Naxalism – A Drag on India’s Quest for Great Power Status

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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.”

Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India

India’s Naxalite insurgency emerged in 1967 as an uprising of armed peasants in the West Bengal town of Naxalbari, to protect the rights of poor peasants and create a classless society. In 2006 the Indian Prime Minister noted that large parts of 160 of the country’s 602 districts were affected by the Maoist movement. The number of affected districts has now increased to 223 of a total of 640 districts and the movement operates in 20 of India’s 28 states. However, the insurgency is more active in Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

After a long factional history of the Naxalite movement due to differences both in approach and ideology, unification was achieved in 2004 under the leadership of Ganapathy, who formed the Communist Party of India – Maoists (CPI-M). Since then the movement has turned more lethal in its activities. Deaths related to the insurgency have increased from 638 in 2008 to 997 in 2009 and 1174 in 2010. According to an assessment, the ‘Maoist insurgency is the worst and steadily worsening of conflict in India’, which accounted for 1180 casualties in 2010 surpassing the combined total of all other insurgent movements in the country.

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4 ‘Non-state armed groups, India’, Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – South Asia, 26 April 2011.
6 ‘Non-state armed groups, India’, Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – South Asia, 26 April 2011.
insurgency has been a source of concern in the country for over four decades and about 20,000 lives have been lost so far.\(^8\)

Internal challenges such as the Naxalite insurgency notwithstanding, India has witnessed steady but uneven economic growth. After the policy changes of 1991, the economy liberalised and soon growth was averaging more than 5 percent per annum.\(^9\) With a population of 1.21 billion and current real GDP growth of 8.4 percent,\(^10\) India aspires to become a great power and is vying for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. However, if Naxalism is as big a problem as Prime Minister Singh stated and many others also think it is, the movement will have serious implications for India, which will need to balance internal problems with its external ambitions.

Against this backdrop, this paper will analyse India’s Naxalite insurgency and the state’s response in order to determine the impact of this insurgency on the nation and its aspirations to become a great power. The first section will define ‘great power’ and ‘regional power’ as well as explore the indicators of great power status. An examination will then be made of how India perceives itself and how it aspires to be seen.

In the next section, an in-depth analysis of the evolution of the Maoist insurgency from its beginning until today will determine its nature and characteristics; why and how it started; why it is still continuing; and, what the causes of its success and failure are. Moreover, the Indian government’s response will be analysed to make an assessment about India’s success in dealing with this problem.

The next section will explore the challenges posed by the insurgency as well as its impact on India’s great power aspirations. This will be followed by an attempt to identify those major power indicators which would not be realized until India finds a lasting solution to this problem. This will be followed by an assessment of the future of the movement. The paper will conclude by explaining how big a hurdle the Maoist insurgency constitutes for India’s endeavours of achieving great power status.

\(^{10}\) Market Information and Research Section, DFAT, Fact Sheet India, 2011.
In this paper the term Maoist will be interchangeably used with Naxalite, Naxal or Communist Party of India - Maoist, which is specific to India. Where reference is made to other factions of the Naxalite movement active in India or to other Maoist organizations outside India, the full name and country of origin of these organizations will be specifically indicated.
Great Power Status

Indicators of a Great Power

If India desires to become a great power, what does this status involve? As defined in the *Dictionary of International Relations* great power refers to:

The ranking of states primarily in terms of their military and economic capabilities. ... In addition to military and economic strength, great powers have generally global if not universal interests and are usually characterised as possessing the political will to pursue them.\(^{11}\)

The World’s political system consists of different levels of power including great, middle, small and micro. The term ‘great power’ was first used as a diplomatic concept when Austria, Britain, France, Prussia and Russia assumed great power status as a result of the Congress of Vienna in 1815. After World War II, a new term ‘super power’ was coined and the USA along with the USSR assumed that status. However, all five members of the ‘nuclear club’ – China, France, UK, US, USSR – were regarded as being great powers. In the military domain having a nuclear capability was deemed to be the least criteria for a great power status. This was the reason that, even after achieving a great economic power status, Japan was not perceived as a great power.\(^{12}\)

Kenneth Waltz defines a state’s power in terms of the application of its capabilities to change another state’s behaviour while defying the authority of others.\(^{13}\) Hence great power is considered to be a nation state which can influence the behaviour and decisions of other smaller powers through various tools of strength at its disposal. These tools of strength are acquired through a combination of various factors that constitute the power of a nation and are referred to as the elements of national power.\(^{14}\) Amongst the tools of strength, diplomatic clout, identity, military capability

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and economic power stand out. However, in order to achieve great power status a nation state needs to excel in every field.\textsuperscript{15}

Statesmen generally use the term ‘great power’ for those states which possess formidable capabilities and influence. A portion of this description refers to material capacity including a strong economy and extended military reach.\textsuperscript{16} However, besides these capabilities, the behaviour of a nation state is also important to achieve great power status. In other words, it is not enough that a nation state possesses the capabilities to influence the smaller states but how it uses those capabilities is also equally important. The behaviour of a nation state is partially reflected in its foreign policy roles. A great power should be able to effectively play the roles of leadership by influencing others to follow specific directions, custodianship by maintaining the desired order, as well as protecting allies from external threats.\textsuperscript{17}

Besides external influence, a nation’s internal situation and the perception of other major powers about this nation are also important indicators. Infrastructure, economic growth, general living standard of the people, law and order, internal security and stability, and ability to deal with internal problems effectively are some of the important domestic elements which build the image of a country and shape the perception of other powers. A power which is unable to resolve its internal problems would have difficulties exerting influence externally as well as maintaining an image commensurate with great power status.

**Regional Power**

Regions are political entities comprising a set of states with a common geographic centre.\textsuperscript{18} Geographical contiguity or proximity, a sense of unity, and social and economic homogeneity are some of the key elements of a region.\textsuperscript{19} Accordingly, a

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{15} Waltz, *Theory of international politics*, p. 131.  
\textsuperscript{16} John D. Ciocirari, ‘India’s approach to great power status’, *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, vol. 35, no. 1, winter 2011, p. 62.  
\textsuperscript{17} Robert Stewart-Ingersoll & Derrick Frazier, ‘India as a regional power: Identifying the impact of roles and foreign policy orientation on the South Asian security order’, *Asian Security*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2010, pp. 57-62.  
\textsuperscript{18} David A. Lake, ‘Regional hierarchy: authority and local international order’, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2009, pp. 35-44.  
\textsuperscript{19} Evans & Jeffery Newnham, *Dictionary of international relations*, pp. 472-473.}
nation state which seeks to dominate and influence other smaller powers in the region can be categorised as a regional power. The main criteria that distinguish a regional power from other powers in a region include a nation’s claim to leadership, power resources, and employment of foreign policy instruments. It is also important that smaller powers in the region as well as other great powers in the world accept the leadership role of that regional power in that particular region.²⁰

Military and economic strength remain the essential ingredients of power at the regional level also. However, in contrast to great powers, regional powers possess adequate military and economic capabilities to dominate a distinct geographic area only and do not have such capabilities on a global scale. Although regional power status appears to be a more relative phenomenon confined within the perceived boundaries of a region, this does not mean that regional powers are limited to the region to which they belong and cannot project power outside the region. In today’s globalised world, a regional power does have considerable influence beyond the confines of the region as well. Sometimes circumstances also dictate that regional powers play a greater role. Great powers also look towards regional powers to further their interests in the region, in which case they may seek to enhance the capabilities of the regional power. Hence, regional powers generally have the potential to rise further which may lead to their aspirations of achieving great power status.

India’s Case

India has not clearly documented its great power aspirations in any concrete or conclusive way. However, some official government documents have indirectly hinted at India’s increased role in the region and beyond. Moreover, leading politicians, on occasions, have made statements suggesting that they want India to pursue great power status and ultimately to become a great power.

According to Yashwant Sinha, former Indian Foreign Minister,

India's self-perception has shifted from that of a weak developing country to that of a great power in the making. … India has started a confident march in the right direction and we are determined to succeed in reaching our goal. 21

Making India a great power by 2020 was one of the top items on the agenda of India’s main opposition party the Bharatiya Janata Party, as cited in its Vision Document 2004 party manifesto prior to the elections. 22 Indian Prime Minister Singh mentioned during an interview, before the US President’s visit to India in 2006, ‘The emergence of India as a major global power is an idea whose time has come.’ 23 As such India perceives itself as a rising power aspiring to become a great power. Indirect sources and strategic analysts also believe that India wants to become a great power.

Emboldened with its economic gains India started claiming a greater role in the region and beyond which is indicative of its ambitions for higher status. Successive Indian governments in recent years have talked about the concept of ‘extended neighbourhood’ which stretches from the Suez Canal to the South China Sea and includes within it West Asia, the Persian Gulf, Central Asia, South East Asia, East Asia, the Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean Region. 24 The term first appeared in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs Annual Report 2000 – 2001. 25 It was also used by the then Indian National Security Advisor, Brajesh Mishra, in 2000 when he mentioned that the global environment necessitated India ensure stability not only on its borders but also in its extended neighbourhood. 26 Moreover, while addressing the Combined Commanders Conference on 26 October 2004, Prime Minister Singh mentioned, ‘Our strategic footprint covers the region bounded by the Horn of Africa, West Asia, Central Asia, South-East Asia and beyond, to the far reaches of the Indian

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Ocean. The Indian Ministry of Defence Annual Report 2006 – 2007 also mentions that, due to its enormous size, geographic location and trade links, the country’s security environment is not limited to the immediate neighbourhood but it extends from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca including the Central Asian region.

The demise of the Soviet Union allowed India to build relations with all the major powers of the world without the restrictions of the past due to its close Cold War relationship with the Soviet Union. Moreover, India’s rapid economic growth and progress in information technology has reshaped global perceptions of India’s rising power. World powers are also interested in India’s rise because it suits their interests. India is a big market, it has the potential to counterbalance other players and share some of the responsibilities of other major powers towards regional as well as international security. It is significant in this regard that leaders of all the permanent members of the UN Security Council visited India in 2010.

The United States wants to strengthen India for its own strategic interest of maintaining its supremacy as a global superpower. US efforts to balance China with the help of India is a case in point. Condoleezza Rice, the then US Secretary of State, told Prime Minister Singh during her visit to India in March 2005 that Washington's broad aim was ‘to help India become a major world power in the 21st century’. Philip Zelikow, the US State Department official who has been one of the key architects of the Bush administration policy, shared the same view. The India-US civilian nuclear energy deal further substantiates American efforts in this direction and is one indication of a strategic partnership between India and the world’s sole superpower.

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There is no doubt about India’s rise. Over the last two decades India has shown tremendous economic growth. With a 10.4 percent GDP real growth rate, India was ranked 5th in the world in 2010 and 7th with respect to its foreign exchange and gold reserves, which were estimated at US $ 284.1 billion.\(^{34}\)

India has shown steady progress in the field of defence capabilities. Although its spending on defence as a share of its GDP has remained relatively steady at 2.5 to 3.0 percent, due to GDP growth, its defence spending has grown by some 64% in real terms since 2001, reaching $36.3 billion in the 2011–2012 budget.\(^{35}\) Some observers believe that India is transforming its military to have global reach while ‘sending a signal that it’s going to be a big player’ and ‘is slowly maturing into a conventional great power’.\(^{36}\)

Moreover, all the three services of the Indian armed forces aspire to project power beyond India’s borders. The Indian Navy’s Maritime Military Strategy focuses on development of a ‘blue-water’ navy able to support foreign policy objectives and national aims.\(^{37}\) The Indian Air Force (IAF) is also aiming to achieve strategic reach to safeguard national interests.\(^{38}\) The Indian Army is planning to transform its infantry into an expeditionary force capable of operating in an out of area contingency.\(^{39}\) Although Indian armed forces have all outlined plans to develop certain capabilities in line with the envisioned goals, these plans appear more ambitious, at least in the near future.


The Indian Navy, for instance, has plans to develop a three-carrier fleet, one bigger and two small, by 2018. This would enable the navy to operate one carrier at sea all the time bearing in mind the maintenance and training cycle. However, it is pertinent that India would need to operate the bigger and one of the small carriers together to generate as much power as a single US Nimitz class carrier.\(^40\) And, though large and growing, the IAF needs more high-tech aircraft with air-to-air refueling capabilities to fulfill its objective of strategic reach. B K Pandey, a retired IAF Air Marshal described the present IAF capabilities as token and not significant and its efforts as ‘baby steps towards acquiring the capability of projecting combat power in the region.’\(^41\) The army’s vision of operating in an ‘out of the area contingency’ would also be limited by the lack of air as well as sea lift capability.\(^42\)

Regarding India’s current power status, there are various groups with divergent views. One group considers that India is already a regional power in South Asia. The proponents of this group argue that, with world’s 4\(^{th}\) largest economy measured by Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) and destined to become world’s most populous country by 2034, India has already achieved the status of a major power in South Asia.\(^43\) Moreover, in relative terms, India enjoys a superior status as other countries in the region are smaller in almost every respect.\(^44\) Hence India is considered to be a regional great power aspiring to become a world power.\(^45\) By some, India is regarded as an eligible potential great power.\(^46\)

The other group views India as a rising power which is still a long way from achieving regional power status. Supporters of this group argue that although India has achieved certain capabilities in terms of hard and soft power to resist the influence of others, it has not been able to significantly influence others in the region. The

\(^{40}\) Walter C Ladwig III, ‘India and military power projection: Will the land of Gandhi become a conventional great power?’, \textit{Asian Survey}, vol. 50, no. 6, 2010, p. 1175.


\(^{42}\) Ladwig III, ‘India and military power projection’, pp. 1179-1182.

\(^{43}\) Kamdar, \textit{Planet India the turbulent rise of the world’s largest democracy}, p. 279.


failure of Indian efforts to persuade others to isolate Pakistan is a case in point. Moreover, by looking at the GDP real growth rate only, one gets a blurred picture. Indeed, India’s wealth is so unevenly distributed it was ranked 163rd in the world in 2010 in terms of GDP per capita (PPP) which figured at US $ 3500. As India’s economic growth is mainly driven by services, the large portion of India’s population living in rural areas which depend on agriculture has not benefited.

According to Indian Planning Commission Poverty Estimates for 2004-05, 27.5 percent of the total population of about 1.2 billion lives below the poverty line of $ 0.4 a day. This number triples to more than 700 million if the poverty line is taken as $ 2 per day. Thus, India faces a number of challenges before it can claim to have achieved great power status in the region. These challenges are mainly due to poverty. Some other proponents of this group contend that although India has made progress achieving capabilities commensurate with a regional power, its behaviour does not conform to that status. India has not been able to play the roles of leadership and custodianship in the region.

There is a general consensus that India is rising and the indicators also support this view. However, India has a long way to go from being a rising power to attaining great power status. Nevertheless, one should not underestimate India’s potential as well as the capacity of world powers which have joined together to propel India to greater heights. Equally, an examination of the Naxalite movement suggests that India needs to successfully deal with this major insurgency before it can start to be considered a great power.

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49 Perkovich, ‘Is India a major power?’ p. 5.
53 Stewart-Ingersoll & Derrick Frazier, ‘India as a regional power’, pp. 57-60.
**Naxalite Insurgency**

**Evolution**

It is important to probe into the historical background and evolution of the Naxalite insurgency in order to evaluate the relatively successful current phase of the movement and the challenges posed by its rise. The movement has its roots in the Communist Party of India (CPI), which first emerged in 1920 in the Indian Subcontinent, carrying a Marxist ideology. Later the CPI divided into factions. Some supported Chinese and some Soviet ideology. The other difference was in approach – political process or violent revolution. This led to the formation of Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI (M) mostly by the younger pro-Chinese members of the old CPI.\(^{55}\)

Ideological differences started to grow as soon as the CPI (M) was formed when some of the members proposed becoming part of political process. The Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 provided an opportunity to the proponents of political process who immediately condemned Pakistan and its ally China. This led to the victory of some of the CPI (M) members in the 1967 state elections in West Bengal, who joined the coalition of parties under the United Front banner which defeated the Congress Party for the first time after independence. Two of the CPI (M) leaders managed to secure the cabinet positions of the Home Ministry and the Ministry of Land Revenue.\(^{56}\) More radical elements of the CPI (M) were, however, antagonised by this development and an encounter between police and armed peasants took place in the West Bengal town of Naxalbari the same year.\(^{57}\) The term ‘Naxalite’ originated from this encounter. Later, on 1\(^{st}\) May 1967, the Naxalites formed their own party CPI (Marxist Leninist) or CPI (ML) under the leadership of Charu Mazumdar.\(^{58}\) This Naxalbari portion of West Bengal is strategically located in the narrow Siliguri corridor that runs between the main portion of India’s landmass and its seven north-eastern states, and which corridor adjoins Sikkim (beyond which lies Chinese Tibet), Bhutan in the north,

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57 ‘Non-state armed groups, India’, *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – South Asia*, 26 April, 2011.
Nepal in the west and Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) in the east. Some analysts believe that one of the factors for the emergence of Naxalism in this area is that external powers and adjoining states wanted to destabilise India by promoting secessionist tendencies. However, others categorise the insurgency as home grown.

Inspired by Mao’s slogan ‘encircle the cities from the villages’, Mazumdar proclaimed that revolution in India must come from the rural peasants and not from the urban centres. Moreover, he presumed that the country was ready for revolution by landless peasants against an oppressive social and political system and only a spark was needed to set it off. He therefore argued that building of mass organisation was not necessary and class hatred should be stimulated by killing village landlords and moneylenders. Some differed with Mazumdar over the need of building a mass organisation resulting in further division. The Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) emerged out of this division in the 1970s which later, in 2003, became the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI).

During the years 1967-72, the Naxalite movement achieved successes through a campaign of terror and its ideology spread across West Bengal, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. However, the movement was later suppressed by police action. Mazumdar was arrested in July 1972 and died in police custody in Calcutta. The subsequent years saw a period of fragmentation for CPI (ML) and Naxalite activities remained somewhat dormant till 1991. The party was split into various factions, mainly on the basis of differences in ideology and practice. Most significant of these were the People’s War Group (PWG) and CPI (ML) Party Unity (CPI (ML) PU). PWG

59 Jawaid, The Naxalite movement in India, pp. 30-32.
63 ‘Communist Party of India – Maoist (CPI-M)’, Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism, 10 June 2011.
emerged in Andhra Pradesh in 1980 and CPI (ML) PU was established in Bihar in 1982.  

Mupalla Lakshmana Rao, alias Ganapathy, who laid the foundation of the present day CPI-Maoist, became the leader of PWG in 1992. A pragmatic personality, he realised that the success of the revolution lay in unity. He embarked upon the unification of the party and was able to achieve a merger of the PWG and CPI (ML) PU to form the CPI (ML) People’s War or PW in 1998. Later, PW and MCCI were merged in 2004 to form CPI-Maoist or CPI-M, with Ganapathy as its leader.  

The evolution of Naxalism in 1967 in the Naxalbari area and its subsequent subsistence can be attributed to a number of factors which are mainly socio-economic. These include the caste system, poverty, feudalism, unequal wealth distribution, lack of infrastructure development particularly in rural areas, tribal culture in West Bengal, and jungle terrain conducive to insurgent activities. Traditionally, small farmers in villages were forced to give up 50 percent of their harvest to their jotedars or landlords and were also exploited by the moneylenders who provided them loans at very high interest rates. The situation was further aggravated due to the caste system which is still prevalent in Indian society. The 9th Congress of the CPI-Maoist characterised 'the specific character of Indian feudalism/semi-feudalism as being deeply interwoven with the caste system. Landowners generally belong to upper castes, particularly in the agricultural states of Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. The landless poor people of rural areas generally belong to lower castes and the Adivasis (aboriginal) community. These ‘lesser’ people are usually not allowed to drink water from the well reserved for the upper castes and have, at times, been subjected to
lynching and burning for petty matters. Few people in India appear to be bothered about crimes against lower caste people, which are generally not reported in the media. Upper caste police do not register crime reports and upper caste journalists generally overlook the incidents.

Another important factor encouraging Naxalism is the tribal culture prevailing in India’s north-east and the centre. The tribal people of India are called Adivasis, meaning indigenous people. Generally, they are poor and under privileged. About 15 million of India’s total of 80 million tribal people live in north-east India, while the rest are in the centre of the country. The Adivasis are very possessive of the land they occupy, which is generally rich in minerals. They resist government’s development and mining projects on their ancestral land. Moreover, the Dandakaranya region, where most of the rural poor and tribal people live, is a heavily forested area of central India and stretches across several states. Naxalites give protection to forest dwellers in return for their support.

The Naxalite movement exploited the widespread discontentment and frustration amongst poor and landless peasants and motivated them to take up arms against higher-caste landlords and moneylenders. Hence, a complex heterogeneous social structure served as a recruiting base for the Naxalite movement which still exploits cracks in society to its advantage.

**Aims and Objectives**

Article 4 of the Party Constitution of the CPI-M lays down its aims and objectives as:

The immediate aim is to accomplish the New Democratic Revolution in India by overthrowing imperialism, feudalism and comprador bureaucratic capitalism only through the Protracted People’s War and establish the people’s democratic dictatorship under the leadership of the proletariat. It will further

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74 ‘Non-state armed groups, India’, *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – South Asia*, 26 April 2011.
75 John Harriss, ‘What is going on in India’s “red corridor”? Questions about India’s Maoist insurgency’, *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 2, June 2011, p. 315.
fight for the establishment of socialism. The ultimate aim of the party is to bring about communism by continuing the revolution under the leadership of the proletariat and thus abolishing the system of exploitation of man by man from the face of earth.\(^7^6\)

The CPI-M has clearly indicated its objective to replace the alleged oppressive capitalist administration with a communist regime comprising the working masses using revolutionary guerrilla tactics on the lines of Mao’s protracted ‘people’s war’. The movement has also enunciated its long term aim to spread communism so as to build a classless society.

**Strategy and Tactics**

The strategy and tactics employed by Naxalites have witnessed an evolutionary process over the past four decades. During the early stages, Mazumdar followed the strategy of annihilating class enemies through terrorist tactics employed by small combatant groups while avoiding mass organisations as he believed that the country was ready for a revolution for which only a spark was needed.\(^7^7\) Fearful that the passion to use of firearms could distract the peasants from their revolutionary activities, Mazumdar restricted their use to the party leadership only.\(^7^8\) After Mazumdar’s death in 1972, the CPI (ML) factionalised, with each following a different strategy. Some groups continued with the annihilation strategy and others started considering building up mass organisations. Those espousing annihilation also encouraged the use of modern weaponry.\(^7^9\)

After the merger in 2004, the CPI-Maoist reiterated its commitment to the classical Maoist strategy of ‘protracted armed struggle’ with the objective of seizure of political power. According to Article 31 of the Party Constitution, area wise-primary units designated as cells were made responsible to involve ‘militant activists and party followers in the revolutionary war against the autocratic semi-colonial, semi-feudal state system’ to function according to ‘the strategy and tactics of the Protracted


\(^7^7\) Gupta, ‘The Naxalites and the Maoist movement in India’, pp. 169.

\(^7^8\) Harneiaux, ‘The resurgence of Naxalism’, p. 24.

\(^7^9\) Harneiaux, ‘The resurgence of Naxalism’, p. 45.
People’s war.’80 The 9th Congress of the CPI-Maoist held in January-February 2007 reaffirmed the strategy of ‘protracted people’s war’ through an agrarian dominated ‘new democratic revolution’ in order to turn guerrilla zones into base areas, then expanding them to cities, with the ultimate aim of overthrowing the ‘comprador bureaucrat bourgeois’ regime.81 During an interview, Ganapathy indicated that, for a relatively long time, their war would be part of self defence, but their ultimate goal remains to seize state power.82 The concept of a protracted war is contrary to Mazumdar’s perception that the revolution only needed a spark.

**Affected Areas**

There has been an increase in the areas affected by the Maoist activities after the merger of various groups in 2004. PWG was earlier active in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. The MCCI was strong in Bihar, with a presence in western Jharkhand, northern West Bengal and northern Orissa. However, after the merger, CPI-M has extended its reach and is now active in several other states. These include Uttar Pradesh and Haryana in the north; Assam in the north-east; Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the south; and Gujarat, Punjab, and Rajasthan in the west.83

In 2003, CPI-M was active in 55 districts of 9 states.84 The government stated in December 2009 that the CPI-M had a presence in more than 223 districts across 20 states.85 Official records show that Maoists are now present in 190 districts in 21 states.86 A map showing Maoist affected areas as in April 2009 is shown in Figure 1.

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83 ‘Communist Party of India – Maoist (CPI-M)’, *Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism*, 10 June 2011.
85 ‘Communist Party of India – Maoist (CPI-M)’, *Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism*, 10 June 2011.
86 Bureau of Police Research and Development, *Executive summary – Genesis and spread of Maoist violence and appropriate state strategy to handle it*, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India,
The main objective of the expansionist designs of Naxalites has been to establish a Compact Revolutionary Zone (CRZ) spreading from Nepal through Bihar to Andhra Pradesh. Generally known as the ‘red corridor’, this is now taking shape. Significantly, it is almost twice the size of the other two insurgency-affected areas of India: the north-east and Kashmir. Indeed, Maoists now affect up to 40 percent of India’s land area and one third of its population.

**Assessment of Naxalite Activities**

There has been a steady increase in the activities of Maoists/Naxalite insurgents. While there are some variations in the data of Naxalite activities quoted in different sources, the overall trend is clear: the insurgent activities have expanded significantly in recent years.

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89 Harriss, ‘What is going on in India’s “red corridor”’, p. 315.

90 Robert M Cutler, ‘Naxalites drill away at India’s wealth’, *Asia Times online*, 20 May 2010, retrieved 11 July 2011, [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LE20Df02.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LE20Df02.html).
sources, the following table depicts official records of state-wise incidents of violence carried out by Naxalites.

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<tr>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1208</td>
<td>1465</td>
<td>1597</td>
<td>1533</td>
<td>1608</td>
<td>1509</td>
<td>1565</td>
<td>1619</td>
<td>2258</td>
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Table 1: State-wise Maoist-related incidents

As per official sources, state-wise casualties in Maoist-related incidents are tabulated in Table 2. The situation has generally worsened in all states over the years with the exception of Andhra Pradesh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>2001</th>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>677</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>696</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: State-wise casualties in Maoist-related incidents

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According to South Asia Terrorism Portal, there were 997 casualties in 2009 and 1180 in 2010. The casualty ratio between the security forces personnel and Naxalites was about 1:2 during 1999 to 2006, which turned in favour of the insurgents in 2007 and 2008 and ranged from 1:0.6 to 1:0.8. For the last three years the ratio has consistently been in the range of 1:2 in favour of the Naxals. This is a surprising statistic, given India’s long experience dealing with insurgencies.

The number of casualties in Maoist-related incidents has consistently been more than the casualties in Kashmir for the last four years. When compared to casualties in the insurgency in India’s north-east, the number of Maoist-related casualties has been more for the last two years. Moreover, both the insurgencies in Kashmir and in the north-east have been generally confined in terms of geographic area, whereas the Naxalite insurgency is expanding geographically. Similarly, the Naxalite movement is largely a domestic undertaking, with little substantial and/or obvious external support for the insurgents being in evidence. By contrast insurgency in Kashmir, which is motivated chiefly by people’s strong desire for autonomy, has a clear international dimension. This has enabled India conveniently, but falsely, to deflect much attention away from its shortcomings – administrative, economic and political – in the Kashmir Valley. Instead, India has been able to blame the ‘foreign hand’, i.e. Pakistan, for fomenting and sustaining this anti-Indian uprising. No such luxury exists in relation to the Naxalite problem. The ideology of the Naxalite movement is different and Naxalism is totally domestic.

The number of Naxalite activists has also increased. As per government sources their strength was assessed to be 9300 in 2004. Now their strength is estimated to vary

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94 Gera, ‘Naxalism: A threat to India’s security’, p. 371.
95 Bhavna Vij-Aurora, ‘Armed and dangerous; A home ministry report reveals it will take three lakh security personnel 20 years to contain the Maoists’, *India Today*, 25 April 2011 (Obtained from ProQuest database).
from 10,000 to as many as 25,000. According to other sources, they have about 10,000 armed cadres, with other workers ranging from 45,000 to 50,000. Another source estimates their strength to be 14,000 full-time fighters with many more semi-trained activists. According to some other reports, CPI-M has about 40,000 permanent armed cadres, in addition to 100,000 militia members. The bottom figure suggests that this movement has some strength; the top figures suggest that India faces a significant enemy.

The Maoists armed wing is the People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) and its largest component is the base force known as the People’s Militia, which comprises ordinary villagers. The Maoists carry out coordinated attacks involving several hundred members of the People’s Militia. An attack involving 500 armed rebels in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh killing 75 police personnel in April 2010 is a case in point. Reportedly, they have also established their own intelligence wing, the People’s Security Service (PSS), with the aim of penetrating the information loop of the government agencies to access classified information on counter insurgency operations.

Naxalites are believed to possess about 15,000 assorted weapons including assault rifles, machine guns and mortars. They also use improvised explosive devices (IEDs) effectively, thus injecting an element of arbitrariness into their activities while also restricting the mobility of the security forces. Naxalites target landlords, moneylenders, security forces personnel and their informers. They levy taxes on

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100 Gera, ‘Naxalism: A threat to India’s security’, p. 369.


103 Non-state armed groups, India’, *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – South Asia*, 26 April 2011.


106 Gera, ‘Naxalism: A threat to India’s security’, p. 369.

107 Non-state armed groups, India’, *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – South Asia*, 26 April 2011.
companies operating in Maoist controlled areas.\textsuperscript{108} They have also established a parallel administrations and ‘Kangaroo’ courts known as ‘Jan Adalats’ (Life Courts) in their area of influence.\textsuperscript{109} These provide some justice for traditionally poorly treated lower caste members of backward parts of India.

Naxalites have also started focusing on infrastructure targets. They are eager to exploit people’s grievances against the central government’s plans to establish Special Economic Zones (SEZ), which appear to benefit some influential people at the cost of the poor.\textsuperscript{110} The government lacks credibility amongst local people who think that adequate compensation is not paid to acquire their land for development or mining projects. There have been instances when same people were displaced again and again with the launch of new projects.\textsuperscript{111} For example, about 14 villagers were killed and 71 injured in Nandigram, West Bengal, in March 2007, during police firing when they were protesting against the establishment of an SEZ on their land.\textsuperscript{112} A similar incident occurred in 2006 in Singur, in West Bengal where a protest rally by peasants was ruthlessly crushed by the government to facilitate land acquisition for Tata Motors.\textsuperscript{113} Ganapathy labeled the government’s planned SEZs as ‘neo-colonial enclaves’ aimed at snatching the fertile farmlands of the poor peasants and pledged to launch a struggle against these often unpopular plans.\textsuperscript{114}

External Links

Both MCCI and PWG have been maintaining links with the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) since July 2001 through the Coordination Committee of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{108} ‘Communist Party of India – Maoist (CPI-M)’, \textit{Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism}, 10 June 2011.
\item \textsuperscript{109} ‘Maoist Kangaroo courts executed 21 people this year: Chidambaram’, \textit{The Times of India}, 2 October 2010, retrieved 11 July 2011, \url{http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-10-02/india/28246162_1_kangaroo-courts-home-minister-maoists}.
\item \textsuperscript{110} Motlagh, ‘The Maoists in the forest’, p. 113.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Gera, ‘Naxalism: A threat to India’s security’, p. 367.
\item \textsuperscript{112} Sudha Ramachandran, ‘Indian villagers resist corporate land grab’, \textit{Asia Times online}, 17 November 2007, retrieved 11 July 2011, \url{http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/IK17Df07.html}.
\item \textsuperscript{113} Sudha Ramachandran, ‘Indian villagers resist corporate land grab, \textit{Asia Times online}, 17 November 2007, retrieved 11 July 2011, \url{http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/IK17Df07.html}.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Indian Vanguard, \textit{Interview with Ganapathy, General Secretary CPI-Maoist on 24 April 2007}, posted 13 May 2007, retrieved 22 June 2011, \url{http://naxalresistance.wordpress.com/2007/05/13/interview-with-ganapathy-general-secretary-cpimaoist/}.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA). These relations have been strengthened after the merger of various Naxalite factions to form CPI-M, which has been sharing men, materiel and training facilities with CPN-M. According to one report, relations between the two groups weakened when CPN-M decided to abandon its armed struggle in 2007 and participate in the political process. However, the Indian embassy in Kathmandu reportedly conveyed to Nepalese authorities in 2010 that close cooperation exists between the two organisations. Although the Nepalese Maoists deny any such links, there are reports to the contrary. Nevertheless, while downplaying any tangible cooperation, both sides acknowledge having ideological links, and the CPI-M spokesperson expressed optimism for continuation of relations as before. New Delhi feels that both the organizations have some kind of ‘working relationship.’ Moreover, Maoists are also believed to have some sympathizers in China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Nepal, who may supply some weapons. It is important for CPI-M to maintain external links because defeating an insurgency with sanctuaries across borders is extremely complex for the Indian government.

Assessment of Government Response

The central government initially downplayed the incident of Naxalbari in 1967. While addressing the Lok Sabha on 13 June 1967, Home Minister Y. B. Chavan regarded the issue as ‘lawlessness’. Moreover, as per Article 256 and State List II of India’s Constitution, states are responsible for law and order, except in the case of an emergency when Article 356 of the Constitution authorises the central government to

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115 ‘Communist Party of India – Maoist (CPI-M)’, Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism, 10 June 2011.
117 ‘Communist Party of India – Maoist (CPI-M)’, Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism, 10 June 2011.
take responsibility for dealing with internal disturbances under President’s Rule.\textsuperscript{122} When violence erupted in the major city of Calcutta, the central government imposed President’s Rule in West Bengal in 1970. Subsequently, the Indian Government launched ‘Operation Steeplechase’ against Naxalites in 1971, which was a coordinated drive by the Indian Army, the Central Reserve Police Force (CPRF) and the local police.\textsuperscript{123} New Delhi also launched a number of rural development and land reform schemes.\textsuperscript{124} The security situation began to improve, and with Mazumdar’s arrest and subsequent death in 1972, the movement subsided. However, as it later proved, the insurgency was not completely extinguished.

During the 1970s, the government dealt with the insurgency aggressively and almost crushed it.\textsuperscript{125} Subsequently, the movement remained dormant and during the 1990s the central government regarded the Naxalite insurgency as a local law and order problem without any significant threat.

After the resurgence of the Naxalite movement in 2004, some government circles remained complacent about the danger it posed. Shivraj Patil, the then Union Home Minister, said in the Lok Sabha on 14 August 2007 that ‘the Naxal movement is little more than in the past’.\textsuperscript{126} This statement was made even after the Prime Minister in 2006 regarded the movement as the single biggest internal security challenge ever faced by India.\textsuperscript{127} The resultant dichotomy of perception weakened the government’s resolve to implement policies to tackle effectively the growing Naxalism problem.

\textsuperscript{122} Ministry of Law and Justice, The Constitution of India, Government of India, New Delhi, Modified up to 1 December 2007.
An examination of the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) annual reports from 2003 until 2011 reveals that the Union Government in New Delhi still regarded the Naxalite insurgency as a law and order and socio-economic problem. Indeed, it was mentioned consistently in the last eight reports that Maoists operate in the vacuum created by gaps in on-the-ground governance and administration. They exploit the discontent and frustration due to perceived neglect and injustice amongst the deprived and poor segments of the society. Accordingly, in broad terms the government has employed a multi-pronged strategy of dealing with the problem on political, social, economic and security fronts over the last eight years. In line with this strategy, the government has instituted various measures which include the constitution of several committees, groups, commissions, task forces, schemes etc., and the number of such bodies has been on the rise over the years.\(^\text{128}\) The government also formulated a 14-point policy in 2006, which was somewhat similar to the policy outlined in various MHA annual reports.\(^\text{129}\)

Overall, the Indian government has resorted to broad ranging measures to tackle the problem of Naxalism. This shows strengthening government resolve to deal with the insurgency in a systematic manner. Conversely, the formulation of multiple committees, commissions and groups has sometimes resulted in a lack of coordination amongst the affected states, leading to confusion, overlapping of responsibilities and duplication of effort.\(^\text{130}\) Moreover, the formulation of policies is one thing but their successful implementation is another. Individual states affected by Naxalism sometimes either lack the will to implement the central government’s policies or do not endorse the Centre’s approach. The central government also does not appear to have completely understood the complexity of the problem and there is little harmony of opinion between central and state governments.\(^\text{131}\) For instance, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu were quick to ban the CPI-M in line with government


policy, whereas this was met with resistance from Orissa and West Bengal. A study sponsored by the Bureau of Police Research and Development, Ministry of Home Affairs, has indicated that:

‘States have shown remarkable similarity in ineffective handling of the situations at different stages. This is helpful to the Maoists as the States do not seem to learn from each other’s experience and prefer to be satisfied with short term measures.’

Coordination and information sharing remain an ongoing problem for Indian counter-insurgency operatives.

In order to address the socio-economic issues, significant measures initiated by the government include filling up critical infrastructure gaps under the scheme for special infrastructure in Naxal-affected areas, institution of monitoring mechanism, recognition of occupation rights of traditional forest dwellers, giving incentives to Naxal militants who surrender their arms, and institution of the central scheme for assistance to civilian victims of Naxal violence. The problem with implementation of such schemes is that the government first needs to secure the areas under Maoist control without which no development can take place. Moreover, the government still lacks the capacity to effectively implement its policies. According to one analyst, the observation of a Steering Group of the Planning Commission made in 2001 is still valid that ‘the government machinery at the cutting edge level was too thinly spread, poorly trained and ill equipped to implement programmes.’ The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs mentioned, with respect to Naxal-affected areas, in its 126th Report in 2007 ‘there is no perceptible change on the socio-economic front.'

In the security domain, a number of reforms have been initiated by the centre to augment the efforts of state governments. Significant amongst these include the provision of Central Paramilitary Forces (CPMFs), Commando Battalions for Resolute Action (CoBRA) and India Reserve (IR) battalions for troubled areas as well as initiation of some training and up-grading programmes. Moreover, states have been encouraged to create an elite anti-Maoist force on the lines of Andhra Pradesh, which raised a specially trained force known as ‘Greyhounds’. Although, Greyhounds have been successful in Andhra Pradesh, some observers believe that they simply pushed the Maoists into neighbouring states. The central Cabinet Committee on Security has also proposed the use of the IAF for surveillance and logistics, as well as the employment of Indian Army personnel in advisory roles. So far, IAF has employed four helicopters to ferry security forces personnel. However, other than training the police and paramilitary forces, the Indian Army is reluctant to play any role against Maoists that would distract it from its focus of national security and defence. All these security measures are yet to yield positive results.

The government policy of encouraging local resistance groups at grass roots level has backfired, at least in Chhattisgarh where Salwa Judum was launched with state support in Dantewada district in 2005 to protect the people from the Naxalites. Salwa Judum is a civilian militia comprising ill-trained youth designated as Special Police Officers. Since its creation, members of Salwa Judum have been involved in gross human rights violations including torture, murder and rape, which is aimed at forcefully shifting villagers to camps in order to protect them from Maoist influence. As a result, some 50,000 people have been displaced and forced to live in makeshift refugee camps.

139 Bhavna Vij-Aurora, ‘Armed and dangerous; A home ministry report reveals it will take three lakh security personnel 20 years to contain the Maoists’, India Today, 25 April 2011 (Obtained from ProQuest database).
140 ‘Non-state armed groups, India’, Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – South Asia, 26 April 2011.
141 ‘No consensus on role of armed forces in Naxal ops’, The Times of India, 11 June 2010 (Obtained from ProQuest database).
There are varying reports about the strength of security forces deployed in Maoist affected areas. In 2004, the central government planned to deploy 23 to 25 CRPF paramilitary battalions comprising 20,000 to 25,000 personnel over the next 3 to 5 years across 55 districts having strong Maoist activity. The on-ground security presence in affected states, however, has remained thin. There are 54 police for every 100 square kilometres in Bihar, 31 in Jharkhand and 17 in Chhattisgarh. Some states lack the will to crackdown on Maoists due to some vested interests. For instance, the government in Jharkhand came to power partially due to Maoist support and therefore remains reluctant to crush the insurgents. Maoists enjoy some support from state politicians in Bihar also.

In late 2009, the central government launched its biggest all out offensive against the Naxalites named ‘Operation Green Hunt’. Initially, more than 100,000 federal paramilitary forces were planned to participate in the operation, which officials termed as the ‘battle to the finish’. According to another report, 60,000 personnel were initially deployed, who were later augmented with 15,000 additional personnel. Moreover, IAF deployed four Mi-17 helicopters to ferry the security forces personnel. Maoists responded with their deadliest attack on 6 April 2010 killing 76 armed policemen. Operation Green Hunt met with varying degree of success in different states. However, according to some reports, it was doomed to fail without air support. Major General (Retd) G D Bakshi noted that ‘The results of

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149 ‘Non-state armed groups, India’, *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – South Asia*, 26 April 2011.
152 ‘No consensus on role of armed forces in Naxal ops’, *The Times of India*, 11 June 2010 ( Obtained from ProQuest database).
Operation Green Hunt have been cause for alarm and have highlighted the under-preparedness of the Central Police Organisations for the task.  

Causes of Failure and Success of Maoists

It is important to examine the causes of failure of the movement in the 1970s and current success in order to determine its future prospects and the challenges it poses to the government. The initial rise and rapid growth of Naxalism after its emergence in 1967 until the death of Mazumdar in 1972, can be attributed to a number of reasons. Unrelenting poverty, unequal wealth distribution leading to a growing gap between rich and poor, a society based on an unequal and discriminatory caste system, administrative failure and exploitation of farmers by landlords were all sources of discontentment for the poor and neglected segments of society. As such, the environment was ripe for an uprising. Many deprived peasants were so frustrated that they were ready to embrace any alternative form of governance or ideology. However, the rise of Naxalism in the late 1960s was short-lived, for which the movement’s leadership was mainly responsible. Conflicting ideology and approaches led to fragmentation.

Mazumdar’s false perceptions and flawed strategy and tactics steered the movement to its ultimate failure. His assumption that the country was ready for a revolution and needed only a spark was totally baseless. His strategy of annihilation through small combatant groups without the use of firearms and aversion to mass organization based on a flawed assumption also proved to be wrong. Moreover, the government’s aggressive approach in the 1970s played a significant role in destroying the organization, and its support base, and subsequently kept it marginalized until its resurgence.

The resurgence of the Naxalism and the credit for their current success mainly goes to its leadership. Ganapathy has been instrumental in unifying various Naxalite factions and keeping them together. In contrast to Mazumdar, Ganapathy has been successful

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155 Bhavna Vij-Aurora, ‘Armed and dangerous; A home ministry report reveals it will take three lakh security personnel 20 years to contain the Maoists’, India Today, 25 April 2011 (Obtained from ProQuest database).
in resolving the differences amongst different groups through his pragmatic approach. Although Ganapathy has also exploited the vacuum created by social injustice and economic deprivation of the masses, particularly in rural areas, he has adopted a different approach to achieve the objective. Contrary to Mazumdar, who was waiting for an imminent revolution thus denouncing the idea of mass organisation, Ganapathy has rallied Naxalite activists under the idea of a people’s protracted war. Moreover, the Maoist leadership appears to be flexible and able to adapt to changing circumstances. Consequently, their strategic emphasis has shifted from fighting against landlordism to opposing a more contemporary issue of land grabbing by the government for SEZs.156

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156 Harriss, ‘What is going on in India’s “red corridor”’, p. 318.
Naxalism has broad ranging implications for India. It is not only a significant law and order problem, but it has socio-political, security, stability and economic dimensions. In some poor states with large tribal populations like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa, the insurgency has become a major political force to be reckoned with.\textsuperscript{157} Maoists’ activities and resultant casualties are a clear indication of security implications in the affected areas. Their campaign of targeting infrastructure will have serious repercussions for India’s rapid economic growth. Some of India’s significant natural resources are located in these areas, and an inability to exploit them freely due to Naxal activities is also a concern for New Delhi.

**Economic Implications**

Naxalism is likely to hurt most in the economic domain. The insurgency has the potential to retard, and possibly even reverse, India’s fast growing economy. Economic development is one of the fields where India has made tremendous progress and boasts some parity with major economic powers.

The Indian government has rightly identified that Naxalites are making systematic efforts to prevent the government from implementing developmental projects by targeting infrastructure including railways, roads, telecommunication, energy and power, in order to expose the government’s inefficiency and ineffectiveness.\textsuperscript{158} For instance, the Maoists destroyed three 132 KVA electricity transmission towers in Naraynpur district in Bastar region of Chhattisgarh in May 2007 resulting in loss of power in the region for a complete week.\textsuperscript{159} The movement has also threatened the energy and mineral sectors in the affected states. In order to boost investment and economic activities, the Indian government announced the concept of SEZs in its Export-Import Policy 2000. However, the Maoists pledged to disrupt government


\textsuperscript{159}‘Red storm rising – India’s intractable Maoist insurgency’, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 15 May 2008.
plans aimed at developing infrastructure, steel plants and mining projects. During the 9th Unity Congress, the Maoists outlined various planned and ongoing projects as their potential targets, including a bauxite mining project in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, the Polavaram irrigation project, steel plants proposed in Chhattisgarh by Tata, Essar and Jindal, the Centre's proposed railway line on the Rajhara-Raighat-Jagdalpur sector, Posco's steel plants in Orissa, power plants proposed by the Ambanis, a proposed steel plant in Jharkhand by the Mittal Group and the Kosi irrigation project in northern Bihar. Due to the fear of Maoist attacks, various companies are reluctant to carry out their activities and multi billion dollar industrial projects are being delayed. A two-day blockade by Maoists in Jharkhand in 2007 completely shut down rail links and mining operations, resulting in the loss of about US $ 37.5 million to the state. Total economic losses in the recent years, due to Maoist activities are estimated at around US $ 475 million.

India’s power generation is mainly based on coal and 85 percent of India’s coal reserves are located in the five states where Maoists are strongest. Due to its rapid economic growth coupled with industrialization, India is increasingly becoming dependent on energy resources. In future, the country will need the raw materials and resources in Naxalite affected states even more than in the past.

If the Naxalite activities and expansion are not checked, their effects will start appearing in India’s macro-economic indicators. The Maoists have the potential to slow India’s economic growth. A strong economy being an important indicator of great power status, this would also slow down India’s rise.

Security and Stability

Naxalism is clearly a threat to security and stability in the affected areas. Over 6,800 people have lost their lives in more than 16,500 violent incidents during the last 10 years.\(^{166}\) The statistics indicate an increase in violence over the last 3 to 4 years. Moreover, the Naxalite activities are aimed at destroying infrastructure and targeting development projects. This, in turn, hampers the government’s endeavours to reach out to the neglected segments of the rural areas and exposes the government failure. To make the things worse, India’s approach towards the Maoist problem is biased towards being ‘security-centric’ rather than towards winning hearts and minds or on socio-economic change, which is bound to result in collateral damage. This further alienates people who become Maoist sympathizers. Due to growing concern, Prime Minister Singh in 2010 again described the problem as being a major threat to India’s internal security.\(^{167}\) According to some observers, Naxalism ‘is one of the biggest internal armed conflicts in the world’, and has the potential to destabilize political order in the country as people increasingly lose their faith in the state because it is unable to ‘provide human development for its citizens.’\(^{168}\)

A regional power is expected to play the role of custodian by ensuring its desired order in the region. However, if a nation is not able to maintain the desired level of security and stability in large parts of its geographic boundaries, it is distracted, which makes it difficult for the nation to exercise its influence outside its borders and over smaller states of the region. This raises the key question of credibility and capability. India first needs to put its own house in order before assuming the role of a great or even a regional power.

Social Implications

The fragile socio-economic condition of the neglected segments of the society particularly in the countryside has been one of the root causes for the emergence of

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the Naxalite insurgency. Instead of any improvement, these conditions have further deteriorated. The plight of the Adivasis of Chhattisgarh is a case in point, where more than 50,000 people have been displaced and forced to take refuge in camps.\textsuperscript{169} According to another estimate, more than 1000 Adivasis have lost their lives, more than 700 villages have been burnt and more than 300,000 people have so far been displaced during the campaign against Naxlaites.\textsuperscript{170} In such circumstances, the concept of society and social structure is losing its value. These areas already lack infrastructure, and whatever exists or is planned by the government becomes the target of Naxalites. As a result, the government often remains handicapped in rendering humanitarian assistance and reaching out to the people in order to play its role effectively.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for a country to claim great power status when its own people are suffering due to an ongoing state of serious internal conflict, while the government has been unable to mitigate their sufferings and implement any significant development projects because of its inability to successfully end the turmoil.

**Political Implications**

Naxalism has become a de facto political force to be reckoned with in the affected areas. Maoists run a parallel government in the affected areas, challenging the writ of the government.\textsuperscript{171} Another concern for the Indian government is the geographic expansion of the movement. The Naxalites have so far been restricted to the rural areas. However, they have always harboured the ambition of expanding their activities to the cities also. Mazumdar was inspired by Mao’s slogan ‘encircle the cities from the villages’.\textsuperscript{172} Their objective is seizure of political power and such power is located in the cities. Accordingly, CPI-M has laid down a detailed strategy to

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{motlagh} Motlagh, ‘The Maoists in the forest’, p. 104.
\bibitem{bendfeldt} Bendfeldt, ‘Naxalism: The Maoist challenge to the Indian State’, p. 31.
\bibitem{kazmi} Manzoor Ali Kazmi, ‘Indian Naxalites: A spectre troubling India’, *Pakistan Observer*, 17 March 2011 (Obtained from ProQuest database).
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expand to urban areas in a document titled ‘Urban Perspective’.  

Although it seems to be a remote possibility, if Naxalism is able to generate significant appeal and support amongst the urban masses in India, the consequences could be devastating for India’s political stability. 

Maoists have been supportive of the insurgency in India’s north-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. 

The 9th Congress of the CPI-M commended the efforts of insurgent activists in the north-east and pledged that the CPI-M would render all possible support to these insurgencies. Reportedly, the CPI-M has bought weapons from the United Liberation Front of Assam, which is active in the north-east. Moreover, a CPI-M Central Committee member has been appointed to organize the Maoist movement in Assam. This is in line with Maoists’ expansionist desires.

This continuing strength of Naxalism and its damaging effect on infrastructure and social cohesion pose an on-going threat to India and its ambitions regarding its place in the world. In simple terms, in order to claim great power status, India first needs to ensure political stability within its own boundaries. The expansionist trends of CPI-M and the possibility of it linking up with other insurgencies creates the potential to damage the political image of the nation in the future and with it aspirations of Indian great power status.


174 For similar views see Harnetiaux, ‘The resurgence of Naxalism’, pp. 93-104.


177 ‘Communist Party of India – Maoist (CPI-M)’, Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism, 10 June 2011.

Future Projection

“Men and women will not rebel, risking their lives and property, without good reason – the occupation of their country by foreign armies, economic crisis, a tyrannical political regime, great poverty, or great social discrepancy between rich and poor.”

Walter Laqueur

Although the Indian government has rightly identified the root causes of the Naxalite movement and formulated broad range of policies to deal with it, the full implementation of these policies is still lacking. Indeed some of government initiatives, for instance local armed groups like Salwa Judum and establishment of SEZs necessitating acquisition of land from the natives have yielded negative results. In some areas people do not even trust the government’s development initiatives and are derisory when someone talks about paying compensation for their land.

India’s economic growth has mainly benefitted the rich and middle classes, and the gap between the rich and poor is widening. This is also true for urban areas where slums are like ‘cities within cities.’ About 80 percent of India’s total population – some 836 million people – lives on less than $0.5 a day. Some regard the small rich section of the country as ‘the citizens of enclave India’ and argue that this section cannot race ahead of the much larger poor section for long. Poverty is a root cause of many other social problems and does not have a quick fix. The benefits of the latest economic boom have not trickled down to the larger poor and neglected segment of the society. India has not been able to resolve its socio-economic problems in more than sixty years of independence.

The Maoists exploit the grievances of the people. They champion the cause of the poor, the landless, the oppressed, the neglected and the tribal. As long as such sections


180 Gera, ‘Naxalism: A threat to India’s security’, p. 367.


form part of the Indian society, Maoists will not have difficulty in finding recruits. The Indian government’s drive against the Maoists in the security domain has not been successful either. The Home Minister recently admitted that operations against the Maoists were at a stalemate. As per an official of the Ministry of Home Affairs, ‘it requires continued deployment of at least three lakh (300,000) personnel for 20 years to contain the Maoist threat’. Some analysts are of the view that the insurgency is so deeply embedded in the society in large parts of central and eastern India that it is not easy to crush the movement as was the case in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Despite strenuous efforts by the Indian establishment the Maoists have grown in number. The intensity and extent of their activities has increased, and they have also expanded their geographic area. The indicators therefore point to the Naxalites continuing to expand their influence and operations. In the next ten years, they are likely to pose further serious challenges for India.

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184 Bhavna Vij-Aurora, ‘Armed and dangerous; A home ministry report reveals it will take three lakh security personnel 20 years to contain the Maoists’, *India Today*, 25 April 2011 (Obtained from ProQuest database).
185 Harriss, ‘What is going on in India’s “red corridor”’, p. 326.
Conclusion

After its resurgence, the Naxalite insurgency has certainly become a serious problem for the Indian government to the extent that it has been repeatedly regarded as the single biggest security challenge ever faced by the country.\textsuperscript{186} The Naxalite movement has expanded after its resurgence in 2004. Despite the best efforts of the Indian government, the insurgency has increased in size and strength, and has enlarged its area of influence. Violent activities carried out by Naxalites have also been on the rise. Moreover, addressing the root causes of poverty and social injustice from which the movement draws its strength is a long, drawn out and tenuous process. The insurgency poses serious challenges to the country at least in the next decade.

India’s rise is driven mainly by its rapid economic growth and expanding defence capabilities. However, the Naxalite movement is hurting India most in the economic domain and has the potential to further affect its economic rise as Naxalites control the areas which are rich in mineral and energy resources. In future, India will become increasingly dependent on raw material and energy resources and being unable to exploit domestic resources will definitely impact on its economic growth.

The insurgency also has implications for internal security and stability in the affected areas. Already categorized as the biggest security challenge confronting India, the continuous spread of the insurgency coupled with its violent activities would further complicate New Delhi’s problems. Moreover, when seen along with other insurgencies in the north-east and Kashmir, the Indian government could be perceived as ineffective and weak due to its inability to successfully confront home-based, anti-social insurgent movements. This could damage India’s image and credibility among the international community and have implications for its aspiring great power status.

The analysis with respect to India’s great power status concludes that India still has a long way to go. As noted above, in order to achieve great power status a nation state

needs to excel in every field. Even to claim the status of being a regional power, India needs to be able to be more assertive and to resolve its own serious problems. At best, India is a rising power which is faced with challenges. The Naxalite movement is one of the most significant internal challenges India needs to deal with successfully before it can assume great power status. In the final analysis, it can be concluded that the expansion of the Naxalite insurgency has the potential to slow down India’s rise. It is a drag on India’s quest for great power status.

187 Waltz, Theory of international politics, p. 131.
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