

Working Draft

Far reaching consequences of Naxalite Problem in India

Executive Summary

This paper aims to study the Naxalite movement in India and approach the Maoist phenomenon through different angles. It accounts the brief historical journey of the movement while examining in detail, the strength and mechanism in place that sustains it. The paper presents a thorough interrogation of the prevalent situation and causes that provide oxygen to this phenomenon. I also present the Government's response to this rising challenge and try to highlight where they have went wrong and what could be done differently.

For the benefit of the reader, the paper has been divided into six chapters. Chapter One deals with a brief historical account of the Naxalite movement in India. From the birth of the movement in the village of Naxalbari, West Bengal in 1967 to the formation and consolidation of the present day CPI (Maoist), the chapter captures the flashpoints that gave new direction and thrust to the Naxalite movement and the prominent figures that played an important role in giving shape to the Maoist cause.

Chapter Two provides a gateway to the Maoist mind. In other words, it brings to the reader the thinking and the ideas that dominate the Maoist mind space and intellectual circles. It looks at the ideology and the policies of the CPI (Maoist) and the strategic thinking behind such policy positions.

Chapter Three presents a comprehensive account of the ground situation in tribal areas and the issues that are causing severe tension between the locals and the government. The chapter analyses how these faultlines are often capitalised upon by the Maoists to increase their strength and influence in such areas. I have also focused extensively on the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) and how its non-implementation and enforcement has pushed the tribals towards Maoist camps, albeit reluctantly. The study on PESA by Ajay Dandekar and Chitrangada Choudhury of the Institute of Rural Management, Anand has formed the backbone of my analysis. The reason I have chosen to delve on PESA and the Forest Rights Act is primarily because it also provides a starting point for the government and the society at large to help the local tribals with their daily livelihood issues, thereby weaning them away from the idea of an 'armed struggle' espoused by the CPI (Maoist).

Chapter Four explores the elaborate organisational framework of the Maoist machine. It examines closely the military strength and strategy the Maoists have put in place to ward off security forces. The chapter also flags the presence of almost a parallel government in various parts of the country and the Maoist structure in place that executes governance in those areas on a daily basis, according to its own ad-hoc laws. Other aspects such as the geographical spread and the foreign support to the Maoists also figure in the chapter. The information gathered from the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) and the view expressed by the likes of Ajay Sahni and Saji Cherian in numerous articles has proved instrumental in assessing the Maoist juggernaut.

Chapter Five and Six deal primarily with the response of the Indian government to the challenge Maoists have posed. Chapter Five looks at the security response of the Indian State and the strategies employed to combat Maoist terror. It also sheds light on various government welfare schemes and the results they have had in accomplishing long-term objectives. Chapter Six presents a critical assessment of the government responses and how and where they have gone wrong. At the same time, it is a chapter of “new ideas” where I try to ideate and suggest ways to curbing the Maoist phenomenon.

There is no doubt that the Maoist phenomenon is a complex problem and there really isn't one single solution to it. When the problem is looked at through different lenses, one finds that conflicting interests exist at all levels. Land, for instance is a sacred commodity for the tribals, but the very same mineral rich area is a goldmine for industry. Who arbitrates between the two? If you put the politician-bureaucrat nexus in the middle, the situation turns murkier. What is also interesting to note is that the whole phenomenon in many ways has become self-sustaining with each player feeding on the other. So, once the tribal land is forcibly cleared for industry, the ground becomes fertile for Maoists to increase their influence among the displaced tribal community. This then facilitates the Maoist extortion economy which plays on corporate fears of losing lucrative mining business. What we see as a result is the indirect sustenance that corporate money is providing to the Maoist movement and aiding the organisational growth of the CPI (Maoist) both militarily and financially. The political-bureaucratic nexus too takes its share of the huge profits involved in the mining business and it is in their interest that the problem persists because in the absence of any hurdles from the Maoists, the corporates would hardly require any political or government patronage.

The tragedy of the whole phenomenon has been the complete marginalization of poor tribals who find themselves sandwiched between these conflicting interests, with no one upholding their cause with genuine determination. It is indeed a sad state of affairs where the dream that independent India and its Constitution showed to tribals decades ago, has turned into a nightmare. It is for the political class in general and the society at large to address their concerns and strike a delicate balance between big businesses and the aspirations of the individual tribal.

Chapter 1

History of the Naxalite Movement and the Events leading up to the formation of the present day CPI (Maoist)

The Naxalite Movement in India has experienced a fascinating journey encountering numerous organizational upheavals and conflict of thoughts and ideas. The movement has seen many highs and lows in its long history since 1967 and mirrors the sentiment expressed by one of the official Maoist documents: *“Revolutions never proceed in a straight line. The history of all successful revolutions shows this. The path is zig-zag, there are ups and downs, there is victory and defeat repeated a number of times.....before final victory”*.

The birth of the Naxalite movement in India took place in a remote village in West Bengal called Naxalbari in the year 1967. A tribal youth named Bimal Kissan obtained a judicial order permitting him to plough his land. The local landlords with the support of their goons and musclemen attacked him. This event infuriated the local Tribal population and led to a violent retaliation by the tribal community to recapture their lands. The events in Naxalbari took shape of a giant rebellion and gained visibility and support across regions including West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and parts of Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. The then United Front government led by the CPI (Marxist) came down heavily on the rebellion using all kinds of repressive measures. Seething with anger, the participants of the “revolution” formed the All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) in May 1968. *“Allegiance to armed struggle and non-participation in the elections”* formed the cornerstone of the AICCCR.

Later, the AICCCR would experience a churning of ideas which resulted in a split. The faction led by Kanhai Chatterjee who believed that *“annihilation of the class enemy should only be undertaken after building up a mass agitation”* would form the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) and the majority of the AICCCR which differed on the question of *“the annihilation of the class enemy”* went ahead and formed the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) in May 1969. Both these outfits converged on the idea of an *“armed struggle”* but where they differed was on the method to give shape to such a struggle.

Charu Majumdar became the undisputed leader of the CPI (M-L) and played an instrumental role in energizing the cadres and providing impetus to the larger movement. The charismatic leader gained a larger than life image which would prove to be counter-productive to the movement after his death in 1972. After Charu Majumdar’s death, the CPI (M-L) was deprived of any credible central leadership and the party withered away to be finally reborn as CPI (M-L) Liberation in 1974.

The Naxalite movement during the early 80s saw two divergent streams of thought emerging which again led to a polarization within. The post-Emergency period saw release of leaders associated with the Communist movement splitting yet again to give birth to the CPI (ML) (People's War), which espoused a more strident line. In 1982, we saw the formation of the Indian People's Front (IPF), which would later become the political front of the CPI (ML) Liberation. It is interesting to note here that the CPI (ML) Liberation made a marked shift away from the ideology of the original CPI (ML). While the original CPI (ML) was committed to an "armed struggle" against the Indian State, the CPI (ML) Liberation adopted a more centrist line advocating participation in the larger parliamentary democratic process. The CPI (ML) Liberation met with success under the banner of the IPF, its political front, when it emerged victorious in the Ara Lok Sabha Constituency (in Bihar) in the 1989 elections. This was a feat of sorts as Bihar sent the first ever "Naxalite" to the Lok Sabha in history of India's Parliamentary democracy.

In 1994, the Indian People's Front (IPF) was disbanded and the Election Commission recognized the CPI (ML) as a political outfit. It is interesting to note however that one of the official documents of the CPI (ML) Liberation did not rule out the violent path to achieving its final objective. The document states that *"The Party does not rule out the possibility that under a set of exceptional national and international circumstances, the balance of social and political forces may even permit a relatively peaceful transfer of central power to revolutionary forces. But in a country where democratic institutions are based on essentially fragile and narrow foundations and where even small victories and partial reforms can only be achieved and maintained on the strength of mass militancy, the party of the proletariat must prepare itself for winning the ultimate decisive victory in an 'armed revolution'. A people's democratic front and a people's army, therefore, remain the two most fundamental weapons of revolution in the arsenal of the Party."*

While we saw the CPI (ML) Liberation adopting a more moderate stance and participating in the parliamentary process, the People's War Group (PWG) line of thought completely rejected the idea of parliamentary democracy. The PWG emerged as the most important of all the splinter groups as the prevalent Naxal ideology and policies of today arise primarily from the principles espoused by the PWG.

If today the Naxals are seen to be running a parallel government in many parts of India, the credit for that goes to the PWG, writes Dr. Rajat Kujur¹. The principal architect of the CPI (ML) (People's War) or PWG was an influential Naxalite from Andhra Pradesh called Kondapalli Seetharamaiah, who was also a Member of the Central Organising Committee of the original CPI (ML).

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One of the official documents of the PWG states: *“The programme of our Party has declared that India is a vast ‘semi-colonial and semi-feudal country’, with about 80 per cent of our population residing in our villages. It is ruled by the big-bourgeois big landlord classes, subservient to imperialism. The contradiction between the alliance of imperialism, feudalism and comprador bureaucrat-capitalism on the one hand and the broad masses of the people on the other is the principal contradiction in our country. Only a successful People’s Democratic Revolution i.e. New Democratic Revolution and the establishment of People’s Democratic Dictatorship of the workers, peasants, the middle classes and national bourgeoisie under the leadership of the working class can lead to the liberation of our people from all exploitation and the dictatorship of the reactionary ruling classes and pave the way for building Socialism and Communism in our country, the ultimate aim of our Party. People’s War based on Armed Agrarian Revolution is the only path for achieving people’s democracy i.e. new democracy, in our country.”*

It is clear from the above statement of the PWG document that they rejected the parliamentary democratic system outright and believed in the idea of a People’s war to bring about a People’s government. The above statement also brings out the inherent conflict that lay in the original CPI (ML) which led to a split and the emergence of both the CPI (ML) Liberation and the PWG. While the CPI (ML) Liberation was more focused on the cause of the peasants, the PWG sought to mobilize peasants, workers, tribals and weaker sections of society to create a mass organisation instead of a political democratic front.

The similarities between the PWG line of thought and that of the Kanhai Chatterjee faction of the AICCCR which formed the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) which advocated creating of mass organisations to sustain the “armed struggle” is hard to miss. It is this convergence of thought that would later lead to a merger of the two outfits.

To quote a renowned Guerilla leader which puts into perspective the deep conflict between the CPI (ML) Liberation and the PWG: *“In the Liberation group, which at one time was one of the strong groups defending Charu Majumdar’s revolutionary line, after the martyrdom of Comrade Johar, with the leadership falling into the hands of Vinod Mishra, they began betraying the Indian revolution. As part of a conspiratorial plan, a once revolutionary party was gradually changed into a revisionist party, like the CPI and CPM. The armed resistance struggles against the state’s attacks, taking place under the then leadership of Liberation, was ended. The armed struggle to crush the feudal private armies was made a secondary task. In this way, they diverted the entire group away from the basic path outlined by the unified CPI (ML), and particularly of its founder, Charu Majumdar — that of protracted people’s war — into becoming agents of the ruling classes, by surrendering them to the parliamentary path. They converted the Comrade Johar-led Liberation, from being a revolutionary movement, into a legalist,*

*reformist and parliamentary movement; and changed the underground organization into an open opportunist and revisionist organization.”*²

The PWG continued its operations in states like Andhra Pradesh. In the meantime, one saw the emergence of another strident outfit called the CPI (ML) (Party Unity), which exercised its influence in the state of Bihar. Both the PWG and the CPI (ML) (Party Unity) merged and the new partnership made the PWG a much stronger force to reckon with in the Bihar region as it piggybacked on the CPI (ML) (Party Unity) in its traditional strongholds of Bihar and other adjoining states.

The strengthening of the PWG also saw the steady deterioration of the CPI (ML) Liberation as it lost out to the shrill and extreme policies of the PWG. The shrinking of the CPI (ML) Liberation's influence could be explained by its advocacy of parliamentary democracy thus corrupting the very basic idea of the “armed struggle” that the original and unified CPI (ML) espoused. While the Naxal cadres were disillusioned with the parliamentary democratic system, they saw no incentive in supporting the CPI (ML) Liberation and its policies as it hardly differed from that of the already existing political set-up which had given them a raw deal in terms of justice and new opportunities. The deprived classes thus yearned for a new set of fresh and ‘revolutionary’ ideas which the PWG and the MCC championed.

Formation of the present day CPI (Maoist)

The Communist Party of India (Maoist) came into existence in September 2004 following the merger of the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) and the People's War Group (PWG). The merger was officially recognized in November 2004 at a press conference in Hyderabad on the eve of the peace-talks between the PWG and the Andhra Pradesh Government.

The PWG had been trying to bring together various Left Wing Extremist groups under one umbrella for years with the objective of overthrowing what they called “*the comprador bourgeois and big landlords classes who control state power in collusion with imperialism*” and “*to establish in its place the New Democratic State under the leadership of the proletariat*”. The initial objective to strike unity among various groups faced immense hurdles with sharp differences emerging among the leadership of both the MCC and the PWG. The creation of the State of Jharkhand in the year 2000 and the security offensive mounted by the Administration acted as a ballast for closer cooperation between the PWG and the MCC which resulted in their coming together under one umbrella which later came to be known as the CPI (Maoist) in 2004.

² Sharvan, the then Secretary Bihar State Committee of CPI (ML) Peoples War, in an interview given to *People's March*, Volume 2, No.3, March 2001.

The coming together of PWG and the MCC wasn't a smooth ride and was fraught with hurdles along the way. Clashes between the MCC and the PWG would occur on regular basis and the period is referred to as a "Black Chapter" by Maoist outfits.

In January 2000, the MCC declared a unilateral ceasefire, thus paving the way for a dialogue process between the two Left-Extremist outfits. The dialogue process led to deep introspection within and it was decided that the two outfits would come together to conduct joint operations in Bihar/Jharkhand. Later, in November 2002, the introduction of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) and its use against the Naxal cadres only strengthened the idea of a merger of the MCC and the PWG along with other splinter Left-Extremist groups. According to Maoist documents, *"the indiscriminate use of POTA against Naxal cadres and sympathizers compelled them to iron out differences and jointly fight against the State."*

At a February 2003 meeting, a decision was taken to come out with a comprehensive document on ideological issues and the future of the Naxalite Movement. The two groups decided to draft five documents: ***Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, Party Programme, Strategy and Tactics, Political Resolution on the International and Domestic Situation, and the Party Constitution.***

Chapter 2

Ideology and Objectives of the CPI (Maoist)

The Naxalite movement began principally on the foundations of an 'agrarian struggle' as encapsulated by the events at Naxalbari, West Bengal in 1967. Since then, the movement not only went through conflicts and organizational upheavals, the basic ideology and the objectives of the movement also took a different turn with the strengthening of the People's War Group (PWG) in the late 90s.

"In our agenda for a new democratic revolution, there are two aspects -- the agrarian revolution and fight for nationality."

This statement came from Muppalla Lakshmana Rao *alias* Ganapathy, Head of the CPI (ML) (PWG) during an interview to a private website. This line of thought confirms a marked departure from the objectives of the original CPI (ML). The new agenda to *"fight for nationality"* could be looked at as a strategic shift on the part of the Naxalite movement masked behind an ideology. The concept of *"nationality"* targets the diverse and delicate faultlines that exist in India today. India is a diverse mix of culture, language and religion. Over the years, regional sub-nationalism and identity has come into the forefront. It is primarily this faultline that the Maoists seek to exploit to advance their agenda. Contrast this with the nationalist sentiment espoused by the Hindutva movement in India. It is not surprising therefore that the Maoist agenda is aggressively opposed by the principal opposition in the country, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP).

In November 1995, the PWG conducted an All India Conference where two important documents were adopted. The *"Party Programme"* states, *"India is a semi-feudal, semi-colonial society; here the New Democratic Revolution (NDR) has to be completed victoriously paving way to the Socialist Revolution and to advance towards the ultimate goal of Communism. The Indian people are weighed down by three big mountains: feudalism, imperialism and comprador bureaucrat capital; these are the targets to be overthrown in the present stage of NDR."*

The document also states, *"India is a multi-national country--a prison-house of nationalities and all the nationalities have the right to self-determination including secession. When NDR is victoriously completed, India will become a voluntary and genuine federation of all national people's republics."* The advocacy of secession to assert regional sub-nationalism seems to be a strategic ploy by the Maoists to weaken the Indian State which could prove to be an important tool in its armoury to achieve its principal objective of capturing power.

The second document adopted by the PWG dealt with *"Strategy and Tactics"*. It reads, *"The political strategy to be pursued in the present stage of NDR in India is one of forming a broad united front of all the anti-feudal, anti-imperialist forces--the working class, the peasantry, the*

petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie--under the leadership of the working class to overthrow the common enemies--feudalism, imperialism and comprador bureaucratic capital. The military strategy or the path of Indian Revolution is the path of protracted people's war i.e., liberating the countryside first through area wise seizure of power establishing guerilla zones and base areas and then encircling the cities and finally capturing power throughout the country. The unevenness in the economic, social and political development of Indian society calls for different tactics i.e., forms of struggle and organization, to be pursued in different regions of the country, while the political tactic line throughout the country remains the same. In urban areas the political and mass work should be carried out observing utmost precaution and the organizational work should proceed keeping in view the long-range perspective. Caste is a peculiar problem in India; and appropriate forms of organization and struggle should be evolved vigorously to fight out untouchability, caste discrimination and to finally root out the caste system. The tactics of boycott of elections have to be pursued for a long time in the prevailing conditions in India; and participating in parliamentary and assembly elections under any pretext only weakens the class struggle."

It is amply clear from the above statement that the Maoists seek to broad base their movement. Organisationally, they seek to capture the country side through a prolonged guerilla war and then move towards urban areas. While the organizational spread takes place, they also seek to attract professionals to defend and propagate their agenda among the educated classes and opinion makers. The principal aim to create sympathy and provide visibility to the movement lies on the shoulders of these professionals who will play a supporting role to spread the Maoist line of thought. What is interesting to note is the similarity between the Maoist rhetoric and that of the mainstream Left parties, except for their tone and tenor. The mainstream Left parties in India came to power on the back of precisely the agendas of land reforms and pro-poor, pro-farmer policies. The disillusionment of the voter with the mainstream parties and the shrinking support base for the Left among urban middle classes who have tasted the fruits of a growing economy, could possibly explain the lack of support for the overground Maoist sympathizers in the media and other public forums.

One of the principal undercurrents of the Maoist thought has been its agenda against feudal lords and waging of a "class war". During the initial years of the movement, the main objective of the Naxalite movement was to carry out an "armed struggle" against the landlords and win back tribal land for tilling and other agricultural activities. From the agrarian struggle of the early years, it is fascinating to note how the ideologues in the Maoist rank in a bid to broadbase their movement, have identified a new enemy: The imperialist forces and their evil designs to inflict economic repression on the poor.

In the June 2009 document released by the CPI (Maoist) Politburo, it extensively talks about how the parliamentary system has been compromised in the hands of the "imperialists" and the role of the Indian State in carrying out the agenda of such forces at the cost of the poor. The document describes the media frenzy around the "victory of democracy" and the "decisive mandate" in favour of the UPA government in the Lok Sabha Elections of 2009 as nothing but a "false propaganda" and "justification" to drive economic reforms which in the eyes of the CPI

(Maoist) is an *“euphemism for selling away the natural and human resources of the country to the imperialist MNCs and the corporate big business”*.

Another interesting observation one makes reading the June 2009 document is the lenient stance of the Maoists towards regional parties. While it is highly critical of the two national parties, the Congress and the BJP, it is supportive of the growth of the regional parties and their influence at the national level. The Maoists have always been apathetic to the parliamentary democratic system and one would expect an outright dismissal of any political participation from them, but it is interesting to note that the Maoists have benefited both strategically and politically from the tacit support of smaller regional parties, who have often elicited support of the Maoists during elections. It is thus plausible that one may see them adopting a softer stance towards regional outfits; even going to the extent of supporting them politically as we saw in the case of West Bengal, where the understanding between the CPI (Maoist) and the Mamta Bannerjee led Trinamool Congress was an open secret. Similar instances were seen in case of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) during the Jharkhand Assembly elections in 2009.

The indirect support to regional parties from the Maoist in a way builds upon the PWG line of thought on “nationality”, where we saw Maoist leader Muppalla Lakshmana Rao *alias* Ganapathy emphasizing the importance of regional sub-nationalism and the assertion of regional identities. Supporting regional political outfits furthers this agenda and prevents the Naxalite movement coming under severe strain against the might of a “unified” Indian State.

The post liberalization era has seen tremendous economic growth which has led to an unequal distribution of wealth. This has led to discontent among the poor and the frustrations of having been left out of the growth process has provided a fertile ground for the CPI (Maoist) to spread their movement further by creating a new enemy in the form of the Indian State which is presented to the tribals and the deprived classes as a “fascist force” carrying out the Imperialist agenda. This line of thought comes out clearly in the June 2009 document of the CPI (Maoist) Politburo.

From a small “agrarian struggle” against the local landlords in Naxalbari village to a broad as the “enemy”, the Maoists have successfully created a strong mass organisation from the tribes and local communities in deep forests of India capitalizing on their fears and frustrations. The subtle shift in ideology over the years has helped the movement spread across regions and threatens to undermine the Indian State and the idea of a Indian Nation in the years to come.

Chapter 3

“Cause and effect, means and ends, seed and fruit cannot be severed; for the effect already blooms in the cause, the end preexists in the means, the fruit in the seed” ~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Reasons for the prevalence of Naxalism and its tremendous growth in Tribal Areas

Addressing the Maoist phenomenon through a security standpoint alone is a delusionary path in itself. It is important to identify the “fuel that is adding to the Maoist fire” and creating havoc in the deep forests of India. One of the regions that have remained the showpiece of the Maoist ideology is the forests of Dandakaranya, which lie in between the borders of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra. It is here, where historically the Maoists capitalized on local sentiments to expand their influence. The Dadakaranya model was adopted in other areas as the movement of the PWG gained momentum and strength.

As Arundhati Roy writes in her article *Walking With the Comrades*, the PWG were not the first to arrive in Dandakaranya. Baba Amte, a well-known Gandhian had opened up a hospital in 1975. The Ramakrishna Mission had begun opening village schools in remote forest areas of Abhujmad. In north Bastar, Baba Bihari Das had started a programme to “bring back the tribals into the Hindu fold”. Among the people who converted to Hinduism included village chiefs, big landlords among them Mahendra Kumar, who would later go on to found the Salwa Judum, a tribal militia. What is interesting to note here is that the first converts were conferred with the caste status of “Dwij”, twice born Brahmins. In this aggressive drive to Hinduise the tribal community, many who did not come forward to join the Hindu fold, were declared ‘Katwas’ (or untouchables). This constituency became a natural target for the Maoists to capitalize on and expand their influence.

The PWG began their work in south Bastar and Gadchiroli. During their initial days, they faced immense opposition from the villagers and were often termed as ‘thieves’ by the local administration. In 1980, the police took out an entire squad during their village meeting. After this huge setback, the PWG regrouped and led an agitation on behalf of the tribals against the low prices they were being paid for tendu leaves, used for making *beedis*. At the time, the local traders paid 3 paise for a bundle of 50 leaves. The PWG after mobilizing the tribals and leading a strike on their behalf successfully negotiated the doubling of price for tendu leaves. This event was an important development as the tribal community realized their political power for the first time. This initial success also brought the local tribal villages closer to the PWG.

Another struggle that the Maoists took up on behalf of the local tribal community was against the Ballarpur Paper Mills. The government had given a private company the contract to extract 1.5 lakh tonnes of bamboo at subsidized rates. The tribals would get 10 paise for a bundle. This is where the PWG and Maoist machinery stepped in leading an agitation which resulted in the price of a bundle tripling to 30 paise. For the tribal community, these successful negotiations were big achievements and the realization of political power through the Maoists dawned upon them. They saw the PWG as an important and powerful tool to extract what they felt, was their legitimate right. The successful outcome cemented the relationship between the local tribal communities and the Maoists.

The above two instances clearly bring out the *modus-operandi* of the Maoists in breaking new ground and spreading their influence. As Arun Shourie in his book³ states, the Naxalites first commence with surveys of “Prospective Areas” that they seek to target. These surveys are carried out professionally and incorporate information about land pattern holdings, crops, problems of each crop, issues relating to wages and tenure, caste composition etc. Then the front organisations of the CPI (Maoist) are formed to instigate the local people on these issues culminating into agitations and strikes. Success achieved through such agitations brings the local community closer to these front organisations and in the Maoist net of influence.

If instead of success, the State unleashes force, this too creates sympathy for the front organisations among the locals as they are seen to be fighting for their cause. Sustained agitations and fights for the local people helps the Maoists consolidate their position in the area allowing them to then raise *dalam*s or Village level militia. The whole process approximately takes 5-6 years. In an interview to *The Telegraph* ‘Comrade Dhruba’ is reported to have said that “*our mass base in Murshidabad (a district in West Bengal) is ready. After five years we will launch strikes.*” Violence from the Maoists comes at a much later stage of the entire operation. So, by the time the Government responds to violence perpetrated by the Maoists, the Maoists are already deeply entrenched having won the support of the local tribal community.

Historically, while issues relating to livelihood remained, it was primarily the heavy handedness of the Forest Department officials that the local tribal community despised. It is here once again where the PWG emerged as the true guardian of tribals and their interests. The PWG shielded the tribals from harassment and devised ways to recapture land that had been grabbed by the Department. In a way, the Maoists emerged as the protector of rights of the tribals, something that the Indian State should have done as enshrined in the Constitution. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the high handedness of the local administration drove the tribal community into the hands of the Maoists. Where the Indian State failed, the PWG emerged as a force that safeguarded their interests.

³ Pg-56, “Where Will All this Take Us?” – Arun Shourie

The result of the tribal backlash with help of the PWG against the Forest Department officials led to land re-distribution among the tribals. However, the principal beneficiaries of this development were the village *mukhias* or heads. They were people who had converted to Hinduism and been conferred with the caste status of “Dwij” or twice born Brahmin as we saw earlier. This led to a lot of discontent among the common tribals who felt cheated. Again, it was the PWG that intervened and sought to establish equity and an “agenda for the masses”. They challenged the village heads and drove them out. The eviction of the powerful group of village heads and the “Dwij” community saw the emergence of Mahendra Karma who eventually founded the Salwa Judum.

The Indian State capitalized on the humiliation of the the village heads and provided tacit support to the militia formed under the name of Salwa Judum. The economic growth story of India saw powerful business houses seeking to expand and set up new industry in and around the huge mineral wealth that lay in the forest regions. It is here again, where the Salwa Judum emerged as a solution to the armed resistance by the tribal community and the PWG to give up land. It is understood that the Salwa Judum was financed by the many corporate interests and had the blessings of the State. This inevitably led to a lot of bloodshed as the war between the PWG and the State backed Salwa Judum got enacted in the forests of Dantewada and adjoining areas.

Clearly, the above policy of the State to retaliate through Salwa Judum has alienated the tribal community further and the erosion of their livelihood and their traditional tribal lifestyle has left them with no option but to seek shelter from the Maoists and support the larger cause espoused by them. It is not that the corporate houses and the State administration have refused to pay adequate compensation for their land, but it is primarily the fear of losing their culture and way of life that the tribals are wary about.

For the tribals, it is their identity, their land that provides them the secure cover for leading a life of dignity, something that the Indian Constitution has failed to provide them. As Arundhati Roy recalls her conversation with a Superintendent of Police who once commented, *“The problem with these tribals is that they don’t understand greed. Unless they become greedy, there’s no hope for us. I have told my boss, remove the force and instead put a TV in every home. Everything will be sorted out.”* This statement does raise an important point. The tribals having been left out of the development process and as a result not only have they not tasted the fruits of a growing economy but are also oblivious to the potential enhancement in the quality of life if the growth process were to touch them. It is in this light that we have to look at the above statement by the SP. Television paves the path for birth of aspiration. When there are aspirations, the people realize the futility of violence and see reason to participate in the growth process and become part of the mainstream without losing their identity and culture. Hence the opposition to part away with their land, which not only is their source of livelihood but also their shield against a system they are unfamiliar with is a phenomenon often seen among the tribal communities. The fear of not being fit enough to participate in a system alien to them also adds as a disincentive to give up their land. This in the end results in a conflict as

there is a clash of ideas that ultimately drives the tribals further away from the mainstream and the reach of the Indian State.

Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) & FRA 2006

Till now, we have studied the birth of the Naxalite Movement in India and the subsequent expansion of its influence and reach in the eastern heartlands of India. We have come across the prevalent conditions that have aided and provided the “water for the guerilla fish to swim in”. The problems and the injustices meted out to the tribal community at large have been brought out in much detail in the previous chapters. More or less, we have been able to identify the root causes that have led to the strengthening of the Maoist cause. The moot question therefore is, “How has the Government of India responded?” More importantly, “How has the political class responded?” “Have they been able to appreciate the legitimate concerns of the tribals?” “Has the bureaucracy failed the political class in implementing some of the path-breaking legislations in this regard?” or “Has the corporate-political-bureaucratic nexus become the big hurdle in addressing tribal rights and their individual aspirations?”

Contrary to popular perception, The Government of India and the political class in general have responded to these challenges and they must be credited for that. The enactment of the path breaking Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 also known as PESA, paved the way for a major shift in the tribal discourse. The political class, it must be said, showed maturity and vision in envisaging PESA, which attempted at shifting the balance of power towards tribal communities and strengthening the idea of self-protection and self-governance. By recognizing the ability of the tribal community to “self-govern”, the Act appreciated the tribal way of life and conferred legitimacy to their systems and traditions. This was indeed a landmark legislation borne out of the many years of struggle by the tribals and the response of the political class and the government showed the commitment towards their cause.

However, the initial expectations that PESA ignited among the tribal community has turned into disappointment that continues to alienate them from participating in the processes of local governance and asserting their rights. It is therefore important to first understand the basic principles enshrined in PESA and then delve into aspects where the spirit of the Act has been violated due to non-implementation and administrative lapses at various levels of governance.

1. Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996

Why was PESA path breaking? In what manner did it mark a departure from earlier laws concerning tribal welfare and rights? PESA recognized the Gram Sabha to be pre-eminent as against the Gram Panchayat. While the Gram Panchayat was an elected body, the Gram Sabha was a much smaller group comprising of village elders of smaller habitations or a group of hamlets. It is in this respect that PESA proved to be a landmark legislation as it sought to

transfer power directly in the hands of the smallest unit, the Gram Sabha. Under the PESA, the Gram Sabha is seriously empowered and has the following powers:

- a. The power to prevent alienation of land in the Scheduled Tribe areas and to take appropriate action to restore the land back to the Scheduled Tribe.
- b. The ownership of minor forest produce
- c. The power to enforce prohibition, or to regulate consumption of liquor
- d. The power to exercise control over money lending to the Scheduled Tribes
- e. The power to control local plans and resources
- f. The power of permission/recommendation in granting licenses or mining leases for minor minerals
- g. The right to be consulted before any land acquisition
- h. The power to issue certificate of utilisation of for government works etc.

What we see here is that PESA empowers the smallest group, the Gram Sabha to take exercise control and take decisions which may affect their lives directly. PESA in effect, has brought down governance right to local level and at the same time recognizes the Gram Sabha to be a competent authority to carry out certain decisions, without the involvement of mid-level government officers.

On matters such as Land Acquisition and Mining, it directly seeks to empower the Gram Sabha to give permission to mining leases and prior recommendation before any land acquisition. These are issues that have affected the tribal community negatively for a long time and PESA sought to reverse some of the historical injustices by empowering the local tribal community to take decisions on matters as important as these.

To sum it up, PESA is a radical piece of legislations which seeks to shift the balance of power from the powerful elites and the State towards the local tribal community. While the intent behind passing PESA was pure, to implement it requires certain capabilities that the State has failed to deliver, thus neutralizing and positive effect the PESA was intended to achieve.

2. PESA: The Unfinished Legislative Agenda

According to a report⁴ prepared by the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA), *“the legislative and executive work, which state governments were meant to undertake, still remains incomplete.”* The report further states, *“The entire effort of all organs of government ought to have been directed towards building up the necessary capabilities....On the contrary legal and administrative subterfuge has kept the provisions of PESA as a set of aspirations and the agenda of self-governance remains postponed.”*

⁴ “PESA, Left-Wing Extremism and Governance: Concerns and Challenges in India’s Tribal Districts” - Ajay Dandekar & Chitragada Choudhury, Institute of Rural Management, Anand

When PESA was passed in 1996, it was believed that the State governments would enact new laws or amend existing ones to facilitate devolution of powers to local tribal communities thus bringing the State laws in resonance with the basic spirit of PESA. However, this objective stands incomplete and remains unfulfilled by various State governments even today. Let's have a look at the current situation:

PESA IN SELECT STATES

The Central PESA Act's provisions	Andhra Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	Jharkhand	Gujarat	Madhya Pradesh	Orissa
Section 4 (i): The Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level shall be consulted before acquiring land in the Scheduled Areas for development projects and before resettling or rehabilitating persons affected by such projects in Scheduled Areas	The AP Act has made provisions to consult the Mandal (Block) Parishad before acquiring land in Scheduled Areas. However, planning & implementing of such projects will be coordinated at the level of the state government.	The Chhattisgarh Act has made provisions that before acquiring land for development projects, the Gram Sabha will be consulted.	The Jharkhand Act has no provision in this regard.	The Gujarat Act provides for the taluka panchayats to be consulted before acquiring any under the Land Acquisition Act, for developmental projects, and before resettling or rehabilitating persons affected by such projects	The MP Act has made provisions that before acquiring land for development projects, the Gram Sabha will be consulted.	The Orissa Act said the District Panchayat shall be consulted before acquiring land. The Revenue department has issued instructions to Collectors to obtain the Gram Sabha's recommendation during land acquisition. The law also ensures bureaucratic control over the Gram: 'The Collector or such other officer or person specially authorised on the behalf of the State Government shall exercise general powers of inspection supervision and control over the exercise of powers, discharge of duties and performance of functions by the Gram Panchayat
Section 4 (j): Planning &	The AP Act has assigned this	The Chhattisgarh Act has assigned	The Jharkhand Act has assigned	The Gujarat Act entrusts this	The MP Act has assigned	The Orissa Act has assigned this

management of Minor water bodies in the Scheduled Areas shall be entrusted to panchayats at the appropriate level;	power to either of the three tiers of Panchayats as the case may be.	powers to the Gram Sabha. Intermediate and District Panchayats also have powers to plan, own and manage minor water bodies	this power to the Gram Panchayat	power to the Gram Panchayat	functions to the Gram Sabha to plan, own and manage bodies situated within its territorial jurisdiction.	power to the District Panchayats.
Section 4 (k): The Recommendations of the Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level shall be made mandatory prior to grant of prospecting license or mining lease for minor minerals by auction.	Recommendations of the Gram Panchayat shall be considered prior to grant of prospecting licenses.	Prior recommendation of the Gram Sabha is mandatory	The Jharkhand Act has no provision in this regard.	The Gujarat Mines & Minerals (Regulation & Development) Act provides that prior to granting the quarry lease and quarry permit, recommendation of the Gram Panchayat shall be obtained.	Prior recommendation of the Gram Sabha is mandatory	The Orissa Act has assigned this power to District Panchayats
Section 4 (l): The prior recommendation of the Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level shall be mandatory for grant of concession for the exploitation of minor minerals by auction;	The AP Act has provided that prior recommendations of Gram Panchayats shall be considered.	The Chhattisgarh Act has no provision in this regard.	The Jharkhand Act has no provision in this regard.	The Gujarat Mines & Minerals Act provides that prior to granting the quarry lease and quarry permit, recommendations of the Gram Panchayat shall be obtained.	Prior recommendation of the Gram Sabha is Mandatory. Auctions are done by the state government and royalties must be paid to the gram sabhas/panchayats.	The Orissa Act has assigned this power to the District Panchayat.
Section 4 (m)(i): The power to enforce prohibition or to regulate or restrict the sale and consumption of any intoxicant;	The AP Act has assigned this function either to the Gram Panchayat or the Gram Sabha.	The Chhattisgarh Act has assigned this power to the Gram Sabha.	The Jharkhand Act has assigned this power to the Gram Panchayat	The Gujarat Act has no provision as prohibition extends to the whole state.	The MP Act says the Gram Sabha has the requisite powers to brew liquor under certain conditions.	The Orissa Act has assigned powers to the Gram Panchayat to be exercised under the direct supervision of the Gram Sabha.
Section 4 (m)(ii): The ownership of Minor Forest Produce;	The AP Act says that Gram Panchayat or Gram Sabha as the case may be, shall exercise powers in this matter, as may be prescribed.	The Chhattisgarh State Federation of Minor Forest Produce is empowered to control trade, and must distribute dividend and bonus to the shareholders.	The Jharkhand Act has assigned these powers to three tiers of Panchayat.	The Gujarat Act has given the right to ownership of MFP to Gram Panchayat. Sale proceeds shall be paid into & form part of the village fund.	The 'Madhya Pradesh Laghu Van Upaj (Gram Sabha Ko Swamitwa Ka Sandan) Vidheyak 2000' submitted by the Forest Department. Of MP is under revision to include issues like 'Ownership of Minor Forest Produce'. 'Jurisdictional Issues; etc.	The Orissa Act has assigned powers to the Gram Panchayat to be exercised under the direct supervision of the Gram Sabha.
Section 4 (m)(iii):	The AP Act says	The Act says that	The Jharkhand	The Gujarat Act	The Act says that	The Orissa Act

The power to prevent alienation of land in the Scheduled Areas and to take appropriate action to restore any unlawfully alienated land of a Scheduled Tribe;	that the Gram Panchayat or the Gram Sabha shall perform such functions.	the Gram Sabha is endowed with such powers.	Act has assigned this power to District Panchayats.	has assigned this power to the District Panchayat.	the Gram Sabha is endowed with such powers.	has assigned powers to the Gram Panchayat to be exercised under the direct supervision of the Gram Sabha.
Section 4 (m)(iv): The power to manage village markets by whatever name called;	The AP Act has assigned powers to the Gram Panchayat or the Gram Sabha as the case may be	The Chhattisgarh Act provides that the Gram Sabha shall have powers to manage village markets and melas through the Gram Panchayat.	The Jharkhand Act has assigned this power to all three tiers of Panchayats.	The Gujarat Act has assigned this power to Gram Panchayats.	The MP Act provides that the Gram Sabha shall have powers to manage village markets and melas through the Gram Panchayat.	The Orissa Act has assigned powers to the Gram Panchayat to be exercised under the direct supervision of the Gram Sabha.
Section 4 (m)(v): The power to exercise control over money lending to the Scheduled Tribes;	The AP Act states that either the Gram Panchayat or the Gram Sabha shall perform such functions	Chhattisgarh Act has amended its laws preventing moneylending in PESA areas, and giving preventive powers to the Gram Sabha.	The Jharkhand Act has assigned this power to the District Panchayat.	The Gujarat Act has assigned this power to the Gram Panchayat.	The Gram Sabha is endowed with such powers.	The Orissa Act has assigned powers to the Gram Panchayat to be exercised under the direct supervision of the Gram Sabha.

Source: "PESA, Left-Wing Extremism and Governance: Concerns and Challenges in India's Tribal Districts" - Ajay Dandekar & Chitragada Choudhury, Institute of Rural Management, Anand

From the above table, the point that needs to be highlighted is that many of the States have devolved power to the Panchayats, and not directly to the Gram Sabha. This is important primarily because PESA envisages "direct local governance" through the Gram Sabha, which accounts for the smallest unit of a village. Panchayats, on the other hand exercise their jurisdiction over a larger group, in some cases a group of many small villages. Thus, many of the local issues and grievances remain unaddressed in much larger body such as the Panchayat, where individual voices get drained out and the results are always sub-optimal. It is precisely this absence of real empowerment of the tribals through the Panchayats that the idea of a Gram Sabha was strengthened under PESA. The States, by not devolving power to the local Gram Sabhas have not lived up to the spirit of "direct and participatory governance" as envisaged under PESA.

When it comes to controlling resources, the power still lies in the hands of the higher levels of government and not the local Gram Sabhas. On matters such as minerals, forest produce and land acquisition, the States have failed to enact legislation empowering the Gram Sabhas. This is understandable as there is always reluctance on the part of the powerful to give away power. The bureaucracy and the influential power elites feel comfortable with the status quo and any change in this regard acts as a disincentive for them.

In the past few years, land politics has caught the imagination of all and issues arising out of land acquisition have entered the national discourse. Under PESA, the local Gram Sabha has the right to be consulted and also pass its recommendation before any land acquisition process. In matters of mining and use of forest resources too, PESA allows the Gram Sabha to be consulted before grant of license and mining leases.

According to the IRMA report, on a comparative analysis of the laws enacted by the States, the States of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh come closest to the original provisions of PESA.

Even if the necessary legislation does get enacted, the process of implementation is an onerous task and is fraught with difficulties. Simply put, there is a clash of interests between the powerful elites and the tribals. “The section below me should be kept unaware, so that I can benefit from it”. This particular culture too has aided the stasis that has crept in the implementation and enforcement of the laws.

The effect of non-implementation and abuse of PESA in denying the rights of tribals

Before we move ahead, what needs to be understood is that land is sacred to the tribal community. There is a tendency to explain land acquisition in forest areas in terms of monetary concessions to the aggrieved community and other financial compensations. At times, the private company also promises to train a tribal from every household in skills as a precursor to employment in the factory or plant to be set up. At first look, the transaction seems reasonable and ethical too. However, what we must understand is that the tribal community finds itself “unfit” to participate in the modern economic activity. The skillset required by industry is often hard to match. This leads to both fear and apprehension in the minds of the tribals on losing their land, even though the financial compensation is fairly attractive. Take for instance, the case⁵ of Mahangu Madiya, a resident of Bastar, Chhattisgarh who received Rs 55 lakhs as compensation, but does not even have a mobile phone. *“I am concerned with farming. My land is important for me. What will I do with this money?”* is what perplexes this resident farmer of Bastar. His land is part of the larger tract which the Govt. of Chhattisgarh is negotiating with the locals to hand it over to steel giant Tata Steel.

What comes out clearly from the above episode is the importance of land in the tribal way of life. At the same time, it is a known fact that the land the tribal communities own, is rich in minerals and other natural resources, a necessary fuel for sustaining the fast growing Indian economy and the thirst for large scale industries. This is where the conflict lies and the interests of a growing economy clashes with that of the local communities who have struggled against colonial forces historically and are now up against the mighty force of the Indian State and the powerful elite.

⁵ The case study referred to here is based on the fieldwork carried out by Ajay Dandekar & Chitrangada Choudhury, Institute of Rural Management, Anand

As a result, India today is witnessing flash points across PESA areas. Acquisition of an individual's or a community's land and natural resources for private industry in violation of PESA is leading to conflicts and violent clashes. The consequence of such a development is further alienation of the tribal community from the mainstream. With every such injustice, the Indian State loses the trust of these people and it is only inevitable that over a period of time, they see the violent methods of the CPI (Maoist) as the only counter to the injustices meted out to them, in the absence of a caring State.

Off late, the State itself has become the principal violator of tribal rights. Earlier, while it committed acts of omission, today, the State administration is freely acquiring land, ignoring the recommendations of the Gram Sabha. It is to be noted here that many such meetings with the Gram Sabha is undertaken under huge police presence, thus not allowing a free and fair process to take place.

What explains the high stakes that lies in these mining areas? On a closer look, the mining sector has registered tremendous growth over the past few years. The rapidly growing construction industry in China means that there is a surge in demand of steel. A lot of the raw iron ore that required for manufacturing steel is exported from India. The mining companies in India pay a royalty of Rs 26 per tonne of iron ore. They then sell it at a much higher rate of around Rs 3000 per tonne, thus posting huge profits. Obviously, the profits are shared with the local politicians and the bureaucracy who facilitate the mining activity in the area. This is a vicious economic cycle that profits everyone except the local tribal community. Now, if PESA were to be strictly implemented, it would put an end to this heavily skewed profit making. It is primarily because of the high incentive and also the pressure from corporate lobbies that there is reluctance on the part of the State governments to devolve powers to the Gram Sabha and empower them to take decisions with respect to their land and resources. In the words of a former Chief Minister, *"Its implementation would put an end to mining projects"*.

Maoism in PESA areas

The enactment of PESA in 1996 led to large scale awareness among the tribals about their rights. The initial success also sought to heal the wounds of the past injustices and gave birth to hope for a better future. The passing of the Act also created a sense of expectation among the tribals from the Indian State, who would be their guardian and protector of their interests. With onset of private capital, it brought with it displacement of communities, usage of forest resources without the consent of the locals and flouting of various provisions of PESA. When the Indian State failed to act as their "protector", the tribals turned to violence and other extreme measures. It is interesting to note that out of the 76 Maoist affected districts in the country, 32 are PESA districts.⁶ As we saw earlier, the Maoist spread their influence in a particular district by taking up local issues concerning land rights, wages, natural resources etc. on behalf of the tribals. It is only at a much later stage after winning their trust that they

⁶ IRMA, Gujarat

unleash their military agenda and work to create *dalamas* (village level militia). Abuse and neglect of PESA provides the Maoist a fertile ground to propagate their agenda and spread their influence in newer areas of the country.

Chapter 4

Structure and Power of the CPI (Maoist)

Till now, we saw how the Naxalite movement took shape in the late 60s and its evolution through the decades thereafter. Without doubt, the movement underwent numerous hiccups and the journey hasn't been without hurdles. We also saw the subtle changes in strategy and the ideological shifts that marked the entire evolutionary process. The prevalent situation on the ground and how it acted as fuel for the larger movement became clearer. The abuse of tribal rights and the historical injustices by the State became the fulcrum of Maoist propaganda and "revolution". The non-enforcement of PESA and FRA has also contributed to the alienation of the tribals from the Indian State.

The questions that arise now are concerned with the strength and shape the Naxal movement has taken today. This chapter aims to study the structure of the Maoist machine and how the various parts keep it going like a well-oiled machine. From the military aspects to the financial strength, from communication strategies to the mechanisms of guerilla warfare, the Maoists have truly become an independent self-sustaining organization which would require considerable efforts from all sides (maybe simultaneously) by the Indian State to put a halt to this juggernaut.

Military Structure and Weapons

The CPI (Maoist) has an elaborate military organization, which has over the years acquired not only tactical know-how but also improved its technical capabilities considerably. At the village level, main fighting machine of the Maoists, the People's Liberation Guerilla Army (PLGA) is absent. The villages are dominated by the village level militia, which forms the "lowest rung" of the Maoist military structure. These local militias mainly comprise of young boys and girls in their early 20s, dressed in saris and lungis. Unlike the cadres of the PLGA, they have no formal uniform and their weaponry is quite primitive. Muzzle-loading rifle (they refer to it as "bharmaar"), knives, bow and arrow, axes and crude mortar constitute their main line of weapons.

As we move up the military chain, the PLGA starts forming the backbone of the rest of the military organization. The PLGA consists of armed cadres dressed in olive green uniforms (a sight we are quite familiar with from newspapers and TV). They are the main attack force of the CPI (Maoist) and have a formidable armoury of weapons at their disposal. Some of them being

the INSAS rifle, SLR, AK-47, country made rockets, mines, timer devices etc. One saw a glimpse of the capabilities of the Maoists when on September 8, 2006, the Andhra Pradesh police busted a large haul of weapons from the cadres of the CPI (Maoist). Around 16 rocket launchers, 600 rocket shells packed in bags were recovered. Later, investigations revealed parts of the rockets and other weapons were actually manufactured at local lathe workshops and foundries in and around Chennai, Tamil Nadu of the Everest Engineering Company, Universal Casts and Bharath Fine Engineering.⁷ Numerous other raids over the years have confirmed the usage of high grade weapons by the CPI (Maoist). From sophisticated rocket launchers to single-loading rifles (SLR), the Maoists have increased their capabilities manifold. In another raid in November 2005, the police seized 11 powerful claymore mines and booster rockets from the Maoists.

It is interesting to note here, that the Maoists have been working hard to acquire indigenously made rockets. Proof of this lies in the documents seized by the police in 2003, which showed design layouts of rocket launchers and mortars. Security officials are of the view that the designs roughly matched that of US made anti-tank rocket launcher M-1 and the Russian RPG-7. According to various reports, there has been considerable improvement in these rocket designs after forensic analysis of blast sites in the past.

The question that arises is as to how have the Maoists succeeded in acquiring such lethal weapons. The weapons used by the Maoists are mainly those that are looted from police or paramilitary forces. This remains the easiest source of weaponry for the Maoists. Among the sophisticated weapons that have swelled Maoist armoury from the loot have been .303s, LMG, SLR, Mortars, Stens, Revolvers and Pistols. Explosives form an integral part of the Maoist weaponry and are often used to blow up physical infrastructure of the State. Mines and mining activity has been a huge source for explosives. For instance, in an attack on the National Mineral Development Corporation (NDMC) in February, 2005, the Maoists looted about 50 tonnes of ammonium nitrate, a key explosive used for detonating iron ore mines by mining contractors.

The Maoists have also invested heavily in setting up their technical wings and strengthening their IT. If reports are to be believed, they employ IT experts on a monthly contract, who help them in development of explosives and other weapons. These experts also play a significant role in communications and tapping government information, while also designing war strategies and guerilla warfare plans. As Saji Cherian writes, the Maoists have been successful in manufacturing claymore mines and detonating them from remote controlled devices from a far off distance, making use of Icom-V8 wireless sets. According to SSP V.V Srinivasa Rao of

⁷ "Maoists: Deadly Arsenal" – Saji Cherian

Vishakhapatnam District, the Maoists *“seem to have copied the model that the U.S Marines had used in Vietnam. The mines kill anyone who steps on them.”*⁸

While the weaponry of the CPI (Maoist) has without doubt added to its overall strength and given it considerable tactical advantage in the deep forest areas, the use of landmines has crippled the security forces in the recent past. Not only do the mines give the Maoists considerable advantage in the warzone, the Maoists have used them judiciously to ambush security personnel in large numbers as was seen in Dantewada in 2009. According to Chhattisgarh DGP Vishwa Ranjan, *“Bastar region is spread over nearly 40,000 sq km, of which up to 25,000 sq km is intensively mined.”* This statement in itself explains the military advantage the Maoists have been able to achieve over the past several years. The Maoists use this advantage to secure their objectives in a clinical fashion. Small contingents of security personnel are targeted by mines embedded deep under the roads. For large security contingents, the Maoist use landmines as a “first shock”, before engaging the security forces in a gun-battle. This strategy has proved successful as was seen in the Maoist attack in Dantewada in 2009, where 70 CRPF jawans lost their lives.

The Maoists bury these mines deep under metalled roads at the time of construction. By threatening local contractors, the Maoists are able to fulfill this objective. It must be understood that quite often the local contractors willingly participate in embedding the roads and bridges with mines. What explains this action by the contractor is that when the mines are triggered by the Maoists, the shoddy work carried out by the contractors is also washed away. The money skimmed off through such dubious means goes straight into the pockets of the contractors. Thus it is a win-win situation for both the Maoists and the local contractors.

The landmines have proved to be a potent weapon in the hands of the Maoists against the police and other paramilitary forces, as it becomes nearly impossible to demine such large forested areas. One wrong step on the part of the security personnel often leads to a catastrophe for the entire contingent. This has severely hampered security operations of the government.

Financial Strength and Mechanism of funding

The question that perplexes many policy and security experts concerned with the Maoist phenomenon today is just how large is the size of the Naxal economy and the financial strength of the CPI (Maoist). The Union Ministry of Home Affairs puts the figure close to Rs 1400 cr annually, while according to the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh Dr. Raman Singh, the figure

⁸ “Maoists: Deadly Arsenal” – Saji Cherian

stands at around Rs. 1200 cr. The DGP of Chhattisgarh believes that the extortion economy of the CPI (Maoist) is close to Rs. 2000 cr. While the above figures vary across reports, it will not be an exaggeration to state that the size of the Naxal economy is indeed staggering and could have drastic consequences.

The cause of worry primarily stems from the fact that much of the annual budget of the CPI (Maoist) is diverted to arms purchase from the illegal arms market in Myanmar and Bangladesh. Money is also routed through the West Bengal – Malaysia drug trade route to procure sophisticated weapons such as the AK-47s, landmines and rocket launchers. Money thus has a considerable bearing on the Naxalite movement in India and any attempts to crush the Naxalite movement will have to start with eliminating the financial sources and strength of the CPI (Maoist).

So from where and how do the cadres of the CPI (Maoist) raise such huge amounts of money to fund the movement and keep the revolutionary fire lit? The answer primarily lies in the huge extortion business that extends over the region, also known as the '*Red Corridor*'. The Maoists mainly target the road contractors, contractors of forest produce like *tendu patta*, bamboo, wood etc. It is important to know that every season the government floats tenders for the extraction of a fixed volume of tendu leaves. Each bag of tendu leaves earns the contractor around Rs. 1100, of which about Rs. 120 is extracted by the Maoists as extortion money.⁹

As Saji Cherian of Institute of Conflict Management writes, poppy and opium cultivation also figures among the top sources of funds for the CPI (Maoist). Interestingly, as claimed by security forces, these fields are often hidden in between normal maize and rice cultivation, thus avoiding the eyes of local officials. According to reports, the Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN) carried out destruction activity of around 1443 hectares of such cultivation in 2009 alone. Another aspect that needs to be highlighted here is that much of the opium cultivation is carried out in areas which are located in the border regions in between States. This creates various legal and jurisdictional hurdles, paving the way for the Maoists to take advantage.

Mining activity forms the main cornerstone of the Maoist finances. Jharkhand alone accounts for around Rs. 40 crore being collected as 'levy' by the Maoists. Many projects sanctioned under the Govt. of India such as the Golden Quadrilateral and other educational funds for primary education are lucrative targets for the Maoists. It has been found that the Maoists have been able to successfully extract a large share of the money by threatening road contractors. The Maoists don't stop at that, but even threaten local village schools and demand money sanctioned to them under the government's various education schemes.

⁹ "Walking With the Comrades" - Arundhati Roy (Outlook Magazine March 2011)

Another surprising fact that emerges from various reports on Maoist finances is that big corporate houses too have become a source of large funds that finds itself in the Maoist coffers. Why are the corporates funding the Maoists? You would ask. Clearly, the interests of the corporate houses lie at odds with the Maoist agenda and there is no reason why they (Maoists) should find corporate funding easy.

The answer to this lies in the complex web of interests that have engulfed the mining regions. Now, mining as earlier pointed out is a highly lucrative business in India with extremely large profit margins. However, to carry out mining activity in Maoist dominated areas without trouble means keeping their guerilla forces silent. This is achieved through payment of 'bribe' or 'levy' to the Maoists, in exchange of which the Maoist guarantee no hurdles from their side. These transactions between the Maoists and the corporate houses are more of a transaction of convenience and mutual self-interest. So, while the Maoists extract huge sums from the corporates, they spend a sufficient portion of it to fight the security forces and the government. Indirectly, corporate money finds itself being used against the democratic government. It is quite an irony that the very corporates who are strong advocates of government stability for economic activity to take place, in effect end up destabilizing the very same democratic fabric unwittingly. Whoever said greed does not outweigh monetary considerations?

Maoists: The people within

We have seen till now the elaborate organisational structure the Maoists have been able to construct over the past several years. Contrary to popular belief, the Maoists have created a self-sustaining financial empire. Not only that, they have also kept themselves abreast with the latest technologies and equipment in warding off any offensive from the security forces. While we have examined in some detail, the functioning of various arms of the CPI (Maoist) and the operational methods undertaken, the principal building block that make up the entire Maoist machine has been ignored; its people.

Women have played a significant role in the Naxalite movement and form an integral cornerstone of the Maoist organisational structure. In various attacks on security forces and other strategic installations of the Indian State, it has been found to be led by women cadres. For instance, in a high profile attack in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra, where 18 policemen were killed in October 2009, it was found that the entire Maoist contingent was led by a woman named Tarakka.¹⁰ Similar instances where women have played significant role in Maoist attacks have occurred with regular frequency. According to various police reports, women seem to

¹⁰ "Maoists: Women in Camp" by Fakir Mohan Pradhan

make up a considerable percentage of the cadre. In some cases, the number goes up as high as 40% in certain areas such as Gadchiroli, Maharashtra.

Young tribal girls and those belonging to the Dalit community also constitute the fairly strong women presence in Maoist ranks. According to interrogation reports, these girls are assigned the job of cooking, carrying bags and other menial jobs in Maoist camps.

While women have played a successful role in the Maoist cause, the story doesn't end there. As Fakir Mohan Pradhan writes, women have had to rough it out in Maoists camps, a case in point being that of Shobha Mandi *alias* Uma (23). She was sexually exploited repeatedly by senior leaders, which ultimately led her to desert the camp and surrender. She was first raped at the age of 17 by a leader named Bikash, and underwent repeated sexual humiliation at the hands of others in the future too. Uma's case is one among the many women who have had to pass through such ordeal.

An important point that emerged from Uma's submission was that women felt protected only if they chose to enter 'companionship' with a senior leader or entered marital union with him. Such union also meant that they rose up the ranks faster. This phenomenon has been found to hold true as many women leaders caught by security personnel are wives or 'partners' of top Maoist commanders and members of the Politburo, the highest decision making body of the CPI (Maoist). *"Sex is demanded at gun-point. It is so rampant that often it is difficult to say who is sleeping with whom in the jungles"*, says Sabita Munda (20).

Without doubt, the condition of women in Maoist camps is unheard of. What is most depressing is that they find themselves sandwiched between the State and the Maoists with nowhere to go and nobody to share their pain with. The lives they live are full of repeated injustices which remain 'invisible' to the outside world. For the world outside the Maoist camp, they are just another 'armed guerilla', which needs to be crushed down. It is not uncommon then to find an increase in the number of women cadres of the CPI (Maoist) surrendering to the police. The jail, for them seems to provide an escape route from the stifling conditions that prevail in Maoist camps. According to data compiled by South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), more than 74 women cadres have surrendered since 2005. This number could only increase further, and also provides the government an opportunity to create new rehabilitation policies for such women so as to attract them out of Maoist camps.

Having taken a closer look at the role of women in the Maoist organisational structure, not focusing on children and young teenagers in such camps will not complete the debate. It is no secret that the Maoists have engaged children and teenagers in various front organisations, the most prominent being the Krantikari Adivasi Balak Sangh, which finds its roots in Chhattisgarh.

This organisation mainly comprises of special child squads trained in weapons and ammunitions.

One often wonders as to why at all are children compelled to join the Maoist bandwagon. How have the Maoists successfully able to induct new young followers in their ranks? The answer to this question in many ways lies at the failure to meet aspirations of the tribal people, by the government. Take for example a simple case of a young tribal boy. With the State abdicating its responsibilities in providing education and new opportunities, the young boy finds himself uneducated, unemployed and a future with bleak prospects. It is in this vacuum that the Maoists step in, by paying a handsome amount of around Rs. 3000 to the young boy to allure him. With the Maoist coffers swelling, paying that high an amount per cadre is not hard for the CPI (Maoist). This strategy has allowed the Maoists to raise a Tribal Army of youths altogether. After all, why would a disillusioned youth shy away from such inducements? These are tough questions which the government has to answer because in an indirect way, it too is responsible for the expanding army of tribals willing to fight the Maoist cause.

Some aspects that need incorporation in the chapter:

Geographical Spread

Data/Figures/Statistics on Maoist strikes on security and economic establishments.

Something on the Overground urban support