*, *Samajvadi Shosit Sena*, *Sunlight Sena* and so on – and the class war virtually got transformed into a caste war, in which the *dalits* and the lowest of the backward castes backed by the then Maoist Communist Centre were on the one side of the fence and other caste armies, even while fighting amongst themselves, were united against the *dalit* and Maoist challenge (see Mehra 2000a). A clinically precise guerrilla raid on Jehanabad district jail in Bihar and other security establishments such as the police lines by a red army on 13 December 2005 in which reflected fine-tuning of guerrilla tactics by the Maoists as well as manifested the overlapping of the caste and class wars (Roy 2005).

Similarly, the Scheduled Tribes, referred to in the present context as the *adivasi* and *girijan*, described as ‘the last frontier of human rights’ (Dhagamwar 2006:11), too have been at the receiving end of violence by the dominant castes/classes for centuries, but the British subjugated the tribal population with the formal and, for them, an incomprehensible legal system (Dhagamwar 2006:41-43).²⁵ No wonder the NCRB data over the years shows increasing atrocities against the STs. In 2006, for example, Andhra Pradesh (13.7), Chhatisgarh (10.1), Madhya Pradesh (25.9), Orissa (6.0) and Jharkhand (5.7), all affected by the Naxal violence, have had high rates of atrocities against the *adivasis*. Rajasthan (15.1),

²⁴ Indeed, a direct correlation between the two needs to be worked out methodically.

The indicator used by the NCRB is ‘percentage contribution to All-India Total’, but in each case, even in terms of absolute numbers (incidence) the figures are high. We also need to factor in non-registration of cases of such atrocities by the police, which is endemic across the country. In fact, modern law, legal system and the law and order machinery have not only almost entirely displaced the traditional law – Hindu, Muslim and customary – they have also been used as a tool of dominance (Gallantar 1996:461-62) and the dominance exercised is brutally invasive, to say the least.

²⁵ Gallanter (1996:461-62) comments: ‘Traditional law – Hindu, Muslim and customary – has been almost entirely displaced from the “modern legal system” and “law” and law are employed here in a narrow (but familiar) sense to refer to that complex institutions, role and rules which itself provides the authoritative and official deficit of what is law.’

Gujarat (4.1) on the danger list in 2005 are now affected with violence against the adivasis continuing unabated in 2006. (see Table 3).

Table 3: Incidence & Rate Of Crime Committed Against Scheduled Tribes During 2006

Sl. No.	State/UT	Incidence	Percentage Contribution To all-India Total	Estimated Mid Year Population (in Lakhs) #	Rate Of Total Cognization Crimes	Ranks as per Total Cognizable Crimes	Rank as per Percentage Share
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
STATES							
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	793	13.7	807.24	1.0	9	3
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	27	0.5	11.74	2.3	4	14
3	ASSAM	244	4.2	291.62	0.8	11	8
4	BIHAR	56	1.0	913.30	0.1	19	13
5	CHHATTISGARH	583	10.1	229.90	2.5	3	4
6	GOA	0	0.0	15.51	0.0	-	-
7	GUJARAT	164	2.8	550.80	0.3	14	10
8	HARYANA	0	0.0	231.63	0.0	-	-
9	HIMACHAL PRADESH	17	0.3	64.46	0.3	15	18
10	JAMMU & KASHMIR	0	0.0	117.25	0.0	-	-
11	JHARKHAND	332	5.7	293.14	1.1	7	6
12	KARNATAKA	214	3.7	563.49	0.4	13	9
13	KERALA	75	1.3	336.79	0.2	18	12
14	MADHYA PRADESH	1498	25.9	672.13	2.2	5	1
15	MAHARASHTRA	267	4.6	1045.70	0.3	17	7
16	MANIPUR	26	0.4	25.72	1.0	8	15
17	MEGHALAYA	0	0.0	24.83	0.0	-	-
18	MIZORAM	0	0.0	9.59	0.0	-	-
19	NAGALAND	109	1.9	21.41	5.1	1	11
20	ORISSA	349	6.0	391.96	0.9	10	5
21	PUNJAB	0	0.0	260.80	0.0	-	-
22	RAJASTHAN	967	16.7	628.02	1.5	6	2
23	SIKKIM	0	0.0	5.81	0.0	-	-
24	TAMILNADU	24	0.4	654.52	0.0	20	16
25	TRIPURA	9	0.2	34.36	0.3	16	20
26	UTTAR PRADESH	11	0.2	1850.21	0.0	23	19
27	UTTARANCHAL	1	0.0	92.62	0.0	21	23
28	WEST BENGAL	7	0.1	861.30	0.0	22	21
	Total (States)	5773	99.7	11005.85	0.5		
Union Territories							
29	A & N ISLANDS	17	0.3	3.96	4.3	2	17
30	CHANDIGARH	0	0.0	10.21	0.0	-	-
31	D & N HAVELI	1	0.0	2.50	0.4	12	22
32	DAMAN & DIU	0	0.0	1.80	0.0	-	-
33	DELHI	0	0.0	162.29	0.0	-	-
34	LAKSHADWEEP	0	0.0	0.67	0.0	-	-
35	PONDICHERY	0	0.0	10.47	0.0	-	-
	TOTAL (UTs)	18	0.3	191.90	0.1		
	TOTAL (ALL-INDIA)	5791	100.0	11197.8	0.5		

Total population including Scheduled Tribes Source: <http://ncrb.nic.in/cii2006/cii-2006/Table%207.9.pdf>

Table 4: Conservative Estimate of Persons and Tribals Displaced by Development Projects 1951-90
(In lakh)

Types of Project	All DPs	Percentage of DPs	DPs Resettled (Lakhs)	Percentage of Resettled DPs	Backlog (Lakhs)	Backlog (Per Cent)	Tribals Displaced (Lakhs)	Percentage of All DPs	Tribals DPs and Resettled (Lakhs)	Percentage of Tribal DPs	Backlog of Tribal DPs	Percentage of Backlog
Dam	164.0	77.0	41.00	25.0	123.00	75.0	63.21	38.5	15.81	25.00	47.40	75.0
Mines	25.5	12.0	6.30	24.7	19.20	75.3	13.30	52.20	3.30	25.00	10.00	75.0
Industries	12.5	5.9	3.75	30.0	8.75	70.0	3.13	25.0	0.80	25.0	2.33	75.0
Wildlife	6.0	2.8	1.25	20.8	4.75	79.2	4.5	75.0	1.00	22.0	3.50	78.0
Others	5.0	2.3	1.50	30.0	3.50	70.0	1.25	25.0	0.25	20.2	1.00	80.0
Total	213	100	53.80	25.0	159.20	75.0	85.39	40.9	21.16	25.0	64.23	79.0

Note: DP denotes displaced persons.

Source: Fernandes (1994:22-32).

Development dichotomy, which has over the years created an unbridgeable displacement-rehabilitation hiatus due to governmental apathy and corruption as well as established exploitative structures, over the years has, and continues to, create pockets of disaffection and frustration to be exploited by the Maoist. Interestingly, the hiatus is visible in Maoism affected states. This dichotomous hiatus is as old as independent India's developmental history, but has acquired new dimensions in the era of globalization. Table 4 shows that between 1951 and 1990, 8.5 million adivasis were displaced, forming 41 percent of all the displaced, in projects related to dams, mines, industries, wildlife and so on, of which only 21 percent were resettled, leaving 6.4 million who were dispossessed of their hearth, home and livelihood without proper resettlement measures. A media report pointed out that of the 22,141 families that were displaced by the Hirakud dam in Orissa in 1957, only 2,185 were resettled by 2007 (*The Hindu*, 31 March 2007). It clearly reflects both callousness and a lack of clear policy on the part of the government for the resettlement of the evictees and the displaced in developmental projects. Under the circumstances, the argument reinforcing the bias of the ruling classes against the adivasis would find receptive years. Various studies over the years, including that by the World Bank and the World Commission on Dams (2000), point out that neither has the Government of India factored in displacements and socio-economic costs of rehabilitation in the projects, nor the impact on failed resettlement on social unrest. A report by the World Commission on Dams (2000:110) says:

Large dams have had serious impacts on the lives, livelihoods, cultures and spiritual existence of indigenous and tribal peoples. Due to neglect and lack of capacity to secure justice because of structural inequities, cultural dissonance, discrimination and economic and political marginalisation, indigenous and tribal peoples have suffered disproportionately from the negative impacts of large dams, while often being excluded from sharing in the benefits.... (In India, 40-50% of those displaced by development projects were tribal people....

Walter Fernandes (2007:203) points out that forty percent of the displaced between 1947 and 2000 have been tribals and twenty percent each *dalits* and backward castes. That 80 percent of those displaced are voiceless may explain the poor rehabilitation.²⁶ Another study of the people displaced by 32 large dams across the country since independence shows that mostly tribals, *dalits* and backward castes in nine States (including undivided Bihar, UP and MP) were affected and the resettlement rate was low (see Table 5). The highlighted States in the table are Naxal affected and if we add Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Chhatisgarh in that list, eleven Naxal affected States show the displacement-rehabilitation hiatus.

²⁶ Fernandes has extensively studied displacement-rehabilitation hiatus since independence. Also see a study of displacement caused by the Indira Sagar dam by Betwa Sharma (2006:5224-25), who concludes that 'The displaced at the Narmada valley are running out of survival options as their living conditions swiftly deteriorate.'

Table 5: Percentage of tribal people affected by some large dams in India²⁷

S. No.	Project	State	Total no. displaced	% of tribals displaced	SC/ Others
1	Hirakud	Orissa	110,000	18.34	n.a
2	Bhakra	HP	36,000	34.76	n.a.
3	Pong	HP	80,000	56.25	n.a.
4	Ukai	Gujarat	52,000	18.92	n.a.
5	Lalpur	Gujarat	11,300	83.20	n.a.
6	Daman Ganga	Gujarat	8,700	48.70	n.a.
7	Karjan	Gujarat	11,600	100	n.a.
8	Icha	Orissa	30,800	80	n.a.
9	Manas	Bihar	3,700	31	n.a.
10	Chandil	Bihar	37,600	87.92	n.a.
11	Poivalam	MP, Andhra Pradesh	1,50,000	52.90	n.a.
12	Tittuli	Maharashtra	13,600	51.61	n.a.
13	Upper Indravati	Orissa	20,000	43.76	13
14	Machkunda	Orissa	16,200	51.1	10.21
15	Subarnarekha	Bihar	64,000	67.29	27
16	Kabini	Karnataka	20,000	30	n.a.
17	Mandira	Orissa	n.a.	68.18	n.a.
18	Masanjor	Bihar	16,000	Mostly tribal	n.a.
19	Bansagar	MP	1,42,000	75	n.a.
20	Mahi Bajaj Sagar	Rajasthan, MP	35,000	76.24	2.13
21	Kadana	Rajasthan, Gujarat	30,000	100	n.a.
22	Bisalpur	Rajasthan	70,000	70 (SC +ST)	
23	Bargi	MP	35,000	43	10 SC, 19 OBC
24	Maithan and Pachet	Bihar, West Bengal	93,874	53.46	n.a.
25	Nagarjun Sagar	Andhra Pradesh	25,490	36	7 SC, 45 OBC
26	Srisaillam	Andhra Pradesh	100,000	81 (SC + ST)	
27	Rihand	UP, MP	47,500	Mostly tribal	n.a.
28	Upper Kolab	Orissa	50,771	52	17
29	Narmada Sagar	MP	1,70000	20	14
30	Sardar Sarovar	Guj., Maha., MP	2,00000	56	9
31	Kulku	Orissa	14,000	Mostly tribal	
32	Surya	Maharashtra	7290	100	

Source: Amrita Patwardhan, (1997) 'Dams and Tribal People in India', Prepared for, *Thematic Review 1.2: Dams, Indigenous People and vulnerable ethnic minorities*; one of 126 contributing papers to the World Commission on Dams; <http://www.dams.org/docs/kbase/contrib/soc207.pdf>.

²⁷ The highlighted States are Naxalite affected. The proposition about causal link between displacement and Naxalism mine.

The tussle for forest rights, which too concerns tribal population and is virtually as old as the displacement conundrum, but currently under an animated social and political debate in the country, also an area that deserves a careful handling, particularly in the context of land acquisitions for industrialization and setting up of Special Economic Zones (SEZ). This process has caused major turmoil in Orissa, West Bengal and Jharkhand. In Jharkhand, for example, several people's organization have been protesting since 2005 fearing displacement due to industrial projects that are in the pipeline with the promised FDIs. A large part of Jharkhand 21 out of 22 districts are already affected by Naxalism and any insensitive handling of the situation will only add to the support base and the ranks of the Maoist groups (Hebbar 2006:4953).

The Maoist movement in India has had very little urban impact. Charu Mazumdar had strategized encircling of cities by capturing the rural areas, but the dream remained unfulfilled. However, an urban strategy adopted by the Maoists at their Ninth Congress in 2001, is a comprehensive 85-page document that needs to be read carefully:

Work in the urban areas has a special importance in our revolutionary work.... in our revolution, ... the liberation of urban areas, will be possible only in the last stage of the revolution.... From the beginning we will have to concentrate on the organization of the working class, which being the leadership of our revolution has to directly participate and lead the agrarian revolution and the people's war and on building a revolutionary workers movement. Moreover, on the basis of revolutionary workers movement we will be able to mobilize millions of urban oppressed masses and build struggles against imperialism and feudalism, struggles in support of the agrarian revolution and struggles for democratic rights.... We should not forget the dialectical relationship between the development of the urban movement and the development of the people's war. In the absence of a strong revolutionary urban movement, the people's war will face difficulties.

However, we should not belittle the importance of the fact that the urban areas are the strong centers of the enemy. Building up of a strong urban revolutionary movement means that our Party should build a struggle network capable of waging struggle consistently, by sustaining itself until the protracted people's war reaches the stage of strategic offensive....²⁸

Considering that their expansion in the present rural bastions over the past six decades has not been easy, the Maoists appear both circumspect and meticulously planned about their 'urban' task ahead. The document, apparently prepared by a pool of experts that the Maoists can bank upon, very carefully surveys the emerging urban India and its socio-economic disparities and dichotomies emerging out of migration, conditions of workers in the organized and unorganized sectors and prevailing frictions, if not conflict, that they could build their movement on. The comprehensive strategic exercise carried out by the Maoists shows the emerging complexity and gravity of India's revolutionary politics and serious implication it has for the country's national security scenario.

Further, since the liberalization of the Indian economy and its interaction with the processes of globalization, the rural market has been integrated with urban commerce, producing in the process 'new structures of power based on land and capital', (Mohanty 2006a:3164) which have the potential to further marginalize the

²⁸<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/maoist/documents/papers/Urbanperspective.htm>.

rural poor. This has also been combined with the rapid expansion of the national and global capital and their quest for investment opportunities in industry and trade, which has prompted the central and State governments to provide them with space and facilities that have been taking shape in the form of the Special Economic Zones (SEZ). This process has begun to threaten the marginal farmers and peasants with dispossession and displacement with their only source of livelihood – land – which cannot be compensated with money for the simple reason that farming is the only skill that the displaced communities have. The promise by the government and the companies to guarantee employment to at least one person from each family has proved hollow. No wonder, when Kalinganagar (Orissa)²⁹, Singur and Nandigram (West Bengal) happen, the Maoists have been seen fishing in troubled water.³⁰

The Maoist movement has traditionally been criticized for being unclear about and insensitive to the democracy question (Mehra 2000 and 2006).³¹ The expansion since the 1990s and consolidation since 2000 have not provided an answer to their sensitivity to democracy. Indeed, two of the three main groups are open and flexible about using the parliamentary path. It is still not clear if they have internal democracy, but the intelligence and media report about the ‘liberated zones’ do not give any optimistic pictures. Their brutal attacks on Salwa Judum camps leading to massacre of the innocents invited a fervent appeal to them (and, of course, to the government) from ‘A Group of Citizens’ (2006:2977-79) to abjure violence and negotiate with the government as ‘the defence of the rights of adivasis can be ensured more effectively through political, non-violent and open means rather than the armed struggle.’³² Of course, the Naxals responded to this appeal questioning the ‘mind and attitude of the liberal democratic intelligentsia’ and

²⁹ Khatua and Stanley (2006), analysing of the ecological and social impact of several bauxite mining and aluminium related industrial projects in various parts of mineral-rich districts of Orissa, bring out that mostly resettlement policies and schemes were sketchily drawn and casually implemented and had adverse social and economic impact on the poor displaced adivasis and peasants.

Villagers put up stiff resistance, even braved bullets, in Kalinganagar (Jaipur district of Orissa on India’s east coast), against the Indian industrial giant Tata’s proposed steel plant, fearing displacement. Manoranjan Mohanty (2006b: 23-30) has argued that there is a dangerous drift because ‘the rulers have ignored the people’s demand for an alternative development strategy’.

³⁰ Singur, due to the new small car factory of the Tatas and Nandigram (both in West Bengal), due to the West Bengal government’s SEZ project, have been in the news during 2006-07 for popular resistance against the projects. (see, Editorial ‘Nandigram: Naked Terror and Massacre of Democracy’, *Mainstream*, March 17, 2007 and Bhaduri, 2007).

³¹ D. Bandhopadhyay in his visit to what the Naxal described as the ‘Flaming Fields of Bihar’, found that the MCC supported the existing *bataidari* (sharing) systems between the landlord and the peasant, in which the peasant tilling the land was always at a disadvantage. In fact, in the prevailing ‘*Do Kathai bandobast*’ the Naxal groups levied ten percent of the produce from the landlord as the peace levy, which effectively put them on the side of the landlords. In Bettiah district, for example, he hardly found any dispute and it appeared to him that the *bataidar* peasants were reconciled to the coercive, iniquitous system. Obviously, they did not take up the plight of the labour and their low wages with the landlords (2006:5302-03). Bandhopadhyay very perceptively points out that the Maoist movement is inclined to make existentialist compromises, which dilute the cause for which their revolutionary movement stands.

‘The Flaming Fields of Bihar’ is a 1986 report of the then CPI (ML) surveying and analysing upper caste and the state machinery atrocities on the dalits and the poor. http://www.cpiml.org/archive/vm_swork/21introduction_to_the_report_from_hm

³² The signatories to this appeal were, Ramachandra Guha, Harivansh, Farha Naqvi, EAS Sarma, Nandini Sundar and B G Verghese.

countering each of the nine questions put before them³³, agreeing to some observations and assuring that ‘we shall take even greater caution with regard to the distinction between civilians and combatants.’ (Ganapathi 2007:67-71). Manoranjan Mohanty has stressed that ‘the Naxalite ideological formulation is still not adequately developed on the issue of class-caste-gender relationship.’ He also observes that ‘particular attitudes and practices persist within Naxalite organization and any programme for women and women’s liberation is still not a prominent part of the people’s democratic revolution.’ (Mohanty 2006a, 3164). Obviously, ideological, organizational-structural, strategic and attitudinal paradoxes appear endemic to the Maoist movement.

THE STATE RESPONSE

First thing that a state confronts in case of revolutionary politics is violence meant to shake people’s faith in its legitimacy and overturn the government. Obviously, the first realisation that strikes the state is the emergence of a challenge to its power, authority and legitimacy; naturally resulting in unleashing of the violent force at its command to suppress the rebellion. Since an analysis of the situation follows the measures to gain back the ground lost to the rebels, the state invariably finds itself in any of the three kinds of situations. First, and the more likely, scenario is that it either gets too embroiled in suppression to circumspect, or if successful, basking in the triumphant glory of repression, it is driven to callousness towards the causative factors. Second, it treads cautiously into conciliatory arena with inclusionary measures to win back the rebels, this measure depends on the one hand on the extent of success of the repressive measures (a successful repressive measure would leave no rationale for reconciliation) and the strength of the political leadership (a politically strong leadership prefers not to concede any ground to the rebels of the system). Finally, it takes measured policy steps to mitigate the grievances of the populace sympathetic to the rebels.

The complexities of the six-decade old Marxist-Leninist-Maoist rebellion in India has paradoxically resulted in the Indian state’s responses which are a mixture of the three situations and their nuances stated above. However, going by the facts and developments, security considerations override every other consideration for the Union and the State governments even today, when the realisation of its shrinking grip over the area under the Naxal influence is sinking in. The first definite indicator of the overwhelming security orientation of the government is the annual report of the Union Home Ministry (2005-06). It accepts that Naxalism ‘is not merely a law and order problem but has deep socio-economic dimensions’ and recommends ‘a multi-pronged strategy essentially of sustained and effective police action coupled with accelerated socio-economic development of Naxal areas is being pursued to effectively tackle this menace.’ (p. 23). However, a reading through the section on Naxalism in the report, ‘sustained and effective’ police action finds prime of place, while ‘accelerated socio-economic development’ is reduced to a small section that emphasizes advise to the State governments for the purpose. The argument on the constitutional domain of the State government would fall flat on face, because police and internal security too

³³ The nine questions put to the Naxals are: lack of response to dialogue; ‘casual attitude towards taking life’, the legitimacy of ‘*jan adalats*’; laying mines all over; recruiting minors and destroying schools; opposed to the right to vote, road construction and access to government funds for development; putting people to risk and inviting repression by resorting to armed struggle; subordinating the interests of the people of Bastar and Dantewada to the wider goal of capture of state power; show no distinction between civilians and combatants (Ganapathi 2007:67).

are in the State List, but the report talks of 'effective police action'. Further, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in his independence day address to the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on August 15, 2006, described Naxalism, along with terrorism, as one of the biggest terrorist threats to the country, which represents the perception and thinking of the ruling classes across the ideological and party divide.³⁴ Though he did talk of socio-economic dimension of the problem and the government's resolve to ameliorate the conditions of the poor, but it is the security aspect of the solution which has been getting priority. In fact, the Prime Minister's carefully worded speech gave the impression that the government is carefully segregating the hard core Naxals from their social support base for different treatments, which is also reflected in the way the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is approaching this issue. For example, the MHA has formed a coordination centre with the Union Home Secretary as the head for Naxal watch in 1998 and a joint task force was created on 7 October 2004, under the chairmanship of Special Secretary (IS), to deliberate upon the steps needed to deal with Naxalism more effectively and in a coordinated manner. Pursuant to the decision taken in the Chief Ministers' Conference on Internal Security and Law and Order held on 15 April 2005, a Standing Committee was constituted under the chairmanship of the Union Home Minister with the Chief Ministers of thirteen Naxal-affected States as its members. On 19 October 2006 a Naxal Management Division was created 'to effectively tackle the Naxalite menace from both security and development angles.'³⁵ Aside from these four an Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG) headed by an Additional Secretary has been created in the MHA to review, monitor and ensure the implementation of the government's scheme for socio-economic development. A meeting of the Chief Ministers held on 5 September 2006 to review internal security, among other things, decided to set up an Empowered Group of Ministers (EGOM), headed by the Home Minister and comprising select Union Ministers and Chief Ministers, to closely monitor the spread of Naxalism and develop effective strategies to deal with the problems related to the growth and expansion of the ultra-left.³⁶ The police are being trained in a specially set up commando warfare

³⁴ Arun Shourie, an articulate voice of the BJP in opposition and a former minister in the NDA government, argued in a nearly full-page Op-Ed article in *The Indian Express*, 'The criteria, therefore, is not whether violence has actually been unleashed, nor whether the level of violence has become embarrassingly "bad". That entire area must be taken to be affected by terrorist activity in which that group – say, Naxalite – is able to prevent officials of the State from carrying out their primary functions: of governance, of dispensing justice, of executing development works.' Arun Shourie, 'National Security through Redefinition', *The Indian Express*, August 1, 2006, p. 9.

If Shourie's analysis and comments are also the official position of the BJP, it is obvious that which ever party comes to power today at any level, the phenomenon of Naxalism will elicit only a routine law and order response, if at all. The root causes of Naxalism, in which local administration (police and justice system included) and contractors (whom surprisingly this former founder member of civil liberties movement in India has defended) have contributed by ignoring and subverting governance, are likely to be ignored.

³⁵ The Division 'will monitor the Naxal situation and counter-measures being taken by the affected States with the objective of improving ground-level policing and development response as per the location specific action plans formulated/to be formulated by the affected States, and review with the concerned Ministries/Departments to ensure optimum utilization of funds released under, and proper implementation of various developmental schemes in the Naxal affected areas.' (India, Government of, *Annual Report 2006-2007*, New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs, pp. 3-4).

³⁶ Two important aspects of the decisions taken at this meeting are that Naxalism has virtually been put at par with terrorism in terms of threat perception and stress has been laid on socio-economic measures to check their spread. (India, Government of, *Annual Report 2006-2007*, New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs, pp. 29-30).

school under the instructors of the Indian army in Kanker in Chhatisgarh. Paradoxically, the lack of development and the need for developmental measures find mention in the MHA report, though the whole range of issues linked to development and/or displacement resettlement fall in the realm of social and economic sector ministries such as Industries and Mines, Irrigation and Power, Panchayati Raj, Rural Development, Forest, Tribal Development and so on.

In fact the history of governmental response to Maoist revolutionary politics has traditionally been security-centric. The Telangana was tamed with the help of the army, the Congress party organization in the region in the newly independent India had coordinated with the security forces against the communist revolutionaries and their supporters. Indeed, Acharya Vonoba Bhave's *bhoodan* (gift of land) movement and some land reforms carried out by the government in the wake of the communist-led rebellion in the region caused people's withdrawal from the movement, but the government had nothing to do with it. Similarly, though the CPM leadership entered into a dialogue with the Naxal leadership in West Bengal, the movement was crushed mercilessly when Siddhartha Shankar Ray-led Congress government came to power in 1972. Of course, the CPM-led coalition government in the State had carried out land reforms in 1967, which played an important role in ebbing the support to it. In fact, Charu Mazumdar too realised this and reacting to its impact, he had observed:

...wherever there have been movements on vested land, the peasant who gets the possession of the vested land and the license to occupy it, does not remain active any longer in the peasant movement.

He further added:

...within a year (of the possession of the land), the class character of the poor peasant changes and he becomes a middle peasant. He no longer shares the economic demand of the poor and landless peasant. Thus, economism drives a wedge in the unity of the fighting peasants and plunges the landless and poor peasants in despondency.³⁷

However, neither the Government of India, nor the State governments, not even those States afflicted with Naxalism, have carried out any meaningful land reforms.³⁸

The displacement-rehabilitation dichotomy is intrinsically linked to the Land Acquisition Act, which was enacted by the British colonial government in 1894 and it empowers the central and State governments to acquire land for 'public purpose', which is defined loosely, but the acquisition for all 'developmental' projects are undertaken under this Act, which does not appear to have taken into account the emerging realities of the country. A glaring anomaly is that since in most developmental work the displaced are the poor and marginalized, this Act is not supported by an equally comprehensive resettlement Act. It was in 2003 that the Union Cabinet approved and notified the National Policy on Resettlement and Rehabilitation for Project Affected Families – 2003. The Annual Report (2004-05)

However, between 1998 and 2006 six committees has been set up within the MHA at the highest political, bureaucratic and security levels. Interestingly, the ambivalence of blending carrots (developmental measures) with stick (security measures) appears starkly visible in the tasks and the terms of reference of each of the committees constituted.

³⁷ CPI (ML) Document No. 8, April 1967.

³⁸ Ironically, the Annual Reports of the Ministry of Rural Development carries a section on land reforms year after year, which includes monitoring of programmes relating to land reforms and implementing Centrally Sponsored Schemes.

of the Ministry of Rural Development also talks about enactment of a legislation on resettlement and rehabilitation, but aside from the cabinet approved policy mentioned above, nothing else has come out yet.

The disregard for the *adivasis*, who are among the largest sections of the displaced in India's development march, is visible in the enactment and application of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA), which extends the provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment relating to the Panchayati Raj to the Scheduled Areas (as notified under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India) and, as in the 73rd and 75th Amendments, leaves the details to be worked out by the State governments. The State Acts have watered down the provisions of the PESA by substituting consent of the *Panchayats/Gram Sabhas* in acquisition of land in the scheduled areas for development projects as well as before resettlement or rehabilitation of persons affected by such projects in scheduled areas. Besides the *Gram Sabhas* and Panchayats have the powers to prevent alienation of land in the Scheduled Area and to take appropriate action to restore any alienated land of the Scheduled Tribes in their respective areas. But, the law is vague and ambiguous. Further, the ownership of forest based resources have also been granted, though there is a tendency to limit the local area of the *Gram Sabha* for the purposes of owning minor forest produce. However, assessment of the State legislations for their conformity with the PESA shows some glaring omissions. For example certain fundamental principles of the PESA, which expect the State legislations to be in consonance with customary laws, preserve and nurture traditional management practices of community resources and make the *Gram Sabha*/Panchayat competent level of the Panchayati Raj in safeguarding and preserving traditions and customs of the people and the community resources, have been omitted from the conformity Acts in some of the States. The eruptions in Kalinganagar (Orissa), Singur and Nandigram (both in West Bengal) as well as disquiet elsewhere in the country wherever the plans to acquire land to establish industrial projects or SEZs are being implemented, are signs of popular ire emanating from distrust of the government's intentions and efficacy about resettlement, for the past record of the Indian state does not inspire confidence. Moreover, aside from the compensation, the high technology projects being set up in the acquired land, have little space for the uprooted. Naturally, with the people apprehensive of being overwhelmed by the new context of 'development', i.e., globalization, the seeds of 'revolution' can easily be sown.

Despite a few attempts at peace talks in 2002 and 2004, the third wave of Maoism since 1980 has largely been sought to be tackled with force and there is reported mingling of the local politics with the Naxals, or vice versa. In 1982, N. T. Ramarao seeking to transform his stardom in celluloid into politics, riding on the crest of a wave in favour of the Telugu Desam Party he founded, sought and secured the support of the PWG in 1983 Legislative Assembly elections by describing the Naxals as 'true patriots, who had been misunderstood by ruling classes', going soft on all their activities, which the Naxals used to enhance their base in eight out of ten districts in Telangana region. After a two-year ban the veteran Congress leader M. Channa Reddy used the same tactics to win the 1988 assembly elections.³⁹ Obviously, when the leadership at the top indulged in such politics, smaller leaders would have imitated them, if not surpassed them for political benefits.

A ban under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 is a preventive, but tough administrative measure against any extremist outfit. It enables the administration in choking the legal financial routes, democratic

³⁹ Ajai Sahni, 'Bad Medicine for a Red Epidemic', http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/3_12.htm.

platforms available legally and constitutionally to any political organization and the sympathy line amongst the intelligentsia and human rights organizations in society. It also empowers them in preventive arrests. Such a ban is also imposed under special anti-terror laws such Terrorism and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) and Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) in operation in the country from time to time. The PWG was banned in Andhra Pradesh in 1987, which was lifted 1989 by the then Congress Chief Minister M. Channa Reddy for the reasons described above. The ban was reemployed in 1992, only to be lifted again in 1994 when NTR returned to power again. His son-in-law and successor Chandrababu Naidu, who split the TDP to oust NTR, reemployed the ban in 1996, which was lifted in 2002 in order to facilitate peace talks. The ban is a tough facilitating measure for the law and order administration to tighten its grip on an extremist organization, before a crackdown. However, when its use is motivated by political expediency rather than prudence, it becomes a useless instrument that is taken advantage of by the rebels and stymies the administration into atrophy.

Since Andhra Pradesh has had to deal with Maoism since 1980, the State government created a commando force called the Gray Hound. Another dimension added to it in recent years is of tribal commandoes named the *Girijan* Gray Hound. Despite the claims of some success in armed encounters with the Maoists since, but Naxalism expanded in Andhra Pradesh through out the 1980s and 1990s. Despite strong police approach, the Maoists have assassinated police officers, landlords and senior politicians across the parties, ministers, including a lethal attack on the then Chief Minister and the leader of Telugu Desam Party Chandrababu Naidu, who survived miraculously. No wonder, complaints of collateral damages, harassment of the civilian population and fake encounter killings of the Maoists have been common and human rights groups, whom the administration keeps accusing of being sympathetic to the rebels, have been indicting the security agencies for indiscriminate violence.⁴⁰ That the police, all at sea in facing the guerrilla tactics of the Naxals, have grown more lethargic, incompetent, unprofessional, corrupt and politicized over the years has added further to their violent behaviour, particularly when they are criticized, or find themselves ridiculed in the face of highly sophisticated guerrilla and commando attacks from the Naxals, in which they lose both men and their arms. Little wonder, the Naxals have begun claiming that the police are their main source of arms and ammunitions.

In between these tough measures, peace moves have also been initiated a few times, particularly in Andhra Pradesh, where the Naxals have been stronger during the 1980s and 1990s. The peace moves have gone in tandem with the politics of ban discussed above. Interestingly, twice that the State leadership in Andhra Pradesh from two different parties hobnobbed politically with the PWG in 1983 and 1989, a political solution to this problem was not sought when the party came to power. The reasons are difficult to guess because no analysis is available on this question, as neither NTR, nor Channa Reddy was ever quizzed about it. Even an insider's account is not available on this. In fact, that the two rival parties sought the support of the Maoists in electoral politics in a gap of six years, meant two things. First, the parties, a section of their leadership at least, had dubious linkages with the Maoists, who did not mind interfering with electoral politics, while refusing to take part in it, while the mainstream parties and their leaders were happy to interact with the Naxals on a quid pro quo basis, indeed a dangerous situation in dealing with the violent situation arising out of armed rebellion. Second, the parties worked at cross purposes for partisan gains in seeking the Naxal help, while allowing the problem to escalate. However, in February 2002 Chandrababu Naidu government initiated peace talks with the PWG. The talks

⁴⁰ See, for example, Kannabiran, Volga and Kannabiran (2005:1310-1312).

collapsed in seven months as the PWG raised several questions and issues that they thought the government was not attending to.⁴¹ While the PWG blamed the government for not being sincere, as the fake encounters continued and several of their comrades were gunned down, the government later claimed that the PWG had only used this time to regroup.

His successor, Y Rajashekhar Reddy led Congress government in the State too began peace talks on 15 October 2004, a few months after it took over. A content analysis of the newspaper reports presents an interesting pattern of paradoxes in the way the process was undergone by the two parties. The PWG leadership not only came over ground, the organization began regrouping (*The Hindu*, October 6, 2004), spanned out to other States and regions (*The Hindu*, October 9, 2004), obviously on a recruitment mission, issued tough statements as a prelude to the talks as a psychological warfare (see, *The Hindu*, October 4-14, 2004), virtually continued with their activities. No wonder, as the first round of talks ended, reportedly on a cordial note, many more contradictions emerged – their fascination with arms, their relentless recruitment drive during this over ground period, their position and actions on the land question kept irking the government. Predictably the second round never began, which raises fundamental questions on peace talks model, as some elemental questions appear irresolvable. For example, if the Naxals give up the land reform question, they give up the *raison d'être* of their revolution; if the government concedes to the Maoist revolutionary politics, even on their stance on the land question, it would be conceding a vast ground. The peace process obviously is a vexed issue and the road ahead is worse than bumpy.

An interesting pattern of the linkage of the Maoist politics with the mainstream meso-politics (or State politics) in Andhra Pradesh appears to be emerging. Two instances of the top leadership of parties as different as an emerging TDP, which in a short period emerged as a strong State party with a significant stake in national politics in spite of a vertical split, and the Congress, which for the first time since the creation of the State was threatened on its safe terrain by a newly created rag-tag State party. Are there other linkages too? This is a critical question that begs an answer. Two possibilities could be visualized. First, some national level leaders, cutting across party lines could have some

⁴¹ Responding to the call for talks given by the Committee of Concerned Citizens K. Rajanna, Secretary CPI (ML) Janashakti, A.P. State Committee wrote on 22 February 2002 asking the following questions:

'It is by now almost half a decade since you started your efforts for talks, democratic intervention and initiative. Do the points shown below figure in the interaction and exchanges by government on one side and the communist revolutionaries on the other side or not:

- (a) Land for the tiller – Issues;
- (b) Globalization – Vision 2020;
- (c) Setting up Telangana State, Autonomous Councils for tribals, Autonomous Councils for Rayalaseema, Kalinga Andhra – Demands;
- (d) Closed industrial units – creating employment for workers;
- (e) Debt burden on ryots;
- (f) Unemployment problem – Security for the employed;
- (g) Privatisation – Loans from external imperialists;
- (h) Irrigation facilities for agricultural lands based on the regional resources;
- (i) Reservation based on population in all sectors of private and public sector for Dalit, Bahujan Women, Religious minorities;
- (j) Hindutva Saffronisation of education, culture, military, economy, political State;
- (k) Protection to caste based traditional occupations;
- (l) Ensuring democratic and civil rights. Right to life. Right to professing political belief, universal right to hold free opinion of ones choice Democratic rights as objective. Repressive laws like POTO Prohibitory actions.'

linkages for personal political edge, while the Maoist could be keeping it for their tactical advantages. Second, with the micro-politics getting energized with the 73rd constitutional amendment, local – from village spanning upto district – could be a critical arena for the Maoists to have indirect influence to expand their red bastion. If the State politicians have no problem seeking a tie up for personal gains, the local politicians logically would have more reasons to do so.

The revolutionary politics of the Maoist variety has put incompetent and highly corrupt state machinery and the law and order administration in India on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, they project that the movement is isolated, driven by a few adventurists, akin to terrorism and not supported by the common people (which is true to some extent), on the other, while looking for linkages of the Naxals at the local level, the common people, particularly the poor, generally have been the suspects. There are several examples that show that the police violence against suspected informers, most of whom are ordinary people whom the Naxals also threaten for being police informers, have driven people to the Naxal ranks.⁴² However, the only example, where the Indian state could claim that the ordinary people are not with the Naxals and that there is a popular ire against them came with the Salwa Judum in Chhatisgarh, which is the first and the only example of what could be termed as a popular movement against the Naxals.

Salwa Judum began in June 2005 when the tribals of nearly 25 villages in Bijapur police district held a spontaneous anti-Naxal rally at Mathwada weekly market. The reason was that declining the Naxal diktat to pay to them more rent and enhanced wages to labour for Tendu leaf picking, the contractors did not bid for the contracts and the tribals depending on wage suffered. This led to Naxal retaliation and counter rallies and eventually local leaders and panchayat leaders got involved. This is when Mahendra Karma, the Congress MLA from Dantewada, took over as the leader (Narayan 2006:33-39). The Salwa Judum is a reality of not only a counter-Naxal response, it is also a part of the discourse on how a state managed, if not created, counter movement to revolutionary politics of the Naxal kind, could create avoidable social disorders, from which both the people and the state would find themselves difficult to be extricated.

As this experiment expanded, the tribal populace of the affected areas were huddled in state sponsored camps, young people, including women, were designated as Special Police Officers (SPO) with a monthly stipend of Rs. 1,500, were given firearms and were entitled to conduct anti-Naxal policing. The Maoists, apparently fearing erosion of their dominance in the area, have been brutally attacking several such camps, inflicting heavy casualties on innocent people, even women and children. This has stiffened the attitude of the state as well, which has continuing with such camps and the Salwa Judum. The assessment of the impact of the movement in its twelve to eighteen months existence lists the enormous hardships that the people are undergoing and a number of problems relating to the duty and legitimacy of the state that are arising. First, the people huddled in the under provided camps, mostly without consent, have been uprooted from their hearth, homes and livelihood and their future remains uncertain. Second, the Maoist attacks on the camps at will clearly shows that they are no more safer in the camps as they were in their villages, where at least they could till their land and had an independent existence. Third, the reports suggests that the way the SPOs have been kept in police stations, they are not only exploited physically, they are also being used as the first line of defence, where they suffer heavy casualties. Fourth, the young women employed as SPOs are reportedly compelled to stay at

⁴² Interviews with three former women Naxalites in Andhra Pradesh unravels the mode of recruitment of ordinary people in the Naxal ranks and life of women in the revolutionary cadre (Khan 2006).

police stations at night and have been open to sexual exploitation. Fifth, in a society where police powers have been identified as the symbol of state power in petty hands as well as individual status symbol, temporary and limited police powers at pettier level is predictably leading to misuse, where people are acting against their own society. It is creating a new sphere not only of extraction from the common people, but also severe distortions in policing and internal security function of the state.

In short, the response of the Indian state appears a muddled one. Despite the land question emerging as the most important causative factor since the Telangana movement, the movement has been tardy. The other issues such as social stratification and inequities, tribal development, displacement rehabilitation hiatus, etc. never appear to have been factored in as the causative factor. In fact, a series of protests in Orissa, West Bengal and Jharkhand in recent years, which are clearly propelled by the processes of globalization and being perceived as threats to livelihood by the people, have not been seen as sparks that will keep the Naxal fire burning. Apparently, creaking under its own weight, destabilised by an intense power politics amongst the parties both in the States and the national level and heavily influenced by the economy of globalization, a studied rational approach to why the grassroots is swaying with the Maoist revolutionary logic appears unlikely from the Indian state in near future.

BY WAY OF A CONCLUSION

Maoist revolutionary politics in India, completed six decades of the first uprising a year before the nation celebrated diamond jubilee of independence. It is engaged in a serious confrontation with the Indian state virtually in one-third of the country. It is, therefore, not easy to offer conclusive remarks on it. Its character, the characters within it, its strategies, its organizational characteristics, the leaders and parties at the State and national levels, even objectives, if not the nature, of the Indian state in many respects, have undergone very significant changes during its six decade of existence. Indeed, the pretext, text and context of this 'revolution' continue to exist, with certain added elements such as the impact of globalization. As it is poised currently, it is neither in the situation of 1951, where it could be abruptly withdrawn, nor is it in a situation of 1972, where it could be ruthlessly crushed. The development deficit, despite the post-liberalization economic boom, are stark in rural areas, where lack of land reform and continuing crisis in the farm sector signified by peasant suicides in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and other parts of the country have created pockets of potential rebellion, waiting to be tapped by the Naxals.

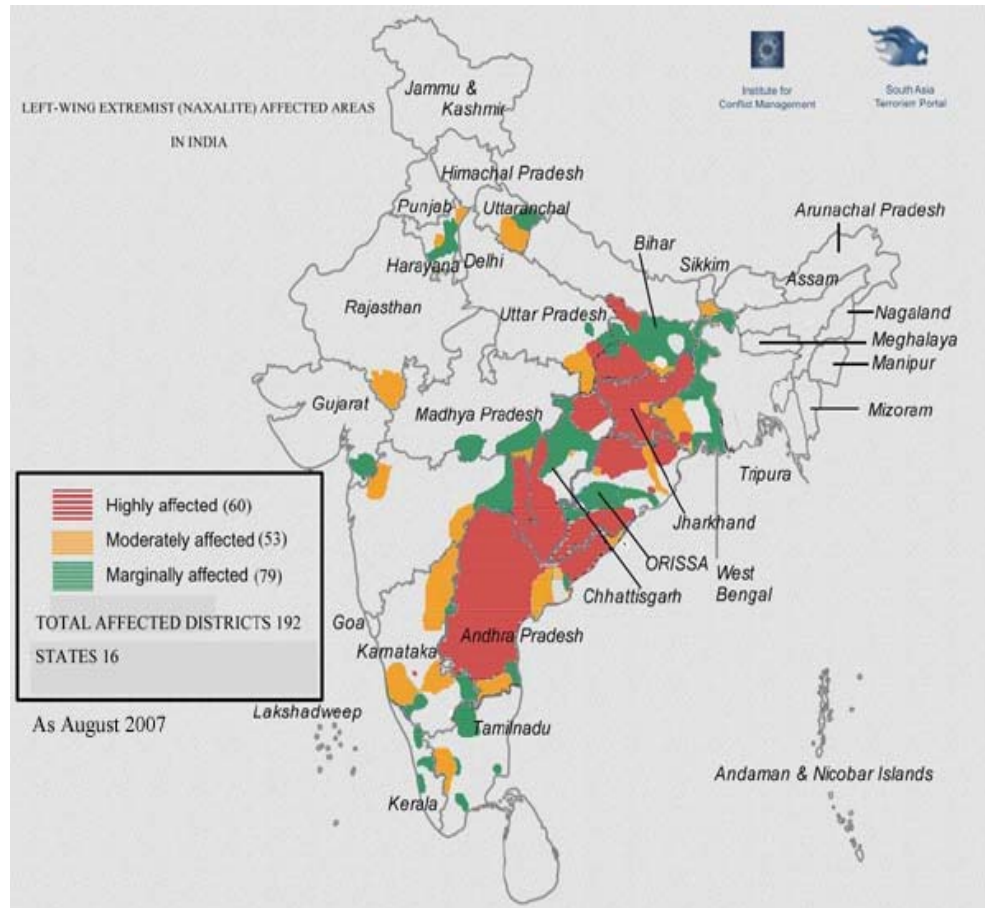
Whether we agree with their philosophy and methods or not, there is no denying the fact that the Naxal politics has made an indelible impression on the polity and society in India. It has symbolized protest politics bursting into rebellion, rather a series of them straddling different cultural regions, challenging the established social and political order in India all along its post-independence history. Since both protest politics and the politics of rebellion move on the vehicle of political mobilization, the contribution of the communist parties, as the perceived 'pure red', the 'extreme' elements for others, kept branching out to keep the 'red' intact from the fading 'pink' – the revisionists for the Marxists, has been a significant process at each stage.

The Maoist revolutionary politics sprouted before the post-colonial Indian democratic state came into existence. But survived the democratic upsurge in the Indian society and exploded within two decades, indeed not all over the country, but again in one small pocket of a crucial State, West Bengal. This revival, the state response, the suppression, the re-emergence and resurgence within four

decades, are pointer to serious incongruities and paradoxes afflicting India's democracy project, which continues to be a success story in the developing world, grave limitations notwithstanding. Atul Kohli's (1991:8) analysis that after the Indian state lost the confidence in its ability to fulfill its agenda of economic change, it became a reactive one and 'now appears capable neither of dealing with the concerns of diverse interest groups nor directing planned development', as '(i)ts dominant institutions are in disarray, and the search for new legitimacy formula goes on', captures the conditions under which the politics of Maoist revolution has expanded its base. The Naxal spread has also added a new dimension to 'the search for new legitimacy formula'. Pranab Bardhan's (1988:214) observation that '...faced with such massive excruciatingly poverty, people are apt to be impatient with the slow processes of democracy and to find arguments for alternative system compelling' explains the rationality of the Maoist expansion.

The most crucial and significant contribution of the Naxalism to Indian politics, however, is that they have kept alive the agrarian demands of the rural poor through persistent but not-always successful struggles at the ground level. 'Even the occasional official lip-service to land reforms perhaps would not have come but their initiatives in this regard in some of the most backward regions where either adivasis in the forests suffer at the hands of trader-contractor-moneylender nexus or the dalit and "other backward class" (OBC) agricultural labourers and very poor peasants are cruelly oppressed and exploited by bigger landowners and rich farmers. And these are the regions where the local powerful cliques, backed by government officials and the police, often respond with naked violence to even most innocuous and lawful demands of the powerless poor.' (Gupta 2006:3173).

Map 1 Naxal Affected Area



Source: <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/database/conflictmap.htm>

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