

LEFT EXTREMISM IN INDIA
NAXAL MOVEMENT IN CHATTISGARH & ORISSA

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INTRODUCTION

One of the striking features of the Naxal movement is that right from its inception it has remained a point of attention for academicians, journalists and, of course, politicians. However, for some reason or the other, contemporary research on Naxalism has so far been focused on West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and, to some extent, Bihar, at the expense of other areas where the movement also has a strong presence. However, as Naxalism or the Naxal movement is a complex problem, it is necessary to look at the problem at specific levels in different regions. It is in this context a primary research on the Naxal Movement in the neighbouring states of Chattisgarh and Orissa, where the Naxal movement is placed at two different levels, is of considerable academic interest. This article is an attempt to explain the growth of the Naxal movement in the poor and underdeveloped regions of these two states. The focus of this paper is on the organizational growth of the movement and the phenomenal increase in violence in the naxal brand of politics. Government initiatives and programmes will find a special mention in the paper.

I
CHATTISGARH
THE NAXAL WAR ZONE

Chattisgarh, which is a part of the Dandakaranya region, has been a centre of Maoist activities since the early days of the People's War. It was none other than the founding father of People's War (PW), K. Seetharamaiah, who envisaged the idea of establishing a guerrilla zone in Dandakaranya. Particularly Bastar, for its typical geo-political situation and socio-economic condition, soon found a prominent place in the Maoist road map. Way back in 1979, a six member squad with five more squads in the following year was sent here to build up revolutionary consciousness.¹ However, the naxal presence in the region was felt only during the late 90s when they successfully established a strong guerrilla network in Bastar and Surguja. By 1995, the mass organisations in the Dandakaranya had swelled to a membership of 60,000 and today the membership is over one hundred and fifty thousand.² As of now the Naxals have consolidated

¹ Out of the Red, April 16,2006,
<http://www.indianexpress.com/sunday/story/2488.html>

² Sudhakar, A Saga of Twenty five years of Glorious Struggle, People's March, January 2006.

their position in nine out of the sixteen districts of Chattisgarh i.e. Kanker, Dantewada, Bastar, Surguja, Balrampur, Rajnandgaon, Koriya, Kawardha and Jashpur and they are also known to be extending their influence rapidly in four other districts. In July 2005, the Director General of Police, Chhattisgarh, Mr O.P. Rathore, said that more than 40,000 square miles spread over 10 out of the 16 districts of the state was under the operational sphere of the Naxalites.³

THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

After the formation of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) in 2004, Chattisgarh was placed under the 'Dandakaranya Special Zone Committee', under which there are five divisional committees. Kosa, who originally hails from Andhra Pradesh, is the Secretary of the Zonal Committee and also a member of the CPI (Maoist), Central Committee. The second man in the command structure is Atayu. Ganesh Uyike, one of the five divisional secretaries, and Sanjeev, a Divisional Committee member of the CPI (Maoist), are two other important naxal leaders who are calling shots these days. There are 70 Local guerrilla squads (LGSs) and 30 military dalams functioning under the Dandakaranya Zonal Committee.⁴ Recently the CPI (Maoist) raised an all women battalion in the Dandakaranya region, named as the 'National Park dalam', which is headed by Ms. Nirmal Ekka, who claims to be a medical graduate.⁵ Other than dalams,

the naxals have another important frontal organization in the name of Sanghams, and while dalams are responsible for armed operations, sanghams are responsible for spreading the Maoist agenda and holding Jan Adalats. The Dandakaranya Adivasi Mazdoor Kisan Sangh (DAKMS) and the Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sanghatan (KAMS) are two specific naxal front organisations who are entrusted with the task of looking into all disputes whether it is a village dispute, a family dispute, a marriage dispute, a caste dispute or something related to tribal customs or community affairs.⁶ The People's Liberation Guerrilla Army, the Krantikari Kisan Committee, the Mahila Mukti Manch, the Chetana Natya Manch, the Revolutionary People's Committee, the Jungle Bachao Committee and the Maoist Vikas, are the other important frontal organizations of the CPI (Maoist) functioning in Chattisgarh. The naxals have also aggressively formed people's militia in the form of Gram Raksha Dal (GRD) and Area Raksha Dal (ARD).

DEMOCRATIC MISGOVERNANCE & THE POLITICS OF VIOLENCE

Chattisgarh, a predominantly tribal State, has about 35 big and small tribes and is endowed with rich mineral and forest resources. The scheduled tribes are concentrated in the southern, northern and the north-eastern districts of the State. The highest concentration is in the erstwhile Bastar district. The new district of Dantewara has 79 per cent tribals followed by

³ Raipur mulls arming tribals against Naxals, *The Asian Age*, 22 July 2005

⁴ Data based on the information provided by local officials.

⁵ *Eagle's Eye: Women Naxals head guerrilla squads*,

<http://www.centralchronicle.com/20060201/0102303.htm>

⁶ 30 years of Naxalbari, <http://www.peoplesmarch.com/publications/30%20years/part5.htm>

Bastar (67 per cent) Jashpur (65 per cent), Surguja (57 per cent) and Kanker (56 per cent).⁷ However, during the past few decades, the demographic profile of tribal dominated areas has undergone several changes. Large-scale intrusion of non-tribals in tribal areas is mostly responsible for the creation of a faulty developmental model where tribals are denied their share in development. As observed by the 'People's Union for Civil Liberties', in one of its reports titled 'Bastar : An Investigation into an Encounter', June 1985; "A lopsided socioeconomic development of the district caused by indirect exploitation through environmental destruction and direct exploitation through cheating and duping, has provided an ideal setting for the Naxalites to take root in the area"⁸.

It is a painful reality that these naxal infested regions of Chattisgarh, once a part of Madhya Pradesh, has been deprived of credible governance since days immemorial. For long, people of this area have been forced to live under abject poverty, rampant corruption and exploitation. It was in these conditions that guerrillas from the neighbouring Telengana region ventured into the dense forests of Chattisgarh in 1979-80. It took them nearly a decade to consolidate their position and by 1990 the erstwhile People's War (PW) was a force to

reckon with in the tribal heartland of Chattisgarh. Slowly but steadily the naxals spread the message of revolution among the tribals by targeting the failed system of governance.

It is alleged that when Chattisgarh was a part of Madhya Pradesh, it was consistently treated unfairly. Bastar, in particular was infamous among government officials as the place for punishment posting because of its inaccessibility and lack of basic infrastructures. For this Bastar soon became the den of corrupt and inept officials, who totally destroyed the credibility of the government amongst masses. Moreover, this is not a claim made by the naxals alone, even the present leadership in Chattisgarh never misses an opportunity to shift the blame upon the previous governments of Madhya Pradesh, for today's sorry state of affairs. "When Chattisgarh was part of Madhya Pradesh, the region was treated as a colony and was never a priority for good governance, because of which Naxalite movements have gained momentum here", says Brij Mohan Agrawal, former Home Minister of the state.⁹

Expectations were high when the new state of Chattisgarh was carved out of Madhya Pradesh in 2000. However, the experience of the past few years suggests that the situation has deteriorated. See Table 1

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[Pib.nic.in/feature/feyr2001/fjun2001/f080620012.html](http://pib.nic.in/feature/feyr2001/fjun2001/f080620012.html)

⁸ Subhash Gatade "The Naxalite Left at the Beginning of the Millennium"
<http://www.massline.info/India/Gatade.htm>

⁹ Naxals push Chhattisgarh into crisis,
<http://www.rediff.com/news/2005/may/24spec2.htm>

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Table 1

<p><u>Health</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 out of 16 districts do not have a district hospital. • One Primary Health Centre caters to an average of 40,000 people (one bed for 3316 people) • Infant Mortality 86 (All India 71) • 4.45 % of the state budget goes to Health <p><u>Workforce</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of the workers work in the rural farm sector. • The Per Capita Income for Males is Rs 6000-9000, and for female Rs 2000- Rs 4000/ year. <p><u>Electricity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 68% of the households do not have electricity connection <p><u>Water</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 49% of the households do not have access to drinking water at home • Only 19% of the agricultural land is irrigated. <p><u>Population</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth; 18%. • 2. Sex Ratio 989 females per 1000 males. • Density: 151/ sqr km (324 national) • 98% of the Schedule Tribe population lives in rural areas. • 17.4% of the tribes live in urban areas <p><u>Education</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop Out rate : 47% enrolled in Primary Schools (64% in STs) • State Budget allocation: 15% <p><u>Roads</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27% of roads are metal led. • Road connectivity to 40 % of the villages. • Telephone Density : 1% <p><u>Agriculture</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of the workforce of the state is involved in farming related works. • Area under double crop:17% • Rice production :1336 kg/hectare • Area under forest cover:44% 	<p>Mineral revenue to state - Rs 3945 crore (in 2000)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persons below Poverty line - 39% <p>Source: Shubhranshu Choudhary, Reality Check: Some facts About Chhattisgarh, http://36garh.notlong.com</p> <p>Even though the majority of the population of the state is predominantly dependent on agriculture and forest, the irony is that the state government has so far paid greater importance to the mineral based industry and coal based power projects. “These projects were permitted without application of mind, in violation of all environmental norms and in an open LOOT of our natural resources, which otherwise should be treated as a Fixed Deposit Security for generations to come by using them wisely.”¹⁰</p> <p>The application of such a distorted developmental formula by the government, in Chattisgarh, provided the naxals with an excellent opportunity to build up a base to wage war against the institutions of Democratic governance. Purely on the basis of the failure of governance today, naxals are running a parallel government in large parts of the Dandakaranya region - what they claim as <i>Janta Sarkar</i>. “Who said we are running parallel administration? We have liberated some of our areas through our sustained people's war in the Abujhmad area of Dandakaranya zone (<i>of Bastar region</i>) where we have established people's governance,” said Atayu, a prominent Naxal leader</p>
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Mineral revenue to state - Rs 3945 crore (in 2000)

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¹⁰ Sudiep Shrivastava, Chhattisgarh – Development or organized exploitation, <http://36garh.notlong.com>

whilst speaking before media persons in the dense forests of Bastar.¹¹

However, violence can never be a road to development. Naxal top guns in Chattisgarh keep on talking about underdevelopment and exploitation though they themselves are not champions of development. Rather they have a vested interest in keeping poverty alive because it enables them to expand their territory. The nagging problem of naxalism is not only affecting economic activities in the state but also forcing it to adopt an imbalanced model of growth due to the presence of the naxals in a majority of the mineral-rich pockets of Chattisgarh. Despite their proclaimed commitment to social change they have utterly failed to evolve a political critique of violence. On the other hand, with the mindless application of terror tricks, they have come to represent the same system against which they claim to be waging a war.

"We were forced to become sangham members. We gave them food and drink, though we had so little for ourselves. For 25 years, they have been here. Earlier they would sweet-talk us, promising to stop exploitation of Adivasis; they said they would form the government. They made fools of us. They harass us, after the police ask questions; they even take away our young girls. Then, they began to kill. They claim to hold *Jan adalats* before doling out punishments or execution orders, but I never saw one," reads a statement by Raghuram, a surrendered sangham member, which

¹¹ Naxals push Chhattisgarh into crisis
<http://www.rediff.com/news/2005/may/24spec2.htm>

summarizes the three decades of Naxal Movement in Chattisgarh.¹²

Year	Incidents	Deaths
2001	105	37
2002	304	55
2003	256	74
2004	352	83
2005	380	165
2006 (First Quarter)	162	105

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2005-06. 2006 figures are quoted from the statement of Union Home Secretary V.K.Duggal, See *The Hindu*, April 1, 2006

THE POLITICS OF COUNTER VIOLENCE

While talking about counter naxal initiatives in Chattisgarh the first thing that comes to mind is 'Salva Judum', which means "Peace Campaign" in Halbi and "Collective Hunting" in the Santhali language. The Raman Singh government claims it to be a peace movement to save tribals from the evils of naxalism. However, the Naxals ridicule it as the group hunting of innocent tribals supporting the people's movement. Salva Judum has a three-prong approach where firstly, the Naxal-hit tribals are marched to state run camps, while the women and children are left behind. Secondly, the Salva Judum activists, accompanied by the police, march in to the enemy (Naxal) stronghold, they conduct public meetings, and distribute pamphlets. More importantly, they hunt for the Sangham members who are then

¹² Annie Zaidi, Resisting the rebels, *Frontline*, Volume 22 - Issue 21, Oct. 08 - 21, 2005

asked to surrender or hand themselves over to the police. Thirdly, the government appoints Special Police Officers (SPOs) among the Salva Judum activists, who are entrusted, and armed, to protect the camps as well as accompany the march. The SPOs are allowed to run check gates and conduct raids.

Of course, security experts have their own way of looking into the pros and cons of the Salva Judum, but it is hard to ignore the impact of the Salva Judum in the process of strategic planning and implementation. At the moment, however, though the campaign stands suspended, it's imperative to examine its implications. As per the state Home Minister Ramvichar Netam, the movement had only been suspended, not wound up and will restart with a "vengeance".¹³

Contrary to popular belief Salva Judum is not an officially launched government anti-naxal programme. Konda Madhukarrao, a little known schoolmaster from Kutru, in the Bijapur Police district of South Bastar, first initiated the call for a public campaign against atrocities committed by naxals.¹⁴ However, it took an organized form under the leadership of Sri Mahendra Karma, the leader of the Opposition in Chattisgarh and soon the state government decided to provide patronage to the programme. On 25 August 2005, the State government announced that it had set up a Committee headed by Chief Secretary A.K. Vijayvargiya to provide

direct support to the Salva Judum in the form of logistics, arms and funding.¹⁵

As of 4 March 2006, the Salva Judum campaign has organized 128 rallies and 42 meetings. Similarly, a total of 45,958 Adivasi villagers from 644 villages in 6 blocks of Dantewada district have come under Salva Judum programme.¹⁶ However, the campaign has taken a heavy toll on the local tribal people. On 27 February 2006, the Chattisgarh Home Minister, Ram Vichar Netam, informed the State Legislative Assembly that between 31 January 2006 and June 2005 the Communist Party of India (Maoist) killed 95 villagers who were involved in the Salva Judum.¹⁷

What started off as a genuine anti-naxal movement has rather, exposed tribals to more violence and made them refugees in their own land. As observed by Ajay Sahni of the Institute of Conflict Management, Salva Judum has exposed the hapless tribals to repeated rounds of violence by the Maoists, and has displaced, according to various estimates, anything up to 40,000 tribals who are now huddled in ill-equipped government relief camps in the worst conceivable conditions.¹⁸ There are several civil society and

¹³ Chattisgarh 'suspends' anti-Maoist people's movement,
<http://www.newkerala.com/news2.php?action=fullnews&id=40713>

¹⁴ Information obtained from a senior Police officer (Intelligence), Chattisgarh.

¹⁵ South Asia Intelligence Review, Weekly Assessments & Briefings, Volume 4, No.7, August 29, 2005,
http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/4_7.htm#assessment2

¹⁶ "The Adivasis of Chhatisgarh, Victims of the Naxalite Movement and Salva Judum Campaign", Report released by the Asian Centre for Human Rights, 17 March 2006.

¹⁷ Maoist killed 95 villagers involved in anti naxal campaign,
<http://www.newkerala.com/news2.php?action=fullnews&id=17321>

¹⁸ Ajay Sahni, Look Who is waving red flag now, The Indian Express, 2 March 2006.

human rights groups who also allege that large-scale human rights violations have been committed by the Salva Judum activists.

Tribals are fed up with the decade old Naxal violence, and the Salva Judum, when it started, was largely seen as a new beginning. Since it was the first-ever tribal resistance against the naxal movement both the ruling party, and the opposition party of the state, promoted it equally. Undoubtedly, it was a positive development when the tribals decided to stand against the mighty red terror. It gave the state a much-needed opportunity to win over the alienated tribals. However, due to the government's ill thought out strategy, it backfired. Earlier the Government of India tried similar schemes to combat insurgencies in Punjab and Kashmir, recruiting locals to act as policemen, or defend villages in more secure areas. However, the Chhatisgarh government failed to realize that it cannot generalize things when dealing with matters related to the country's internal security. In Kashmir things are mostly taken care of by the professional Indian Army and there is a unified command to oversee anti-terrorist operations. When Punjab was at the peak of terrorism, the anti-terrorist campaign was spear headed by the state police. However, in the case of the Salva Judum, 'the police, the administration, and the politicians are all hoping that the Salva Judum will do what they themselves could not: break the backbone of the local naxalite movement.'¹⁹

¹⁹ Annie Zaidi, Resisting the rebels, Frontline, Volume 22 - Issue 21, Oct. 08 - 21, 2005

Though the state government has suspended the Salva Judum, it is clearly working on a more comprehensive formula to deal with the concentrated naxal attacks. To begin with, the Chhatisgarh government has formally appointed retired IPS officer and former Punjab Director General of police K.P.S. Gill as an advisor to the state government. "Gill has been appointed advisor to the Chhatisgarh government on Maoist issues. His appointment order was issued Thursday by the general administration department," an official release said. The appointment of the security advisor was cleared despite the state police's reluctance because Chief Minister Raman Singh was particularly interested. ²⁰ However, while Gill's tenure in Punjab as the Director General Police earned him the name of super cop, numerous allegations of human rights violations against him still makes him a controversial figure. The government needs to understand that big names won't provide solutions; rather the problem of naxalism in Chattisgarh can be solved only through the effective functioning of institutions. "The challenge is to mix perfect policing policy with a well-coordinated, sensitive and holistic national approach to address the grievances of sections of the jobless and the poor."²¹

²⁰ K.P.S. Gill is Chhatisgarh security advisor, Apr 15, 2006, http://stories.indobase.com/article_4015.shtml

²¹ Amarnath K. Menon, Guns And Postures, India Today International Edition 17.04.2006

Recently the government of Chattisgarh announced a range of benefits for the police personnel in an effort to boost their morale. Incentives for police officers included a 50% increase in salary, Rs. 10 Lakh insurance cover for each commando, Rs. 5 Lakh as Gratuity, Rs. 1 Lakh as Benevolent Fund and an employment for a family member in case of death.²²

On the other hand, the Union Home Ministry has recently prepared an elaborate blue print of massive operations against the CPI (Maoist) in Chattisgarh. "The Centre will rush an estimated sixty companies of paramilitary forces who have been pressed into election duties in four states. The idea is to start the operation in May and finish it before the monsoon sets in since then the forces cannot carry out operations in the dense jungles of Dantewada, the worst affected region in Chattisgarh."²³ As per the Home Ministry statistics, the Ministry sanctioned Rs. 200.14 Lakh for Security Related Expenditure (SRE) during the year 2005-06. For the same period it has also released Rs. 500 lakhs as advance under the head of SREs.²⁴

On April 12, the Chattisgarh Government clamped a ban on the CPI (Maoist) and five other organisations under the Chattisgarh Special Public Security Act, 2005. Additional Chief Secretary (Home), B.K.S. Ray, said the banned organisations are the CPI-Maoist,

Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Sangh, Krantikari Adivasi Balak Sangh, Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sangh, Krantikari Kisan Committee and Mahila Mukti Manch. The ban was imposed under Section 3(1) of the act, which received the President's assent in March 2006 after the Legislative Assembly had passed it in December 2005.²⁵

Given the war like situation in Chattisgarh all these security related measures are very much necessary. Some may term these measures as short term, but the government's long term measures would yield result only when the presence of the government is felt in the naxal-infested regions. To make sure of this the government needs to ride on an effective mechanism of scientific planning which would balance the strategic implications with people's aspirations. At the same time, in order to push its military agenda, the government needs to win over the local tribals for which it needs to work on a comprehensive formula of sustainable development. Unfortunately, though, everybody in his or her concern for violence has forgotten that poverty is the greatest form of human rights violation and violence in the name of development is the greatest form of exploitation. Other than any thing high profile Chattisgarh today needs the basics, i.e. tribal development, livelihood support system, health care, forest rights and a credible system of governance. Natural Resource Management and making tribals partners of development, holds the key to any government initiative.

²² VK Shashikumar, *War strategy: Beat them in their den*, March 16, 2006
http://www.ibnlive.com/article.php?id=6876§ion_id3&single=true

²³ Center's knockout punch for Naxals, Hindustan times, April 27, 2005.

²⁴ Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2005-06

²⁵ Chhattisgarh bans CPI-Maoist and five other organisations,
http://www.satp.org/satporgrp/detailed_news.asp?date1=4/13/2006#9

**II
ORISSA
UNDER THE SHADOW OF RED
TERROR**

Contrary to popular belief 'Naxal Movement', is not a recent phenomenon in Orissa. As of now, the naxals are said to be active in the Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Rayagada, Gajapati, Ganjam, Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Deogarh and Jharsuguda districts of the state. The Communist Party India (Maoist) cadres are also working overtime to establish their foothold in Dhenkanal and Jajpur. While Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Rayagada, Gajapati, and Ganjam have, for a long time, served as a base for the erstwhile People's War Group (PWG), the Jharkhand bordering districts of Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj, and Keonjhar have always remained a hot bed of activity for the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC). In a recently tabled white paper on the law and order situation of the state the state government itself admitted that out of thirty districts of the state, naxals are active in 14 districts.²⁶ It is worth mentioning here that prior to the formation of the CPI (Maoist) in September 2004, Sambalpur, Deogarh and Jharsuguda had no history of naxal problems.

²⁶ Naxalite problem spreads to 14 of 30 Orissa districts
<http://naxalwatch.blogspot.com/2006/03/naxalite-problem-spreads-to-14-of-30.html>

THE ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK

After the formation of the CPI (Maoist), there are two zonal committees of the CPI (Maoist) functioning in Orissa i.e. the Andhra-Orissa Border Special Zonal Committee (AOBSZC) and the Jharkhand-Bihar-Orissa Special Zonal Committee (JBOBSZC). These two function in close coordination with the CPI (Maoist) Central Committee and the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee.²⁷

The AOBSZC, which covers the naxal infested districts of Malkangiri, Koraput, Gajapati, Nabarangpur, Rayagada and Ganjam, has a bureaucratic organizational structure. It is divided into two bureaus where the South Bureau includes the Malkangiri Division and the North Bureau includes the Basdhara Division of the CPI (Maoist), Orissa. The Malkangiri Division has Gopi Sammi Reddy alias Jugal alias Santhosh as its secretary with Balaram Narayan Swami alias Damodar (Surrendered), Kakarala Sunitha alias Guru Smruthi alias Tubri, w/o Sudhakar, Swarna, w/o Vinay (Surrendered), and Kolukula Bala Raju alias Bhagat as its members. On the other hand, the Basdhara Division functions under Sabyasachi Panda alias Sarat as its Secretary with Dunna Keshava Rao alias Anand, Vasantha (suspended for one year), and Bhanu (Sabita), Vizag Advocate as members. Under the Malkangiri Division there are four core committees, i.e. the Papluar Area Committee, the Jana Natya Mandali, the Special Guerilla Squad and the Kalimela Area Committee. Similarly,

²⁷ As informed by a senior member of CPI (Maoist) from Orissa.

under the Basdhara Division, there are five core committees, i.e. the Dippaguda Area Committee, the Mandravaja Area Committee, the Special Dalam, and the Agricultural Team. Some of the prominent Local Guerilla Squads (LGS) under the Malkangiri Division are the Papluar LGS, the Balimela LGS, the Kalimela LGS, the Potteru LGS and the Motu LGS. On the other hand, the Dippaguda LGS, the Mandravaj LGS and the Chandrapur LGS function under the Basdhara Division. The Zonal Military Commission (ZMC) of the AOBSZC manages the strategic planning and armed operations. Recently, the naxals have formed the Peoples Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) and the Orissa Squad, of which Sabyasachi Panda is the new commander. Other functional departments under the AOBSZC are the Mobile Political School (MOPOS), the Mobile Academic School (MAS), the Tailoring Team, the Centre Protection Squad and the Medical Team.²⁸

Over the years, the Naxals have managed to develop a number of front organizations of tribal, women and cultural artists. Some of them are: the Kui Labanga Sangh, the Lok Shakti Manch, the Nari Shakti Bahini, the Kui Sanskrutika Sangathan, the Chasi Mulia Royat Samiti, the Radical Students Organization, the Rajanaitika Bandi Mukti Committee, the Royat Kuli Sangram Manch and the Daman Pratirodh Manch²⁹

²⁸ Information obtained from a senior police officer of Orissa Police who has led several anti naxal operations.

²⁹ Author's interview with Dandapani Mohanty, Convenor, Daman Pratirodh Manch,

The Jharkhand bordering districts of Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanja, and the newest naxal den of Sambalpur are placed under the JBOBSZC of CPI (Maoist). For long the Police and government officials were clueless about the organizational activities of the naxals in these areas. As of now, the naxals are functioning through the Krantikari Kissan Sangh, the Local Regular Guerrilla Squad (LRGS) and the Special Regular Guerrilla Squad (SRGS), above which there is Military Platoon who effectively takes all the important decisions.³⁰

THE NAXAL ROADMAP IN ORISSA

Orissa has been a target of Left-Wing extremism since 1951. For long, it was confined to the undivided Koraput district. The first sign of left wing extremism was noticed in 1962, when comrades from this area -Bhuban Mohan Patnaik, Nagabhusan Patnaik, Purna Chandra Gomang, Purushottam Pali, Jaganath Mishra - with the cooperation of their counterparts in Srikakulam, managed to start a movement called "food liberation" from Gunpur.³¹

a pro-naxal organization in Orissa on 21May, 2005 at his residence in Berhampur.

³⁰ Information obtained from the villagers in Orissa-Jharkhand border during several of my field visits.

³¹ "The 'food liberation' programme which originally started from Gunupur area of then Koraput District (now in Rayagada district) soon spread to some pockets of Berhampur, Chhatrapur, Phulbani and Koraput. Under this programme the peasants and tribal were mobilized to conduct raid on the illegal food stocks of the Zamindars and Landlords." Ref: "Andhra Odisha Simanta Re Naxalbad (Oriya)", one undated Maoist literature published by CPI (ML).

However, the Naxal Movement in Orissa gained momentum and strengthened its position during the last two decades. During the 1990's the Andhra Pradesh government declared the Naxal Movement to be illegal, which had a far-reaching impact on Orissa. Initially the Andhra Naxals used the dense forest of neighbouring Orissa as their hideouts. It was during this time they became successful in creating a base for the People's War Group (PWG) in the rural areas of Koraput. The Naxal Groups attacked the corrupt bureaucrats, and targeted the exploitive businessmen and this led them to win over the local tribals.

Violence intensified in the Naxal affected areas of Orissa after the PWG formed the Andhra –Orissa Border Special Zonal Committee (AOBSZC) in 2001. The AOBSZC covers four north coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh – East Godavari, Vishakhapatnam, Vijaynagaram and Srikakulam, and six southern districts of Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Rayagada, Gajapati, and Ganjam in Orissa.³² Naxalism in Orissa entered yet another phase after the merger of the MCC and the PWG resulting in the formation of CPI (Maoist).

The popular discontent with the existing socio-political order has always been an important factor for any social movement. Even though it's highly debatable if one can really put the Naxal movement in the category of social movements, it's also a fact that naxalism thrived in Orissa mostly because of the lack of a proper developmental strategy. Recently, the Planning Commission of India

³² Information obtained from the Malkangiri District Police.

identified Orissa as having the highest over all poverty ratio of any major Indian state, with around 48 percent (17 million) of its population living below the poverty line. The ground situation in the literacy front is much more worry-some where the literacy rate in Orissa is 63.61 percent as compared to the national literacy rate of 65.4 per cent. Infectious diseases (acute respiratory infections, diarrhea, tuberculosis, and malaria) have never left Orissa. The state still holds its position among the states with highest infant mortality rates. The health care facility is in a terrible state, as it has lowest number of doctors per capita in the world. However, even though the state is poverty-stricken, surprisingly less than 5 percent of the population have access to subsidized food aimed at poverty alleviation.³³

These development indicators put the naxals in an excellent position to build up a formidable base in Orissa. Through out all these years several industrial, mining and irrigation projects have come up in Orissa though, it's a failure on the part of government that it could not include the tribal and poor in the ensuing development. The asymmetrical development in Orissa has fostered a conflict between values of democratic governance and aspirations of the people. The Naxal movement in Orissa has so far managed to sustain itself because it successfully exploits the life of marginalized people in these areas. It has established a link between underdevelopment, regional

³³ Data compiled from several government reports and reproduced from my article titled 'Underdevelopment and Naxal Movement', Economic and Political Weekly, February 18, 2006.

imbalance, economic disparity and gun culture.

After the formation of the CPI (Maoist) a sea of change has been noticed in the functioning of the ultras. They have managed to reach out to areas where previously there was no history of naxalism. Particularly, the western Orissa district of Sambalpur, with its long stretch of forest cover (Redhakhol), has now become the fertile breeding ground for naxals. Credit goes to Dam Deo, one Maoist emissary from Bihar who first started the Maoist propaganda in the dense forest of Redhakhol. Since then, the naxals have managed to conduct several training camps and they also run several gun-manufacturing units inside the inaccessible forest. It's not Maoism in itself that attracts the villagers, but the villagers of this region are forced to join Naxal ranks as it provides them with a source of livelihood as the naxals pay anything between Rs.1000/ to Rs. 2000/ per month to all new recruits.³⁴ In their quest for so called development, the naxals went on a rampage on May 27th 2005, and killed three villagers and injured several others in the Burda village under Jujumura police station. Again, on 6th July 2005, they killed five villagers in the Banjaritikra village of Sambalpur.³⁵ The Naxal leadership and literature is never tired of talking about the development of the poor and the marginalized. However, the CPI (Maoist) showed it's real colour when it kidnapped 14 daily wage labourers from Pudamal village of Sambalpur on February 8th 2005 and demanded 1 lakh as ransom.³⁶

³⁴ Laal Corridor, The Sambad (Oriya Daily), Dt. 13/2/2005.

³⁵ Andolana Ra Atankaraj, The Sunday section of Sambad (Oriya Daily), 17th July, 2005.

³⁶ Sambad (Oriya Daily), 10th February 2005.

Orissa is probably the only state where narco-terrorism finds a place in the modus operandi of Left wing extremism. It has been reported several times in the local media that naxals are into Ganja cultivation and smuggling. Inaccessible areas (mostly administration and police use this term) of Malkangiri and Redhakhol have long spread Ganja cultivation fields owned by the naxal groups.

The naxals proved their mastery over the technique of landmines several times in the naxal-infested areas of Malkangiri through out 2004-05. In many of their attacks they proved their ability and exposed the cracks in the police intelligence. Similarly, with the recent daring jailbreak incident in the Gajapati district on 24th March 06, the Naxals sent a loud and clear message that they are ubiquitous and can strike anywhere at will.

MISSING GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Despite this alarming situation, it is unbelievable, but true, that the government has yet to formulate an effective counter-Naxal policy. In the recently concluded coordination committee meeting of Naxal affected states, the government of Orissa was severely criticized for its inept and casual approach to the growing problem of naxalism. Orissa could not give a constructive anti-Naxalism policy and continued to harp that no Naxal violence was witnessed in the state during the last year. However, the Orissa Chief Secretary, Subash Pani, was sternly told that no incident was witnessed because it was giving a free run to extremists.³⁷ The

³⁷ Orissa pulled up for no Naxal policy
<http://www.zeenews.com/znnew/articles.asp?aid=285752&sid=REG>

government itself has admitted that it's 14 out of total 30 districts are under the influence of the CPI (Maoist), however its really a pity that the government has not even thought of any strategic policy. This lacuna is admitted among the top ranking police officials in Orissa. One senior IPS officer, who does not want to be named here, ridiculed the government demand for more companies of CRPF for Naxal-affected areas, as there are more than 7,000 vacancies in the state police force itself.

Orissa does not have a rule where every IPS and state cadre officer has to be posted in Naxal-affected districts and this drawback has led to corrupt practices and there is a serious cause of demotivation among the security personnel who are posted in the guerrilla zone.

It's not only a problem with the present government and even in the mid-nineties when the naxals were focussing on Organization building the then government of J.B. Pattnaik preferred to ignore the problem. And, that apathy soon became a blessing for the naxals as it gave them a free hand to reach into every nook and corner of the state.³⁸

Probably the first organized attempt to counter naxals in Orissa was made by "Shanti Sena", which was led by an estranged naxal leader, Daku Majhi, during 1998. Even Daku Majhi contested elections and became the Chairman of the Chandrapur Block in 2003. Initially, he was able to organize tribals against the naxals and police

saw a friend in him. "We were sympathetic with Shanti Sena initially, but we never promoted them."³⁹ However the experiment was short lived, as the government did not know what to do with the Shanti Sena and Daku Majhi was eliminated by the Sabyasachi group on April 24, 2004 during the General Elections.

Recently, in the naxal-hit district of Malkangiri, the police have started a low scale programme on 'Community Policing' to win over local tribals and checkmate the naxals in their heartland. Led by the Malkangiri SDPO, Himanshu Lal, IPS, the district police is visiting the villages where no government official ever bothered to go. "We go there, organize some tournament or some cultural event and also organize a feast with the villagers. Under the programme the police also appoint Special Police Officers among the local people."⁴⁰ Undoubtedly, a small scale initiative, which could well mark a new beginning if the government put some serious planning into its successful implementation.

Taking advantage of the prevalent backwardness, and of the failed mechanism of governance today, the naxals have managed to create a place for themselves in the political map of Orissa. However, in their quest for a Maoist regime, the naxals in Orissa have forgotten that political power in India does not flow from the barrel of a gun. The Naxal brand of politics, in its avowed faith on violent techniques, has created more space for political exploitation.

³⁸ Statement of a former Member of Parliament and senior tribal leader in Congress from Orissa.

³⁹ M. Praharaj, IPS, Addl. D.G Orissa Police, while interacting with the writer.

⁴⁰ Telephonic Conversation with Sri Himanshu Lal, IPS, SDPO, Malkangiri.

Successive governments in Orissa have agreed numerous times that development, land and tribe related issues are key to the problem of naxalism in Orissa. Yet, none have ever attempted to approach these issues seriously.

To sum up, given the alarming naxal situation today, a national approach is strongly needed. The problem of naxalism has grown into a serious internal security problem and compartmentalization would only worsen the situation. A ban in Chattisgarh, and the lack of any policy in Orissa, is clearly not solution for Naxalism.