

CHAPTER- 1

Evolution of Naxalism: Reasons and Causes

Introduction

“It would not be an exaggeration to say that the problem of Naxalism is the single biggest internal security challenge ever faced by our country.”¹ With this startling pronouncement in April 2006, India’s Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, finally drew the West’s attention to an insurgency that had plagued his country for more than four decades, taking nearly 20,000 lives in the process.² While the world was fixated on the violence in Kashmir, fundamentalist Islamic terrorism, and intermittent bouts of Hindu-Muslim sectarian violence, an archaic Maoist ideology, rejected even in the land of its birth, was growing in scope, breadth, and violence. Over the past seven years in particular, Naxalite rebels have come to control large swathes of the Indian countryside in a “Red Corridor” stretching from Nepal to Tamil Nadu and killed thousands of Indian security forces and civilians. This thesis will examine the evolution of the Naxalite threat, from its humble beginnings in 1967 to the present, to ascertain the true danger posed to India’s rise as a twenty-first century Asian power.³

Importance

Since the end of the Cold War and economic reforms in the early 1990s, India’s Performance has been truly staggering. It would be difficult to overstate the key role the Country is expected to assume in the global community over the coming decades. With a Population of over 1.2 billion, a young, growing, and increasingly educated workforce, and persistent real GDP growth rates in the area of 8 per cent over the last decade, India is emerging as a powerful driver of the world economy. Its demographic clout and in recent years the relation between economic performance and civil conflict has generated considerable amount of interest among economists.⁴ Not surprisingly within the span of a few years a lot has been written on the subject.⁵ The Maoist conflict in India has existed for more than 40 years (since 1967). However, it has seen a terrifying increase in proportions only in the last decade. In fact, it has been identified as "the single biggest security challenge to the Indian state" by Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India. Indeed such a conflict if not tackled on a timely and efficient manner, could have enormous negative socio-economic

consequences. Such violence often leads to the destruction of existing infrastructure and discourages investment, apart from the loss in human capital. A good part of the civil conflict literature leads underdevelopment as a primary determinant of civil conflict. If the conflict indeed is mostly located in the more impoverished regions of the country, the existence of such a conflict would give a further adverse shock to the economy of the region. Moreover, if the conflict intensity rises unabated (like it has in the past few years) for too long a period, then it could eventually negatively affect the growth that India is currently experiencing. And this would be a consequence over and above the tremendous direct human suffering that such conflicts inevitably cause. All this makes the Maoist conflict a serious issue and calls for an in-depth analysis identifying its causes and suggesting potential policy interventions.

The Naxalite movement emerged in 1967 as an uprising of disaffected and disenfranchised peasants in Naxalbari, West Bengal. Given its four decade long existence, there is generally a surprising dearth of academic study on the movement. Western scholarship on insurgency in South Asia usually focuses on the conflict in Kashmir and (perhaps surprisingly) the plethora of smaller insurrections in India's northeast. What little attention is paid to Naxalism is focused almost solely on the underlying causes of insurgent movements in general, treating Naxalism simply as one case in a larger group. Nevertheless, these treatments do provide valuable insight on contributing factors to the movement's rise and persistence. There seem to be two main schools of thought on this issue. The first is that insurgencies arise out of unmet political demands, usually from a minority that feels it is being oppressed. The second school of thought cites economic inequality as a reason for insurgent uprising, typified by their revolts of lower class social groups against what they feel is lack of access to economic gain. A third, smaller body of literature stresses the importance of contributing factors, asserting that uprisings are more likely to occur where the terrain provides sanctuary to small groups that can train, equip, and educate their followers outside the reach of government forces.⁶In the case of Naxalism, elements of all three theories seem to be at play, and are echoed in the literature from outside the West. The "development camp," by contrast, tends to view the Naxalist threat primarily in terms of its humanitarian dimension. These analysts focus on the recent internal displacement of tens of thousands of rural and tribal peoples, and the atrocities committed by both Maoist rebels and the government security forces, as the insurgency's greatest dangers. While this argument is emotionally compelling, it is by no means clear that this aspect of the threat represents a serious strategic problem for New Delhi in and of itself.

Review of literature and theoretical Understanding

An extensive empirical literature has sought to test many of these theories. Levels of analysis have ranged from those employing cross-country, large-n studies to those taking a micro-level approach with more in-depth case studies. Cross-country empirical research has sought to identify factors associated with insurgency and civil war. Focusing on economic opportunities for rebellion, Collier and Hoeffler argue that political grievances are universal, but the economic incentives for violent conflict are not. Opportunities for rebellion, such as financing, a dispersed population, and difficult terrain all increase the likelihood of intrastate war. On the other hand, higher secondary education levels, higher per capita incomes, and higher economic growth rates reduce the risk of conflict. Moreover, proxies for grievances measuring inequality, political rights, ethnic polarization and religious fractionalization were all found to be insignificant. Poverty, political instability, rough terrain, and large populations, put countries at a greater risk of civil war. However, rather than just economic opportunities that encourage insurgency, a weak government in terms of police and military strength also makes insurgency feasible. In fact, they argue that the factors the most important for the prospects of a nascent insurgency are the government's police and military capabilities and the reach of government institutions into rural areas. Thus, with these two studies specifically, the cross-country empirical literature has heavily favored factors that indicate opportunities for rebellion over grievances as key to understanding global patterns in civil war.

While cross-country studies have certain benefits, Blattman and Miguel, in their review of literature, propose that the most promising area of future research in this field is at the micro-level of analysis. Part of the trouble with cross-country studies is establishing basis for causality. For example, while many cross-country studies robustly link low per capita incomes and slow economic growth with civil war, it is rarely clear that poverty is in fact a cause of civil war. In some cases, it could be argued instead that more often civil war, given its destructive capabilities, causes poverty. Thus, Blatt man and Miguel advocate for more micro-level studies, which have found both material and non-material motivations for insurgency.

Two micro-studies of a neighboring case, Nepal's Maoist insurgency, warrant review because of their proximity. Analyzing casualties over space and time, Do and Iyer find that conflict-related deaths are significantly higher in poorer districts. Confirming the evidence of cross-country studies, Do and Iyer's findings are consistent with the theory that a lower cost of recruiting rebels is an important factor in initiating conflict. The study also finds conflict-related deaths to be higher in geographical conditions favorable to insurgents, such as mountains or forests, but that these factors are not as strong at the onset of conflict. Thus, absolute deprivation and, to a lesser extent, geographic opportunities for rebellion best explain the conflict. Macours, on the other hand, arrives at a different conclusion in her study of Nepal's civil conflict. Noting how violence increased during a period of steady economic growth and poverty reduction, she finds that Maoist abduction has been most prevalent in areas of fastest growing inequality. She thus argues that relative deprivation, rather than absolute deprivation, better explains patterns of Maoist recruitment. These studies illustrate the same debates and questions pertinent for the case of Bihar. The history of Naxalism in India is described by Sumanta Banerjee, its most respected chronicler, as 'tortuous'. A complicated diagram in Bela Bhatia's study of 'The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar' shows how very fragmented the Movement became before the merger of the two principal groups, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) [CPI (M-L) People's War] and the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) in 2004. In 1995-96, Bhatia reports, there were as many as 17 different active groups in Bihar. Of these groups, the three most significant were: 'Liberation', by that time following the line of participation in parliamentary politics, and recognized by the Election Commissioner as the 'CPI(ML)'; the Maoist Communist Centre, considered to be 'extreme left'; and 'Party Unity' which stood somewhere in-between. What follows, therefore, is the merest sketch of a complex history.⁷In the 1980s, which is the second phase in the history of the Movement as conceptualized by Sumanta Banerjee, rethinking took place on the part of some survivors of the first phase who favored participation in parliamentary politics and trade union activities. Others stuck with the line of armed struggle whilst also encouraging mass mobilization through the setting up of open fronts. By the end of the decade groups following the latter course, including CPI(M-L) Party Unity in Bihar, and People's War Group [CPI(M-L) People's War Group] in Andhra Pradesh had built strong bases in parts of these two states and others in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa. It has been from these areas that the Maoists have succeeded over the last twenty years, in spite of both state repression and resistance against them carried on by the militias of dominant groups, in building the 'red corridor' stretching from the upper Gangetic plain.

The Movement is currently, Banerjee thinks, in its third phase following the agreement of leaders and cadres of scattered and divided groups to the creation of the single revolutionary party, the CPI (Maoist) in 2004.⁸ The reasons for ‘fusion’ after decades of fragmentation in the Movement are unclear. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to suppose that the Indian activists have been influenced by the example of the Nepali Maoists – even though they may also be critical of the latter for having agreed to join the electoral process. It is probably no accident that the merger in 2004 was partly facilitated by the Nepali leader, Prachanda. Whatever the factors behind the fusion that has taken place, it appears to have brought about a significant regeneration of the Movement, having ‘given synergy to the new outfit in terms of strength, capability and resources – for launching attacks on the security forces’.⁹ This fusion has also provided a large swathe of the country within which the Maoists are able to move without the problems of coordination that afflict the state police forces. Both the scale and frequency of incidents in which the Maoists have confronted the security forces have increased, culminating most recently in the attack on 6 April 2010 in a forest in eastern Chhattisgarh that left 78 armed policemen dead.¹⁰

This occurred not long after an attack on a police camp at Silda in West Bengal in which 24 policemen were killed. Bhatia and Kunnath provide ethnographic evidence that the social base of the Movement in Central Bihar, when the Movement was strong there, was amongst the landless, small and marginal peasants of lower and intermediate castes, though there were some supporters from amongst higher castes and classes and whose presence was felt in the leadership. These authors show that there was a perception amongst poorer people that Naxalites were ‘good people’, who were opposed to their oppressors and who supported them in a struggle for their basic rights. But according to Bhatia, people understood the objective of the movement as being ‘change’, not ‘revolution’. They supported it because they felt that the Naxalites shared their sense of injustice rather than for any ideological reasons. The appeal of ‘class struggle’ was as a means of securing needs for higher wages, land redistribution and freedom from harassment. Bhatia notes that people petitioned the Maoists for exactly the same things for which they also petitioned government. Bhatia describes mobilizations by Dalits against Bhumihar landowners in Bhojpur; Kunnath the struggles between Maoist-led landless Dalits and Kurmi landholders in another village in Central Bihar.¹¹ They established land rights for some, raised wages in the areas of struggle and perhaps above all, inspired poor people to assert themselves as human beings and to claim their social and political rights. ‘Honor’ or ‘self-respect’ (izzat) appears for many to

have been their most important achievement from their participation in the mass mobilizations of the Maoists. In practice, Bhatia argues on the basis of extensive fieldwork in Central Bihar in the mid-1990s, a large part of the Movement's activities were non-violent (demonstrations, dharnas and the like). Still, there were significant differences between Liberation (castigated by General Secretary Ganapathy as having degenerated 'after a history of glorious struggle'56), Party Unity and the MCC over the extent of their commitment to the mass line represented by the open fronts set up by the various groups. Liberation formed the Indian People's Front (IPF) and the Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha (BPKS) in the early 1980s and both flourished. Party Unity set up the Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti (MKSS) was banned in 1986 but was later renamed Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Parishad (MKSP). But underground, armed action was always important.¹²At the outset and again more recently according to other commentators, the groups relied almost exclusively on armed tactics. These were undertaken by the dasta (squads), each with 6-10 members recruited mostly locally from amongst the labouring classes, though they might also include middle class members, some from outside the area. The most important role of the dasta, according to Bhatia, was (in the 1990s) to protect the open fronts; open fronts and underground groups were intimately linked. Gautam Navlakha gives a somewhat more sympathetic account of the Maoists in Bastar from the journey he made in their 'base area' there, where they run their Jantanam Sarkar or 'people's government' in January 2010. He, like Arundathi Roy (see note 43), was evidently very impressed by the self-discipline of the young cadres amongst whom he observed remarkable gender equality. He notes the large numbers of women and that many platoons of the People's Liberation Guerilla Army have women commanders. He says 'It is significant that women comprise by far and away the most articulate members of the movement' and records its work to encourage (not 'decree') the emancipation of women as also to develop education, healthcare and agricultural production. According to Navlakha's account, the Maoists are very concerned indeed to explain and defend their policy in regard to violence. They point to the violence that is carried on against the people quite routinely by police and private militia of the Salwa Judum and strongly assert that only 'enemies of the people' were killed by them.¹³

Counterinsurgency Theory

While the literature discussed above seeks to understand causes of intrastate war, the state's response to such conflict has also received great attention, and deserves brief mention.

Two main approaches to counterinsurgency (COIN) dominate the literature. The first strategy is the direct approach that begins with the understanding the war.¹⁴ The strategy is focused on eliminating the enemy. The second strategy is an indirect approach. Ironically enough, Mao Zedong's own concept typifies this approach. According to Mao, revolutionaries are like fish that swim in the water of the people, and therefore the key to defeating insurgency is to separate the fish from the water. In other words, counterinsurgency operations should focus on removing the people's support that the insurgency must have to challenge the government effectively. By winning the support of the people, insurgents are cut off from their source of supply, personnel, and intelligence. This task could take a number of forms and strategies, such as various kinds of development schemes, reforms, or special privileges.

LWE in India in the Context of Conflict Literature

With this brief overview of the relevant intrastate conflict literature in place, attention must now turn to the case of left-wing extremism in India. As we have seen in the academic literature, some hypothesize that insurgencies occur when given opportunities for rebellion, especially because of economic underdevelopment or weak government capacity. Others contend that only grievances are motive enough to incite violence. Public debates over India's left-wing extremist movement have strongly reflected the debates of the academic literature.¹⁵

Underdevelopment as Opportunity for Rebellion

Many have applied the argument that economic underdevelopment is a key cause of insurgency to the case of left-wing extremism in India. Poverty and a lack of economic development reduce the opportunity costs of soldiering. With few other opportunities, it is easier to attract desperate individuals. Adopting this same logic, many in India interpret the growth in left-wing extremism as a development problem. Haridwar Rai and K.M. Prasad argue that that Naxalism is basically a socio-economic problem and only superficially a law and order problem. Under this view, one summarized by Lieutenant General Madan Gopal (Retd.), Naxalism is not the problem; rather it is the symptom of a problem, namely the lack of development. The approach paper of United Service.¹⁶ Institution of India puts this argument even more explicitly: The absence of developmental activities, including the virtual absence of healthcare, drinking water, electricity, roads, tracks and educational facilities has alienated the people living in the interior areas from the government machinery. This

opportunity was quickly seized by the Naxalites to discredit the capability of the government and the failure of the parliamentary democratic system to bring succor to the poor and deprived.¹⁷

Since LWE violence is a symptom of poverty and underdevelopment, the “direct” counterinsurgency approach will ultimately be unsuccessful as it will fail to address the root cause of the problem. Without greater economic opportunities, recruits will still be easily found.¹⁸ Extending this logic, many in India plead for India’s COIN strategy to have a strong development component, often focused on providing alternative economic opportunities. If development reaches isolated villages, individuals will have less incentive to join left-wing extremist groups. This viewpoint is not limited to one particular constituency as it can be found expressed among politicians, journalists, activists, and academics.¹⁹ The Naxalite/Maoist Movement of India has a history extending back to 1967. For most of this time, it has been politically and organizationally fragmented and confined to relatively small pockets – though within them, as in parts of Andhra Pradesh and neighboring Chhattisgarh and some parts of Bihar/Jharkhand, different groups established a strong presence. Different groups have given varying emphasis to mass organization and armed struggle, and though the two forms of action have been mutually supportive, there have also been tensions between them. Mass organization has been made increasingly difficult as governments have sought to proscribe the Maoist groups. The particular patterns of mobilization of support have evidently varied considerably from case to case, both because of these variations of organizational emphasis and in view of the determination of the Maoists to build an alliance between the proletariat, peasantry, petty-bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie. They have been influenced both by caste and local politics. There are instances where one or other Naxalite group has entered an area through winning the support of members of upper castes and the rural middle classes. The pattern of support may shift over time as in Central Bihar according to Kunnath’s account. Revolutionary groups there have sought to win over powerful upper castes in their quest to secure state power, losing support amongst Dalits and others in the process. The lines of class conflict may be blurred by these factors. The coming together of the major groups to form the CPI (Maoist) in 2004 marked a turning point and the Movement is now recognized as constituting the most serious challenge to its authority that the Indian state has ever confronted.²⁰ The Maoists have gained strength from the failures of the state in regard to large numbers of poor people. There have been extensive failures of omission relating to the delivery of public services and social security, and failures of commission

having to do with the abuses to which people have been subjected at the hands of the police, the forest department and other officials. Close observers have found that ordinary people in areas where the Maoists are well-organized have more faith in them than they do in the state. Actual or threatened displacement of large numbers especially of tribal people to make way for mining, power generation or other projects has given rise to resistance movements with which the Maoists have often been associated, if they have not actually organized them. Rents derived from natural resources such as the minerals of Bastar and Orissa or trade such as tendu leaves in northern Telengana or from supplying protection provide the funds for carrying on administration in the areas that the Maoists now control and for supporting armed struggle. These rents may make for incentives to keep conflict going. The essential reason, however, for the strength of the Maoists in the hilly, forested tracts of eastern and central India is that this terrain, in India as elsewhere in the world, most favors guerilla insurgency.²¹ Though it has been argued that ‘there are hardly any reliable empirical studies to measure the level of support or to weigh the reasons for the common people to join the movement’, the ethnographic studies and some other reports cited in this review, clearly show that the Naxalites/Maoists have won support from amongst landless and poor peasants, Dalits and adivasis – and probably particularly amongst young men and women who have limited opportunities. They also show that the Maoists have had some positive impacts upon the lives and livelihoods of such people in many places. At best, they have changed rural power relations; more generally, they have enhanced the self-respect of poor people. Political leaders such as Digvijay Singh and others argue that it will only be when the state effectively addresses these problems that it will win people back. In their view, the Maoists cannot be defeated by sheer force.²²

Gautam Navlakha, in the first of the epigraphs to this paper, based on his experiences in Bastar concurs: ‘this is one rebellion which will test the resilience of the Indian state as never before. Precisely because it is a rebellion in which people are fighting to save their land, forests, water and minerals from being grabbed and they are convinced that they have an alternative vision’. The actions of state security forces and especially of those that are allowed to operate outside the law (such as Salwa Judum), often in support of private capital invested in mining and other projects in tribal areas that are likely not to benefit local people, continually provide reasons for such people to support the Maoists. The very uncertainty that is created in people’s everyday lives in these conflict situations may very well prompt some

people to join the Maoists as a way of trying to find ‘certainty’ for themselves as Shah has argued.²³

The Main Hypotheses

The literature speaks of a variety of divergent factors that might lead to civil conflicts. "Civil Wars are more likely to occur in countries that are poor, are subject to negative income shocks, have weak state institutions, have sparsely populated peripheral regions and possess mountainous terrain" (Blattman and Miguel (2010)). Some of the other factors that have been mentioned in the literature are, Ethnic and religious diversity and fragmentation, lack of democracy and civil liberties, linguistic and religious discrimination, inequality, new states and political instability, geographical factors like mountains and non-contiguous territory, population pressure, colonial occupation, weak state institutions etc. 19 In this study we try to identify which factors might be more relevant in the context of the Naxalite conflict in India. Thus, combining the findings from the previous literature and our understanding of the conflict we test for deferent hypotheses.

1. Hypothesis: Land inequality increases conflict.

Following up from the discussion in the previous section we think that land issues are crucial. Land inequality and exploitation of the landless/poor farmers by the wealthy landlords has been attributed to be one of the most important causes of the Naxalite movement. In fact, that's how it started in the rest place. "Land is a very strategic socio-economic asset, particularly in poor societies where wealth and survival are measured by control of, and access to, land" (USAID (2005)). Moreover, land often has valuable natural resources buried beneath it. In a predominantly agrarian economy, the importance of land cannot be overemphasized and survival of the poor often depends on their access to land. There is in fact, empirical evidence on the importance of land on conflicts from elsewhere in the world as well. Andre and Platteau (1996) study a highly densely populated area in the Northwest of Rwanda during the period 1988-93 and how the land distribution had become increasingly unequal and land dispossession rampant. They further show that pervasive incidence of land disputes and the threat of landlessness had led to rising tensions in social relations. They relate these adverse conditions in land distribution to the civil conflict that

broke out in 1994. A highly skewed land distribution also react higher disparities in the social and economic lives of the people and thus a higher potential for grievance. Moreover, if the distribution is too unequal and dominated by a few large landlords while the vast majority being small and landless then there is an additional source of problem. In a growing India the government is trying to acquire land for a variety of purposes including industrialization, mining or building dams. In case of land acquisition by the government while the entire community is adversely affected the compensation.

2. Hypothesis: Historical land institutions directly impact the conflict.

As already discussed in section, the allocation of the responsibility of collecting the land revenue to the landlords (which translates into a de facto property right over the land) gave birth to a reason for perpetual conflict between the peasants and landlords. "Elsewhere, the colonial state directly collected the land revenue from the cultivator, thereby avoiding this particular source of internecine conflict" Banerjee and Somana than (2007). Moreover, land acquisition for mining purposes, building dams or for private industry is an important issue pursued by the Maoists. Such land acquisition often leads to large scale displacement and loss of livelihood of people. Given adequate compensation people might be less discontent with the displacement induced by land acquisition. In this context, Duo and Pande (2007) show how the landlords districts do worse than the non-landlord districts as far as elects of dams are concerned. They argue that since the social relation in the landlord districts somehow renders collective action difficult it leads to inadequate compensation. Following the same argument if land is taken away in the landlord districts for industrial, mining or the purposes of building dams, historically people in such districts have less potential for collective action leading to inadequate compensation, which in turn leads to more grievances. This makes for easier Maoist recruits. Thus, we try to test whether the historical property rights institutions have any elect over and above its effects through underdevelopment and land distribution.

3. Hypothesis: The presence of disadvantaged castes Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) leads to more conflict

As discussed in the previous section "the main support for the Naxalite movement comes from dalits (SC) and adivasis (ST) (Government of India (2008))." In fact, the

predominantly tribal areas like Chhattisgarh have experienced higher conflict levels. While the SCs and STs have enjoyed an amative action in the post independence period, they might still not be economically and socially at par with others. "There are over 2, 00,000 pending cases of atrocities against lower castes in India, and the conviction rate is just a little over 2 percent. "There are an estimated 162 million untouchables in rural India, according to the National federation of Dalit Land rights movement. 70% of them don't own land" (Chakravarti (2008)). Thus Caste and tribal identities are important issues that could exacerbate the conflict and we directly test to verify if a higher SC & ST percentage indeed lead to higher conflict. Moreover, if the benefits of the high growth that the country is experiencing are not homogeneous across groups, there is further potential of grievances arising out of feelings of exclusion. "Some case studies [Sambanis 2005, Frances Stewart 2001] suggest that 'horizontal' inequality-inequality that coincides with ethnic or other politically salient cleavages-is a particular important driver of civil conflict" Blattman and Miguel (2010)." Thus we test to see how the incomes of the different groups impact the conflict.

Methodology

Primary and secondary source materials are utilized to the maximum extent practical. Primary sources consist largely of internal documents from the Government of India and Naxalite organizations, as well as quotes and speeches from government and insurgent leaders. As mentioned in the literature review, there is not as much rigorous academic source material on this issue as one might like. What peer-reviewed work there is receives primacy of place, but publications and studies from interested NGOs, think tanks, and security analysts also contain valuable information, and are included in this study. Finally, significant tertiary source material, in the form of coverage from reputable news media like The Economist, Frontline (an Indian weekly), and the Times of India, is required to fill factual gaps in the existing literature. There were now three major communist strands within India: the CPI, the CPI- (M), and the violently radical Maoists. This last group, eventually named for the birthplace of their armed struggle in Naxalbari, West Bengal, would in due course form a third, underground organization, the Communist Party of India-Marxist Leninist, or CPI- (ML). Unlike its progenitors, the CPI-(ML) was totally opposed to the electoral process.

And the espoused violent revolution as the only legitimate means of realizing its political agenda. In short, this entailed nothing less than the complete overthrow of the existing political structure, corrupted as it was by the four evils of “U.S. imperialism, Soviet social-imperialism, feudalism, and comprador-bureaucrat capital.” From 1967-1972, this group embarked on a campaign of political terror that caused no small amount of consternation to national and state governments, and resonated, at least initially, with many poor residents of West Bengal, Bihar, and Andhra Pradesh. To understand why, one must appreciate India’s broader political, economic, and social contexts during this period.

The Naxalite movement owes to the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in West Bengal. The group which was split from the CPI (M) led an armed struggle against the landed gentry at Naxalbari in West Bengal. However, this was crushed by the police in a few months by the United Front Government that was in power in the state. Thus the revolt which acquired the label of Naxalism paved the way for waging struggles against the established feudal order by the oppressed masses in different parts of country. In fact Naxalism identifies with the fight against poverty and alienation. There are around 40 groups in the country professing the ideology of Naxalism which is otherwise known as Marxism, Leninism and Maoism. About 11 groups have a predominant place in the Naxalite movement which has identified itself with the Left wing extremism in the country. The present chapter discusses the genesis of the Naxalite movement, splits of the movement, and the state policy towards the movement while reviewing the studies that deal with the relationship between the media and the Naxalite movement.

Genesis of Naxalite Movement

Two Communist leaders- Charu Maunder and Kanu Sanyal ignited the first spark of Naxalite movement to achieve peasant rights at Naxalbari in West Bengal which appeared in the national press in late May, 1967. It was reported that a group of tribal peasants had taken control of the Naxalbari area under the leadership of the local unit Communist Party of India. The first clash was triggered between peasants and landed gentry on May 22 1967 when a land lord attempted to forcibly evict a poor tenant from his land in defiance of a court order.²⁴The next attack took place the following day when the tribal tried to occupy a land near a tea estate, protected by the private armed guards. On May 22 a small party of policemen went to the estate area and one officer was killed in the ambush. Consequent upon the attack, a bigger police force was sent to the village, which fired on the demonstrating women and

children, killing nine in the absence of the men, who had fled. In June the struggle intensified further, particularly in the areas of the Naxalbari, Kharibari and Phansidewa in West Bengal.²⁵ Soon after the first incident in the last week of May, 1967, the leaders of the Naxalbari unit of the CPI (M) declared the area as “liberated zone” (Das Gupta, 1974; 8). It meant that the police and the government officials would not be allowed to enter that area as the armed squads were formed to defend the area. Village Committees of CPI (M) were established under the leadership of Charu Mazumdar to take over the administration of schools and other public activities.²⁶ These committees also performed the function of judicial bodies. Raids were organized on the house of rich peasants and the stocks of hoarded rice were confiscated. The mortgage and loan documents in their possession were destroyed. Fire arms and ammunition were snatched away from the jotedars (Landlords). These incidents received unprecedented publicity in the national press. The rich peasant parties, particularly the Bangla Congress, the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) and the Samyukta Socialist Party, as well as the Congress Party, demanded immediate police action. Within a few days, three tribals were killed by the ‘defensive actions’ of these Resistance Committees. In the ruthless cordon and search operations, hundreds beaten up and over thousand were arrested. Some leaders like Jangal Santal were arrested, others like Charu Mazumdar went underground, yet others like Tribheni Kanu, Sobhan Ali Gorkh Majhi and Tika Majhi became “communist martyrs”.

Naxalbari- Type Upsurge

The period 1968 and 1969 saw the outbreak of struggles of landless and poor peasants that rebelled against the rich people. The upsurge in Naxalbari had its impact in Srikakulam, one of the 23 districts in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Unlike most other districts it had never been a strong communist base in the past. For instance, the communist failed to gain a single seat from this area in any of the first four general elections and their percentage of votes were 4.9, 12.7, 5.6, and 4.4 respectively for the CPI (M) and the CPI combined (Das Gupta, 1974; 46). In Srikakulam district, two school teachers built up an amass base amongst the tribals since the late 1950. Vempatapu Satyaanarayana (popularly known as Satyam) together with Adibhaatla Kailasam was finding the militancy of their struggle coming into direct conflict with existing Communist Party state leadership. Forcible seizures of crops, land occupations, growing clashes with the landlords were developing into armed clashes with the police. These

two teachers were soon joined by youth leader Panchadi Krishnamurthy. Added to this, the folk performance of Subbarao Panigarhi became the vehicle of revolutionary politics.²⁷

With the outbreak of the news of Naxalbari, Sathyam and others immediately embraced the politics of Naxalbari as in they found the answers for which they were grouping and which the state leadership of the then CPI (M) and later Andhra Pradesh Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (APCCCR) was unwilling to provide. The spark was triggered on October 31, 1967 when two comrades 'Koranna' and 'Managanna' were shot dead by landlords at Levidi village in Srikakulam district on the way of the Girijan Sangam Conference. In response to this, the girijan (tribes) rose in a big way against the landlords. Seizure of the land of land lords, property and food grains spread from village to another which was organized by tribes moving in groups armed with traditional weapons. This continued for six months, which paralyzed the local police forces. But in March, 1968, the government sent a special armed police to suppress the mass movement. Two persons were killed and 1500 others were arrested. Ironically, the police resorted to looting and destroying of tribal villages.

The movement took a new turn in October, 1968 after an incident in Garudabhadra, in which a demonstration of girijan was attacked by men of landlords. They did not spare women and did not hesitate to molest them. This angered the people of several neighboring villages who assembled and forcibly cultivated the landlords' land which was followed by severe police repression. This incident forced Naxalites to think about more effective ways of combating the repression unleashed by the police and the landlord's men. Panchadi Krishnamurthy, the leader of the Naxalites in the Srikakulam district, decides to make direct contact with Charu Mazumdar and others leaders of All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) ignoring the state leaders.²⁸

Mazumdar advised the Srikakulam leaders to forsake the line of building mass movement based on economic struggles and to start guerilla actions. He also suggested that the Srikakulam leaders should concentrate on action to annihilate "class enemies" and to destroy the police force that context. The first phase of the guerilla movement began on November 25, 1968, when 250 girijan from 25 villages attacked the houses of a moneylender in Parvathipuram and took over his accumulated rice and grains worth Rs. 20,000. This was the beginning of a series of raids on landlords, money lenders and their agents in which the guerillas destroyed and burnt houses and decamped with money and other belongings.

Alongside these activities there took place several encounters with the police. In 1969, the number of functioning squads Naxalites increased and did the attacks. But in October, 1969 the government sent 12,000 Central Reserved Protection Force (CRPF) and the battle went on for nearly six months. Major guerilla actions took place in the upper Aviri area, on the Bothili hills and near ‘Sanjuvai’, ‘Vegulavada’ and ‘Inthamanugadda’; all in the district of Srikakulam. By January 1970, as many as 120 policemen were killed. Consequently, the leaders like Satyam, Adibhatla Kailasam, Panchadi Krishnamurthy, Panchadi Nirmala, Dr. Chaganti Bhaskar Rao and Subba Rao Panigarhi died in police actions.

Revolutionary activities were launched by the Indian Maoist in several other areas besides Naxalbari and Srikakulam. Prominent among those areas were Debra – Gopiballavpore in West Bengal, Mushahari in Bihar, Lakhimpur- Kheri in Uttar Pradesh, Chamkaursahib in Punjab, Pulpali, Triuchelli in Kerla, Ganjam and Koraput in Orissa, Goalpura in Assam.²⁹

Splits in the Movement

The Communist Movement in India split several times in the 1960s, and major features of these splits was the role, the attitude and view of the Communist Party of China. The first split, 1964 led the formation of CPI (M), subsequently the CPI (ML) split into smaller groups because of conflicting interpretations of the Chinese line.³⁰

The Birth of CPI (ML)

At a meeting on February 8, 1969, All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) gave a call for the formation of a Marxist Leninist Party. In a declaration it said, “Idealistic deviation on the question of Party building arises as a result of the refusal to recognize the struggle that must be waged within the party. The idea that the party should formed only within the party. The idea that the party should be formed only after all opportunistic tendencies, alien trends and undesirable elements have been purged through class struggles is nothing but subjective idealism. To conceive of a party without contradictions, without struggle between the opposite, that is to a pure and faultless party, is indulging in mere idealist fantasy. Thus, the CPI (ML) was formed on April 22, 1969, after holding the birth anniversary of Lenin. Primal Das Gupta, General Secretary of the State Electricity Board Employees’ Union of West Bengal defected and formed arrival coordination committee at the state level. In a document he criticized the CPI (ML) for

choosing the cities, for refusing to participate in trade union and for ignoring the task of building class- based mass organizations at village level. This document also criticized the CPI (ML)'s method of guerilla warfare as "Cheguevarism," Another important leader Asit Sen, who preside over the Calcutta rally, which announced the formation of a new party also eventually broke away from the CPI (ML) and formed a new organization called Maoist Communist Centre (MCC). His criticism of the CPI (ML) was similar to that of Primal Das gupta. Moreover he was critical of the "annihilation of class enemy campaign", which was formally launched after April, 1969.

Both the CPI (ML) and the MCC continued with their respective forms of armed struggle for the next two years. In the process, Mazumdar acquired a kind of cult status among Naxalite. The negative aspect of the development of this personality cult revealed itself shortly when Mazumdar was arrested in Calcutta on July 16, 1972. Less than a fortnight later, his death in the police lock up, virtually led to the collapse of central authority in CPI (ML).

People's War

The CPI (ML) –people's War was formed on Lenin's birth anniversary on April 22, 1980. The formation was part a process to reorganize a centre for all- India revolution after it went out of existence in 1972. A similar attempt was made in 1974 when the COC (Central Organizing Committee) was formed. This was dissolved in May, 1977. In fact the AP State Committee had to function without a central committee from July, 1972 to January 1974 and again from May, 1977 to April 1980. The 1980 center was formed on the basis of two issues; the first was the self- critical review and the second was the tactical line. The self- critical review was basically the same as that presented to the COC in 1975 with a few change. The tactical line basically upheld the legacy of Naxalbari while rectifying the 'left' errors of that period. Both had enriched by the practice of the preceding eight years. Konapalli Seetharamaiah was later expelled from the People's War operations command in Karimnagar district, in the North Telengana region of Andra Pradesh, and subsequently spared to other parts of the state and to other state also. Ideological difference led to splits and there was reunification of these splinter groups. At present, the CPI-ML People's War has a strong presence in eight states, and significant presence in eight states, and significant presence in another seven. The other major Naxalite group is the Maoist Communist Centre of Bihar. According to an estimate, the Naxalite movement has a presence in 53 districts in about 15

states. The people's War Movement has formed several guerrilla bases in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Maharashtra and West Bengal. In a state like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala in South India and Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab in the north, the PW tried to expand its activities.³¹

Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) Janashakti

CPI Janashakti was formed on July 30, 1992 with the merger of seven Communist groups. They are- CPI (ML) Resistance, one group of the unity center of Communist Revolutionaries of India, CPI Agami Yug, Paila Vasudeva Rao's CPI, CPI communist Revolutionary Group for Unity and Communist Janashakti's ideology was based on the 'mass line' developed by Chandra Pulla Reddy and Tarimila Nagi Reddy. In 1994, it contested in 13 constituencies of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly and won only in Illendu constituency (Khammam). A trade union namely All India Federation of Trade Unions, and a peasant's movement were also organized by the Janashakti group. However, in 1996, one faction broke away and subsequently formed the CPI-ML Unity initiative. The same remains as CPI Kanu Sanyal faction, presently. Soon the main body got split into seven more factions, which included among others the k. Rajanna faction. This settled on a strategy of guerilla warfare, a tactical line similar to the erstwhile People's War Group.³² It is this faction that became a united front with the PWG, which merged with the Maoist Communist Centre to form the Communist Party of India- Maoist in September, 2004. The present day CPI-ML Janashakti is the second most dominant and violent group in Andhra Pradesh after the CPI-Maoist Senior leaders like M.V. Prasad and Raghavulu fell out with Rajanna on the issue of the misuse of funds, floated their own group with the coastal region as its main base. While the Rajanna faction had to confine itself to the Telengana Region, Rajanna chose to have an independent status for his group. On the other hand the breakaway faction preferred to be affiliated to the CPI-ML group at the national level. On August 18, 2005, the CPI-ML Pratighatana and CPI- ML merged to form the CPI. Another Janashakti faction, the south regional Provincial committee got merged with CPI- ML of Chandra Pulla Reddy on April 11, 2004, and formed the Communist Party of India Janashakti. Another breakaway group is the Communist Party of United States of India also referred to as the Janashakti Veeranna faction. Although there are no ideological differences between the CPI- Maoist and the CPI-ML Janashakti Veeranna faction. Although there are no ideological difference between the CPI- Maoist and the CPI- ML Janashakti, their operational areas differed. While the CPI-

Maoist has been reported to operate in the least 15 states, the Janashakti has its presence in three states. Andhra Pradesh, having a strong presence in the Telengana region, has a marginal presence in the state of Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh.

Communist Party of India- Maoist (CPI-Maoist)

The Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCC) and the CPI (ML) People's War merged to form a new entity, the Communist Party of India- Maoist (CPI- Maoist) on September 21, 2004. Officially, the merger was announced on 14, 2004, by the PWG Andhra Pradesh State Secretary 'Ramakrishna', at a news conference in Hyderabad, on the eve of peace talks between the PWG and the State Government. During four rounds of negotiations between high- level delegations of the two outfits and the respective Central Committees, a final agreement was reached in September 2004. The five documents- 1.Marxism- Leninism- Maoism, 2.Party programmed 3.Strategy and tactics, 4.Political Resolution on the international and domestic situation, and 5. The party constitution, were adopted and also decided to be translated into 10 regional languages for wider deliberations throughout the outfits bases across India.³³

Areas of Operation

Following the merger, the MCC outfit is active in 156 districts of 13 states that include Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttaranchal and Kerala. The outfit has also been making attempts to establish and expand its presence in several other states such as Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. The MCC's current areas of influence extends over Bihar and Jharkhand, with some sway in Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, West Bengal, Uttaranchal and in few pockets of Madhya Pradesh. The PWG's areas of dominance include Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. The merger now makes the CPI- Maoist a pan – Indian revolutionary group, and brings the Maoist closer to their objective of ' liberating' their proposed Compact Revolutionary Zone. This area extends from Nepal through Bihar in the North to Dandakaranya region and Andhra Pradesh in the south. The intention is to have a continuous stretch of territory under their influence and control, with the ultimate goal of eventually 'liberating' the entire zone. Large parts of this territory have already been brought under the extremist influence with only some link- ups now necessary in the remaining

pockets to make the CRZ a reality. Once achieved, the CRZ will virtually drive a wedge through the vital areas of the country. It would help crystallize linkages with other Maoist groups operating in South Asia, including the Communist Party of Bhutan- Maoist. In the view of the police and politicians, 'the problem of Naxalite movement is only the problem of law and order'. Whereas, for the Naxalite 'Naxalite movement is not a problem but the solution to the problems'. According to them the real 'problems' are of democratic rights, deep-rooted poverty, landlessness, hunger, joblessness, rising debts and suicides, growing bankruptcies and its devastation, the state terror and 'black' murderous gangs, and the rising inequalities.

Government's View of the Movement

The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, admits the spread of Naxalite movement to 76 districts in 9 states of the Union, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. It further agrees that the People's War and the MCCI are trying increasing their influence and operations in some parts in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala states. According to the Institute for Conflict Management, New Delhi, the Movement has actually spread over 165 districts in 14 states and that the Home Minister's assessment in this regard is an understatement. The movement got a tremendous boost when its two major components, the people's War and the Maoist Communist Centre of India decided to merge on March 21, 2004; though a formal announcement was made on October 15, 2004 only. The unified party was called the Communist Party of India. The merger, a part from augmenting the support base of the movement has given the character of a pan- Indians revolutionary group. The Naxalite's plan to have a Compact Revolutionary Zone stretching from Indo- Nepal border to the Dandakaranya Region is likely to net a fillip with the unification of their ranks.³⁴

State Policy towards Naxalite Movement

In 1969, Jalagam Vengala Rao, and the Chief Minister treated it as a law and order problem. In 1983, N.T.Rana Rao, the then Chief Minister representing Telgu Desam praised them initially, but later adopted a tough line of action against them. Following the kidnap of six IAS Officers in East Godavari district in 1987, the government strengthened the police department with the institution of 'Grey Hounds' and nearly 1,000 personal were drawn on deputation from the special armed police and the Andhra Pradesh Reserve Police who were

specially trained for the purpose. The kidnap and killing of Telugu Desam Mandal President Malhar Rao in Karimnagar district, Mr. Rama Rao talked of matching Naxalite violence with the police violence, and proposed to bomb remote forest and hilly tracts using helicopters and flush out Naxalites from their hideouts. The state also sought the permission of the Union Government to set up ammunition factory to supply arms at reasonable rates to the people to protect themselves from Naxalites. Issuing of licenses for fire arms was liberalized and village self defense squads and district coordination committees were set up to monitor the implementation of the welfare schemes.³⁵

In 1989, Congress Party returned to power and Dr. M. Chenna Reddy became the Chief Minister of the State. In view of the reports of police excesses and human rights violence and the kidnap of two legislators, Mr. Mandava Venkateswara Rao of TDP and Mr. Krishana Reddy of Congress in two separate incidents Dr. Cheena Reddy adopted a conciliatory policy with the hope that the PWG would stop abductions and attract the Naxalites to join the mainstream. Under trail Naxalit prisoners numbering 150 were released and the Disturbed Areas Act in force in select divisions of Karimnagar, Warangal, and Nizamabad and Khammam districts since 1978 was withdrawn. Likewise, the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act and a special security force were created to counter the problem. During this period when the state adopted a 'soft' liberal policy, Naxalities held a series of meeting in which leaders of their front organizations like Gaddar, a folk singer against whom non – bailable warrants were pending, took part. The PWG conducted a number of mammoth rallies, public meetings and achieved higher 'political consciousness' and mobilized 'organized political opinion'.³⁶

Subsequently, the N. Janardhan Reddy Government adopted a hard- line strategy and declared the People's War group and eight of its front organizations as unlawful and banned it for three years on June 5, 1991. The other organizations which were banned were Radical Students Union (RSU), Radical Youth League (RYL), Rythu Coolie Sangham (RC), the Singareni Karmika Samakhya, the Girijan Rythu Coolie Sangham, All India Revolutionary Women's League and the Organization for Protection of Girijan Rights. The state Government declared a ban on PWG and its front organization under Criminal Law Act (1908) applicable to the Andhra area and under the Andhra Pradesh, Public Security Act for "indulging in mindless violence, taking life, and destruction of public property and for disturbing general peace by their violent activities."³⁷

In December 1994, after N.T. Rana Rao took over as the Chief Minister of State, the Government declared that it proposed to handle the extremist activity as a socio- economic issue and not merely as a law and order problem. The Government embarked on a different approach to cut arms supply to the hardcore groups and wean away people from the movement through socio- economic issue and not merely as a law and order problem. The Government embarked on a different approach to cut arms supply to the hardcore groups and wean away people from the movement through socio- economic measures. Naxalites were invited unconditionally in the hope of abjuring violence and joining the mainstream. They were asked to identify excess lands with the landlords for distribution. The Government directed the police to stop all 'encounters' and released Kondapali Seetharamaiah from humanitarian grounds after withdrawing cases against him. When it was time to review the ban on PWG and its front organizations on June 21, 1995, Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao decided 'to allow it to lapse'. Mr. Chandrababu Naidu who succeeded Rama Rao as Chief Minister decided to maintain status quo. However, the ban was reclaimed on June 23, 1996 on the ground that "development in the Telengana districts was being impeded because of Naxalites."

The State continues to portray the Naxalite movement as a law and order problem and does not wish to acknowledge the fact that the movement is essentially an expression of the Peoples aspirations to life of dignity and self-respect. However, the state leadership shifted its political burden to the police, encouraging them to indulge in encounters, which are no other than custodial and targeted killings, even if they are euphemistically described as an encounters, the extinguishing of human life and right to life the Government. Dr. Y.S. Rajasekara Reddy who took over as the Chief Minister of the State on May 14, 2004 made an announcement immediately after being sworn in that he would review and if possible, lift the ban on People's War if they created a congenial atmosphere in the state by putting an end to violence on the government's part. He said that he would strongly advise the police to reciprocate by not resorting to fake encounters and acts of repression. The United Progressive Alliance which came to power at the Centre also stated in its common minimum needs programmed (May 27, 2004) that "The UPA is concerned with the growth of extremist violence and other forms of terrorist activity in different states. This is not merely a law and order problem but a far deeper socio- economic issue which will be addressed more meaningfully than has been the case so far. False encounter will be permitted." On June 4, 2004, making a bus mouth statement on the post- election law and order situation in the

state in the Legislative Assembly, Home Minister Jana Reddy announced the decision to stop giving cash rewards on the heads of Naxalites and the constitution of what he termed as, “a conciliation committee to identify problems of people espoused by Naxalites.” The previous government announced a series of monetary rewards between Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 13 lakh depending upon the position they occupied. On July 21, 2004 the State Government has allowed the ban on the militant People’s War and its six frontal organizations to lapse. The Government has decided not to extend the ban, due to expire on July 22, 2004, as a prelude to ‘direct’ peace talks with ‘representatives of the outfit’.³⁸

Peace Talks

By the middle of May 2002, the CPI People’s War and the Government agreed in principle for the talks. Later, People’s War announced a ceasefire and the Government agreed too. It termed it as the creation of a conducive atmosphere for the talks. The CPI and People’s War nominated two Cabinet Ministers to represent it for the preliminary talks on modalities. The talks on modalities commenced on the June 5, 2002 and there were two further sittings on 9 and 20 June, 2002 respectively. However, the occurrence of encounter killings in Karimnagar district on the July 2, 2002 vitiated the atmosphere and jeopardized the talks. In this attack four members of the People’s War including a senior leader were killed. On the July 15, 2002, the CPI-PW declared that the ceasefire was withdrawn and their ‘war of resistance’ would continue; at the same time, they mentioned that they were prepared for talks if a conducive atmosphere emerged.³⁹ Naxalites should give up armed struggle or declare lying down or arms before talks. The process of talks in 2002 thus came to an abrupt end. The issue of Naxalites movement became the central issue in the elections to Andhra Pradesh Assembly which took place in April, 2004. The then Telugu Desam Government clearly stated in the recommendations to the Governor to dissolve the Assembly in November 2004, as it wanted to take the issue of Naxalite movement head-on and extremism was to be made the central issue in the elections. In its election manifesto, the Telugu Desam Party stated that it would take steps to put down Naxalite movement firmly. In contrast, the Congress Party declared in its election manifesto that the policy of ‘bullet for bullet’ of the State Government did not really help in containing the situation. On the other hand, “the Congress which over the years painstakingly built up democratic institutions in the country believes that the extremist movement in the state should be viewed from a larger socio-economic perspective and tackled holistically by engaging them in a dialogue. The Congress

Party therefore is committed to resolving this issue through a process of dialogue and consultation.’ The elections to the Andhra Pradesh Assembly as well as the General Election to Parliament took place in April- May 2004. The Congress Party came to power in Andhra Pradesh and the United Progressive Alliance led by Congress, assumed office at the national level. Consequent upon the promise made in the election manifesto of the Congress Party, the possibility of talks between the Government and the Naxalites got reviewed. The long awaited peace talks which finally commenced on October 15, 2004 ended after four days.⁴⁰

End of Peace Talks

After six months of ceasefire and all pervasive peaceful atmospheres, there were a series of statements and action on the part of the Government and the Naxalites which contributed to a fast deterioration of law and order in the atmosphere. After the first round of talks was over, it became a common practice on the part of the Government to refuse permission for the holding meetings or for unveiling martyrs memorials by the Naxalites. On December 15, 2004 four constables were hurt in land mine blast by CPI People’s War in Visakhapatnam district. On January 6, 2005 a Naxalites belonging to CPI Janashakti was killed in police action in Warangal district. On January 15, 2005, six Maoists were killed in alleged encounters in Mahboobnagar and Prakasam districts. The Naxalites parties too killed an alleged informer and a sarpanch.⁴¹ On the January 17, 2005, CPI and CPI Janashakti Parties made a formal announcement “withdrawing from the talks” as a protest against the combing operations and encounters resulting in the death of as many as many as eleven persons since January. In their statement, they mentioned that the first round of talks was completed as a mere formality that the Government felt threatened by the surge of support for the Naxalites, government did not extend the ceasefire after December 16, 2004, that the ruling classes are incapable of solving peoples basic problems and the talks” was a conspiracy to tie the hands of the parties and that the only alternative for resolving people’s problems was People War. Hence they withdraw from the talks. The encounters as well as killing by Naxalites Parties unabated with serious incidents such as in Vempenta in Pamulapadu Mandal of Kurnool district on February 28, 2005 by CPI, in Manala in Nizamabad district on the March 7, 2005 by CPI. But the sporadic political statement from the government expressed interest in talks.

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