Naxalism: The Maoist Challenge to the Indian State
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Abstract
The Naxalite armed movement challenges the Indian state since more than 40 years. It is based on Maoist ideology and gains its strength through mobilizing the poor, underprivileged, discouraged and marginalized, especially in rural India. The Naxalite movements are a serious threat for the Indian State: They are now active in 223 districts in 20 states and the strength of their armed cadres is estimated between 10,000 and 20,000.
Due to the Naxalite’s control over certain areas and their armed fight against the state security forces, they are challenging the inherent ideals of the state, namely sovereignty and monopoly on the use of force. In order to correspond with its ideal, the state focuses on the re-establishment of law and order by encountering the Naxalites violently. However, the movement’s roots are located within India’s numerous social and economic inequalities as well as in environmental degradation. Without fostering the root causes the state will not be able to solve the problem.
This paper is divided into three parts and tries to give an extensive overview of the complex issue of the Naxalite conflict. Therefore the first part deals with the history of the movement by describing its origin and development until today. Part two deals with the strategy and actions of the Naxalites and sets its focus on the root causes. The final third part covers the state’s responses and the limitations of the state in the embattled regions.
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1 Introduction

On April 21 2010 Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh repeated his message that estimated Left-wing Extremism as the gravest internal security threat for the country (Indian Express 2010). This was said two weeks after the worst Maoist attack, where 76 security men were killed in an ambush in the Dantewada District of Chhattisgarh. This recent event is the culminating point of a long persistent escalation process.

In the light of China’s emerging markets and its gradual turning away from communist ideology, it seems surprising that after the end of the Cold War a Maoist movement is challenging the Indian state. Indeed, it is actually deeply rooted in the Indian context and not a new phenomenon, as the Indian state faces the problem of left revolutionary violence since more than 4 decades.

However, the conflict has obtained a new quality over the recent years. Even though India is challenged by several conflicts, the Maoist insurgency can be regarded as one of the most serious threats, in terms of the level of violence, the amount of embattled territory as well as its complexity. In addition, India’s other conflicts, namely Kashmir and the North East are located in its periphery, the Naxal one is fought in its heartland.

The armed group that is challenging the Indian state follows Maoist ideology and calls them self Naxalites. The term stems from the small village Naxalbari in West Bengal where 1967 a violent uprising of exploited and discontented peasants in collaboration with communist activists took place. This event marks the beginning of the organised armed struggle and the beginning of the political movement.

Today, the territory where the Maoists are engaged stretches from the Nepalese Border to the northern parts of Kerala. The Indian Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) states that 223 districts in 20 states are affected (Sahni/Singh 2010). Seven of these states are severely affected (Sen 2009). Within the public discourse this particular region is referred to as red corridor and comprises the least developed and poorest regions of India with a noticeable high amount of tribal population (Adivasis), Untouchables (Dalits) and other vulnerable groups. The poor, exploited and discontented are mobilized by the Maoist leadership. That is why some parts of these affected territories are under the firm control of Maoists and they receive huge support from the inhabited population. At the same time the state is
badly equipped and underdeveloped. It does not fulfil its ideally basic responsibilities, the administrative and governmental structures in the affected states are paralyzed by inefficiency and corruption.

Figure 1: Naxal affecte areas in India (2009)


The state’s central approach towards this challenge focuses mainly so far on the re-establishment of law and order. Since the general elections during spring 2009 the situation aggravated, especially after the Indian government started a comprehensive offensive called Operation Green Hunt, deploying around 70,000 paramilitary troops against the Naxalites (Mukerji 2010). This year nearly 800 people have been killed in the conflict so far (The Economist 2010). Almost daily the media report about the clashes
between Naxalites and security forces. Due to its complexity the conflict is often presented in a simplified manner in the public discourse. Surprisingly this conflict receives a very low degree of international attention, although it is one of the biggest internal armed conflicts in the world. In this regard this paper wants to be a corrective. The intention is to give an extensive overview on the topic of Naxalism in India for interested readers whether in India or abroad without neglecting the complexity of the topic.

Despite the fact that the issue exists since more than 40 years, relatively little research work has been conducted. However, within recent years a rapid increase in academic work can be observed that is dealing with the roots and causes of Naxalism. For this paper mainly Indian literature was drawn on as the issue is largely neglected beyond the Indian context. In respect to the dynamic nature of the conflict, several sources stem from magazines and newspapers as they often represent the latest and only first hand information from the troubled regions. Apart from social scientists and journalists, a number of former members of the security forces have contributed to the study of Naxalism.

The main objective of this paper is to explore the interrelationship between the Naxalite conflict and the Indian state. To what extent is the state responsible for the root causes of this conflict and to what extent does the conflict affect the state itself?

For this purpose, as some causes of the conflict are deeply rooted in the social and political history of India and the initial phase of the political movement goes over into the time of independence, the organizational, ideological and strategic development of the Naxalite movements and their spread is outlined in chapter two in order to understand the current context and characteristics.

The later section tries to answer the question concerning who the Naxalites actually are. Why do people join or support the Maoists and what are the institutions carrying this movement? What is the course of action of the Maoist party and which ideology is behind it?

Chapter four elaborates on the role of the state and analyses its institutional weaknesses and limitations in the affected areas. In addition its policies and concepts to suppress and eradicate the conflict are also discussed. Moreover, the way the issue of Naxalism is
presented and debated in the Indian public discourse is roughly shown at the end of this paper.
2 History of the Naxalite movement: From Naxalbari to Dantewada

2.1 Prelude: The British Rule and the Telangana movement

According to Maoist official statements they are fighting for the rights of the impoverished peasant population. In fact there exists a close relationship between the unfavourable situations of many parts of rural India and the armed left wing struggle (Chakravarti 2010 (B). The origin of peasant’s marginalisation and exploitation dates back to the late Moghul time when the rulers began restructuring the agrarian sector. Under British Raj restructuring was continued and intensified in order to meet the economic requirements of the Empire.

The British rule was broadly based on the alliance with and co-opting of traditional local elites that consisted mostly out of high-ranking castes. The soil of the peasants was taken and handed over to the landlords and revenue collectors. Their duty was to act as intermediaries between the British rulers and working rural population. They demanded their share, a certain amount of the generated crops. This system was based on force and legitimized by the extraordinary standing of the landlord in the Indian society (Joshi 2006, 445).

The new large landowners generally did not have any knowledge concerning efficient agriculture management and so the output could not have been enhanced. The peasant that lived erstwhile mainly from subsistence farming were now forced to bonded labour on their formerly self owned land. The tribal population was worst affected. (Mehra 2008, 4).

The high demands by the landlords led to indebtedness and pauperization of the rural population in large scale. In addition the introduction of “commodity market” along the lines of western capitalism destroyed existing traditional social structures in a sustainable manner.
As Joshi puts it, “the pattern of land relations that developed in the wake of the British rule was characterized by semi-feudal land ownership which obstructed the development of productive forces in agriculture” (Joshi 2006, p. 445)

As a consequence of the concentration of the agricultural land in the hands of a few rentier land-owners between 1783 and 1900 110 violent peasant uprisings took place (Mehra 2008, 4).

Although the Congress led independence movement demanded land reforms and redistribution, the issue was taken up only hesitantly after 1947, when the Indians took over the political administration of the British Empire. The new Indian state granted landlords an extraordinary powerful position, perpetuating the inequitable structures.

Due to the popularity of the non-violent independence movement, the Communist Party of India (CPI), founded in 1920 in exile, restrained initially from violent resistance during the pre-independence phase. However, they expanded their support base in the most backward areas of the former princely state of Hyderabad, the Telangana region. In 1944 it culminated in a peasant uprising that turned violent in 1946. The movement had evidently socio-economic roots: uneven land distribution as well as exploitation of the rural poor and socially deprived by revenue collectors and landlords. The peasants were organised, mobilised and indoctrinated by the communists for several years. The inequalities and marginalisation of many inhabitants of the rural areas made them highly responsive to communist ideology.

They expelled the landlords, redistributed the land, abolished the bonded labour, introduced minimum wages and build up a militia. In terms of making the ordinary people a fighting group, this marked the first time that the lessons from Mao Zedong and China’s violent struggle were adapted to India (Kujur 2008, 2).

In 1948 when Hyderabad was incorporated into the Unions territory, the Indian army forced the insurrectionaries to surrender. The revolting peasants were able to control over 3000 villages in that region during that time (Singh 2010, 5). After the army stepped in, the militia retreated to the forests and continued to oppose the newly established Indian state.

After Stalin agreed upon Prime Minister Nehrus request to ask the Indian communists to lay down their arms they stopped their armed struggle. Thereupon the CPI started
participating in the democratic process. The Chinese-Indian war in 1962 initiated severe disagreements within the party. The result was the party division into two parties. The radical leftist part of the CPI, following the Chinese path of communism founded a new party CPI (Marxist) (CPI (M)). This was the first split within the Indian communist movement and several more followed. It turned out that whenever a communist radical section was appeased, a split off of a more radical part took place.

2.2 The Trigger: The Naxalbari uprising and the Birth of the Movement

The year 1967 marks a turning point in terms of the revolutionary armed struggle in India. On May 24th the persistent social and political tensions in the small village Naxalbari in the Darjeeling District of the Federal State West Bengal unloaded after a landlord was attacked and led to a full-scale peasant riot. This event was also deeply rooted in the socio-economic conditions, namely unequal land distribution and forced labour that had persisted since the British rule (Marwah 2009, 98). Amongst the disadvantaged rural population there was a big number of Dalits and Adivasis (Singh 2010, 6). CPI and later CPI (M) were active in mobilising the peasants in the area around Naxalbari since 1959 (Mehra 2008, 7).

The peasants were armed with traditional weapons and engaged in bloody clashes. The uprising was spearheaded by a radical faction of the CPI (M) that was led by Charu Mazumdar, a charismatic party worker who turned out later to become the ideological father of Naxalism. He had composed eight monographs, that later became known as the eight historic documents which are regarded as the inspiration for the uprising and the subsequent development of Naxalism (Ahmed 2003).

During the uprising in Naxalbari 139 people died, among them 28 police officers (Marwah 2009, 98). Spontaneous trials against landlords were implemented, their land was redistributed, debentures and documents were burned and revolutionary committees were established in order to execute political power. The uprising found supporters throughout the country. This particular development was also appreciated by the Communist Chinese government (Singh 2010, 4).
The situation constituted a dilemma for the CPI (M). Since on the one hand the uprising was led and supported by militant cadres of their own party, on the other hand the CPI (M) was a part of United Front Government, the coalition that ruled West Bengal at this time. The event radiated sympathy on the followers, but on the same time they were in charge maintaining law and order. Various attempts of mediation by the state government failed. After that the police stepped in and smashed the movement in a small amount of time due to its superior numbers. The revolt ended after only 52 days. The Naxalbari uprising did not change a lot for the marginalised. The importance of the event is rather due to its myth and the initial point for an organised armed struggle by underprivileged groups influenced by Maoist ideology.

Large numbers of party members were discontented because of the violent suppression of the revolt by the security forces. In fact, the uprising awakened the desire among many communists to fight an armed revolution by mobilizing the poor and addressing their needs. But the leaders of the uprising identified for their failure in Naxalbari the lack of party organisation, the missing of a mass base and the neglect of an organised military approach (Singh 2010, 13). Subsequently, the supporters of the uprising turned away from the CPI (M) and strived therefore for a new organisation. This development marks the beginning of the Naxalite political movement.

In November 1967 left wing extremists from the whole country gathered in Kolkata, founding the All India Coordination Committee. They concluded that India offers an excellent situation for a revolution in terms of socio-economic conditions. In May 1968 the Committee renamed in All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) and declared its ideological aims: Protracted people’s war in accordance with Mao’s teachings, meaning adaption of guerrilla warfare, establishment of rural revolutionary base areas and finally encircling the cities as well as abstaining from parliamentary elections. Inspired by the Naxalbari experience armed struggles broke out in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh (Marwah 2009, 99).

On April 22nd 1969, Lenin’s hundredths birthday, the AICCCR founded the revolutionary party CPI Marxist-Leninist (ML) that was based on Maoist Ideology. This act was welcomed and supported by the Chinese government as it expected that an Indian revolution in the pattern of the Chinese path was possible.
A part of the AICCCR members was not happy with the circumstances regarding the foundation of the party due to undemocratic and haste procedure. Subsequently they founded, on October 20th Dakshin Desh, also an armed party that had similar targets. It was renamed in 1975 in Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) and constitutes today a crucial fraction of the biggest Maoist party.

In 1970 at the CPI (ML) congress in Kolkata, the constant leader of the movement Charu Mazumdar was formally elected as general secretary and thus “became the undisputed Naxalite Guru” (Kujur 2008, 3).

The CPI (ML) started formulating their strategy as follows: Seizure of political power in certain regions through armed struggle and the establishment of base areas. In addition they targeted on the annihilation of the class enemy, namely moneylenders, landlords and their agents, rich peasants, police officers as well as police informers (Singh 2010, 33). These measures were meant to overthrow the ruling class in a respective area in terms of economy, politics and military.

One of the most important milestones in this regard took place in the Srikakulam region, the northernmost district of Andhra Pradesh. The miserable situation of the hill tribes led already in 1961 to the formation of a protest movement. Inspired by the events of Naxalbari and after an incident in 1967 where a tribal was killed, the movement turned violent. Almost the whole tribal population was mobilised. Raids were conducted, property was stolen and destroyed. 34 landlords lost their lives, others fled (Mehra 2008, 9). One year later the movement came under the auspices of the CPI (ML) and was co-opted. The dense forests and the hilly terrain in the Srikakulam region offered excellent conditions for guerrilla warfare (Singh 46). Under the exploited and discontented tribal population the Naxalites found enthusiastic followers. They were able to establish a liberated zone where police and state authorities did not have any access possibility. The base area served as a sanctuary for party cadres. In July 1969 they controlled over 300 of the 518 villages in the Srikakulam region. (Marwah 2009, 101). Until 1975 the Naxalites contributed to land distribution to high degree.

The Naxalite movement spread throughout the country, especially in West Bengal, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, accompanied by a high grade of violence. The revolutionaries found easily many followers under the impoverished and
frustrated peasants, as well as the Adivasis, India’s aboriginal tribal population, who often experienced discrimination and corruption from state authorities. Also several young unemployed and students got attracted by the Naxal ideology.

During 1970 and 1971 over 4000 Naxal inspired violent incidents took place throughout the country (Marwah 2009, 99). Several clashes between Naxalites and the police occurred. The police was picked as a main target of violence as they were seen as the representatives of the state. The attacks on the police had a demoralizing effect and the Naxalites seized their weapons. In 1971 the CPI (ML) organized its violent potential in an armed wing, called People’s Liberation Army. The period from 1970 to mid 1971 represents the peak in violence against the state.

As a result the central government reacted on the growing threat by enforcing a joint operation of police and army in the most affected areas in West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa (Marwah 2009, 99). In the clashes hundreds of CPI (ML) cadres were killed and thousand got arrested. Party activists fled in other parts of the country in search for shelter. In the long run, this resulted in spill-over effects and thus contributed to the spread of Naxalism.

At this point of time the CPI (ML) was the unchallenged organization of violent left-wing struggle. However, while the state set pressure on the Naxalites, differences within the party emerged. The omission of building up mass organizations besides the violent struggle, the initial neglect of using firearms, Charu Mazumdar authoritarian leadership and the too mechanically adaption of the Chinese theory of people’s war by neglecting India’s special circumstances were questioned critically.

The development of the party was further influenced by an international incident. During the liberation struggle in East Pakistan, today Bangladesh, the Chinese government supported the Pakistani repressive forces. This event caused incomprehension and anger within the party but the official line of the CPI (ML) was defending China’s policy. Subsequently many of the discontented left the CPI (ML) and formed or joined other Naxalite parties.

In 1972 almost all top leaders of the movement were imprisoned due to hard crackdown measures by law enforcement agencies. Charu Mazumdar also was caught and died in 1972 in police custody. The death of their charismatic leader, ideological differences concerning the route of the party as well as dissatisfaction in respect to several cases of
indiscriminate killings weakened the movement immensely. The party was on a downturn. In the sequel further splits and fragmentation happened.

### 2.3 Escalation: Launching the People’s War

After the death of their charismatic leader the Naxalite movement faced various challenges. Disagreements within the party CPI (ML) persisted. The issue of participating in elections was repeatedly raised. Moreover the changes within the Communist Party of China (CPC) after the death of Mao Zedong 1976 had also a direct effect on the Naxal movement. Members of the CPI (ML) quarreled upon the new line of the CPC. One part stayed loyal to the rulers in Beijing, another split off the main party and demanded a course correction. The group called themselves CPI (ML) Liberation. They saw themselves as the preservers of Charu Mazumdars thoughts and true successor of his party (Kujur 2008, 6). Their aim was continuing armed struggle while broadening its efforts by establishing mass organizations. The Chinese role model of guerilla warfare had to been customized to Indian conditions and many former CPI (ML) cadres joined the Liberation group.

The emergency declared by Indira Gandhi in 1975 resulted in the ban of all Naxal organizations. Around 40,000 cadres were imprisoned (Mohanty 2006, 6). It was a major setback for the Naxal movements and demoralized many cadres. In 1977 when the emergency was lifted and Indira Gandhi lost the general elections, the CPI (ML) reviewed its strategy. They left the underground and opted for going the peaceful path and participating in parliamentary elections.

But this event did not mark the end of violence. In the same year several Naxal leaders were released from prison. Many of them became active again and some formed new groups. In 1980 around 30 different Naxal groups existed throughout the country. The most affected states during that period were Andhra Pradesh and Bihar (Singh 2010, 124).

One of the released prisoners was Kondapalli Seetharamaiah, a former CPI (ML) leader. In April 1980 he formed the CPI (ML) People’s War that became well known as People’s War Group (PWG) that constitutes the other major part of the biggest Maoist party today.
Strategy and tactics of the PWG still represent the dominant line of the Naxal movement today. PWG gave Maoism in India a new life and new characteristics. Seetharamaiah again was mainly following Mazumdar’s approach of armed strife but was eager expanding the struggle to economy and politics by mobilizing the masses and establishing front organizations that worked overground.

The PWG focused on Andhra Pradesh where they found ideal conditions for their guerilla warfare. Concerning recruitment they followed their former experiences and concentrated on remote areas where the deprived and neglected lived. The Naxalites put especially much emphasis on mobilising the poor and underprivileged, Dalits and the tribal population. The Adivasis for instance cultivated and used the forests since many generations but the Forest Conservation Act from 1980 imposed heavy restrictions. Due to a distinctive culture of corruption within the forest departments, the anger of the Adivasis even increased and impelled many of them into the arms of the Naxal movements (Marwah 2009, 113). The Naxalite’s campaigning for forest rights, minimum wages and land distribution gave them respect and support amongst main parts of the disadvantaged population (Singh 2010, 144). The inaccessible villages of the Adivasis again served as safe havens for Naxalites (Singh 2010, 132).

Following the politics of liberating rural zones, the Naxalites were not only able to enforce their demands for higher wages for their poor workers, but also to impose some kind of parallel government. Within the liberated zones they redistributed land, imposed taxes and courts. The objectives of the courts were not limited to economic issues but were also handling legal matters like disputes in the family (Singh 2010, 140). Moreover they introduced a social code forbidding alcohol, gambling and prostitution. Supposedly the Naxalite governments redistributed nearly half million acres in Andhra Pradesh (Singh 2010, 134). This engagement provided the PWG with good reputation among large parts of the rural population who experienced the state as absent, disregarded or corrupt.

But the Naxalites also unleashed a wave of violence. They primarily attacked police and seized their weapons. Moreover they were engaged in kidnapping and executing politicians and bureaucrats. As symbols of the hated state, railway and police stations were attacked and destroyed.
The violent groups amongst the Naxalites upgraded their arsenals with AK47 assault rifles and remote-controlled landmines. It is assumed that the Naxalites gained that knowledge and equipment through collaboration with the LTTE. Landmine attacks became one of the deadliest weapons of the Naxalites and also their brand mark.

From a position of weakness the Andhra Pradesh state government tried to appease the PWG in 1989. It loosened restrictions against Naxalite organizations and released several prisoners. But the Naxalites took advantage of this situation and they were able to expand their area of influence, even to the neighboring regions in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa.

From 1990 onwards an increasing growth in violent clashes between security forces and Naxalites can be observed (Kujur 2008, 4). The peak of violence was reached in 1991, where several attacks on telephone exchanges and railway stations were carried out by the Naxalites, numerous kidnappings and killings of police forces and state authorities took place (Singh 2010, 141). In 1992 the PWG experienced several setbacks due to a large counter-insurgency campaign that was led with strong hand and accompanied by interior disagreements. 248 Naxalite cadres were killed, 3434 arrested. Due to demoralization around 8500 further cadres gave up voluntarily (Singh 2010, 142).

However, the organization persisted and possessed lethal power and maintained a good network in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa. In 1993 several violent attacks proved that the PWG still existed. In 1998 the PWG merged with another Naxalite group, the CPI (ML) Party Unity and was thus able to enhance its power and area of influence.

Beside Andhra Pradesh violence escalated especially in Bihar. Among the Naxalite groups in the respective state, the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) was the dominant force. The MCC had a similar strategy as the PWG. They abstained from elections, and followed the ideology of people’s war while establishing front organizations. Their armed cadres were well trained and equipped. The MCC was also able to establish liberated zones that cut off the influence of the state.

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1 The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, a highly specialised separatist armed organisation, formerly based in Northern Sri Lanka.
Bihar’s social structure is strongly shaped by fragmentation along caste lines. Also here the Naxalites allied with the underprivileged, in this case especially Dalits. Over time the conflict emerged to a caste war when higher castes formed own militias, so called senas, as a reaction on the violence. The caste and class wars overlapped in this period and can not be separated clearly\(^2\) (Singh 2010, 154). Clashes did not only happen between Naxalites and security forces and different senas but also among the different Naxalite groups themselves fighting about their turf and discipleship.

The violence resulted in the retreat of the state and an almost total breakdown of authority (Singh 2010, 148). The Naxalites were able to fill the power vacuum generated by the dysfunctional judicial and administrative system (Marwah 2009, 115). Their actions were marked by a high grade of violence and propagating terror aimed at demoralizing state authorities.

Due to non-existing territorial conflicts and similar strategies as well as an equal ideology, the MCC and the PWG, which later merged, established contacts already during the late 1980’s (Singh 2010, 155).

On the contrary parts of the Naxalite movement took a different stance. The Liberation group gradually left the underground. As early as 1982 they formed a political platform called Indian People’s Front (IPF) that participated on elections. The first success of the IPF during the elections 1989 underlined a change in their strategy. They declared that the Indian situation was not ripe for a revolution (Singh 2010, 158). In 1992 CPI (ML) Liberation took the formal decision operating henceforth mainly publicly as a political party (Marwah 2009, 116).

\[2\] For an extensive insight into class-caste war compare Kumar, Ashwani (2009): Community Warriors – State, Peasants and Caste Armies in Bihar;

### 2.4 Persisting Thread and Recent developments

From the 1990’s onwards the Naxalites were able to expand their area of influence gradually that is now called the red corridor. In this regard the Maoist rebels benefited notably from the weakness and failures of the federal states and central government tackling the challenge. As Kujar puts it, “while the Naxal movement has mostly been
characterized by fragmented groups and innumerable splits; successive governments at the national and state level were never able to follow uniform approach to deal with the problem of Naxalism, thus leading to a marked impact in the growth of the Naxal movement.” (Kujur 2008, 4). Moreover the Naxalite movement during these days still was a fragmented movement aware of its weaknesses and constraints. Thus off and on calls for merger were expressed and a united movement demanded. The most important recent event that still marks today’s situation was the merger between the two dominant Naxalite organisations PWG and MCC to the Communist Party of India (Maoist) (CPI (Maoist)) that took place on 21 September 2004. In the sequel the new formed party was able to improve their operational capability and firepower through a common national leadership (Ficci 2009, 27). The merger led to more cohesion among the Maoists and today the CPI (Maoist) is the largest and most powerful Naxalite group (Mehra 2008, 10). Later on further splinter groups accepted the CPI (Maoist) claim to power. Today around 95% of all Naxal groups are under the umbrella of the CPI (Maoist) (Marwah 2009, 146). The Ministry for Home Affairs (MHA) makes the party responsible for more than 90% of Left Wing Extremist incidents and 95% of the resulting killings (MHA 2010, 17). Since the beginning of the millennium the Naxalites were able to expand their firepower and armoury. Whereas in the beginning of the movement local made weapons, such as bows and spears dominated, now many cadres are armed with highly sophisticated weapons, inter alia rocket-launchers, AK47 and INSAS rifles as well as so called Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) (Marwah 2009, 132). The strength of the new founded People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) is assessed to be between 10.000 and 20.000 people (Marwah 2009, 130). They were responsible for numerous spectacular actions characterized by surprise and well planning such as coordinated synchronised attacks on multiple targets where they were supported by overground activists and sympathisers (Marwah 2009, 133). When the attacks were conducted the cadres retreat rapidly into the forests; they hit and run. Predominantly they attack in large numbers during daylight to underline their strength (Marwah 2009, 135). Besides police and railway stations they have augmented their operations to all symbols of the states, especially infrastructure, such as trains, streets and power supplies. Increasingly they also attack businesses that are operating in the
embattled resource rich regions, primarily mining companies where they loot explosives as supplies for their booby traps. In order to gain financial means the Naxalites are also engaged in extortion of these companies.

In a very spectacular incident armed Maoists stormed a high security prison in 2005, releasing 341 allies and kidnapping 20 members of the Ranvir Sena, the enemy landlord militia. In 2009 they even hijacked a train with over 400 passengers in Jharkhand.

After the PWG and MCC were already declared terroristic organizations, the CPI (Maoist) suffered the same fate in 2009 (Marwah 118/145). However, in contrast to terrorists, the Naxalites are mainly engaged in discriminate violence, usually picking their targets carefully, trying to avoid collateral damage. Most of their victims are police officers as well as so-called police informers who are often killed and executed in a particular cruel manner. According to the South Asian Terrorism Portal (SATP) more than 5000 people died since 2004 as a result of clashes between Maoists and Police forces (SATP).

Since the last general elections in 2009, the situation aggravated. In fall 2009 the central government in alliance with the federal states started an offensive against the Naxalites most affected states by deploying large numbers of paramilitary police battalions that were trained in guerrilla warfare. The offensive known as Operation Green Hunt largely led to an escalation in terms of violence.

This development culminated into an ingenious planned ambush executed on a bus, carrying a large number of Central Reserve Police Forces (CRPF) through the dense jungles of Dantewada, Chhattisgarh, on 17 May 2010. The bus was hit by an IED-explosion and around 200 armed Maoists took the police officers under heavy fire. 76 Security Forces were killed, reflecting the deadliest attack by Maoists so far (BBC 2010). Although this event marks the peak in escalation, Maoist attacks occur almost in daily regularity.
3 Naxalism: grounds, ideology and power

3.1 Grounds people joining the Naxalites

The Naxalite movements are currently active in an area that stretches from Bihar, at the Nepalese border to the Southern states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The core area is called red corridor comprising Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal (MHA 2010, 17). Within that territory certain districts are under firm control of the Maoists, in other parts of the respective region their influence is less. The most affected territory is situated in the triangle of the bordering regions of northern Andhra Pradesh, western Maharashtra and the South of Chhattisgarh and Orissa. This area stretches over 400 sq km and is largely cut off the states power. Figures concerning the controlled respectively affected areas vary. The Indian Ministry of Home Affairs puts the number at 223 districts in 20 states, covering an area of 40,000 sq in total with a combined population of 2.5 million inhabitants (Sahni/ Singh 2010).

One main cause for this huge spread is that the rebels never had problems in terms of recruitment and finding sympathisers. Since the Telangana movement started, the communist’s strategy focuses on mobilising the disadvantaged and marginalised by utilizing their unfavourable situation.

The expansion of the Maoist’ influence must be seen in the light of persisting poverty and malnutrition as well as huge income disparities in several parts of India. Although India is nowadays seen by many commentators as an aspiring power in the world, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) rates India in their reputable Human Development Index (HDI) in having life expectancy, education and standard of living on a place 134 of 182 nations for the year 2009 (UNDP 2009). The single HDI-reports on Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh show an especially low grade of development (UNDP 2005/2007).

The poverty rate in the in rural areas of the other most affected states, Orissa and Bihar, is among the world’s most extreme (Dhar 2009).
In addition, referring to estimations from the Indian government, 456 million people, i.e. around 42% of India’s total population, lives under the global poverty line. One third of the global poor lives in India, 75% in rural areas (Dhar 2009). The constant high numbers of farmer suicides due to indebtedness, harassment and discrimination, especially in the Naxalite affected areas, reflects the miserable situation of large parts of India’s rural population (Dhar 2009). The allocation of farmland remains unevenly that is to some extent still a result of the British occupation.

The lack of human development causes anger and resentments amongst the people. They feel alienated and excluded. In addition often local elites are engaged in exploiting, harassing and even torturing the tribal population (Planning Commission 2008, 4-6).

The Naxalites receive most support from Dalits and Adivasis. Together they amount for one fourth of India’s population; most of them live in rural India (Planning Commission 3). Their causes for supporting the violent movement are manifold: Among these groups persists low degree of employment and qualification, new forest policies with restriction for their livelihoods, cultural humiliation, weak access to health care, education and power, restricted and limited access to natural resources, multifaceted forms of exploitation, social atrocities, displacement and deficient rehabilitation programs, political marginalisation and suppression of protests (Planning Commission 2008, 4-23).

Mehra has underlined that the most affected states have a huge number of people facing huge deprivation, especially among Dalits and Adivasis. Moreover these respective states show a high record on crimes that are committed against the neglected groups as well as displacement due to economic and development projects (Mehra 2008, 14 - 16).

In fact 80% of the total displaced persons within the period of 1947 – 2000 were tribals (Mehra 2008, 19). A large number of tribals were not regarded by state services as well as governmental development projects. Attempts by the states to increase its influence in the most backward areas resulted in repression of the inhabitants by state authorities, such as by the forest departments and subsequently resulted in the destruction of their traditional social bonds.

The age of globalization with the liberation of India’s economy and opening up of its markets gave new life to the conflict. Several Indian and foreign companies operate in the resource rich areas of Chattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand and Orissa that constitute
the poorest states in India and show a high degree of Naxalite affection (Ramakrishnan 2010/ Kaur 2010).

Several of them have signed memoranda of understanding worth billions for exploiting the respective resources (FICCI 2009, 38). But the inhabitants of these areas generally do not benefit from the resources richness of their areas. Besides the issue of mining, the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) and huge dam projects entail the displacement of thousands of people. Mehra and others have pointed out that mainly Adivasis and Dalits are afflicted and that these actions are also associated to insufficient compensation measures (Mehra 2008, 19).

Thus they are not interested into the so-called development projects by the state and even attack the employees of these companies. These processes create beneficial conditions regarding recruiting grounds for the Maoists. They only need to exploit the prevailing frustration (Kaur 2010).

Although India enjoyed a steadily solid economic growth during the recent years, the benefits are distributed very uneven among various social groups and geographic regions. Income disparities have aggravated and also the harsh distinction between living conditions of the people in the rural areas and the metropolis in India must be underlined (Khilnani 2004, 11). But these contradictions do not only exist between rural and urban areas but also within the cities. This situation exacerbates with an upward trend. Also the CPI (Maoist) got aware of this development and drafted in 2004 its Urban Perspective Plan where they pointed out the necessity of building up popular support in the cities through infiltrating labour unions and targeting the unemployed and students as well as exploiting the socio-economic disparities. (Ficci 2008, 28/ CPI (Maoist) 2010) Big cities like Delhi, Patna and Kolkata remain to be big hubs for Maoist sympathising intellectuals (Dhar 2009).

Referring to Ernst Bloch the development of Modernity and capitalism can create contradictions within a society. These contradictions are often a consequence of social progress that is not shared by the whole population. Bloch calls this asymmetric development “the simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous”. This process can be conflict-promoting especially when the contradictions are exploited by a political force. (Bloch 1991) This concept can be well applied to the Naxalite conflict.
In addition, a high degree of violence, indiscriminate killings, fake encounters and several human rights violations, such as rape, burning villages and so on that happened in context of the conflict, have increased the support for the Naxalites among the suffering population (Banerjee 2010, 2).

Considering the fact that the Naxalites present themselves as defenders of the poor and marginalised also several intellectuals and students are attracted by them and their ideology. The Naxal movement always had well educated leaders and numerous recent research papers by the Maoists imply an intellectual background by some of their cadres (Mehra 2008, 21).

### 3.2 Ideology and Strategy

Although most Naxalite groups today have a distant relationship to China and its ruling communist party, Maoism is still at the core of their ideology, with protracted people’s war as its main feature (Mohanti 2006, 3). This means long term revolutionary violent struggle supported by the rural masses. More precisely during the first phase of revolution, the rebels try to gain popular support by ideological indoctrination, start building up liberated zones and start attacking the government. During the second phase the violence escalates and the revolutionaries increase their influence in rural areas and select bigger targets. In the final phase conventional warfare is adopted and the cities are encircled from the conquered countryside aiming to overthrow the government (Ficci 2009, 32). Following this doctrine, the Naxal revolution appears to be stuck within the second phase.

Still today, over 30 years after his death, the thoughts of Charu Mazumdar, the intellectual father of the movement, play an important role for the Naxalites. In his “eight historic documents” he points out the necessity of setting up an armed group in rural areas and to establish liberated zones in order to capture state power. The participation in the electoral process within the Indian political system was rejected categorically. In contrast to the CPI (ML) and the Liberation group that by now participate in the parliamentary system, the CPI (Maoist) regards themselves as the true successor of the
movement that started in Naxalbari. Instead to the parliamentary process the seizure of power shall be accomplished through the armed struggle. Liberating the countryside and the establishment of self-sufficient base areas are key elements in the Naxalite strategy towards the gradual seizure of political power. They are aiming on the expansion of these base areas in order to create a revolutionary compact zone. Although the so-called red corridor is often regarded as a compact revolutionary zone, doubts can be raised regarding the varying degree of influence of the Maoist on respective territories (Mohanty 2006, 9).

The official line of the CPI (Maoist) focuses on the underprivileged, basically poor peasants and tribals, rejects any caste systems and supports all national movements striving for independence and self-determination, with a special reference to India’s North East as well as Kashmir (Mohanty 2006, 4). Recently also feminist positions were introduced. The Maoists are staffed with a high degree of female soldiers. However patriarchal structures still persist within the movement (Mohanty 2006, 4).

But it must be questioned if the welfare of the marginalised and deprived as well as Dalits and Adivasis lies at the Naxalite’s heart. Due to Maoist ideology and Charu Mazumdar’s teachings, seizure of state power is the ultimate goal of the movement in order to transform India into a multinational union of equal nationalities (Mohanty 2006 4). This is also reflected by several official Naxalite documents. (Marwah 2009, 131).

In this regard their engagement with the poor primarily appears as a strategy for mobilising the masses for revolutionary reasons. Also a look on the composition of the highest party bodies shows that neither Dalits nor tribals are represented; in fact most of the members belong to high castes (Ranmohan 2010, 2). It appears that a distinction can be made between on the one hand the intellectual leadership of the movement that is highly convinced of the Maoist ideology and strives for their ultimate goal of overthrowing the Indian state in the long run and on the other hand the rural mass supporters, poor peasants, Adivasis, Dalits etc. whose anger and frustration was instrumentalised that fight for social justice, equality and local development in order to improve their individual situation. Both aspects must be seen at the same time. (Planning Commission 2010).
Furthermore, the CPI (Maoist) is very engaged in building up mass organizations, such as labour unions, as well as women and students association in order to broaden its approach to the economic and political struggle besides the armed one. Their peasant worker front *Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Majdoor Sangh* (DAKMS) has around 100,000, their women front *Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Samity* (KAM) around 90,000 and actually their cultural front *Chetna Natya Manch* amounts for over 10,000 members (Mukherji 2010). Recently the Maoists have started to focus increasingly on the government’s attempts to liberalize finance and economy. As shown before, the engagement of companies and the state in respective affected areas do result in even more contradictions that are likely to be exploited by the Naxalites.

### 3.3 Organisation and Domination

Although most of the Naxalite groups seem to be under the umbrella of the CPI (Maoist), the party within is fragmented. The basic organisation of the different outfits still exists within the party as a consequence of non-profound merger (SATP (A)). Most of the extremists within the party originally belonged to the MCC while most of the moderate party members can be found within the ranks of the PWG.

There are also armed groups operating under the guise of the CPI (Maoist) that are criminal gangs rather than revolutionaries as they are highly engaged in extortion activities. However, despite numerous internal differences the party was able to build up a highly organised hierarchical leadership.

The highest body of the CPI (Maoist) is the Central Committee (CC). A part of the CC constitutes the Politburo that gathers the core political leadership. It consists of 13 or 14 members and is led by its secretary general Muppala Lakshmana Rao alias Ganapati. Ganapati was already secretary general of the PWG and is regarded as one of its first members. Many commentators do not assess his leadership as very charismatic; therefore he depends on other strong men within the leadership. Several former members of the politburo were killed or arrested by the security forces. The most recent victim was Cherukuri Rajkumar, alias Azad, the number three of the leadership, killed July 2nd 2010.
The Central Military Commission (CMC) that guides the military actions is likewise composed by members of the CC (Marwah 2009, 131). Moreover the Central Committee oversees the Regional Bureaus and State Committees. The subordinated units to the respective bodies are divided into District committees and Divisional Committees (Marwah 2009, 137). The local bodies are even equipped with specialised departments, inter alia for justice, education and agriculture (Navlakha 2010, 44/45).

In addition reports concerning a special Technology Committee, that is engaged in developing an efficient communication system and supply lines as well as military assessment and producing weapons reflect the sophisticated character of the party organisation (Marwah 2009, 137).

However, functioning of the leadership and the institutional structure of the party persist secretly and partly transparently as they have to operate from the underground. Because of this fact the organization of the party does not work out smoothly all the times, reflected by several incidents where local squads had carried out attacks that were later regretted by the central leadership (Mohanty 2006, 10).

Besides the mentioned contacts to the LTTE, consisting of arms deals and training cooperation, the leadership of the CPI (Maoist) has established contacts to different armed groups within and beyond India. There were tight linkages between the Maoists of India and the former Communist Party of Nepal Maoist, cooperating in terms of training, armament and logistics.\(^3\) (Marwah 2009, 142). However, since the Maoists in Nepal formally decided to participate in the parliamentary process in 2007, the relations strained. In addition there exists international cooperation via the 2001 formed Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organizations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA) including extremist left wing parties from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal and Bhutan (Ramana 2008, 118). Moreover there were reports that the Naxalites have established some contacts to insurgent groups of India’s North East, most prominent to the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) (Ramana, 2008, 125).

The strategy of the Maoists concerning the modus operandi in their area of operation shall be outlined as follows: Before the Naxalites enter new territory they conduct

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3 Since the merger with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unity-Centre-Masal) it is called Unified Communistic Party of Nepal (Maoist) (UCPN(M))
intelligence reconnaissance of the socio-economic situation on site with special reference to discrimination and deprivation among the population. Of peculiar interest is the social composition and power distribution. When the leader of the respective social community is identified the Maoists step in and try to convince him supporting their cause. If he refuses, the Maoists strive for supporting his competitor and start to build up a parallel unit of rule. In respect to the persistence of weak administration and almost political vacuum in several remote areas, the Naxalites find ideal conditions for their purpose and are seen as a welcome alternative to state rule.

Once Naxalites have entered the political sphere they start their propaganda work in order to establish popular support. This means particularly building up of mass organizations “specifically for mobilising women, workers, students and peasants and, generally, for anti-caste organisations. Headed by committed cadres, these units indoctrinate people considered impressionable.” (Reddy 2008, 93). In their area of influence they start slogging money lenders, demanding landlords to distribute land and hold political rallies. Moreover in some parts they were able to establish parallel governments that are engaged in imposing of taxes, setting up of people’s courts, distributing land as well as education through People’s schools that shall guarantee the indoctrination of the young. Meanwhile they paralyze the functioning of the state institutions in the respective areas like schools and hospitals as well as communication and they even stop revenue payment to state authorities (Dhar 2009, 1). These so-called liberated zones serve as safe havens for the Maoists (Marwah 2009, 124).

In fact Maoists have often destroyed local schools as they claimed that they were used by security forces as base camps. But they have also forced teachers, doctors and other governmental official to fulfil their duty in the remote areas.

In addition the Naxalites have contributed in decreasing exploitation of tribal workers, enforced higher wages for Tendu leave pickers, a job often carried out by tribals, as well as partly committed in setting up irrigation for farmland (Mohanty 2006, 5).

Recently they have engaged in destroying roads, railway lines and bridges in order to isolate the target area and deny the state’s claim to power (Ficci 2009, 32).

Their financing derives from looting of banks, extortion, taxes and royalties of forest producers (Mukherji 2010, 19).
According to Mukherji who analysed the financing of the party, a high amount of the party’s income that derives from taxes, royalties and are mostly purposed to be spent for development, are diverted to the military budget. There exist also reports that forest and private contractors, as well as mining companies that operate in the affected areas, are paying protection fees to the Naxalites (Singh 2010 (B), 1). In this regard the Maoists have introduced the often announced development model only hesitantly as they still benefit partly from the persisting system. (Mukherji 2010, 20).

However, the Naxalites have established parallel power structures in several parts of the country. As long as the Maoist’s installed ‘governments’ are able to establish social order among the governed and can guarantee the smoothly running of everyday life, the legitimacy of their imposed political order is fostered and thus stabilised. (Schlichte 2009, 96/97).

But as one major feature of Maoist strategy refers to retreat when they oppose superior security forces, political control of Maoists in these areas is not persistent, albeit sympathy and support among the population for the Naxalites endures. The existence of such areas is challenging the ideal of the Indian state as they limit its influence and power.
4 Weakness of the State and its Response to the Naxalite Challenge

4.1 Crises of governance and Challenge for the State

The success of the Maoist movement is deeply rooted in the weakness of some parts of the Indian state to fulfill its ideally functions and responsibilities. Although India, in comparison to other former colonized states, was able to develop a powerful apparatus of state, state control remains in large parts precarious in terms of its conception. State administration is especially in those areas sparsely developed which are most affected by Naxalite violence. This fact is reflected inter alia by small state budgets, low bureaucratic efficiency as well as prevailing corruption (Mehra 2009, 4). There are even some remote areas where state domination is almost completely absent (Mainstream 2008).

In these regions that are characterized by weak governance, traditional types of rule were able to persist. Social elites like high castes, landlords and loan sharks dominate the rural population and benefit from their exploitation. (Nigam 2010). State-aided rural development programs in these areas have often not reached the bottom of the society and instead contributed to the persistence of landlordism (Mohanty 2006, 3).

Rarely the state is able to comply with its ideally basic responsibilities, such as guaranteeing security, providing basic amenities as well as ensuring social upward mobility (Frontier 1). Instead malnutrition is prevalent. The State Hunger index from 2008 shows that the situation regarding food supply in the whole of India is generally alarming but the starvation rate in the Naxalite most affected areas is especially high (IFPRI 2009)

Basic services such as roads, sanitation and electricity are not being provided well. Public institutions such as schools, health care centers and police stations are underdeveloped (Mainstream 2008). Government schools do exist but teachers are rarely willing to work in these respective areas. In addition, the coverage of doctors and the provision of medical services are very low. Generally police stations are poorly staffed, with only 7-
10 officers who have to dominate an average area of 450 sqm (Dhar 2009). Many state authorities refuse to work in the remote and conflict torn areas (Marwah 2009, 124). Furthermore the public administration is frequently affected by corruption (Mehra 2008, 19/Planning Commission 2008, 53). Because of that, in conjunction with inefficient administration, funds that are assigned for the minor developed parts of India, do not reach the poor (Dhar 2009).

Many state agencies also execute structural violence in terms of restrictive forest policy, as well as land acquisition for industrial projects that is related to deficient resettlement measures (Mehra 2008, 21). Several non-violent protests in this regard were suppressed violently by the security forces (Subramanian 2007, 131). All of these mentioned issues led to the frustration and loss of confidence in the state by the residents of the respective areas. Because of that the influence and control of the state is therefore marginal.

These circumstances enable the Maoist to take influence easily on large parts of the society. According to Sahni the population in respective areas expects that the state provides basic needs for them but generally fails. Under these conditions the population reacts with a lot of gratitude towards the efforts of the Naxalites to establish a kind of social order by way of which they e.g. set up courts as well as distribute land (Millet 2008).

Subsequently the state loses its turf to the Maoists as it was not able to address the basic needs of the population (Mainstream 2008). In addition, in the federal states of Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand tight relations between Naxalites and political leaders evolved for their mutual advantage. The politicians sought the help of the rebels during elections while the Naxalites benefitted from loose prosecution and minor interventions from the state (Marwah 2009, 120/122/ Mehra 2009, 9).

Due to the fact that the Maoists were able to spread their influence into several pockets within the Indian state, there exist parallel claims to power over respective regions. This fact, and the direct violent attacks against the agents, institutions and symbols of the state, apparently challenges the inherent ideals of the state, namely sovereignty and monopoly on the use of force. Hence, the state’s legitimacy is in crisis.
This challenge sets the state under pressure to correspond with its ideal. So far the Indian state interprets this task in a limited way, namely by executing armed force against the challenger.

Heretofore this approach was not crowned with success due to additional weakness of the state security apparatus, such as lack of training, capacity, equipment and limited mobility. The coercive reaction by the Indian state on the Naxalite challenge instead contributed to alienate large parts of the population living in the conflict zone even more from the state (Dhar 2009).

4.2 The Violent Response of the State

The states reaction on the challenge is mainly based on force, although voices within the governments were raised, that acknowledged the conflict refers to socio-economic root causes (Gaikwad 2009/ MHA 2009, 17). So far establishing law and order takes precedence (Dhar 2009). Government officials claim that only after re-building state domination over the concerned remote areas, effective development endeavors can be started (Mehra 2009, 2).

Nevertheless, for instance the Maoists are back in the Lalgarh region although it was recaptured in 2009 by state forces after a big campaign. This is referable to the fact that the promised funds have not reached the people in need yet (The Economist 2010, 28).

The India constitution asserts that the Federal states are in charge for keeping law and order. However, as argued before, the states are poorly equipped for this challenge, e.g. Andhra Pradesh is the only state having a paramilitary police force, the Grey Hounds. But the constitution also concedes the Centre a key role in situations of serious law and order challenges within the states. Therefore it takes lead and formulates a collective strategy by fostering close cooperation (Subramanian 2009, 125/126).

But a central problem in terms of coordination persists especially in the most affected area that is situated within the boarder region of Andhra Pradesh, Maharasthra, Chhattisgarh and Orissa, as the four states are led by different coalitions that all have different views as well as approaches on the issue. Moreover the Maoists are exploiting
the fact that the states have different jurisdictions. The state security forces often refrain
from pursuing the armed Maoist cadres when they cross the state boarders.

The Centre supports the federal states with their paramilitary Central Reserve Police
Force (CRPF) and its guerrilla warfare trained Commando Battalion for Resolute Action
(COBRA). A huge problem for the security forces is the lack of on-site intelligence as
these forces are not rooted in the operational area. Within the local population distrust
against the agents of the state prevails.

In marked contrast, the Maoists are well informed about planned raids and patrols by the
security forces. This is the reason why the Maoists can often escape and are able to
execute their most deadly weapons, Landmines and IEDs, attacking the vehicles of the
security forces with pinpoint precision. A further problem is that the deployed forces only
remain for a short time in the re-conquered areas. In this regard it is impossible to achieve
sustainable territorial gains as well as setting up intelligence capacities in the long run.
Moreover only a few security forces are trained in guerrilla warfare, contrary to the
Maoists who have developed their strength well in this regard. But the central
government has become aware of this lack and has set up some training camps, where
security personnel are trained by the army (Dhar 2009, 3,4).

Since the general election 2009 the degree of violence has increased (Mehra 2009, 2).
That is because the state initiated Operation Green Hunt, a wide scale military offensive
against the positions of the Maoists. The task of the security forces is to engage the
Naxalites into fights and expel them from their areas of influence (Dhar 2009). Since this
operation around 70.000 paramilitary forces have been deployed to the dense forests of
Chhattisgarh, Orissa, West Bengal and Jharkhand (Sen 2009).

The security forces have often been alleged for committing several human rights
violations during their operations and exploit fake encounters (ACHR 2006/ Mohanty
2006, 11).

The security forces are rarely rooted in the conflict area and therefore cannot overview
the situation, they cannot distinguish between Maoists, supporters, sympathizers and
victims. Therefore they often execute indiscriminate violence on the local populations in
order to obtain control. Kalywas has suggested that armed groups who are not rooted
entrenched within the social context of the embattled territory and have trouble to
identify the combatants are likely to exploit indiscriminate violence in order to regain domination. But this procedure affects the legitimacy of the armed forces as it produces resentment, distrust and shame (Kalywas 2006, 65) EN Ranmohan, former director of the Border Security Police (BSP) makes the weak leadership of the CRPF responsible for these incidents and pleads for fighting this conflict legally as they only worsen the situation (Ranmohan 2010, 2,3).

A further escalation of violence can be observed in the context of the Salwa Judum militia (Peace March) operating in Chhattisgarh. State and militia have described the foundation in 2005 as a spontaneous popular reaction on the violence of the Maoists for the reason of self defense. Due to a persisting nexus between state and militia this version might be questioned critically.

In this regard the ruling BJP as well as the Congress party have welcomed the foundation and Mahindra Karma, Congress leader and leader of he opposition in Chhattisgarh is regarded as it patron (Marwah 2009, 152). The State recruited many of Salwa Judum members as Special Police Officers (SPO) trained them in the handling of .303 rifles and armed them. During their violent campaigns they were often supported by central security forces (Subramainain 2007, 127).

The Maoist ideology describes the nature of guerilla fight as a symbiotic relation between combatants and civilians as fish (army) that swims in the water (people). Referring to this analogy the cause behind the foundation of Salwa Judum was called „deny water to the fish by mobilizing villagers against Maoists“. (Dhar 2009)

The militia, mainly consisting of tribals, has gained a notorious reputation. There exist reports that they are engaged in recruiting child soldiers as well as committing several human rights violations, such as torture, killings and rape (ACHR 2006 (B)/ UNHCR 2008/ PUCL 2005).

In the focus of the campaign stood forced resettlement of several Adivasis to state camps, allegedly for their own security. The situation in the camps is very bad and the supply for the refugees is inadequate (Sundar 2010).

Human rights activists claim that more than 1000 Adivasis lost their life, more than 700 villages were burnt down, and more than 300.000 people were displaced during the
campaign (Mainstream 2010). Thereby the militia is even creating more sources that make the continuation of violence possible (Schlichte 2009, 71).

According to Schlichte, state sponsored armed groups are very likely to deploy a high degree of violence against civilians as they operate with the implicit allowance of the state (Schlichte 2009, 53/75). The Maoists have reacted to this challenge also with a high degree of violence. The often poorly armed and trained SPOs are generally no match for the well trained guerilla fighters. In addition the Maoists have also attacked the Salwa Judum refugee camps. This process has definitely contributed to the escalation of violence and has overall increased insecurity (Mohanty 2006, 11).

This resulted in the almost total breakdown of rule of law in the embattled regions. Therefore the Supreme Court ruled in 2008 that the state is not allowed to support the militia anymore (Indian Express 2009). Indeed, mass forced evacuations of villagers to camps are not enforced anymore, but the recruitment and the armament of SPOs persists (Sundar 2010).

Besides the violent approach there were also attempts to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict. On 14-18 October 2004 promising talks with the Naxalites, inter alia the PWG started. However the Naxalites withdrew from the talks due to persisting police operations and resurgence of violence (Mohanty 2006, 7).

The government has not revealed a big interest into pursuing the talks (Planning Commission 2008, 60). Instead the new line says that the central government is not ready to conduct any talks about a ceasefire until the Maoists put down weapons and abjure violence. In addition the MHA has asked all federal governments to comply with this line (Subramanian 2007, 126). The government expects that the Maoists would use the chance for regrouping and stabilizing their influence in certain areas.

However, this line is incomprehensible to other areas of conflict in India, like in the North East, where the government has not imposed any preconditions for ceasefire talks (Mainstream 2008). But Ranmohan also estimates that a break in the fire would not be in the interest of the Maoists as they are on the run and it would be hard for them to start again. (Ranmohan 2010)

It has been shown that the state was able to achieve short successes when it was containing and engaging the Maoist violently but this was never a long term sustainable
result. Ranmohan has stated that militarization of the conflict makes it only worse and solution become less likely (Ranmohan 2010).

4.3 Alternative Approaches and the Public Discourse

In 2008 the Planning Commission received from an expert group a well researched 95-pages extensive report⁴ that addressed the socio-economic root causes of the Naxalite movement. But the government turned away from its suggestions and neither Prime Minister Manmohan Singh nor Home Minister Chidambaram have referred to the report in their statements (Mehra 2009, 3,12)

The report did not only mention the social and economic causes for the rise of Maoism in India like displacement, unequal land distribution, discrimination or socio-economic deprivation but also addressed the weakness of the state in the remote areas and questioned the dominant approach by the government that is based on force and maintenance of law and order (Planning Commission 2008, especially p.56 onwards).

Moreover, various MHA departments have repeatedly called attention to the socio-economic root causes of the Naxalites movement but due to institutional flaws this view was not able to prevail. Instead the main source of information for the central government and especially the MHA remains the Intelligence Bureau (IB) that has only a limited capacity regarding the analysis of social and economic issues and its perspective is dominated mainly by the security aspect (Subramanian 2007, 132). K.S. Subramanian avers historic reasons for the constricted state approach, as „the inherited administrative structure remains still basically regulatory as in colonial times with its dominant preoccupation with „order at the cost of law and justice““ (Subramanian 2007, 131).

A further problem is that the main responsibility lays at the MHA whose objective is to keep up law and order without involving other departments that play an important role within this conflict, like the Ministry for Tribal Affairs, the Ministry for Environment and Forests, the Ministry of Agriculture as well as the Ministry of Mines. Without that

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holistic interdepartmental approach, a coherent strategy on the complex issue of Naxalism cannot be established and long term results not expected. But gradually the government reacted to some root causes, such as displacement, restrictive forest policy and unemployment by producing acts and laws like the National Rural Employment Act (NREGA) 2005, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 as well as the National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy 2007. But doubts can be raised if these acts have been implemented successfully and if they reach the people in need, due to persisting poor administrative structures in the remote districts (Mainstream 2008/ Planning Commission 2008, 58).

Disagreements concerning the right approach also persist within the public discourse which has heated up tremendously in the recent past. While many commentators and intellectuals have repeatedly alleged the state for suppressing violently a movement that actually strives for legitimate demands as well as ignoring its socio-economic implications, and thus has been responsible for the persistence of the conflict, others call the Naxalites Terrorists that must be wiped out and state authorities react rigidly, blame the critics being Maoist sympathizers and giving intellectual support (Mehra 2009, 1,2).

Recently the public statements of Arundhati Roy caused a furor. She, being one of India’s most prominent authors, has raised her voice many times regarding the Maoist issue. Her 30 page essay “Walking with Comrades”, published at the end of March in a popular weekly news magazine that describes her experiences while accompanying Naxalites in Chhattisgarh, had a big impact on the public discourse and was even subject within parliamentary debates (Roy 2010). This was the beginning of an active discussion that was covered in several magazines and newspapers, in which Roy was harshly attacked by several state officials for sympathizing with the Maoists and expressing understanding for their causes. Initially Roy should have even faced charges for their journalistic piece. In addition, besides Roy also Ghandian activist Himanshu Kumar, human rights activist Gladson Dungdung as well as many other human rights groups have been accused for being strong supporters of the Maoists (Dungdung 2010/ Indian Express 2010 (B)/ Kumar 2009, 3).
Initially the coverage of the Maoist issue was small and the reportage one-sided but a change within the media in respect to the topic can be observed. Admittedly a lot of news relates to police handouts but many newspapers and magazines started looking at the issue in a differentiated way, revealed human rights violations by the security forces and questioned the state’s strategy (Mehra 2009, 3). In this regard media has often been harassed by state police (Mehra 2009, 2). The prevalent acceptance by people regarding the violent response of the state is in a state of flux and the notion of civil war as well as questions concerning the root causes and the state’s concept of development are more and more raised.
5 Conclusion

The Telangana movement of the 1940’s and especially the initial spark of 1967 in Naxalbari have created a political movement in India that is entrenched firmly and cannot swept away easily. It has now existed since over 40 years and if the state will not change its strategy, the conflict can last easily even 40 years more.

The record of the past four decades shows clearly that an approach which is almost exclusively based on force and suppression is not able to destroy the movement. Even a situation like in 1971 where the state was able to curb the challengers with a hard hand and almost destroyed the movement, cannot be repeated today as it is entrenched too deeply within India’s socio-political sphere of the affected areas.

The state is at war against a part of its own people but this war cannot be won militarily. The raison d'être of the movement is rooted in the persisting economic and social conditions within the Indian state. It will persist to be a part of Indian politics and society as long the state does not acknowledge the nature of the movement and actively looks for long-term solutions for the people involved.

The often made proposal developing the remote areas cannot help solely to get the situation under control. The loss of confidence in the state within large parts of the society and their distrust will make it hard for the state authorities to regain the hearts of the frustrated and exploited.

Therefore the state must start to fight the conflict legally, minimize collateral damage, strengthen the leadership of the security forces and abstain from any human rights violation. The security forces should better start protecting the population living within the area of conflict instead of merely confronting the Maoists on large scale. The Naxalite movement must be challenged politically by presenting better alternatives to the Maoist approach and offer new perspectives. In this regard the state should start addressing the basic needs of the poor and fulfilling its main responsibilities to deliver human development to these disadvantaged areas.

But also the possibility of the Naxalites achieving their aims must be questioned. Indeed they were able to spread all over the country and constitute a big challenge but the
persisting military stalemate makes it illusionary for the Maoists to seize state power within the foreseeable future.

Their merit is that they put issues on the public agenda which were ignored before and that they gave people a voice that has been neglected. Today they are a part of the public discourse. It would have been unlikely for the movement to achieve similar results by striving for a non-violent approach as they had not any publicity.

Many people within the Indian society have sympathy for the root cause that the Maoists are fighting for, however the fewest agree on the violent way of struggle. The execution of brutal violence and attacks on civilians, such as the recent one on the passenger train in West Bengal where more than 150 people have died have a delegitimizing effect on the whole movement.

So is Naxalism now India’s biggest internal threat? Doubtlessly it is definitely a serious challenge. But the author and columnist Sudeep Chakravarti declared recently that the statement is an absolute myth. In fact Naxalism reflects merely India’s real threats like large scale poverty, hunger and injustice (Chakravarti 2010 (B)). The Naxalite movement is a symptom for the failure of the Indian state to provide human development for its citizens.

Naxalism does not only threaten the flow of foreign direct investments but could destabilize the whole political order as many citizens lose their faith in the state and therefore its legitimacy is challenged. India, on its way playing a bigger role on the international level, needs to tackle its internal problems urgently.
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