

Caste, Regionalism, and Political Violence: Maoist Violence in Nepal and Bihar

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Up until 1996, the Maoist movement in Nepal was in a dormant state. To Nepal's south, in the central-eastern Indian state of Bihar, a strong Left movement has its history since the 1930s. Nepal -- until the surge of global democratization in early 1990s -- was regarded largely as a quiet Himalayan Hindu kingdom with its docile citizenry and exotic tourist spots. Bihar, on the other hand, has seen many ups and downs in its democratic experience since 1947, including the politics of revolutionary (Marxist-Maoist) violence.

In the post 9/11 international scene of political violence and terrorism, if a couple of stories have to be picked up from South Asia, usually secession-violence in Kashmir or the Tamil-Sinhalese ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka get most of the attention. The strategic location, ferocity or the head-count usually determine international consciousness. Also, people tend to go where the media take them. So, buried under the major international headlines related to violence and upheavals of the day are other ongoing stories either ignored or given least priority to. One such spot is an expanding area of Maoist influence starting clockwise from Uttar Pradesh in India to Nepal and then to Bihar and other states in east and south India¹.

In the following essay, an attempt is made to critically understand the Maoist groups in Nepal and Bihar, their social base, their ideology and agenda, and the response of the states. It also seeks to examine the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of the methods the Maoists are adopting and the location of the politics of violence in the larger South Asian political context.

Nepali Maoists: From obscurity to a major player

The Maoists in Nepal have grown from a small group of intellectuals into a formidable military and social force particularly in the countryside. In the decades before 1990, there were several Marxist Communist groups having relations to the uprisings against the monarchy, student radicalism or struggles of peasants and workers. They participated in the popular People's Movement of 1989-90 as constituents of the United National People's Movement (UNPM), a joint front for the promotion of democracy. Following the political transformation in 1990, several communist groups, disgruntled with the democratic system under constitutional monarchy, broke away from their parent party, the Unified Left Front (ULF). To reserve the option of adopting a violent revolutionary path, they formed a two-tier organization: the revolutionary front (Communist Party of Nepal Unity Centre, CPN-UC) and the political front (United People's Front of Nepal, UPFN). The UPFN participated in the May 1991 elections and came a distant third group with nine seats in the 205-member lower house. It did marginally well in the local bodies' elections the following year. The mainstream Unified Left Front (ULF), in the

mean time, had survived the desertions of radical elements. In January 1991, two major factions of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) – the CPN (Marxist) and the CPN (Marxist-Leninist) – had merged to form the CPN – UML (Unified Marxist-Leninist). It came surprisingly second with 69 members after the Nepali Congress Party (NCP) which had 110 seats. The NCP, with higher number of seats, had secured a comfortable majority in the parliament. However, it was defeated by the UML in the eastern hill districts and in some parts of the *terai* (the plains).

In terms of popularity among the voters, the UML had a broader mandate than the radical UPFN. In the general election of 1994, the UML emerged as the single largest party with 88 seats leaving the NCP behind by three seats. To the amazement of observers, a feudal oligarchic country unexpectedly found itself under a democratically elected Marxist-Leninist government. The communist government did not last very long; however, the UML modified the Marxist-Leninist dogma and accepted the principle of working within a competitive democratic multiparty system. The UPFN, on the other hand, got divided into factions: one led by Nirmal Lama and Niranjan Vaidya, and the other by Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Baburam Bhattarai. Dahal's faction decided not to contest the 1994 election and set upon a course of confrontation with the state.

In 1995, they established an autonomous Communist Party of Nepal—Maoist party by adopting a wholesome “Marxist—Leninist-Maoist” (M-L-M) ideology and platform. There was no ideological ambiguity about their allegiance to Maoism which contended that some self-styled communist groups were “revisionists”. True to their loyalty, the CPN-M believed in Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution and Red Guards which meant their denunciation of more conservative opponents like Deng Xiaoping. After Mao's death, when Deng came to power, Nepali Maoists criticized China as a pseudo-communist and a nation of “state capitalism”.

This might explain why CPN-M and the current communist leadership in China were not on best terms. Sympathetic to the objectives of socialism, the CPN-M puts emphasis on Maoism as a revolutionary ideal. It contends that any Marxist party would cease to be revolutionary if it took part in elections because that would mean acceptance of 1990 parliamentary constitution. Moreover, Maoist communism recognized rural-urban dichotomy. It gave precedence to the rural struggle of peasants against landlords over the urban struggles of workers against their employers. This is the line followed by Maoists in Bihar as well.

The Maoists took inspiration from their mentor's strategy of the ‘People's War’ more than likely to be successful in rural areas. The Nepali Maoists modelled themselves more after Peru's rural Senderos Luminosas (Shining Path) than urban guerrillas. In the decades of 1960s and 1970s, the urban guerrillas inspired by the writings of Carlos Marighella of Brazil and the Tupamaros in Uruguay were ruthlessly crushed. The rural armed uprisings in Algeria, Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam and China were, on the other hand, successful. Nepal's overwhelming rural setting, its feudal social structure, lack of industrialization and almost absence of meaningful natural resources made it a fertile ground for the launching of the ‘People's War.’

There were differences between the Maoists and the mainstream communist-socialist groups on programs and strategies also. For example, the mainstream communist group could go slow on the question of gender equality since it was not possible to abolish thousands of years old cultural norms and traditions. For Maoists gender was an important issue and emancipation of women could go together with the class struggle. In a country where national literacy rate for women was only 14 percent as against 40 percent for men, the CPN-M had introduced special programs to teach women how to read and write.

Beginning of the People's Revolutionary War

During the six years following the end of the monarchical partyless Panchayat system, Nepal had gone through a series of political and constitutional crises which not only affected the leading centrist Nepali Congress Party (NCP) but also the communist parties. Following a protracted people's movement and the King's assent, Nepal was supposed to undergo a transition from a centuries-old oligarchic-monarchical system to a representative parliamentary constitutional monarchy. Instead, the country's democratization got hamstrung by intra-party feuds, inter-party deceit and distrust, administrative corruption, monarchical manipulation and the big brotherly intervention of India. In the meantime, poverty, unemployment and lack of civic amenities in Nepal were constantly deteriorating.

As if the difficulties in Nepal were too much to bear, the CPN-M, under the leadership of Pushpa kamal Dahal (alias Comrade Prachanda) and Baburam Bhattarai, denounced other mainstream communists as 'renegades and revisionists' and launched a "People's War" by resorting to an armed attack (13 February 1996) on police stations in two districts of northwestern Nepal. Only nine days earlier, a memorandum containing 40-point demand was sent to the Prime Minister by Bhattarai who had signed the memorandum in his capacity as the chairman of the central committee of the United People's Front, the political arm of the CPN-M. The memorandum broadly lashed out at the expansionist imperialist ambitions of foreign masters, mainly India; lamented the socio-economic condition of Nepal and presented demands related to 'nationalism, democracy and livelihood.'²

On the question of nationalism, the memorandum asked for an outright abrogation of the 1950 Nepal-India treaty as it was biased and discriminatory against Nepal. It also asked for a withdrawal of the treaty with India concluded on 29 January 1996 which had given India access to water from the Tanakpur barrage on the Mahakali River. In addition, the flow of Nepali workers to India and their condition, the influence of 'imperialist and colonial' culture, their capital in Nepali industries and their invasion in the garb of NGOs should be either ended or regulated. The economic and custom policies must be redesigned to help the nation become self-reliant.

On the issues related to people's democracy, the party demanded a complete overhaul and redrafting of the Nepalese constitution which would change the nation from a constitutional monarchy to a secular 'people's democratic system' by abolishing the

special privileges of the King. The new constitution would bring the police and bureaucracy under the civilian control, repeal repressive acts like the Security Act, introduce ethnic, regional, gender, linguistic equality, academic, professional and press freedom and eliminate untouchability (caste discrimination). Local bodies should be promoted and equipped to do away with regional and ethnic disparities. Also, the government was asked to account for a series of extra-judicial killings and arrests, compensate the affected families, release the party activists under detention and declare the dead as martyrs.

On the question of 'livelihood', the third and final category in the list of demands, the party pressed for a reconstruction of Nepal's rural-agricultural set up. Using the Marxist-Maoist rhetoric, the memorandum demanded a state takeover of land and property belonging to the feudal, middlemen and 'comprador capitalists.' "Capital lying unproductive should be invested to promote industrialization". Furthermore, the state should guarantee poor farmers exemption from loan repayment; employment or, interim unemployment allowance; minimum wage for agricultural and industrial workers; subsidized fertilizer and seeds; home for homeless; free and scientific health and education services to all and so on. Underlining the need for drinking water, roads and electricity to all villages, the party demanded the 'commercialization of education' to be stopped. Whereas corruption, smuggling, black marketing, bribery and the practices of middlemen should be eliminated, all essential goods and services must be cheaply accessible to all. As expected, the memorandum did not suggest how such a huge fund would be raised and whether there would be any significant role of private enterprise or capital.

The memorandum posted 17 February 1996 as the deadline before which the government was expected 'to initiate steps to fulfill' the demands. But, the party launched its 'armed struggle against the state power' with full force four days earlier in the hill districts of Rolpa and Rukum in northwestern Nepal.³ Gradually, the Maoist violence spread to the western and mid-western and some parts of eastern Nepal. A low-intensity war between the instruments of the Nepalese state (police, military and para-military forces) and the Maoists, now almost a decade old, had claimed the lives of more than 5,000 Maoist insurgents and 1, 700 security personnel by January, 2004.⁴ As the state repression increased, the underground Maoist insurgents became more cadre-based and organized in its command and control. In varying degrees, the Maoist insurgents had their presence in 68 out of 75 districts of Nepal.

Increasing militant clout of the CPN-M

Working as an underground outfit since 1995, the CPN-M consolidated its organizational structure. The CPN-M is headed by its chairman who is the chief of operations. The political (United People's Front) and the military (Central Military Commission) wings were responsible for carrying out the directives of the Politburo. Constituted in 1998, the Central Military Commission was being assisted by regional, sub-regional and district military commissions. The following table shows the organizational structure of the CPN-Maoist:

Party	People's Army	United Front
Standing Committee	Central Military Commission	United People's District Committees
Politburo	Regional Military Commission	United People's Area Committee
Central Committee	Sub-regional Military Commission	United People's Village Committee
Regional Bureaus (Five)	District Military Commission	United People's Ward Committees
Sub-regional bureaus (In some places sub-regional bureau)	Included in this are: Temporary Battalion	
District Committees	Companies	
Area Committees	Platoons	
Cell Committees	Squads (separate people's militias also exist under united village people's committees)	

Source:

As Nepal continued to experience the growth of a 'third world democracy' marked by violent and questionable elections, clamor over spoil-sharing, defections, horse-trading, coalition formation and its subversion, and the King's interference, the CPN-M carried on its insurgent 'people's war' gathering momentum in the summer of 1998. However, the administration which had the mainstream Communist Party, the UML as its coalition partner, sought to quell the insurgency.

In June 2000, after the NCP had won a clear majority and set up a new administration, the CPN-M accepted the government's invitation for a dialogue. In order to meet the Maoists' condition, the government had agreed to release their two leaders. In October, the first direct 'unofficial' negotiations between the government and the CPN-M did not yield anything. The released Maoist leaders, according to the government, went back on their promise of renouncing the use of force. The Maoists did not have sympathizers in

the UML leadership either. The UML ruled out any alliance with the Maoist group until it had abandoned violence.

In January 2001, in the midst of political turmoil, aggravated by the Maoist insurgency, the CPN-M again agreed to participate in a dialogue with the government. To facilitate this, the government had released the whereabouts of more than 300 insurgents, one of the major conditions set by Maoist leaders. That, however, didn't stop insurgency and by April 2001, violence between Maoists and the police had brought the total number of deaths to more than 1,600 since 1996. In the summer of 2001, Nepal was overwhelmed by another crisis. On 1 June 2001, the crown prince Dipendra, in a murder spree, shot to death the King, the Queen and seven members of their family before he shot himself. On 4 June, after Dipendra succumbed to his injury, Prince Gyanendra, a brother of the deceased King Birendra, succeeded to the throne.

By 2001, the insurgency had struck in 68 of the total of 75 Nepali districts in varying degrees. In some places the Maoists would engage the government forces and carry out their missions with military precision and superior fire power. In July 2001, the Maoists announced a cease-fire which lasted until November (four months) and then they launched a country wide strike. The Nepali government responded by declaring a nationwide state of emergency and deployed the Royal Nepal Army in affected areas. Counter-insurgency operations by the government did often result in a temporary decrease in the number of districts controlled by the Maoists.

The year 2002 witnessed a large-scale violence leading again to a ceasefire on 29 January 2003. From April through August 2003, the Nepali government and the Maoists had three rounds of talks which again failed to yield any tangible result. The government, backed by foreign donors and humanitarian agencies, wanted a prolonged commitment to peace so that rehabilitation of affected people and reconstruction of infrastructure could take place. The Maoists preferred to address their core political agenda which included, among other things, a redrafting of the Constitution and changing the Nepali limited monarchy into a republic. In fact, the two sides were hardly able to build up a trust and confidence among themselves. The Maoists looked upon the government with suspicion. The government, they feared, would perhaps put the concessions on hold, buy time and prepare for a move to militarily finish up their movement. The government, on the other hand, would not treat the Maoists as equal partners aiming at a political deal. Sometimes they would seem to change the ground rules for negotiations by insisting on surrendering the arms and ammunitions and renunciation of violence by the Maoists.

On having failed to arrive at an agreed formula for peace, the Maoist leaders unilaterally pulled out of the cease-fire agreement on 27 August 2003 and resumed their violent activities. In the meantime, the government which had come under a new royalist Prime Minister in May 2003 sought to take advantage of the domestic situation and the post-9/11 anti-terrorism international climate and declared the CPN-M a terrorist organization. However, despite the effort of the government to put down the insurgents once for all did not succeed even though the administration was backed by the King and the CPN-UML and other parties.

The Maoist insurgents' violence and agenda had cast a huge shadow over the politics of Nepal. Through their operations, they had applied a psychological pressure on the country and created an atmosphere of fear. Despite the claims of the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) in January 2005 that it had killed more than 200 Maoists in Kailali district (500 miles west of capital), arrested important operatives, and destroyed their biggest arms and ammunition factory in the Sirsi forest of Doti district, the Maoists were able to cripple the every-day lives of the common people. They could impose blockades in any part of the country with impunity including the Kathmandu valley. Towards the end of 2004, they had called off an indefinite blockade in Kathmandu but imposed new blockade in the eastern districts (Parsa, Bara, and Rautahat) and the central region, crucial for the country's 70 percent commercial export and import. The Maoists had demonstrated repeatedly that they could regulate the movement of people and vehicles in any part of the country.

Moreover, the extent of Maoist influence in the rural areas was evident from the fact that following their threat more than 70 percent of the secretaries of Village Development Committee (VDC) had reportedly submitted their resignations to the government. The rural areas were, thus, deprived of a civil government which could maintain a liaison with the central government. Furthermore, for fear of their lives and security, leaders of other political parties had also left the villages and lived in the district headquarters.⁵

All the major players in the Nepali politics (the army, the King, the political parties, the public opinion), therefore, wished to somehow co-opt the Maoists in the mainstream politics and get them to participate in elections. In January of 2005, a seven month old four party coalition government led by the Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Nepali Congress – Democratic (NC-D), a breakaway from the NCP, and the Deputy Prime Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikary of the CPN-UML tried to bring the Maoists to the negotiation table. This cabinet, nominated by the King, declared January 13 as a deadline for the rebels to show up for negotiations but the Maoists did not respond. The political climate was also complicated because the House of Representatives had been dissolved and the Nepali Congress was leading an agitation for its reinstatement. The King had nominated the government led by Deuba in June 2004 with the mandate that (a) it would engage Maoists in negotiations to achieve peace; and (b) it would make preparations for election to the House of Representatives by April 2005.

The country was, however, caught in a dilemma. The administration was ready to discuss issues, previously out of bounds, with the Maoists including the question of forming a new Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution. The government was convinced that the Maoists' participation in the elections was crucial because they would not let the election process go forward. The Maoists, on the other hand, would not deal with a government with questionable legitimacy. In fact, at one time, the Maoist leader was reportedly asking for a direct negotiation with the King.

The Maoist violence and political stalemate had created a state of lawlessness and near anarchy. The Maoists' intransigence and division among the political parties on the question of whether to further wait on the Maoists created a stalemate. The King sought to break that stalemate, dismissed the government on 1 February 2005, took over direct

power and imposed an emergency in the country. According to the King, the government of Deuba had “failed to make necessary arrangements to hold elections by April, protect democracy, the sovereignty of the people and life and property.”⁶ The King appointed a 10-member cabinet to assist him in the administration and suspended certain provisions of the Constitution, including the freedom of expression, the freedom to assemble, the right to privacy and the right against preventive detention.

The CPN- Maoist as a political organization was very effective in keeping the politics of Nepal revolve around itself. They achieved through violence and subversion what they could not have accomplished through the normal democratic process.

Maoist Organizations in Bihar: the MCC and the PWG

The history of the Maoist Communist movement in the Indian province of Bihar was much older than that of Nepal. The two main organizations of the Maoist movement were the MCC (Maoist Communist Centre) and the PWG (People’s War Group).

Maoist Communist Centre (MCC)

Of the two organizations, the Maoist Communist Centre is the older. It owes its origin to the radical Marxist-Leninist-Maoist movement of the 1960s in different parts of India, particularly West Bengal. In 1969, many splinter Maoist groups merged to form the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), popularly referred to as Naxalites.⁷ A breakaway group called Dakshin Desh (Southern Nation) decided to stay independent of the CPI (M-L) and launch a ‘people’s war’ with a view to establishing a ‘people’s government’ primarily in a few districts of West Bengal* [the districts were Burdwan, Sunderbans, 24-Parganas, Hooghly and Midnapore]

Dakshin Desh followed the ideological lines of Chairman Mao and his method of ‘organized peasant resurrection’ and gave itself a new name in 1975, the MCC. In almost two decades, the MCC considerably expanded its influence in the districts (Gaya, Aurangabad, Camoor-Bhabhua, Rohtas, Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Bettiah and Sitamarhi) of Bihar. In Jharkhand, a state carved out of the southern part of Bihar in 2000, the MCC was active in the districts of Chatra, Daltonganj, Hazaribagh, Palamau, Giridih, Dhanbad, Bokaro, Ranchi, Garhwa, Lohardagga, Gumla, and Latehar.

Organizationally, the MCC consisted of an underground party unit, a military wing, and copious fronts for revolutionary women, youth, intellectuals, laborers and students. From the grassroots level, the cadre of the MCC filled in committees at the levels of regional, sub-zonal and zonal committees headed by an all powerful central committee.

The MCC followed a familiar pattern of violence in its areas of influence, particularly in West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar and Orissa. They would target police personnel, informers, set police stations on fire and plunder the ammunitions often in the face of little resistance. In many instances, they would abduct local officials from a factory, a dam, or the government bureaus for a ransom. They had also acquired the technique of using landmines. Sometimes, they would set up a ‘people’s court’ and deliver verdicts for or against the parties in a village dispute. Many Naxalites and their local leaders were also killed in encounters with the police. The Naxalites, on a regular basis, gave calls to shut down business and regular civil activities and persecuted those who didn’t comply.

As recently as on 1 April 2003, the MCC along with the PWG enforced a 48-hour strike in Jharkhand to protest against the police high-handedness and ‘the US-led attack on Iraq.’ The MCC was never subdued by the state force and was always a formidable force to reckon with. It was proven by the fact that the then Chief Minister of Jharkhand, Arjun Munda, offered to hold talks with the MCC once in the middle of April 2003. The government of Bihar, however, did not show any interest in having any dialogue with the MCC, an outlawed extremist organization.

People’s War Group (PWG)

Unlike the MCC, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) People's War, also known as the People's War Group (PWG), was mainly a group based in the state of Andhra Pradesh. In early 1980s, it was formed by a faction led by an influential member of the then Central Organizing Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). Just as the MCC began its operations from a few districts of West Bengal and extended further, the PWG started from Karimnagar (Koyyuru forests) district of North Telangana region in Andhra Pradesh and expanded further within the state and beyond. In Bihar, the PWG had merged with the CPI-ML (Party Unity) in 1998 and further consolidated its position. The PWG was active in Patna, Aurangabad, Gaya, Jehanabad, Rohtas, Buxur, Saharsa, Khagaria, Banka and Jamui districts of Bihar. In Jharkhand, the group was influential in the districts of Palamau, Garhwa, Latehar, Gumla, Chatra, Hazaribagh and Koderma.

The PWG had been furiously opposed to the MCC for almost a decade and a half because the PWG owed ideological allegiance primarily to Marx and Lenin. They took a considerable period of time to assimilate the principles of Chairman Mao and his method of ‘organized peasant insurrection.’ However, similar to the ideology of the MCC, it did not believe in parliamentary democracy as it existed in India. Its eventual goal was to herald a New Democratic Revolution (NDR) by capturing political power through a protracted armed guerrilla struggle. The armed warfare was to start with its bases in remote rural areas which would first create guerrilla zones and then liberated zones. These protected zones would further help encircle and seize the cities.

Organizationally, the PWG appeared to be more elaborate and sophisticated than the MCC and, therefore, well-poised to strengthen the Maoist movement in future after its merger with the MCC.

Merger of the MCC and the PWG

On 14 October 2004, the Maoist movement, i.e., the extremist left wing movement took a qualitative turn when the two leading organizations, the PWG and the MCC announced their merger in Andhra Pradesh. The new Communist Party of India (Maoist), a stronger revolutionary party, according to their representatives, would usher in “a new democratic society” and advance towards socialism and communism. Their respective military arms (the People’s Guerrilla Army, PGA and the People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army, PLGA) also merged into a unified force called the People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) with effect from December, 2004.⁸

How the unity came about?

Ironically, the merger was announced on the eve of the peace talks between the PWG and the state government of Andhra Pradesh. The PWG, since its formation in April 1980, had been trying to bring almost 40 Maoist factions together under its stewardship. As early as in 1993, attempts were made by the PWG, MCC and the CPI-ML (Party Unity) to jointly constitute the All India People's Resistance Forum to intensify the Naxalite movement in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and other states and to build a strong anti-feudal and anti-imperialist movement. The process of unification, however, broke down on differences over the Revolutionary International Movement.

The MCC nevertheless was the main faction which had to be brought aboard and with whom negotiations went on for more than two decades. The two groups shared the same goals and ideologies and yet they clashed over tactical and strategic issues, personalities and territorial jurisdiction and control. The internecine conflict resulted in 'turf wars' and fratricide through the better part of the 1990s. This period was acknowledged by the Naxalites as the 'dark chapter' in the Naxalites' history. However, continuous dialogue and anti-Maoist operations by the Jharkhand state administration in late 2000 forced them to close ranks and announce a ceasefire in 2001. The merger of the PWG with the CPI-ML (Party Unity) of Bihar in 1998 was also a reason for the differences between the MCC and the PWG.

As the two groups were trying to unite and build 'a united revolutionary proletarian party,' the MCC was the first to take the lead and declared a unilateral cease fire in January 2000, later reciprocated by the PWG. In August 2001, the two groups agreed to engage in joint operations in Bihar-Jharkhand area. The rapprochement between the two groups was said to be because of a new attitude on the part of the MCC and appeals from 'revolutionary forces within India and abroad. The unity was, however, also necessitated by the enforcement of POTA (Prevention of Terrorist Act) during the BJP-led government at the centre.

[An act brought about by the Indian federal government led at that time by a Hindu nationalist party, the BJP and enforced in Jharkhand by the state government also under the BJP. The POTA was enacted in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 (2001) terrorist act in the United States. A controversial piece of legislation, equivalent to the Patriot Act in the United States and full of provisions that suspended civil rights, was withdrawn by the Congress government in 2004.]. In November 2002, the two groups in a joint statement issued at Patna, the capital of Bihar, declared that the arbitrary use of POTA against the Naxalite cadres and sympathizers by the Jharkhand Government had "compelled them to iron out differences" and fight jointly against the state.

In February 2003, the two groups came up with their assessment of what caused the extended phase of inter-group violence in 1990s, referred to as a Black Chapter period. Both the groups resolved not to take to violence against what they called 'class friends' regardless of the severity of ideological or methodological differences. The two groups prepared five documents which, as discussed later, became the basis of their merger. They were: (i) Hold high the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, (ii) The Party Programme, (iii) Strategy and Tactics, (iv) Political Resolution on International and Domestic Situation, and (v) Party Constitution.

In September 2004, the Central Committees (CC) of the two outfits reached a final agreement and decided to set up a common Central Committee (Provisional).

Leadership, Cadre and Command Structure

The unified CPI-ML (Maoist) or CPI-Maoist reportedly retained the organizational structures of the two constituents. It had the central committee as its apex body which in the beginning was led by the general secretary (Mr. Ganapathi) of the PWG central committee. The party was organized from the grass roots level upwards beginning with the Squad Area Committees, District or Division Committees, Zonal or State Committees, Regional Bureaus and topped by a Central Committee.

The merged unit of the two armies, the PLGA, had three levels of forces: the Basic, the Secondary and the Main forces and had strengthened their firepower and battle ability by modernizing and reinforcing their squads. In addition to armed squads numbering three to four thousands, land mining capabilities, and gun manufacturing and repairing factory, the PLGA had ammunitions in abundance. The command and cadre structure can be demonstrated in the following table:

Central Committee (Headed by the Secretary)	People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army (PGLA)
Regional Committee	
Zonal or State Committee	PGLA Main Forces
District or Division Committee	PGLA Secondary Forces
Squad Area Committee	PGLA Basic Forces

Source:

Ideological reconciliation between the two groups

During the inter-group conflict in the 1990s, the two sides realized the extreme necessity of avoiding the bloody conflict and finding the common ideological grounds where they could have some reconciliation. It appears the PWG faction from Andhra Pradesh was reluctant to give precedence to the ideology of Mao over that of Marx and Lenin. After a protracted negotiation, the PWG conceded that the teachings of Mao were a methodological improvement upon the ideologies of Marx and Lenin. Instead of strict adherence to a Marxist-Leninist ‘line,’ therefore, the PWG accepted Maoism as “the higher stage of the M-L (Marxist-Leninist) philosophy.” They declared Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to be the “ideological basis” guiding the new party’s thinking in “all spheres of activities.” The classical Maoist strategy included a ‘protracted armed struggle’ aimed at the seizure of the state power. It was by no means limited to “the seizure of lands, crops and other immediate goals.”

From this perspective, they did not believe in the election system which they called a sham and a futile engagement with ‘bourgeois democracy.’ In an election, according to them, one ruling clique was pulled down and replaced by another ruling clique. True to the Maoist ideology, all efforts and attention be firmly focused on ‘revolutionary activities’ to undermine the state and seize power. Armed struggle was the only way to achieve the ‘basic objectives of land, livelihood and liberation’, arouse the mass consciousness and secure the real state power into the hands of the masses.⁹ The merged organization in the end believed in bringing about a revolution by the “annihilation of class enemies” and the use of extreme violence to overthrow “the bureaucrat comprador bourgeois and big landlords’ classes who controlled state power in collusion with imperialism.” It also aimed at the accomplishment of “the New Democratic State under the leadership of the proletariat” and the ultimate establishment of “socialism and communism.”

The new party was also committed to working with the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

Unlike the mainstream Indian communist parties, the CPI and the CPM, the political allies and alliance partners with the middle of the road Congress party at the center, the CPI-Maoist opposed the central government.

A closer analysis of the United Maoists’ ideology and programs

As mentioned before, this unity and merger didn’t come easily. They reviewed their differences and decided to reconcile them. The PWG reportedly admitted that the clashes between the two groups were a result of the ‘wrong handling of contradictions among the people.’ They felt that they had compromised the class approach in favor of parochial approach while dealing with the contradictions. The statement confessed: “Instead of solving the contradictions with a class approach...(and) in a non-antagonistic manner, we adopted a parochial and non-proletarian approach.”¹⁰ The PWG central committee pledged to

..learn from this negative experience and never again to take up arms against our class friends, no matter how sharp may be the differences. Political differences must be settled by polemical debates and by proving correctness of our politics through revolutionary practice, but not through the gun.¹¹

The five documents mentioned above offered an insight into the minds and thinking of the Maoists.

Notice the ideological rhetoric coming from the united Maoist party in India. They intended to carry on the new “democratic revolution,” which was to remain directed against “imperialism, feudalism and comprador bureaucratic capitalism.” They believed the party would instill “fear among the ruling classes” and would fulfill “the aspirations of the masses.” These aspirations were supposed to be a desire for a ‘strong revolutionary party’ that would take through the stages of socialism and communism, before eventually ushering in a ‘new democratic society.’

According to the October 14, 2004 press statement, the New Democratic Revolution was to be advanced as a part of ‘the world proletarian revolution.’ The world proletarian revolution was intended to be achieved by overthrowing “the semi-colonial, semi-feudal system under the neo-colonial form of indirect rule, exploitation and control.”¹² The revolutionary armed violence would obviously be the means to achieving that objective. According to the tactical plans of the Maoist party, the revolutionary violence will have two aspects: rural and urban. The armed agrarian revolutionary war would be a protracted armed people’s war and its principal mission would be to capture and seize power by encircling the cities from the countryside. The countryside and the Protracted People’s War, therefore, became the ‘center of gravity’ of the party’s work. The party organization and activities in the urban areas were to be geared towards this goal and would be ‘complimentary’ only.

The objectives and strategy adopted by the party were laid down in the famous five documents which gave an insight into the Maoists’ ideological and tactical line of thinking:

The first document, *Hold high the bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism* contained extension of the ideologies of Marxism and Leninism to Maoism. Mao refined the doctrine of Marx and Lenin and adopted it to the context of rural China. From Marxism-Leninism, he took it to the third stage in the areas of philosophy, political economy, military science and scientific socialism.

In the second document called, the *Program*, the CPI-Maoists seemed to assert the autonomy of different nationalities. Tracing the reasons of various forms of armed struggles in the country to the nationality question, the document appeared to suggest that the ruling classes in India, in their service to the interest of the imperialists, had transformed the country into a ‘prison-house’ of different nationalities.¹³ The ruling class emphasized the slogan of “unity and integrity” of the country to perpetuate their own power. The members of different nationalities, on the other hand, were engaged in violent struggles to preserve their autonomy and identity. In the end, the document supported the ‘nationalities struggles’ waged through different means, violent or non-violent. The question, however, remained why the Naxalites have begun to raise nationality question now.

The third document, *The Strategy and Tactics of Indian Revolution* sought to do a thorough ‘class analysis of Indian society’ and came to the conclusion that the character of the Indian society was semi-colonial and semi-feudal. The document determined that the Indian revolution had to go through two stages. In the first stage, the revolution would transform the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society into an independent new democratic society. In the second stage, the people’s war would be advanced further by arousing and organizing people for ‘agrarian revolutionary guerrilla war’ in the country side. The document reiterated the well-known party line that the remote rural areas were most suited to build up the people’s army and the red base areas for launching guerrilla warfare against the urban areas by encircling them.

The fourth document, *Political Resolution*, painted a gloomy picture of the international and domestic situation. The world, in the Maoists' view, was greatly under stress because of the unprecedented disorder, turbulence and instability since the World War II. The world continued to be under the 'imperialist offensive' and the domestic situation of India reflected that it also had come under the imperialists' dominance.

Understandably, according to the Maoists, the solution lay in the Maoist method of 'class annihilation' both at the international and domestic levels. The new Constitution the Maoists presented was based on the "Bolshevik principles of democratic centralism, with the core comprising of professional revolutionaries."¹⁴ Whereas the core party leadership was to be in the hands of a few experienced, ideology-driven, and battle-hardened revolutionaries, the involvement of the party with the masses was supposed to be facilitated by a 'a wide network of part timers.' These part-timers were to be 'principled, selfless, courageous, dedicated, modest, hard-working' and entirely dedicated to the goal of revolution, socialism and communism. They would work for the party which would remain underground until the New Democratic Revolution had been achieved. The party, based on the firm ideological foundation of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, would continuously guard itself and its members against the 'non-proletariat tendencies' that frequently infiltrated into the party and sought to erode it from within.

Areas of Operation: What they have accomplished?

According to their strategy, the party aimed at carving out a Compact Revolutionary Zone (CRZ) which extended from Nepal and Bihar in the north through the dense forest areas of Central India (the Dandakaranya region) to the south, Andhra Pradesh and beyond. With the merger of the Maoist parties, the new group acquired the status and clout of a pan-Indian revolutionary group. They could now work towards the objective of liberating the CRZ. A sizable part of this territory had already been brought under the influence of the Maoists. What they needed was a few 'link-ups' to cover the entire stretch of territory under their control and possibly liberate it from the Indian union. Once the CRZ became a reality, the Indian Maoist party could coordinate their efforts with other Maoist parties in South Asia, particularly the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) and the Communist Party of Bhutan-Maoist (CPB-M) to extend their influence.¹⁵

However, in India, after more than 35 years of the Maoist movement, they could claim to be effective in terms of setting up parallel administrative control (or liberated zones) in pockets of Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal in the north, the Malkangiri region in southern Orissa, the Bastar area of Chhattisgarh and a few northern districts of Andhra Pradesh and its adjacent areas in eastern Maharashtra. The combined population of these seven states account for nearly half of the Indian population. In comparison, the Nepalese Maoists seem to have done significantly better as they have made their operations felt in all 75 districts of Nepal affecting its 27 million people in less than a decade. In terms of creating a fear psychosis and disarray particularly among the law and order agencies, the Maoists of India and Nepal have both accomplished great results. In India, the police and

bureaucracy of the seven states mentioned above coordinated their resources to tackle what in the administrative parlance was called the 'Naxalite menace'¹⁶ In Nepal, the Maoists' activities had caused the resources of the Nepalese government to stretch thin. Just after the Royal take over of the Nepalese administration on 1 February 2005, only 110 of the country's 1, 135 police stations were in operation.¹⁷ The 44, 000 strong civil police were confined to protecting only district head quarters leaving the rural Nepal for the Royal Nepalese Army. The RNA could take action against the Maoists only in 30 out of 75 districts of Nepal. Despite the Maoists' achievement in India and Nepal, they were no where close to what Mao himself had accomplished within a decade during the 1930-40 period when he and his followers had established liberated zone of Yenan. The Maoists' liberation of areas in India and Nepal were not even as effective as the control of the northeast India by the Naga Liberation fighters.¹⁸

Criminality and violation of human rights by Maoists

Another side of the Maoist movement was that it was replete with criminalization and violation of human rights. Information regarding Maoists' criminal and underworld connection had begun coming in much earlier. In their areas of control or influence, the MCC cadre or their area commander periodically gave calls to boycott elections and threatened with reprisals those who dared to disobey. However, people largely did not pay heed to their threats. To the amazement of many, the MCC and its cadre worked for political candidates who belonged to their castes. They participated in what is called "booth management" or "silent booth capturing" for the candidates they wanted to support in exchange for a price.¹⁹

Rather than punishing the mafia, they worked in collusion with them and punished upright and honest officers. As an example, one honest and dutiful forest officer (Sanjay Singh) was murdered in Kaimur forest by an area commander (Nirala Yadav) of the MCC with the help of a dasta of 15 hard core activists.²⁰ This was revealed by a hardcore regional commander (Nathuni Mistri) of the same organization when he was arrested by the police. The officer's murder was allegedly planned by local forest mafias who owned stone crushers and timber business. This raised the fundamental ideological question as to who were their class enemy: the honest officer or the mafia making money by degrading the forest and the environment.

There were other stories of the "deviation and degeneration" of the MCC. In as many as 18 districts of Bihar and Jharkhand, the public work contractors had to pay 30 percent of the sanctioned money as commission or bribe to the local area commander of the MCC. Their collection method was far more efficient than the government agencies responsible to collect commercial taxes. This exploitative collection, called *hafta* (weekly), was expected from people ranging from forest contractors to government officials including the police. The local activists had replaced the police as the recipients of *hafta* from illegitimate businesses like the brewing of illicit liquor etc.

At many public construction sites, the contractors were forced to pay money to the representatives of the Maoist organizations. For instance again, when the works were in progress to lay out a rail track on Patna-Gaya route in late 1990s, the contractors' vehicles and equipments were allegedly blown off by CPI-ML (People's War) activists.

The common people did not understand how an improved road, school or canal system would stand as hindrance to social change the Maoists advocated.

At one time the Maoists were popular when they did constructive works at the grass-roots level almost taking over the role of a village-level administration almost absent in many areas of Bihar. They could administer justice in a village by setting up a people's court (Kangaroo Court), organize laborers for wage enhancement and community ownership on natural resources. According to the villagers, the Maoists who once advocated class annihilation became a class on their own.

Internationalization of human rights violation in Nepal

Almost nine year old Maoist insurgency and the brutal counterinsurgency measures in Nepal on part of the government involving torture in custody, extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests put the country on the international radar screen for human rights violations. In 2004, Switzerland asked the 53-nation United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) in Geneva for a stricter monitoring of Nepal's human rights records.²¹

The take over of the Nepalese administration by the king in February 2005, dissolution of the parliament and suspension of civil rights following imposition of a state of emergency made things worse. The king of Nepal came under increased international pressure for restoration of civil rights and representative democracy. Many countries including the USA, the UK and India withheld military aid and asked Nepalese king to take appropriate steps. On the other side, China and Pakistan believed that the political changes in Nepal were Nepal's internal matter and others should not interfere. Human rights issues therefore got enmeshed in geopolitics of the region. [Explain geopolitics] However, the harsh reality was that the country was showing signs of sinking deeper into civil war between pro-palace villagers and the Maoist insurgents. According to a report in the *New York Times*, the vigilantes have taken upon themselves the challenge of hunting down the Maoists.²² They killed several suspected Maoists and burnt down houses believed to have sheltered the Maoists. In retaliation, the Maoists escalated their ferocity against anyone they considered police collaborators or class enemies. The prospect of the local people taking the law into their own hands would certainly be a disaster. The government understandably resisted arming the vigilantes but the villagers used indigenous farm tools to carry out the attacks. However, in view of the fact that the government was not able to resolve the crisis arising out of the Maoist rebellion through negotiations or military means, it might eventually be persuaded to aiding the vigilantes and applying the military means. In such a lawless situation, human rights would be the first major casualty. The pro-palace people were mostly the landed gentry who supported the vigilantes and the poor people were the reservoir for the Maoist recruits.

Since 1 February 2005, the land owners were more encouraged to go after the Maoists because the emergency rule had suspended basic civil rights and a tough administration would not release Maoists under pressure from politicians and political parties. The king's direct rule would not even spare politicians. Earlier, there were cases where landlord's houses were destroyed and crops looted and the suspects would not be brought to book because of the political pressure. The administration was rendered powerless.

The king's take over of the administration and his decrees restored a lot of faith in the institution of monarch and the villagers gained moral strength from the king.

A New York-based human rights organization, Watch List estimated that 30 percent of the Nepalese Maoist people's army comprised of boys and girls under the age of 18. Not all of them were fighters but they helped in laying booby traps, carry weapons, supplies and information. As a result, children have been the victims of this fight between the government forces and the Maoists. This brought Nepal in the category of countries where children were victims of armed insurgencies. Children were recruited, mostly forcibly, in the ranks of the rebels and paid a higher price because. If they didn't lose their lives, they were very likely displaced, disabled or orphaned.²³

Another example of human rights violation could be seen when the relatives and friends of those killed, injured or otherwise affected by the Maoist violence set up an organization called, the Maoist Victims Association (MVA). They took out a rally on the 13 February 2004, the ninth anniversary of the launching of the 'People's War' and, as a mark of protest, they burnt the effigies of the Maoist leaders (Prachanda and Bhattarai). Two days later, the president of the MVA, was killed in Kathmandu. The killing was condemned by many Nepalese and newspapers characterized such killings as being indicative of the 'fascist streak' and 'political bankruptcy' of the Maoist party.²⁴ A large section of the people doubted its public commitment because of its intolerance toward political dissidence.

In the case of Bihar, after the merger of the MCC and the PWG, their cadres of the new Maoist Party were attacking the members of another Maoist group the CP (ML) Liberation. Until 1992, CP (ML) Liberation in Bihar was an outlawed and underground Naxalite organization. It broke ranks with the MCC and the PWG and decided to abandon the Maoist path of armed struggle and participated in the parliamentary (federal) and legislative (state) elections. For that reason, its members have been a target of violence from fellow Maoists (the MCC and the PWG). A leader of the CP (ML) Liberation, Vinod Mishra, even characterized the other Maoist organizations (i.e. the MCC and the PWG) as 'anarchists' who had turned themselves into money-collecting machines and indulged in 'a killing spree of our cadres and people.' Vinod Mishra further alleged that such parties were 'using ultra-left rhetoric' to hide their 'dubious links and their dirty mission of disrupting organized mass movements.'²⁵

In February 2005 Bihar legislative assembly election, the CP (ML) Liberation improved its number of seats from four to seven. Two of its members were elected while behind bars awaiting trial on murder charges.²⁶ It was not an insignificant electoral achievement for a Naxalite party since the Congress Party, a major national mainstream party got ten seats only in the state legislature. The CP (ML) Liberation had considerable influence among farm labors in the countryside, the part of Bihar also notoriously famous for caste wars between the land owning castes (e.g, Bhumihars or Rajputs) and the middle or low caste landless people. One of its legislative assembly members (from Sandesh), Rameshwar Prasad was elected Member of Parliament from the Lok Sabha constituency of Arah in 1989.²⁷ In August, 2002, in a pamphlet, the CPI (ML) Liberation declared that the People's War (PW) had killed many of their supporters. More alarming than that was the claim that scores of the leading cadres of the PW were formerly 'either dreaded dacoits or members of the Ranveer Sena, Samata Party or the Bharatiya Janata Party.'²⁸

It was also alleged that the MCC was backed by the Yadavs who in turn supported the government led by the RJD. A centrist party of the middle caste and middle class, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) was presided over by Lalu Yadav. This claim was supported by the fact that the ruling RJD party members or its highly placed officers were not among a long list of people killed by the MCC. Lalu Yadav in February 2005 claimed to have been supported by the seven members of the CP (ML) in the formation of the provincial government.

Democracy: Two Different Approaches

The Maoist parties seemed to be reiterating their faith in democracy. One of their documents talked about transforming the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society into an 'independent new democratic society.' But their concept and structure of democracy appeared to be fundamentally different from what is understood by the term 'democracy' in the western world or professed in India. Even if the Maoist organizations participate in parliamentary process they would emphasise on democratic centralism.

In 1999, Vinod Mishra, a leading Naxalite ideologue wrote:

Democracy within the Communist Party is somewhat different from what is commonly understood by this term. It is democracy under centralized guidance. The Party Central Committee decides when and on what questions debates and discussions should be allowed. Otherwise, the Party will degenerate into a debating society.²⁹

This position seemed to be irreconcilable to the principles of democratic decentralization. The average people in India or Nepal expected democratic institutions to build up from the village level up. The village-level administration should be manned by the local people who belonged to and got elected by the local community or ethnic groups. It is not consistent with the democratic principles and local-self government if some one is imposed from outside. One of the major difficulties of the Indian political party system was that the power was usually vested in the central party leadership which dominated over the party organs and the grass root party workers. The leaders manipulated the party and used it as a springboard to dispense political favors and shore up their position in the party. The party system was subservient to one or a few charismatic figures and all sorts of irregularities including financial corruption would get their place in it. The Maoist parties could not be different. After all, they have been faction-ridden all along in their party history ready to physically eliminate each other. The decade of 1990s was lost in an internecine fight between the PWG and the MCC.

Maoists and the communal polarization

In terms of winning over people's mind, i.e., in the realm of ideas or strategy, the Maoist parties in India were left behind all other parties including the Hindu-nationalist parties and groups, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its wing Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). Scholars and observers sympathetic to the Naxalite movement have also observed that the Naxalite parties with their excessive emphasis on the liberation and conversion of 'feudal zones into Red areas' by resorting to 'individual annihilation' had politically been isolated. They had the wrong priority seeking to eliminate the centrist, pro-capital, pro-democracy parties and leaders and leaving out the parties and leaders who divided the

poor up along communal lines. The communal parties had made inroads into the Naxalite base i.e., the tribal areas of Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Gujarat and Maharashtra. For scores of tribal people, construction of Ram temple at the site where a mosque was destroyed in 1992 was more important than any socio-economic issue.

In the decade of the 1990s, the popularity of the BJP and its allies increased phenomenally and the Maoists were not able to offer a counter ideology or platform. The BJP party, whose influence was confined only to the Hindi heartland and had only two members in the lower house of parliament in 1984, improved its appeal and came to lead a ruling coalition government by 1996 at the center. It also entered the non-Hindi, non-communal south (Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala) and the interior villages of West Bengal in the east. Ironically, the Naxalites (particularly, the PWG) could boast of wielding influence in the tribal-dominated areas of Maharashtra (Gadchiroli and Gondia) adjacent to Chhattisgarh but yielded Mumbai to communal organizations like Shiv Sena who would exploit and terrorize the migrant Muslim workers and non-Maharashtrians. The Naxalites also did not organize its cadre to offer any numerical or ideological challenge to the BJP in the state of Gujarat affected by communal riots. One reason why the Maoists did not appear to be addressing themselves to the communal question was perhaps the fact that the Naxalite leadership was also dominated by upper and middle caste Hindus.**30**

Furthermore, in a democracy, ideas interact and compete, parties tried to sell their ideology and political platform to the people and seek to win over their support. This is a serious question worth examining. The rise of communist extremism in Nepal and Bihar was partially traceable to the usurpation of democratic processes by the vested interests represented by corrupt bureaucrats and politicians. Politicians of all hues were constantly engaged in factional fighting over the share of power and would not show their commitment to fair and productive governance. Both in Bihar and Nepal, governments have been constituted several times but did not last because of corruption, party infighting, personal ambition or because of the arbitrary intervention from the federal authority, the central government in the case of Bihar and the King in the case of Nepal.

Maoist violence and the rise of counter armed militancy

In Nepal, after the King took over the administration, the landed people took upon themselves the responsibility of protecting their land and confronting the Maoists violently, as the story from Kapilvastu suggested (Somini Dasgupta's report) In Bihar, several caste-based rural militant and murderous groups had already emerged in response to the violent methods of the Maoists. [It is also, however, true that the Maoist violence was also in itself a response to all sorts of violence that existed in the society. In the context of Bihar,] the rural violence had its roots in the exploitative caste structure and the uneven possession of land by the upper, middle and lower caste groups. Since the Independence (1947) and the abolition of the Zamindari system (1950), the government passed a series of legislations limiting the size of land holdings a particular individual or

family could have. The surplus land above such ceiling was supposed to have been taken over by the government and redistributed among the landless people. The philosophy behind that drastic and ambitious rural socio-economic reconstruction was very appealing as it was influenced by the Bolshevik idea of community ownership and the Maoist cooperative revolution in China. It was, therefore, no less than ‘a revolution through legislation’ that the Zamindari system, a caste-based revenue collection system renewed by the British, was abolished. The protagonists of the abolition of the Zamindari system had expected that the land so acquired from the surplus landholders would go to the landless or to the tiller, absentee landlordism would end and this would amount to a great leap forward in the direction of poverty eradication. As the experience of more than 50 years suggested, that flawed policy was unsuccessful from the start. What happened as an unintended consequence was that a large section of the upper castes who owned more than 80% of the land began to migrate to the urban areas abandoning the agricultural sector altogether, selling or transferring their lands to fictitious names (locally called *benaami*). The members of the left out upper castes, the middle or lower middle castes who worked the fields of the surplus holders became the owners of the lands. They not only jealously guarded their lands but also substituted the traditional landlords (Zamindars) in their treatment of the landless workers working on their lands. The rejuvenation and continuation of the Maoist movement since the 1970s could be seen in that context where the Maoists struggled to have land and dignity restored to the tillers (mostly the lower castes) besides making sure that they are paid the minimum wages fixed by the government from time to time. This, among many other reasons, created a perpetually conflicting situation. The new landowners found that farming a midsize land holding was economically unprofitable and could not afford to pay the minimum wages and the landless would not survive without wages or food. The weakest would, therefore, have the temptation to grab land from those who had it and the landowners would feel compelled to defend their land by any means. It is for this reason that many caste militias (as indicated in the following table) came into existence to defend their possession.

Major Caste Militia of Bihar

Senas (Militias)	Caste Affiliations	Year of Foundation
Kuer Sena	Rajput	1979
Bhoomi Sena	Kurmi	1983
Lorik Sena	Yadav	1983
Brahmarshi Sena	Bhumihar	1984
Kisan Sangh	Rajput Brahmin	1984
Sunlight Sena	Pathan, Rajput	1989
Savarna Liberation Front	Bhumihar	1990
Kisan Sangha		
Kisan Morcha	Bhumihar	1990
Ganga Sena	Rajput	1989-90
Ranveer Sena	Bhumihar	1990
	Bhumihar	1994

Many scholars and observers have argued that the Maoist violence and other social unrest have continued in Bihar because there had not been a full and complete implementation of land reforms laws. As mentioned before, the upper strata of the rural society mostly the upper caste landowners who were also relatively educated and entrepreneurial, moved out depriving the villages of very productive human resources. That also resulted in a haphazard redistribution of land which included land grab by the cadres and sympathizers of the Left. The government had no record of that. However, even if all surplus land was accounted for and the government was in a position to redistribute them, there were not enough land to be distributed. As a sample case, the finding of Arun Kumar illustrates this point. Based on his interview with the District Magistrate of Jehanabad in 2003, he found out that there could be at most 9,000 acres of land above the ceiling in Jehanabad and Arwal districts, areas where Maoists were most active. Even if the government was successful in redistribution, 9,000 acres of land were hardly enough to support 9, 000 families. **31**

Prospect of increasing level of violence

Nepal and the state of Bihar becoming increasingly dysfunctional, economic activities paralyzed, social bond dislocated and unemployment on the rise, the Muslim youths may possibly join the Maoists in future. The Pakistani intelligence organization (ISI) which is suspected to be involved in insurgencies from Kashmir to the North East as well as in Nepal would most likely take interest in the Maoist activities. In Nepal and in areas bordering Nepal and Bangladesh where Muslims are sizable in number (e.g., Kishanganj in Bihar), the ISI has already been reported to be active. In such a situation, the Maoist groups would be targeted as an organization which contained communal elements as well. This could make political forces like the BJP more popular. The Muslims, on their part, would not hesitate to mobilize and draw in resources from the Muslim world (e.g., Wahabis etc.). Further internationalization of the Maoist problem, therefore, could not be ruled out.

Regardless of the anarchist or criminal nature of their actions, it would be a mistake to treat the Maoist violence lightly as an aberration or a law and order issue. The circumstances that gave birth to extremism like Maoism are unmistakable. Both in Nepal and Bihar the youth who suffered and witnessed injustice and corruption in the field of politics, electoral process, education, training, employment or ultimate placement/ advancement in life were all seething with anger and they found in the Maoist organizations an outlet. Similar group of frustrated people in the West get involved in the underworld gangs and drugs. A very careful, concerted and responsible assessment will have to be made in order to handle the challenges posed by Maoist extremism.

Endnotes and References

1. Bhutan, a quiet tiny sovereign kingdom, had thus far remained largely free from Maoist or terrorist violence. However, the infiltration and activities of terrorist groups on the Bhutanese territory from India's Northeast have lately aroused serious concerns. The Ngolops (armed Nepalese dissidents) are said to have posed serious challenge to the security of this Himalayan Kingdom.
2. For a transcript go to the website <http://www.satp.org>
3. Deepak Thapa, ed., *Understanding the Maoist of Nepal* (Kathmandu, Nepal: Martin Chautari, 2003), 391
4. According to the spokesman for the Home Ministry of Nepal. Kantipur Online, 20 January 2004
5. Keshab Poudel, "Waiting for Prachanda," *South Asia Intelligence Review: Weekly Assessments and Briefings (On Line)*, Vol. 3, No. 27, January 17, 2005.
6. *Indian Express* (New Delhi), 2 February 2005
7. The name Naxalites is derived from a place, Naxalbari, a remote village in West Bengal where in 1960s, a land dispute between the landowners and the landless gave rise to the Maoist movement. For a perspective on the Naxal movement see S. Pandey, *Naxal Violence: A Socio-Political Study* (Delhi: Chanakya, 1985); Manoranjan Mohanty, *Revolutionary Violence: A Study of the Maoist Movement in India* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1977) and Pradhan H. Prasad, "Agrarian Violence in Bihar," *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay), May 30, 1987.
8. *The Hindu* (Chennai), 15 October 2004.
9. *The Hindu*, 13 October 2004
10. The SAIR (to be cited)
11. The SAIR
12. The SAIR
13. The SAIR
14. The SAIR

15. The SAIR
16. Sumanta Banerjee, "Naxalbari: Between Past and Future," *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 1, 2002, 2115
17. Ajai Sahni, "The Calculus of Failure," SAIR, Vol. 3, No. 32, 21 February 2005 (On line).
18. Banerjee, 2002
19. Booth management normally includes preventing supporters of other parties from voting and with the connivance of electoral officers stuffing ballots in the ballot boxes. After the replacement of ballot boxes by the Electronic Voting Machine (EVMs) in general elections, the rigging the election has become easier in Bihar.]
20. Ajay Kumar, "Changing face of MCC: Renegades have upper hand," http://www.bihartimes.com/articles/ajay/mcc_change.html
21. Sudeshna Sarkar, "Rights Record: Challenge Before Nepal At Geneva Meet," *Statesman Weekly* (Kolkata), 19 March 2005, 10
22. Somini Sengupta, "Vigilantes May Be Nepal's Secret Weapon Against Rebels," *nytimes online*, 11 April 2005.
23. The report titled "Caught in the Middle: Mounting Violations against Children in Nepal's Armed Conflict" was quoted in *New India Press* 28 January 2005
24. *Kantipur online*, 17 February 2004
25. Vinod Mishra, *Selected Works* (Delhi: Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (ML), 1999), p. 152 quoted in Arun Kumar, "Violence and Political Culture: Politics of the Ultra Left in Bihar", *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 22, 2003, 4977-83
26. Varghese K. George, "Laloo is counting on them but M-L is not M-Y", *Indianexpress.com*, 5 March 2005
27. Getting elected to the Parliament was a very significant breakthrough for a Naxalite party man at that time. His election was regarded as the harbinger of a new wave of politics. Prof Harold Gould, in an elaborate essay, was very optimistic and profuse in his admiration for the MCC candidate Rameshwar Prasad. He did not win a parliamentary election after that. However, he has been active and is now elected as a Member Legislative Assembly (MLA).

28. *Tathyon ki Zubani: People's War ki Kahani* (Patna: CPI (ML) Liberation, 2002 quoted in Arun Kumar, "Violence and Political Culture: Politics of the Ultra Left in Bihar", *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 22, 2003, 4977-83
29. Vinod Mishra 1999:454-55
30. Sumanta Banerjee, "Naxalites: Time for Introspection," *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 1, 2003, 4636
31. See Arun Kumar, "Violence and Political Culture, Politics of the Ultra Left in Bihar," *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 22, 2003, p. 4981

* The Nepal government has classified these districts in three categories: sensitive class A, B and C. Six districts of mid-western Nepal (Rolpa, Rukum, Jajarkot, Salyan, Pyuthan and Kalikot) fall in class A where the government has a token presence in the district quarters only. The Maoists have the rest of each district under control. In class B, there are nine districts: Dolakha, Ramechhap, Sindhuli, Kavrepalanchowk, Sindhupalchowk, Gorkha, Dang, Surkhet, and Achem. There are 17 districts in class C. They are Khotang, Okhaldhunga, Udaypur, Makwanpur, Lalitpur, Nuwakot, Dhading, Tanahu, Lamjung, Parbat, Baglung, Gulmi, Arghakhachi, Bardiya, Dailekh, Jumla and Dopl.

* The Maoists had an organized ideological opponent, though very weak, in some pockets of rural areas. In Dailekha (350 miles of west of the capital and Nawalparasi (200 miles south west of capital), a Maoist breakaway group, the United People's Front (UPF) confronted the Maoists by carrying out an "Expose the Maoists' campaign. The Maoists had been intimidating its workers. The UPF was, however, not that effective because villagers were not solidly organized behind them.

*Since the insurgency started in 1996, more than 10,000 people had lost their lives. According to the police, 261 persons were killed in one month alone at the turn of the year 2005.

*There were differences between the NC-D (Deuba), the CPN-UML (Adhikari), and the Nepali Congress (Girija Prasad Koirala). Whereas the Nepali Congress did not accept the legitimacy of the Deuba's government, the CPN-UML believed that the reinstatement of the House of Representatives was better than going in for immediate elections. There were independent voices also asking for mediation through other means. Damannath Dhungana, a former speaker of the House of Representatives and a mediator in the past Government-Maoist talks believed that the Government must have opened the negotiations with the Maoists even if that meant seeking mediation from the UN. The Maoists had once demanded the UN intervention. According to Dhungana, the

government should also have accepted the demand for a new Constituent Assembly if it ensured bringing the Maoists on the negotiation table.

*Personality clashes clothed in ideological differences have consistently been the reason for the breaking up and reformation of the Communist movement in India including the Maoist extremist movement. For example, in early 1980s, Ramadhar Singh, a deputy to the then MCC chief Shivenji, had differences with the leadership over the issue of targeted 'individual annihilation.' Ramadhar Singh later broke away to join the CPI (M-L). In 1980, the founder leader of the PWG, Kondapalli Seetharamaiah broke away from its parent party CPI(M-L) where he was a member of the powerful Central Organizing Committee. Later he did not find himself in agreement with other leaders and was expelled from the group.

*The PWG, generally regarded as a Naxalite outfit of the south, has had a strong base in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Orissa. The MCC, on the other hand, has had its sway mainly in eastern and central part of India, i.e., Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Chhatisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and certain areas of Madhya Pradesh. However, after the merger, the CPI-Maoist consolidated its effective presence in 156 districts of 13 provinces which included Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand,, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Uttaranchal, Kerala, Karnataka, and Maharashtra. After strengthening its base, it is projected to penetrate in relatively affluent states such as Gujarat, Haryana and Punjab and a few less prosperous states like Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh.

* In the context of India or Bihar, Maoists are referred to as Naxalites or Ultra Left also. These terms are used interchangeably.