
A historical introduction to Naxalism in India

India's remarkable economic development in the last 30 years has earned it the rank of the fastest growing democracy in the world. However, three major issues in the country have threatened its advancement on the international scene, its development and its national unity. These are: the Jammu and Kashmir conflict (as old as independent India itself), the separatist movements in the North Eastern states (which date back to the early 1950s) and the Naxalite insurgency (which started in West Bengal in the late 1960s). The latter insurgency is the focus of this paper.

In 1967, oppressed peasants inspired by the communist movement raised their bows and arrows against the feudal landowners in Naxalbari. In 2019, the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist), known also as Maoists or Naxalites, raised their upgraded, more sophisticated weapons against mining corporations and development projects which threatened to expel indigenous tribes (or Adivasis, an umbrella term to describe tribal populations) from their ancestral lands in order to exploit the mineral-rich soil. Times have changed, but the aim of the Maoists has not: seizing land from oppressors and redistributing it to the people. This armed struggle has resulted in human rights violations, mass displacement and at least 12,000 deaths as of 2018.

This paper aims to describe the extent to which the CPI-Maoists cause a threat to Indian integrity and development. It will provide a description of communist movements in India, and how schisms within these movements brought about the creation of Naxalism. Furthermore, it will explore the current ideology and tactics of the CPI-Maoists, and how the group aims to overthrow the democratic institutions in India through a protracted '*people's war*', as it perceives the Indian government to be feudal and imperialist. Finally, it will approach the State's counter-insurgency policies and its population-centric development plans.

The origins of Naxalism

The birth of Naxalism is pinpointed to the Naxalbari uprising of spring 1967. Naxalbari, the village that gave its name to the movement, was the site of a peasant revolt, instigated by communist leaders against land owners of the State. While at this point, India had been independent from the British for 20 years, the country had retained the colonial land tenancy system. Under the British imperial system, indigenous landlords were granted pieces of land in return for their collection of tax revenue and as in Medieval European feudal systems, these landlords subleased their land to peasants for half their yield. As shown by the 1971 census, nearly 60% of the population was landless, the lion's share of land being owned by the richest 4%.

While this event marked the beginning of the Naxalite movement as we know it today, it is important to understand that its emergence is a result of the various fragmentations of communist ideologies in India over time. Hence, in order to comprehend the nature of the Naxalism, one must first delve into its own tumultuous history.

Communist movements in India

The creation of the Communist Party of India (CPI) in 1925 consolidated the presence of communist ideology in the country. Inspired by the communist movements taking place all over the world, the CPI fanned the flames of a proletarian-led national revolution against British imperials. The political context at the time proved to be favourable for the CPI. Firstly, peasant revolts against imperialist landowners has continuously occurred throughout the history of British India. According to Gupta (2007), at least 110 violent peasant uprisings took place between 1783 and 1900 and while these uprisings proved to be unsuccessful, they planted the seed for future proletariat mass movements against the State. Secondly, thousands of cadres, being disappointed in the failure of Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement of 1920-1922 and disenchanted by the nationalist movement, were drawn to the more revolutionary Marxist ideology and would become the corpus of the CPI upon its formation. The success of the October Revolution in Russia became a source of inspiration for the nascent communist movement in India.

While in its initial stages, the CPI remained secure in the idea of a Marxist inspired mass revolution, followed by setbacks that eventually led to the emergence of more radical communist parties. To elaborate, the CPI was inherently tied to foreign communist leaders, such as Stalin. In February 1951, a delegation from the CPI met with Stalin in Moscow and the USSR leader allegedly told the members of the delegation to abandon violent revolution and participate in the democratic platforms of newly independent India. Perhaps Stalin sought to establish a strategic relationship with India that could not be sustained should a violent communist revolt engulf the nation. Not only was India suffering the repercussions of Partition and the first India-Pakistan war over Jammu and Kashmir (1947-1949), but the USSR was at the time also engaged on the side of North Koreans in the Korean War. The economic and demographic consequences of the Second World War for the USSR, its engagements in Korea and the climate of the Cold War settling on the international scene could not have permitted the USSR to facilitate their *ideological brethren* of the CPI.

Stalin's encouragement to dismiss the armed revolution proved to be a major blow to the CPI, and likely influenced the CPI's decision to abort the Telengana movement. This movement, which lasted from 1946 to 1951, sought to liberate the peasantry from the dominance of oppressive landlords and redistribute the land amongst the landless - as would be the root of the Naxalbari uprising 16 years later. The CPI had established a strong presence in Telengana and aimed to organise the peasantry to lead it into revolution against the State. Moreover, the Telengana insurgency led to the CPI promoting guerrilla warfare as a tactic.

The tables turned when the Indian Army augmented their offensive against peasant rebels and called for all communists to surrender. The landlords were returning to reclaim their lands, and thousands of people were imprisoned and placed in camps. As a consequence of

this offensive, CPI members were faced with a dilemma, as some felt the necessity to give up arms, while others believed that abandoning the struggle would discredit the CPI in the eyes of the peasantry. The leadership was hence divided; some members opted to surrender while others continued the armed struggle. However, following negotiations with the Indian National Congress, the CPI formally withdrew from the insurgency in October 1951.

Birth of the CPI-M

As feared, this led to a discreditation of the CPI, which seemingly had abandoned the revolutionary ideology that had been their selling point to the proletariat. This sentiment of disillusionment in the capacities of the CPI paved the way for the creation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) at the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of India in Calcutta in late 1964. The schism between the CPI and the CPI-M was brought about by the tensions between the two communist giants of the time - the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. In the 1960s, the Soviets advocated for democratic methods and diplomatic relations to spread communism, which led the Chinese to label the Soviets as revisionists who had abandoned the revolutionary flame. While the older members of CPI stood by the USSR (as they had when Stalin advised them to make use of democratic institutions back in 1951), the younger generation (which still advocated for violent revolution) sided with the Chinese as it considered the older members traitors to the cause for having abandoned the Telangana uprising.

It was not long until the CPI-M itself was faced with yet another separation due to ideological differences. While imprisoned in the mid-1960s, a man named Charu Mazumdar wrote a set of nine essays that would serve the basis for Naxalite ideology. Mazumdar was born into a family of small landowners, but had risen in the ranks of the CPI and later the CPI-M. Frustrated by the failure of a communist takeover in India, Mazumdar turned to the example of the Chinese Communist Party. Not only did Mazumdar denounce the revisionist turn of the Soviet Union and the CPI as being the reason for the failure of communism in India, he also affirmed that the revolution in India must come from the peasants in rural areas rather than the working class - as it happened in China under the leadership of Mao Zedong.

Mazumdar's pro-China stance resonated throughout the CPI-M at a time when international politics once again played a role in the fracture of Indian communist parties. In 1965, one year after the formation of the CPI-M, India and Pakistan raised arms against each other over Jammu and Kashmir for the second time in less than 20 years. This led to a clash between patriotism and communist ideology for the pro-China CPI-M, as Mao's government chose to side with its '*all-weather friend*', Pakistan. Considering the deep animosity between India and Pakistan, the CPI-M condemned Beijing's choice to support Rawalpindi (Pakistan's interim capital between 1959 and 1967). However, this did not sit well with members of the party who felt that the CPI-M had betrayed the allegiance to Chinese communist ideology.

Another issue arose between the CPI-M and its more radical members when the CPI-M participated in the United Front coalition for the 1967 West Bengal Legislative Assembly Elections. The coalition won and ousted the Indian National Congress from the seat of power it had held in West Bengal since independence. However, this meant that the CPI-M was now

part of mainstream politics and could no longer sustain faithfulness to its revolutionary goals while swearing allegiance to the Indian Constitution. Additionally, two members of the CPI-M were given important positions in the cabinet, notably in the Home Ministry and the Ministry of Land Revenue.

At the start of the Naxalbari uprising in 1967, barely a few months after the victory of the CPI-M's coalition in the Legislative Assembly Elections, the seeds for another schism had been planted. The Naxalbari uprising was sparked by the United Front's inability to implement effective land reforms. The people involved in the Naxalbari uprising put CPI-M leaders in a very difficult situation: the communist party found itself the opponent of a communist movement.

The CPI-M had an obligation to law and order, which it carried out, however, this did not deter the movement which continued to gain momentum. In fact, at its peak in 1969, Mazumdar officially split from the CPI-M by forming the Communist Party of India- Marxist Leninist (CPI-ML). Despite the name, Mazumdar was much more inspired by Maoist ideology than Marxist or Leninist Doctrine. In fact, the slogan of the party was: *"China's Chairman is our Chairman. Chinese path is our path"*. Mazumdar and the CPI-ML sought to import a Maoist-style revolution, but the dissemination of Maoist propaganda proved to be an unattractive move on behalf of the CPI-ML, following India's defeat in the Sino-Indian War of 1962, clashing with patriotic sentiments. Moreover, the CPI-ML was not as concerned with public opinion as it should have been (and as the CPI-Maoists is now). Instead, Mazumdar was convinced the revolution would simply need a spark and the right conditions to ignite. This assumption proved to be the beginning of the end for this phase of the Naxalite insurgency. Furthermore, the situation took a turn in 1971, when the government commenced *Operation Steeplechase* and sent the army and members of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) into West Bengal. The operation lasted 45 days from June to August, and ultimately crushed the Naxalite movement. Following the retaliation by State forces, the movement saw a decline in activity for the following two decades. However, the insurgency resurfaced in the 1990s, during the liberalization of the Indian economy when the government began granting licenses to private and multinational mining corporations, when splintered Naxalite groups began dialogues and negotiations to recycle the original movement, only this time in a more structured fashion. One of the most famous results of these negotiations is the merger of two of the biggest and most active Naxalite groups, the People's War Group and the Maoist Communist Center in 2004. This merger resulted in the Communist Party of India-Maoists.

As explained, the CPI and the CPI-M abandoned their armed struggle in favour of mainstream politics. However, the CPI-Maoists, which was declared a terrorist organisation under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act in 2009, tenaciously held on to the protracted people's war, and aims to bring about a communist revolution as was seen in China in the 1930s and 1940s, while being oblivious to the fact that the political context of modern-day India cannot be compared to the civil-war inflicted China of 80 years past. Technological, social and economic advancements have changed the terrain, and hence led to evolutions in the Maoist tactics and the Indian Government's counter-insurgency policies.

Modern Maoists

The merger of the People's War Group and Maoist Communist Center in 2004 resulted in the creation of the Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist) and its armed wing, the People's Liberation Guerilla Army (PLGA), and an upsurge in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) related violence. While this is the biggest operating group, there are still numerous Naxalite factions active in the country's eastern states, along what has been infamously dubbed the *Red Corridor*. Some of the states in which the Maoists have a relatively strong presence include Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, where Maoist factions control pockets of territory in underdeveloped areas that are not easily accessed.

The merger prompted an upsurge in violence in numerous Indian states, which led Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India from 2004 to 2014, to declare that Naxalism was "*the single biggest security challenge ever faced by our country*", in April 2006. In the first trimester of 2006, more than 200 people were killed in Naxalite activities. In a context where India was still battling Sikh separatist movements and Kashmir insurgency, labelling Naxalism as the biggest threat showed how seriously officials grasped the menace. At the time, Naxalites were an estimated 20,000 strong group and occupied territory in states that comprised of 20% of the country's population. Maoist factions, to this day, continue operating in India's "*Red Corridor*", which includes central and eastern states such as Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. Pockets in these states have been riddled with poverty and underdevelopment for decades, which the Naxalites seek to exploit in order to achieve their aims. The return of this insurgency forced the Indian Government to implement policies that would contain and eventually eradicate the Naxalite threat, resulting in the creation of The Left Wing Extremism Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs in October 2009 to tackle the various Naxalite factions spread throughout the country.

Around the time of its creation, the CPI-Maoists published a document titled, '*Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution (STIR)*'. This document clearly outlines guidelines of political and military strategies to achieve the immediate aim of the group - the New Democratic Revolution (NDR). The NDR, in line with Mazumdar's formulation of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thoughts, aims to overthrow "*imperialism, feudalism and comprador bureaucratic capitalism only through the Protracted People's War*". The ultimate aim, and second phase of the revolution following the NDR, is installing communism in the country. Both these aims are formulated along the central task of the revolution, which is the seizure of power through protracted armed struggle.

As articulated in this document, both the political and military strategy of the CPI-Maoists are centred on civilian masses. The political strategy is to exploit the existing class inequalities in India to the Maoists' advantage, as unequal income distribution, socio-demographic disparity, poverty and deprivation are issues that plague the underdeveloped areas of the country. Hence, the Maoists draw on this to mobilize socially and economically marginalized populations, such as the Adivasis. The military strategy aims to create revolutionary '*base areas*' in the countryside where the State has little reach and cannot enforce the rule of law. The weakness of the State in such areas, combined with the support of alienated Adivasis,

allow the Maoists to sustain their operations. Quoting the doctrine of the Maoists: *“The people are the eyes and ears of the army; they feed and keep our soldiers, It is they who help the army in sabotage and in battle. The people are the water and our army the fish”*.

From this quote, two observations can be made. Firstly, the nature of the Maoist’s ideology translates into using guerrilla tactics against the State. Secondly, as the Maoists wish to use people as *“eyes and ears”*, this implies that if the Maoists are not able to mobilize them, their operations would end. It can also explain why said civilians are currently caught in a tug of war between the Maoists and the Indian government, where the State has implemented counter-insurgency strategies that involve developing tribal areas and eradicating poverty amongst tribal people. This will be discussed later on in the paper.

Maoists against the State

The Maoists’ tactics against the Indian State fit well within the principles of guerrilla warfare, as mentioned above. As their base areas are distributed in dense forests and hilly territories, where the State is relatively weak, they are able to maximize the use of the terrain in their favour. This makes for a textbook example of asymmetric and unconventional warfare. The size of the Maoist army and its resources render it unlikely to succeed in a full blown confrontation with the Indian forces, and in order to avoid a repetition of the government victories that were seen in the 1970s, the Maoists have had to adapt. The STIR describes that Maoist forces should operate in small, decentralised units and gather intelligence before conducting swift ambushes. As such, they have become highly mobile and flexible. These methods of movement render them almost undetectable by State forces, and allows them to gather intelligence through simple methods, such as scouting, spying and bribing corrupt police officials, in order to conduct effective ambushes against the Indian security forces. Some examples of such ambushes include the May 2009 attacks in the jungles of Maharashtra that killed 16 police officers and the April 2010 ambush of police reinforcement troops in Chhattisgarh. In one of the most recent attacks, on 1 May 2019 in Gadchiroli (district in the east of Maharashtra), the Maoists allegedly torched 27 vehicles belonging to a construction company and ten hours later detonated an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) that killed 15 members of the Quick Response Team (QRT) that was sent for reinforcements. According to government officials, this is a typical Maoist tactic; launching an attack in order to ambush reinforcement troops. It is also believed that swift, successive attacks are part of the Maoists’ tactical offensive campaign, as it would distract police forces and divert their attention away from periodic meetings of top Maoist leaders. Aside from ambushes, Maoists have conducted prison break operations and hostage taking in exchange for the release of Maoist prisoners.

The deadliest Maoist attacks almost exclusively target State forces (such as police and paramilitary forces). This not only undermines State authorities in the eyes of the local population, because they are perceived as unable to defend themselves against Maoists, but it also discourages police officers from operating effectively for fear of ambushes. It could also discourage people from joining police forces in districts with a high Maoist presence, hence depleting the State of potential personnel. However, civilians have paid the price; between 1980 and 2015, the Naxalite insurgency caused 20,012 casualties; of these, 4,761 are Naxalites, 3,105 are members of the security forces, and 12,146 are civilians. Moreover, a

report published by the Indian Home Ministry in 2019 demonstrated that, since 2010, an average of 417 civilians have been killed annually in approximately 1,200 incidents of violence perpetrated by Maoists.

The report also highlighted the reduction of Maoist related violent incidents in the last five years (a decrease of 26.7% from 2013 to 2018), due to the Maoists losing ground to the Indian forces. Furthermore, it states that: *“The development outreach by the Government of India has seen an increasingly large number of LWE cadres shunning the path of violence and returning to the mainstream”*.

While this is positive news for India’s counterinsurgency efforts, the Maoists’ loss of ground coincides with an increase of executions of civilians by Maoists. Individuals are often branded as police informers by Maoists, and are executed for supposedly conspiring with the State. Using civilians as scapegoats for their decreasing hold in the *Red Corridor* territory creates an environment of terror for those living in Naxalite areas, and deters them from any attempts to collaborate with the police. Out of the 109 civilian casualties in Naxalite-related incidents in 2018, 61 were executed. From January to June 2019, out of the 37 civilian casualties, 22 were executed for being *“police informants”*. This goes to show that civilians pay the highest price in the Naxalite insurgency, and that the Maoists have turned their terror tactics against the very people they claim to be fighting a so-called revolution for. This brings into question the durability of the CPI-Maoists and other Naxalite groups that resort to these tactics. As they increase violence against their very own support base, they stray from their original ideology and civilians earlier loyal to their cause become disenchanted with Maoist ideology. It is also highly likely that civilians are coerced into providing shelter, food and support out of fear for the Maoists and their anti-people tactics.

Funding

There is little concrete evidence that would suggest a steady flow of external funding for the CPI-Maoists. Rather, as outlined in the document *‘Our Financial Policy’* adopted at the CPI-Maoists’ 9th Unity Congress in 2007, the sources of funding come from membership fees and contributions, extortion and confiscation of wealth and income of the enemy and *‘revolutionary taxes’*. These funds aim to cater to three main economic needs: war expenditures, propaganda and the people. As such, the Maoists have established an elaborate and strict tax collection system. However, extortion and racketeering conducted by the Maoists does not only affect individuals, who could see their property burnt or even lose their lives over refusing to contribute to the cause, but also corporations. Evidence suggests that some businesses operating in Maoist areas pay a tax in order to avoid attacks. This method of extortion highlights hypocrisy on behalf of the Maoists, and also causes a risk to these companies as they could be prosecuted for terror financing.

Recently, some reports have also emerged linking Naxalites to organised crime. For the insurgents to sustain their activities in the face of India’s increased counter-insurgency tactics, it would make sense that the Maoists have had to evolve and orientate itself towards deeper organised crime networks. In 2018, Indian police seized an amount of crude heroin equivalent to 700 million Rupees (approximately 8,8 million Euros) from Naxal areas. Officials

speculated that following the crackdown of cross-border drug cartels along the Afghan-Pakistan trafficking route, Naxalites had seized the opportunity to merge into the drug trafficking network. While India's license to cultivate opium for pharmaceutical purposes is officially recognised by the United Nations' International Narcotics Control Board, the growing international market for heroin has turned Jharkhand into a major hub for illegal opium cultivation. Jharkhand is one of the Indian states heavily affected by the Maoist insurgency and the Maoists have been using opium cultivation as a source of revenue since 2007. Moreover, Maoists have been known to entice villagers in opium production by providing them with seeds, start-up money and a reward of 10,000 Indian Rupees (approximately 130 Euros) per kilogram of opium. In return for opium farming, these villagers gain protection from the Maoists, who claim a large share of the profits (a kilogram of opium could sell for up to 450 euros in Mumbai). By involving these isolated citizens in this illicit production system, Maoists further marginalize them from the State. This tactic could be a way to secure the loyalty of people living in Naxalite-controlled areas and remove options of legitimate sources of revenue for the population. Hypothetically, a farmer may see more benefits in cultivating illegal opium for Maoists for profit and protection than turning towards established government development programs such as the NREGA, which would mean losing the protection of the Maoists. One of the worst case scenarios would be being branded as a police informant, which is used as an excuse by Maoists to carry out executions of civilians. In order to root out this method of funding and counter the incentive to work with Maoists, the Jharkhand State government, which destroys thousands of poppy fields each year, has started to promote the cultivation of profitable medicinal plants.

Aside from the opium trade, it is suspected that Naxalites are also profiting from harvesting and trafficking cannabis from Orissa, parts of which are under Maoist control, to other parts of the country and the region. Cannabis is one of the most used drugs in South Asia, and in 2017 the Indian government seized 352 tonnes of trafficked cannabis. In 2010, the Bengaluru police stumbled across plans to arrange a meeting between Chhota Shakeel's men and Naxalite leaders. Chhota Shakeel is an Indian crime boss, and a high ranking member of the D-Company, Dawood Ibrahim's notorious organised crime gang. The D-Company has ties to the Pakistani spy agency, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and a Naxalite-D-Company partnership could be encouraged by the ISI in order to prolong the insurgency, hence engaging in yet another proxy war. While the plot was foiled and five people were arrested, the establishment of an ISI-Naxalite link is one that has consistently troubled the Indian authorities. Nearly 500 Maoists have allegedly undergone training with the Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), a banned organisation with ties to the ISI, in 2008. Two years later, members of the notorious ISI-backed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) reportedly met with Naxalite leaders.

The Naxalites have been known to seek the support of other insurgent groups in order to sustain their operations. Carrying out a "*protracted people's war*" requires funds and resources such as weapons and ammunitions, and the Naxalite cannot entirely rely on "*donations*", "*revolutionary taxes*" and looting police outposts. As the ISI has traditionally kept a keen interest in subversive movements in India, and the Naxalites are in need of external support, such an alliance could lead to an escalation of LWE in India.

Ties to other groups

In the mid-2000s, the Maoists were believed to have received logistical support and training from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). This transfer of knowledge was a source of worry for the Indian government, as the LTTE was notorious for their expertise in explosives and suicide bombings. As the use of IEDs, landmines and bombs by Maoists is recurrent, it is suspected that a LTTE-Maoist alliance was at some point in time established, where LTTE expertise in weaponry was exchanged for safe haven from Naxalites. It is also believed that the Maoists in India had links to the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-Maoists). While one government official stated in 2009 that this link was mainly ideological, joint operations and trainings between the CPI-Maoists and the CPN-M have been reported, according to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program. Furthermore, the Indian Maoists have been able to procure arms from China through the Nepalese Maoists.

Moreover, the CPI-Maoist is a member of the Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA), an umbrella organisation that serves as a discussion platform for Maoist parties in the subcontinent, and it is believed to have mainly provided moral support in the past. According to a report published by the US-based think tank Stratfor in 2010, the Maoists mainly sustain their weapons stock through raids on police outposts, theft from businesses operating in areas under their control, local makeshift arms factories and procuring foreign weapons from external militant groups operating within India and/or neighbouring countries. This last point is of serious concern for the Indian government, as Maoists have allegedly sought the support of their *comrades* in insurgency in Assam and Jammu & Kashmir to accomplish the goal of overthrowing the central Indian government. This nexus suggests that the CPI-Maoists support their so-called right to self-determination, yet it seems to contradict its own objective of installing a communist regime in the whole country.

Such ties between anti-India armed groups could further challenge the State's capacity of efficiently combating these insurgencies. The same Stratfor report mentions that the Indian government accuses the United Liberated Front of Assam (ULFA) of working with the Naxalites to smuggle drugs and counterfeit money along the Indian-Bangladeshi border, in exchange for weapons and explosives from the ISI. Another Bengali connection is Sailen Sarkar, a member of the communist party of Bangladesh. Sarkar was accused of training Naxalites in ISI sponsored camps in Bangladesh, and of participating in organised crime activities alongside the Maoists and the ULFA.

In these operations, the ISI seems to act as a third party, because of which establishing a direct link between the ISI and the Naxalites becomes difficult. However, the ISI's long-lasting policy of providing support to anti-India insurgent groups should not be overlooked, especially when the Naxalites are moving towards establishing business relations with underground criminal networks based in Pakistan.

The tug of war for civilian support

In his 2013 book, *'Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present'*, Max Boot, an American military historian, describes the conditions through which guerrilla warfare can succeed. His work retains 12 lessons from the history of guerrilla

warfare, two of which can be directly applied to the Naxalite insurgency in India. Firstly, he notes that in the past 200 years, public opinion has made an impact on the effectiveness of guerrilla warfare. This explains why the CPI-Maoists are adamant on providing welfare services to the population and continue conducting active propaganda against the State. Building upon the *injustice-narrative*, they can rally people to their cause. By providing services to marginalised people, they attempt to establish some form of legitimacy. The second lesson that can be applied to the Indian context is that population-centric counterinsurgency policies are often effective; however these have brought about their own share of crimes and human rights violations.

These lessons share one point in common: the population. From this, one could draw the conclusion that the population is the key to success, for both the State and insurgents. Considering that both the Indian government and the CPI Maoists have incorporated population-centric strategies, it would seem that both parties have taken the primordial importance of public opinion and support into account.

According to the Left Wing Extremism Division, the *“Government’s approach is to deal with Left Wing Extremism in a holistic manner, in the areas of security, development, ensuring rights and entitlements of local communities, improvement in governance and public perception management”*. An integrated method has been adopted in order to accomplish this, as the government first aims to retake the territory held by Naxalites and hold it securely, and re-establish relations with the local population before carrying out development projects. Furthermore, in order to counter the *“land-grabbing”* narrative of the Maoists, the government has adopted laws that aim to decrease poverty rates and reform land acquisition. As such, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) of 2005 (one of the largest poverty-eradication programs in the world), provides a legal guarantee of 100 days of public-sector employment to rural households, in order to decrease the urban/rural disparities and to reduce recruitment opportunities for Maoists as rural populations would have less incentive to join. However, a study conducted by Khanna and Zimmermann (2017) showed that the implementation of this scheme led to an increase in violence, police-initiated attacks and insurgent violence on civilians. Similarly to this, the 2009 Integrated Action Plan (IAP), which provided funds for focused development projects in areas with high intensity of Maoist violence, saw an expected backlash. While early successes were recorded as the number of attacks decreased, the Maoists have called this as a government tactic that disfavours tribal populations and rural areas while conducting sporadic attacks on infrastructure and development contractors as to deter businesses from accepting contracts in these areas. Officials in Jharkhand have attributed the number of attacks on infrastructure as a result of poor implementation of the IAP. Maoists have also blown up mobile towers as these facilitate communication between State authorities and allows them to track the Naxalites.

In regards to the prevention of land acquisition mentioned above, the government implemented the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act in 2013 and the Forest Rights Act of 2006. While on paper, the laws aim to provide security against forcible land acquisition and allow indigenous tribes to live in forest areas, an estimated 10 million Adivasis have been displaced due to

development projects. This challenges the government's aim to re-establish ties with populations who work with and support the Naxalites. Indeed, the deeply rooted mistrust of authorities has to be overcome, which explains why the Indian government has included "*public perception management*" in its approach.

Aside from improving public perception, the government has included development strategies in the implementation of its counter-insurgency policies. However, this could prove to be a double-edged sword. The rural population is marginalised and this is partly due to a lack of integrated connectivity infrastructure, such as roads and highways, and facilities, such as schools and hospitals. As the government seeks to undertake development projects to improve the living conditions of rural populations, it can also backfire as the Naxalites can concrete the narrative that the government wants to expel populations from their ancestral lands to develop these infrastructure projects to its own '*capitalist*' ends. However, as seen above, insurgents have continuously discouraged civilians from engaging with authorities and have resorted to executions of so-called police informants, hence installing fear. Yet, by destroying development and infrastructure programs initiated by the State, and claiming to solve the issue of marginalised, rural populations, the Maoists are further marginalising these populations. Moreover, they are cutting off any possibility of alternative options, meaning that civilians are forced to turn to Maoists for governance issues (such as dispute resolution, jobs, welfare etc.). The notion that Maoists are only able to depend on the loyalties of rural populations out of installed fear, rather than commitment to the ideology, is therefore proven to be a correct one.

While the Maoists have committed gross human rights violations against the people they swore to protect from the "*feudal*", "*imperialist*" and "*capitalist*" Indian State, the state authorities have also been accused of crimes against civilians since the beginning of *Operation Greenhunt*. This operation, as dubbed by the Indian media, began in 2009 when the Indian government sent out troops and formed paramilitary groups such as the Salwa Judum. Due to the guerrilla tactics employed by the insurgents, distinguishing between civilian and Maoist can often be difficult. Some raids on Maoist controlled areas have resulted in extrajudicial killings and executions, thus adding to the mistrust of authorities. One such case is the alleged 2012 killing of 17 Adivasis, including 7 children, by the CRPF who claimed these villagers were Maoists. In 2017, a judicial inquiry found this claim to be untrue, the killing unprovoked and hence extra-judicial. However, the government has yet to take action against the perpetrators.

Conclusion

Seizing land from oppressors and redistributing it amongst the peasants has been the aim of the Naxalites since its creation. Today, they are no longer fighting against imperialist landlords but the State and its development industries. Hence, India's advancement as a world power, and its integrity, remains challenged by the Naxalite insurgency. By attacking development and infrastructure projects, Naxalites directly impede the development of India's economy, while themselves perpetuating the cycle of poverty and marginalisation of rural populations. As such, the Indian government has had to adapt to this unconventional warfare. While their counter-insurgency has shown successes, they have also led to human rights violations.

History shows that most insurgencies only survive by giving up armed struggle and joining mainstream politics. Two examples of this are the African National Congress in South Africa and PLO in Palestine. Two even better examples are the communist movements of India themselves. Both the CPI and the CPI-M started out with aims of revolutionary armed struggle, but eventually joined mainstream Indian politics and are today established, legitimate political parties. Yet, the CPI-Maoists show no sign or will to integrate itself with democratic Indian institutions, as they continue to call for boycotts of elections and prevent civilians in areas controlled by them to vote. In the past, voters living in Naxalite areas have been targeted for their election-ink stained finger. This active boycotting campaign could have had an impact on the low turnout rates in two of the most affected districts, Bijapur (Karnataka State) and Konta (Chhattisgarh State). These states saw a 49% and 55% turnout rate respectively for the 2018 State Legislative Assembly elections. While this may be perceived as an achievement by the Maoists, it does call into question the sustainability of their operations and agenda. As evoked above, the CPI-Maoists itself is a result of numerous splits that opposed parties joining the political mainstreaming and those that opted from the prolongation of the people's struggle. Considering the CPI-Maoist's obvious derailments from its original doctrine, counter-insurgency operations by the State and the disillusionment among the violence-fatigued people, the group splintering off again, remains a realistic possibility.

The Maoists' suspected connections to organised crime further shows that the group has evolved from its original ideology and has become more profit motivated, hence marking a clear distinction between the CPI and CPI-M experience. These sources of funding should be explored by counter-insurgency units in order to evaluate the situation and adopt appropriate policies to counter this.

Furthermore, the connection with other insurgency groups, as well as the involvement of the Pakistani ISI, in being the middle-man for these groups, India could be faced with a security threat that extends beyond the Red Corridor. While the erstwhile Maoist ideology is losing its appeal, hard counter-terrorism strategies coupled with an efficacious population-centric campaign by the State, aimed at winning over hearts and minds, seems the answer.

