

Naxalism

Naxalism is definitely a challenge to the democratic political system of India. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh considers naxalism “the greatest internal security threat to our country” Naxalism is a political ideology followed by some extremist communist groups. Its followers are known as Naxalites. Naxalites are a communist guerilla group under the influence of the Communist Party of India - Maoist. – CPI (Maoist).

The word ‘naxal’ in naxalism is derived from the name of Naxalbari village situated in the Siliguri subdivision of Darjeeling district of West Bengal. It is a tribal area mainly consisting of Santhal, Munda and some other tribes.

The [Naxal Management Division of Government of India](#)¹ describes naxalism as left wing extremism (LWE). Naxalites, the followers of Naxalism, have vowed to destroy the current Indian political system and replace it with a state based on the leftist ideology – particularly Maoism.

The Communists – CPI and CPM

The history of Naxalism can be traced back to the origin of Communist party in India in 1920s. [The Communist Party of India](#)² was established on 26th December 1925. It was inspired by [Great October socialist revolution](#)³ of 1917 in Russia.⁴

Overthrowing capitalist system, establishing dictatorship of the proletariat (workers) were the main objectives of this revolution. At that time the Indian National Congress was a dominant force in Indian politics and the CPI had a very minor influence on Indian politics. Even after independence the communists were not able to improve their condition.

State assembly elections in Kerala in 1957 were a notable event. First democratically elected communist government in the world came to power in Kerala in 1957 under the leadership of [Chief Minister E. M. S. Namboodiripad](#).⁵

There was a major split in the Communist party of India. A new faction [CPI \(Marxist\)](#) was formed at the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of India held in Calcutta from October 31 to November 7, 1964. ⁶ The CPM is dominant mainly in West Bengal and Tripura.

The CPI (M) celebrated 25 years of their government in West Bengal in 2002 (It was in power since 1977). In 2011 elections they were defeated by the All India [Trinamool Congress](#)⁷ of Mamata Banerjee.

Currently the Communists have a significant presence in the states of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. In the 15th Loksabha elections 2009 the left front secured 25 seats with CPI 4 seats CPM 16 seats and other small parties 5 seats.

[Brief History of Naxalism](#)⁸

The first major event the process of development of the naxal movement was the 1948 Telangana struggle. Some villages in the southern Andhra were organised into 'communes' as part of a peasant movement which came to be known as Telangana Struggle. The famous

Andhra Thesis for the first time demanded that 'Indian revolution' follow the Chinese revolution.

In 1967 a group of rebels under the leadership of Charu Majumdar decided to form a separate organisation and wage a violent war against the exploiting land lords and protect the poor farmers as the CPM participated in polls and forms a coalition United Front government in West Bengal.

The rebel cadres led by Charu Majumdar launched a peasant uprising at Naxalbari in Darjeeling district of West Bengal. A tribal youth fighting for his land was attacked by goons of local landlords. Tribals retaliated and started forcefully capturing back their lands.

The CPI (M)-led United Front government cracked down on the uprising and in 72 days of the rebellion a police sub-inspector and nine tribals were killed. The Congress government at the Centre supported the crackdown. The incident echoed throughout India and naxalism was born.

A new party, CPI (Marxist - Leninist), was launched on the birth anniversary of Lenin in 1969. Charu Majumdar was elected as the Secretary of Central Organising Committee. In July 1972 Charu Majumdar was arrested in Calcutta He died in Lal Bazaar police lock-up on July 28. In 1980 Kondapally Sitaramayya formed the People's War Group, which was later banned by the Andhra government.

The Naxalites have always expressed their sympathies towards the dalit movement, particularly in Maharashtra. An all-India dalit conference was held in Amravati in 1980 to facilitate interaction with Ambedkarite groups.

After the assassination of Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi in October 1984 the Naxalites tried to woo Sikh youth towards joining revolutionary movement. The Sikh community was angered and frustrated due to the blue star operation conducted by the Army in the Golden Temple at Amritsar and the countrywide anti-Sikh riots after the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by two of her own Sikh bodyguards.

CPI (ML) (Liberation) recorded its first electoral victory under Indian People's Front banner. A naxalite was elected as a Loksabha member from the Ara constituency in Bihar.

N T Ramarao relaxed the ban on Peoples War Group in Andhra Pradesh for three months in 1995. But there was no positive response from the organisation. On the contrary they started a massive recruitment drive.

In a significant development in 2004, the People's War Group (PWG), then operating in Andhra Pradesh, and the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI), then operating in Bihar and adjoining areas, merged to form the CPI (Maoist). The CPI (Maoist) is the major Left Wing Extremist outfit responsible for most incidents of violence and killing of civilians and security forces and has been included in the Schedule of Terrorist Organisations along with all its formations and front organisations under the [Unlawful Activities \(Prevention\) Act, 1967](#).⁹

Major incidents of Naxal violence in the last decade:-

1) Attack on N Chandrababu Naidu (Oct. 2003)

The Telugu Desam Party chief and then Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu had a narrow escape, when he was on his way to Tirupati on October 1, 2003. The attack was carried out by a special team of Maoists at the foothills of Tirumala. A few seconds delay in triggering claymore mines saved his life.

2) Naxal Attack in Koraput (2004)

In a daring attack, over 1000 Maoists attacked Orissa's district headquarters town of Koraput and looted 200 sophisticated guns and other weapons worth Rs. 50 crore. They looted the district armoury, five police stations, Koraput jail, SP's office and the Orissa State Armed Police (OSAP) battalion.

3) Jehanabad Jail break (2005)

On November 13, 2005, Maoists laid virtual siege to Jehanabad town and freed over 375 prisoners including 130 Naxalites. The operation continued for seven hours, killing several Ranveer Sena men and police personnel. They looted 185 rifles and 2000 rounds of ammunition. How the naxalites view this is depicted in the following paragraph:-

“The jails are packed with innocent people while the real criminals in society rarely are put behind bars. For this reason the people of the country have the right to release their beloved brethren who are falsely thrown into jails and to try the real culprits in people’s courts. This the CPI (Maoists) did successfully in the historic Jehanabad jail break.”

4) Naxal attacks in R. Udayagiri, 40 prisoners freed (Feb, 2006)

On March 24, 2006, over 500 Maoists lashed with arms and ammunition attacked the Orissa State Armed Police camp in the Gajapati district of Orissa, killing three policemen. They looted arms and freed around 40 prisoners.

5) Chattisgarh Naxal attack (2006)

At least 25 people were killed and 80 others injured, when over 800 armed Naxalites attacked a village in Dantewada district of Chattisgarh on July 17, 2006. The attack took place at Errabore relief camp where more than 4000 people had taken shelter. They also kidnapped more than 20 people, while 200 others fled from the spot.

6) Naxalites kill Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) MP Sunil Mahato (2007)

Armed Naxalites shot dead JMM MP (Lok Sabha) Sunil Kumar Mahato, his bodyguards and a party colleague while they were watching football match at Bakuria village near Jamshedpur in Jharkhand.

7) Naxalites attack Police Outpost; kill 55 security personnel (2007)

Over 500 Naxalites attacked a police outpost in Chattisgarh's Rani Bodi village, killing 55 policemen. 24 of the deceased belonged to the state police, while 31 others were Special Police

Officers (SPOs). Most of these policemen were asleep when this attack was carried out with lobbed grenades and bombs.

8) Naxal attack in Dantewada, 303 prisoners freed (2007)

The Naxalites attacked the Dantewada jail and freed 303 prisoners, 100 out of which were Naxalites. It was reported that most of the prisoners fled to the jungles of Orissa, 25 out of them were recaptured but none of them were Naxalites.

9) Naxalites kill Babulal Marandi's son (2007)

Former Jharkhand CM Babulal Marandi's son Anup and 17 others were killed in a Naxal attack at the Chilkhadia village in Giridh district of Jharkhand. The Naxals opened indiscriminate fire and exploded bombs when a cultural programme was being held.

10) Nayagarh Naxal Attack (2008)

The Naxal attack in Nayagarh on the night of February 15, 2008, was called the deadliest of all attacks that has been witnessed by the country. Hundreds of Maoists came in buses and trucks, and laid siege of the district headquarters town in Orissa. They killed 14 policemen and one civilian. They also torched the Police Training School. Over 700 state police personnel, CRPF, SOG Commandos, Special Greyhound Forces from Andhra Pradesh and IAF Helicopters launched massive offensive on the Naxals at the Gasma Mountain. Although 20 Maoists were reportedly killed, there were no captured prisoners.

11) Darbha Valley attack on Congress leaders

On 25 May 2013, Naxalite insurgents of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) attacked a convoy of Indian National Congress leaders in the Darbha Valley in the Sukma district of Chhattisgarh, India. The attack caused at least 27 deaths, including that of former state minister Mahendra Karma and Chhattisgarh Congress chief Nand Kumar Patel. Vidya Charan Shukla, a senior Congress leader also later succumbed to his injuries on 11 June 2013.

The Government of India's approach

[Naxal Management Division](#)¹⁰ was created on October 19, 2006 under the Home Ministry to effectively address the LWE problem in a holistic manner. The Division monitors the LWE situation and counter-measures being taken by the affected States. The Division coordinates the implementation of various development schemes of the Ministries/Departments of Govt. of India in LWE affected States.

President Pranab Mukherjee (views expressed in 2010, when he was the finance minister) is of the opinion that Naxals are political elements out to capture power and the issue of development was “more imaginary than actual”.

“Development is needed. Lack of development may swell their (Naxals) cadre. But they do not run charitable institutions ...They are political elements and want to capture the power of the state,” Mr. Mukherjee said.

“Many well-meaning liberal intellectuals fall prey to Maoist propaganda without understanding the true nature of Maoist insurgency doctrine which glorifies violence and believes in annihilation of the so called class enemies.”¹¹



Figure 1: Arundhati Roy with some of the LWEs

Consider what Arundhati Roy¹² has to say about the Naxalites:-

“While 99 per cent of Naxals are tribals, 99 per cent of tribals are not Maoists”, and the Naxal violence is a corollary to the battle between the tribals and the corporate houses to gain control over natural resources. “What the government calls Maoists corridor, is in fact MoU-ist corridor. You have a Memorandum of Understanding (a contract) on every mountain, river...MoUs signed by biggest corporations in the world who are waiting to gain hold of the resources,”¹³

Elaborating on the strategy of the naxals, the Naxal Management of the Indian Home Ministry says:-

“Since 2001 to 2012 about 5772 civilians and 2065 SFs have been killed by the Maoists in different parts of India. A majority of the civilians killed are tribals, often branded as ‘Police informers’ before being brutally tortured and killed. In fact, tribals and the economically underprivileged sections have been the biggest victims of the so called ‘protracted peoples war’ of the CPI (Maoist) against the Indian state.

Many sections of society, especially the younger generation, have romantic illusions about the Maoists, arising out of an incomplete understanding of their ideology. The central theme of Maoist ideology is violence. The Maoist insurgency doctrine glorifies violence as the primary means to overwhelm the existing socio-economic and political structures. The Peoples Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA), the armed wing of CPI (Maoist), has been created with this purpose in mind. In the first stage of the insurgency, the PLGA resorts to guerrilla warfare. This primarily aims at creating a vacuum at the grass-roots level of the existing governance structures. They achieve this by killing lower-level government officials, police-personnel of the local police stations, the workers of mainstream political parties and the people’s representatives of the Panchayati Raj system. After creating a vacuum, they coerce the local population to join the movement. A strident propaganda is also carried out against the purported and real inadequacies of the existing state structure.

In areas under Maoist domination, the absence of governance becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy since the delivery systems are extinguished through killings and intimidation. This is the first step in the strategy of the Maoists to seek to control the countryside. In the meanwhile, many Front Organisations are created to facilitate mass-mobilisation in semi-urban and urban areas through ostensibly democratic means. Most of the Front Organisations are led by well-educated intellectuals with firm belief in the Maoist insurgency doctrine. These ideologues function as masks to cover the violent nature of the CPI (Maoist) ideology. They form propaganda/disinformation machinery of the party.

They stridently take up issues like human rights violations by security forces etc. and often make fantastic claims in this regard which gets reported even by the mainstream media. The Front Organisations also skilfully use

state structures and legal processes to further the Maoist agenda and weaken the enforcement regime. The important functions of these Organisations include raising funds for the insurgency, creating urban shelters for underground cadres, providing legal help to arrested cadres and mass- mobilisation by agitating over issues of relevance/ convenience. The Front Organisations aim to provide short-term democratic subterfuge to cover-up the totalitarian and oppressive nature of the Maoist ideology. Finally, the CPI (Maoist) also have a strategic game-plan to create a 'United Front' with all like-minded insurgent / terrorist outfits in India. It needs to be remembered that many of these outfits are supported by external forces inimical to India and the CPI (Maoist) consider such alliances as strategic assets.

The Government's approach is to deal with Left Wing Extremism in a holistic manner, in the areas of security, development, ensuring rights of local communities, improvement in governance and public perception management.

Some related websites for more information:-

1. <http://www.cpiml.org/>
2. <http://www.cpiml.in/>
3. http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/terroristoutfits/CPI_M_Timeline13.htm

Table showing the figures of naxal attacks and deaths during those attacks in various states since 2008

State	total incidents	total deaths	2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013 (up to Apr)	
			Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths
Chattisgarh	2703	1213	620	242	529	290	625	343	465	204	370	109	94	25
Jharkhand	2875	978	484	207	742	208	501	157	517	182	480	163	151	61
West Bengal	738	487	35	26	255	158	350	258	92	45	6	0	0	0
Bihar	1260	368	164	73	232	72	307	97	316	63	166	44	75	19
Odisha	978	352	103	101	266	67	218	79	192	54	171	45	28	6
Maharashtra	588	259	68	22	154	93	94	45	109	53	134	41	29	5
Andhra Pradesh	391	114	92	46	66	18	100	24	54	9	67	13	12	4
Others	39	5	14	4	5	0	5	0	6	1	8	0	1	0
Uttar Pradesh	21	3	4	0	8	2	6	1	1	0	2	0	0	0
Madhya Pradesh	35	1	7	0	1	0	7	1	8	0	11	0	1	0
Total	9628	3780	1591	721	2258	908	2213	1005	1760	611	1415	415	391	120

Salwa Judum

Salwa Judum is a term in the Gondi language spoken by the Gond tribals in Central India. It means a peace march or purification hunt. This term was used by the Chattisgarh government to name its counter insurgency operation against the naxalites. It was started in 2005. It can be called as a government backed people's resistance movement against the Maoists.

Government authorities armed the tribal villagers to fight the naxalites. Mahendra Karma, a Congress leader, took lead in organising the movement against the Naxalites. Tribals were recruited as **Special Police Officers** (SPOs) and given arms training. It was expected that Salwa Judum will effectively curb the power of the naxalites.

But in practice Salwa Judum was not successful. Many innocent people were either killed¹⁴ or were harassed by both the sides – the Naxalites and the Salwa Judum people. In 2013 Mahendra Karma was assassinated by the Naxalites. In 2008 the Supreme Court banned the recruitment of tribals as special police officers and ordered to

stop the Salwa Judum movement. According to Supreme Court decision the move to recruit tribals as special police officers was unconstitutional. It said "It is a question of law and order. You cannot give arms to somebody (a civilian) and allow him to kill. You will be an abettor of the offence under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code."

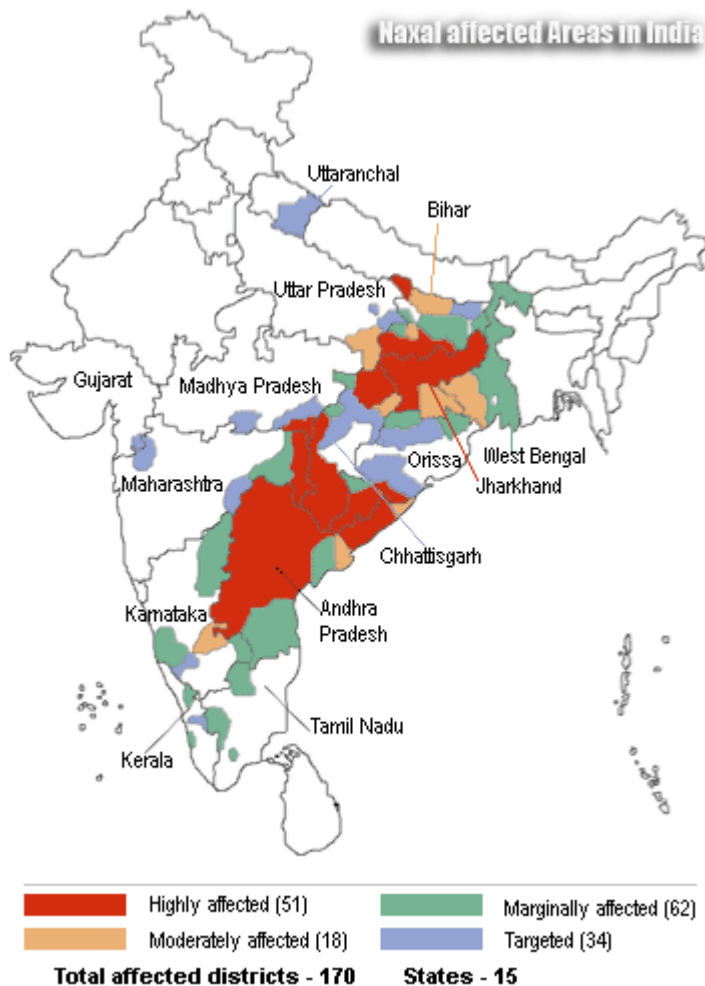
A human rights organisation says about the Salwa Judum in its report:-

"...The Salwa Judum has been responsible for a huge amount of violence in the district, which includes killing civilians, burning and looting their houses, and raping women. Rather than stopping Maoist violence, it has actually led to an increase in retaliatory killings by Naxalites. "

"....The creation and support of the Salwa Judum has divided entire villages and families, perhaps irreversibly. They are forced either to choose the Maoists or the Salwa Judum. Official figures state that 644 out of 1153 villages or nearly 56% are involved in the Salwa Judum. A cycle of retribution and revenge has been set in motion, with the Salwa Judum targeting villagers believed to be sympathetic to the Maoists and the Maoists in turn killing those active in the Salwa Judum."

The Red Corridor

The Red corridor is the zone from Pashupatinath in Nepal to Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh India. The Naxalites want to set up a communist state in this region. The region covers the Indian state of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Orissa parts of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh. Following is the map showing the Red corridor.



Source: - <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/naxals-vow-to-renew-red-terror/35121-3.html#> downloaded on 14/1/2014

Inside this Red Corridor, set up in the tribal forest lands of Central India and stretching from Nepal to Andhra Pradesh, the Naxalites run a parallel government and vow to continue their fight against the state - a full-fledged war they call "people's struggle".

References:-

- ¹ http://mha.nic.in/naxal_new - Naxal Management Division of Government of India.
- ² <http://www.comunistparty.in/> - official website of the Communist Party of India
- ³ <http://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/events/revolution/index.htm> - details about the October revolution.
- ⁴ <http://www.marxists.org/index.htm> - Read more about Marxism
- ⁵ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/obituary-e-m-s-namboodiripad-1153957.html> - Read this obituary to know more about EMS Namboodiripad.
- ⁶ <http://www.cpim.org/> - official site of CPI (M)
- ⁷ <https://aitmc.org/index.php> Trinamool Congress website
- ⁸ <http://www.hindustantimes.com/news-feed/nm2/history-of-naxalism/article1-6545.aspx> - Article on Hindustan Times website downloaded on 15-1-2014.

⁹ [http://www.nia.gov.in/acts/TheUnlawfulActivities_\(Prevention\)_AmendmentAct,1967\(37of1967\).pdf](http://www.nia.gov.in/acts/TheUnlawfulActivities_(Prevention)_AmendmentAct,1967(37of1967).pdf) – The act in PDF format as available on the National Investigation Agency (NIA) website.

¹⁰ http://mha.nic.in/naxal_new - Government of India site

¹¹ <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?264738-0> – Read this article about the naxalites by famous writer Arundhati Roy

¹² <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?264738-0> Article by Arundhati Roy on Naxalism.

¹³ <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/73159/i-still-back-naxals-struggle.html>

¹⁴ <http://cpjc.wordpress.com/> 'Campaign for peace and justice in Chattisgarh – CPJC' - View this site to read more about Salwa Judum

Questions

1. Write short notes about:-
 - a. Communist Party of India
 - b. Communist Party of India (Marxist)
 - c. Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)
 - d. People's War Group
 - e. Salwa Judum
 - f. Red corridor
2. Explain the Government of India's approach towards Naxalism
3. Explain the problem of Naxalism as you understand it